

Not everybody agrees with us. Not everybody agrees in this auditorium about issues. That's part of what makes this country special, is the nature of our democracy. And so sometimes it can be frustrating. And I know there are times where you're sitting there and you're thinking, golly, you know, Obama, he's made some compromise with the Republicans on this or that. Or, how come he's—he should have done it this way. Everybody's a political consultant. [Laughter] And if he had just phrased it that way, I'm sure we could have gotten health care done in 2 months. [Laughter] You know who I'm talking about—you. That's right.

And then your friends come, and you say, oh, Obama's changed. He's—I was—I used to be so excited. I still have the poster, but—[laughter]. I know. I know.

Sometimes I get frustrated. There are times where I am just so burdened by the fact that there are still so many folks out there who we haven't—haven't gotten the help that they need. And so I understand how you guys feel. But we knew this wouldn't be easy. We knew that on a journey like this, there were going to be setbacks, there were going to be detours, there were going to be some times where we stumbled.

People act like the campaign was easy. They weren't on the campaign. [Laughter] They all look back: Oh, Obama, he ran such a perfect campaign, it was so smooth. What campaign were you on? [Laughter] This was hard. So we knew that there were going to be setbacks and stumbles.

But here's what keeps me going. At every juncture in our history, when our future was on the line, when we were at a crossroads like we are right now, we pulled through, and we pulled through together. We were able to make the changes that were needed. And it was hard. It was full of debate and sometimes rancor and sometimes worse. That's how this country became more equal. That's how the women's movement started. That's how the civil rights movement started. That's how the union movement started.

At every juncture, there's been resistance and debate and uncertainty, but somehow, we pulled through, together. So whenever you hear people say our problems are too big to solve, whenever you hear people say we've got to shrink back on our dreams, whenever you hear people say we can't bring about the changes that we seek, whenever you hear people say, well, the campaign was this or that, but now governing is somehow different, I just want you to think about all the progress that we've already made.

I want you to think about all the unfinished business we've got ahead of us. I want you to be excited about the future that lies before us. I want to remind you and everybody else of those three simple words that summed up what we believe as a people: Yes, we can.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:52 p.m. in the Nob Hill Masonic Center. In his remarks, he referred to Supreme Court Associate Justices Elena Kagan and Sonia M. Sotomayor. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 21.

## Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in San Francisco April 21, 2011

*The President.* Everybody, please be seated. Thank you. It is wonderful to be here, and I'll admit I sort of slept in. [Laughter] That whole 3-hour time difference is okay. I did stay up late last night, so I had an excuse.

We've got just some great friends in the audience, people who have helped us in so many

ways and helped California in so many ways. I just want to acknowledge a few folks to make sure, if they haven't been already acknowledged. Somebody who I had the pleasure of serving with and is one of the finest Senators in the country, Dianne Feinstein is here. Your dynamic Lieutenant Governor, Gavin Newsom is

in the house. One of my favorites, somebody who was with me through thick and thin during the course of my campaign, and then, hopefully, she felt I was there with her during the course of her campaign, Attorney General Kamala Harris is here.

San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee is in the house, doing a great job. Former Mayor Willie Brown is here. No matter how hard I try, Willie is still better dressed than me. [Laughter] Although I'm still getting used to the no mustache thing. I mean, he's a pretty good-looking guy, but I still remember that.

And what can I say about Nancy Pelosi? She has been—I think will go down in history as one of the finest Speakers that we have ever had, and she is going to continue to be in the future one of the great Speakers that we've ever had.

So many of you were with us in 2008, and I had great fun last night talking to a big crowd, and you could start feeling people getting back—Jerry already left, I thought. Jerry was here. [Laughter] Your Governor, Jerry Brown, was in the house. [Laughter] But it's always awkward when you introduce someone and they're not there. [Laughter] So Jerry had to leave, but—because he had important business to do on behalf of the State of California.

Last night was a wonderful event, and I had a chance to talk to a lot of our grassroots supporters here in California. And I reminded them that the campaign we ran in 2008 wasn't about me. It was about a commitment that the American people were making to each other. It was about a vision of what America could be, because what we understood was that we were at a crossroads.

There are moments in history that are inflection points, and I think we understood back in 2008 that we were entering into one of those periods. Domestically, we had gone through a decade in which the economy was growing, but it was growing on top of a bubble. And people at the very top were doing very well, but the wages and incomes of ordinary families had flatlined, and we were starting as a Government to live beyond our means, with tax cuts and two wars that weren't paid for. And so I

think people understood even before the recession hit that somehow, the way our economy was operating was not conducive to long-term sustained economic growth or making sure that everybody had a chance at the American Dream.

Internationally, we were seeing changes around the world: countries like China and India rising, areas like the Middle East becoming less stable, the world shrinking because of technology, much of it invented right here in this region. And so I think we understood that we were going to have to adapt in some fundamental way in order to make sure that our kids and our grandkids ended up inheriting the kind of America that we inherited.

And so as I think about the campaign, what always excited me was not the huge crowds. It wasn't all the attention that I got. What really excited me was whenever we went into a community and it turned out that people who hadn't been involved in politics before were suddenly getting involved. And folks who would normally not meet suddenly were meeting and planning and plotting. And entire virtual communities got set up in places like Idaho and northern Nevada. And these folks would set up their own teams, and they were coming up with ideas about how to get folks more engaged and more involved.

There was a sense that from the bottom up, the American people were saying, we're going to reach for a more hopeful future and we're going to make our politics work. We're going to insist on a politics that is responsive to the hopes and dreams of ordinary folks.

*Audience member.* Mr. President, we're going to do a song. Can we stand?

*The President.* Well, let me—

[At this point, the audience members began to sing.]

*The President.* That's very nice. Nancy, did you plan this? [Laughter]

All right, how about—that was a pretty good song. You guys sing better than I do.

[The audience members continued to sing.]

All right, guys. That was a nice song. You guys have much better voices than I have. Okay, thank you very much, guys.

*Audience member.* Thank you for listening.

*The President.* Of course. Well, I appreciate that. Now, where was I? [*Laughter*] It did break my flow, I've got to admit.

Now, there's an example of creativity that we saw during the campaign. [*Laughter*] You know, it wasn't always convenient, but it's part of what made 2008 special. And what's happened—and I think that was indicative of that performance as well—is, is that over the last 2½ years, change turned out to be tougher than a lot of us expected, right? I think a lot of folks didn't recognize that we might end up going through the worst recession since the Great Depression and that we'd see 8 million jobs lost, devastating entire communities all across the country. I think we didn't anticipate a housing crisis that kept on worsening or the potential of a financial meltdown.

And what ordinary folks are going through still, even after the economy has started growing again, is something that keeps me up at night, and it's something that I think about the first thing when I wake up in the morning.

We knew that we had to make changes in energy, and we've made some, but we understood that despite these changes, folks are still out there with four-a-gallon gas, and that's tough on ordinary families. They can't afford to buy a new hybrid car if they're driving 50 miles a day to go to work.

And so what I think a lot of folks feel over the last 2½ years is we've done extraordinary work—in part, thanks to folks like Nancy and Dianne and people in Congress—but we understand that we've still got more work to do.

I could not be prouder of our track record over the last 2½ years. But yanking this country out of a Great Depression, passing historic health care laws so that people who are bankrupt—people who are sick don't have to go through bankruptcy in order to pay their medical bills; making sure that “don't ask, don't tell” was finally repealed; making sure that we've got two women on the Supreme Court, and one of them is the first Latina on the Supreme

Court; making sure that we made the largest investment in clean energy and education and infrastructure in our history—I could not be prouder of those achievements. But we've got so much more work to do. And we're not going to be able to make those changes unless that same spirit that drove us in 2008 drives us in 2012.

I think that a lot of folks feel that, well, he's now President; he's a little grayer, he's a little older. It's not quite as new as it was. And so we can run a different kind of campaign: more top down, more Washington.

And I guess part of my message here in California today is that we need you now more than ever. Your engagement, your involvement, your commitments are going to be critically important because the work that we wanted to do, the vision that we had for the country is unfinished, and because we're facing as stark as a choice—as stark of a choice as we've seen, I think, in this country philosophically as we've seen in a very long time. And we're seeing that in the budget discussions that we're having right now.

We've got a serious deficit and debt problem. There is no doubt about it. It's one that we inherited, but it's real. And we've got a responsibility to fix it. The question is, how do we fix it? Are we going to fix it by making sure that we eliminate spending that we don't need, as I've proposed, but also making sure that everybody shares the burden and we're raising additional revenues by making sure that those of us who have done so well in this society can afford to pay a little bit more? Or do we end up balancing our budget and reducing our deficit by fundamentally reworking our social compact so that suddenly kids on Head Start don't have those opportunities anymore, so that we say to our seniors Medicare is no longer a guarantee that you will have health care when you are older—here's a voucher, we're going to shift the costs onto you, and if you can't get the health care that you need on the open market, then tough luck?

Is it a vision of America that is big and ambitious and generous and says we're going to invest in clean energy and we are going to invest

in our kids' college educations, we're going to invest in math and science education because we know that innovation is going to be the key to the 21st century? And we're going to invest in our infrastructure because we want to make this a great country to do businesses and we understand that means moving goods and services and people and information efficiently around the country?

Or do we have a shrunken image of America that says we can't afford to do those things anymore, that America just doesn't do big things anymore? That's the vision that is reflected in the budget that's already been voted on by the House Republicans, one that says we can't afford to do big things anymore. I fundamentally disagree with that vision. That's not what built California. That's not what built Silicon Valley. That's not what made us the greatest country on Earth.

So this debate is going to be fierce. It is going to be serious. But it can't just take place in Washington. It's going to have to be animated by conversations that you have with your friends and your neighbors and your coworkers. And you're going to have to be speaking out and pulling together networks, and it's going to be a conversation that's taking place at the State and local levels just as much as it is at the national level. It already is.

Here's the thing. For all the challenges that we've experienced over the last 2½ years, for all the issues, international and domestic, that we've dealt with, despite the occasional set-

back and the frustrations, what we've already gotten accomplished in 2½ years gives me confidence about what we can accomplish in the next six.

We have gone through tougher times before, both as a country, but also as a movement. And each time, because we've come together, we've been able to achieve what a lot of folks thought was impossible. People really didn't think we were going to get health care passed, but Nancy helped prove them wrong.

We didn't think—a lot of people didn't think that we were going to get "don't ask, don't tell" repealed until we got it repealed.

A lot of folks didn't think that we could elect a guy named Barack Obama to the Presidency until we got Barack Obama elected to the Presidency. You have proved time and again that when people of good will come together, there's nothing that's impossible.

And so I just ask all of you to make sure that your participation in this process over the next 18 months isn't restricted to writing a check, but rather, continues to embody the same kinds of imagination and can-do spirit and, I think most importantly, that sense of community that was so central to us being successful in 2008.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. And thank you again for the song.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:28 a.m. at the St. Regis Hotel. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Reno, Nevada *April 21, 2011*

*The President.* Thank you. Hello, Reno! Thank you. Thank you so much. Please, everybody have a seat.

It is great to be back here in Reno, great to be back in Nevada. I am thrilled that all of you are here. We've got some special, special people that I want to acknowledge. First of all, I want to thank ElectraTherm for hosting us, and John Fox, the CEO of ElectraTherm, is

here; Stephen Olson, the president and CFO of ElectraTherm. Thank you very much. They just had a chance to meet me backstage, and they were describing all the great work that they are doing. I am told the contraption behind me here is known as the Green Machine, produces renewable energy from low-temperature heat waste. And John and Stephen were explaining to me how it works, and I was nod-