

space, when I know they're incredibly busy. I was just hearing about "Spider-Man 4"—[*laughter*—so I'm all psyched up about that.

Audience member. Will you play a part?

The President. Seriously, I was—[*laughter*—I'm very big on Spider-Man. I also want to acknowledge a wonderful public servant, one of the finest mayors in the country, Antonio Villaraigosa is here.

We set this up so that I am just going to go from table to table. And you guys can poke me and prod me—[*laughter*—you know, lift the hood and kick the tires and give me what I'm sure will be wonderful advice. [*Laughter*] Looking around this room, this is not a shy group. [*Laughter*]

But what I want to say before I visit with all of you is how grateful I am. You know, many of you were involved in the 2008 campaign, and let's face it, it was not likely that I was going to end up in the Oval Office. It was possible, but not likely. And so many of you took this incredible leap of faith, in part because the campaign wasn't just about me. It was about how we could move the country in a new direction and how could we recapture that sense of community that, I think, had frayed for too long, and it prevented us from dealing with so many challenges that we face.

As John said, we've made incredible progress over the last 2½ years, but we've got so much more work to do. There are still a lot of folks hurting out there. We've got to put people back to work. We've got to grow the economy. We've got to reduce the deficit. We've got to pass immigration reform. We've got to have an energy plan that works for all Americans.

And that's before I start talking about international affairs. [*Laughter*]

So my inbox keeps on filling up, but I welcome the challenge because I know that I have all of you behind me. I just want to remind you, as we're going around to the tables, that this is going to be just as hard, if not harder, than 2008. And I'm going to need all of you just as engaged, just as motivated, and taking as much ownership over the campaign as you did then.

That's part of what made 2008 special, was you owned it. It wasn't just top down. That's part of the reason why our campaign office is going to be in Chicago, first time in modern history that a President hasn't had his campaign office run out of Washington. Because I never want to lose touch. I never want to lose that sense that what this is about is not simply maintaining a status quo, but it's about how do we bring about the changes that are going to make a difference in people's lives.

So thank you, all of you, for being here. Thanks in advance for the extraordinary work that you're going to do over the next 18 months to make sure that we can finish the job that we started. And with that, let me join you all at the tables. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:39 p.m. in the Commissary restaurant at Sony Pictures Studios. In his remarks, he referred to John B. Emerson and Kenneth A. Solomon, cochairs, Southern California Finance Committee, Democratic National Committee; and Michael M. Lynton, chairman and chief executive officer, and Amy B. Pascal, cochairman, Sony Pictures Entertainment. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Culver City April 21, 2011

The President. Hello, L.A.! Hello, Los Angeles! It is good to be back in L.A.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Love you back. It's an honor to be here at Sony Studios stage 30. For those of you who thought you were being brought in

here as extras for the new Spider-Man movie—[*laughter*—you're at the wrong soundstage. [*Laughter*] I hope you'll stick around anyway.

We have some wonderful folks here, and I am so grateful for everybody and what they did

to participate in this wonderful event. But I just want to acknowledge a few folks. We've got a great congressional delegation coming out. Congressman Brad Sherman is here. Congresswoman Laura Richardson is here. Congresswoman Karen Bass is here. Controller John Chiang is here. All the elected officials, the community leaders, there are too many to mention, but I am grateful for all of you.

Now, I'm assuming that Jamie Foxx didn't say anything too crazy while he was out here, because if he did, I'll talk to him when I get backstage.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Well, actually, technically it's about five and a half. That's our goal.

Now, it is nice to be out of DC. The weather in DC is okay, but the conversation that you hear in Washington is very different from the conversation that you hear around kitchen tables and around water coolers. And that's why we recently decided that our reelection campaign will be the first one in modern history to be based outside of Washington, DC. We're going back to Chicago. I should add, by the way, that the Bulls just won. *[Laughter]* So maybe we'll see you in the finals. I know the Bulls will be there.

But look, here's the reason that we're going to be based outside of Washington. I don't want our campaign to be hearing only from pundits and powerbrokers and lobbyists. I want our campaign to be hearing from the folks who got me into the Oval Office. I want them hearing from you. I want to make sure we are putting the campaign in your hands, the hands of the same organizers, the same volunteers, the same neighborhood folks who proved last time that together, ordinary people can do extraordinary things. That's what this campaign is still about. I'm glad you're in. I hope you're all in.

Now, a few things have changed since the last time around. I'm grayer. *[Laughter]*

Audience members. *[Inaudible]*

The President. I'm all right? All right, I'm going to let Michelle know you said it's okay. *[Laughter]* See, folks here in Hollywood, they

can go gray and they just say, well, that was just for a part and then they rinse. *[Laughter]* I can't do that. But even though some things have changed, all of us can still remember that night in Grant Park, the excitement on the streets, the sense of possibility. And I hope you also remember what I said to you that night. I said our work hadn't ended; we were just beginning. And that—

Audience member. I love you, President Obama.

The President. I love you too, sweetie. *[Laughter]* But what I said was that our climb would be steep. We would have a tough road ahead. I said we might not get there in 1 year; we might not even get there in one term. But I knew in my heart that together we would get there, that we would bring about the change that we had promised—promised, by the way, to each other. Because the campaign wasn't just about me, the campaign was you making commitments to each other about the kind of country that you wanted. You made a commitment to each other about the kind of future that we wanted for our children and our grandchildren.

Now, it turns out, let's face it, the climb was a little steeper than we anticipated. *[Laughter]* I ended up taking office in the middle of the worst recession since the Great Depression. Four million people had lost their jobs before I was sworn in; another 4 million lost their jobs in the first few months before our economic plan had a chance to take effect. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs—millions of people lost their jobs, hundreds of thousands lost their homes.

It was a recession so bad that families all across America are still grappling with it. Some folks in this audience may still be dealing with the aftereffects. So we had to make some tough decisions, and we had to make them very quickly. And they weren't always popular.

But 2½ years later, the economy is growing again. Two and a half years later, we're creating jobs again. Two and a half years later, the financial system works again. Two and a half years later, small businesses are opening their doors again.

Over the last 4 months, we've seen the largest drop in unemployment since 1984. Over the last 13 months, we have created nearly 2 million private sector jobs. Some of the things that weren't popular that folks said wouldn't work have worked. We have a Big Three auto industry in Detroit that is back on its feet, making a profit again. GM announced it's hiring all its workers back.

So we've made progress, but our work is not finished. We're still climbing. We're still climbing because the summit we want to reach is a summit where every child in America has opportunity. The summit we want to reach is where we're looking out for each other if we're disabled or infirm or in our golden years. The summit we want to reach is where America is more competitive than ever before, where our economy is growing and everybody is sharing in the prosperity. That's the summit we want to reach.

And it's going to take more than a couple of years. It's going to take, in fact, more than one term. I am reminded of that almost every night, because every night I get letters from citizens all across the country. And some of these letters are heartbreaking. You read a letter about someone who's sent out 16 résumés and hasn't gotten a response back. Or a child writes you a letter and says: "You know, my mommy and daddy, they're losing their home. Is there something that you can do to help us?"

And sometimes, I'll stay up late just trying to figure out what is it that we haven't tried yet; what is it that we need to do to make sure that we're reaching every single one of those folks who are working so hard, doing the right thing, looking after their families, meeting their responsibilities, and they're still struggling out there. That's the reason that we ran. It wasn't for the title. It wasn't for the trappings of office. It was making sure we were delivering for those families all across America.

And our work is not done. But even though those are the Americans that I'm thinking about when I wake up in the morning and those are the Americans I'm thinking about when I go to bed at night, I want everybody to

understand that we have made progress. Because of you, we have made progress.

That progress shouldn't make us complacent, but it should remind us of what is possible and it should inspire us to try to finish what we started in 2008.

Because of you, we were able to prevent a second Great Depression. Because of you, we know that we've got the chance of making sure that the new jobs, the new industries aren't located somewhere else, but they're located here in California, they're located here in the United States of America.

We've got to be prepared to win the future. Because of you, we've made college more affordable for millions of young people all across America. It used to be that the student loan program run through the Government would give billions of dollars to banks, unwarranted subsidies for acting as middlemen in the student loan program. We said, well, let's end that. Let's give the money directly to students. And as a consequence, millions of more students are able to benefit from a better deal.

We're not done yet, but we've started to reform some of the schools that needed reforming all across America. And because of our Race to the Top program, we're seeing better teachers in our classrooms, and we are seeing more support for our teachers and more resources for our teachers. And we are making sure that we're reaching into the schools that are underperforming here in Los Angeles and all across the country. Because of you, we've been able to accomplish that.

Audience member. We need your leadership.

The President. I'm ready to give it, but I'm going to need yours as well. Because of you, we made the largest investment in clean energy, in renewable energy in our history, investments that are already creating new jobs and new businesses.

But at a time of high gas prices—I know you've noticed it's rough out there. I admit Secret Service doesn't let me fill up the pump anymore. [Laughter] But it hasn't been that long since I did. You think about folks—and certainly here in Los Angeles, everybody understands this experience—if you've got to

drive 50 miles for your job, and you can't afford the new hybrid, so you got that old beater giving you 8 miles a gallon—[laughter]—and your budget is already strained, I mean, that's tough. But let me tell you something, we're already making a difference.

We have increased oil production, but more importantly, we've also said to ourselves, how are we going to find the kinds of alternative energy sources, the new energy sources that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil, but also clean up the planet in the process? That's something we need to invest in.

Because of you, we used to only have 2 percent of the world's advanced battery manufacturing in this country, a whole new industry. These are the batteries that go into these new electric cars. In 5 years, we're going to have 40 percent of that market. That's because of you, because you were able to get us in a position to make those decisions.

Because of you, we've increased fuel efficiency standards on cars that will save 1.8 billion barrels of oil. But we've got to do more. And to help pay for it, I don't know about you, but I think it's time we eliminated the \$4 billion in taxpayer subsidies that we're giving to oil companies.

Now, they are making—keep in mind that the top five oil companies over the last 5 years, their lowest profits were 75 billion; their highest profits were 125 billion. That's money coming directly from your pocket into theirs.

Audience member. And we feel it.

The President. And you feel it. Now, companies make big investments. They're allowed to make a profit. But let me tell you, for them to get a \$4 billion tax break at a time when they're making record profits and you're struggling to fill up your tank does not make sense. It has to stop. Let's stop subsidizing the energy sources of yesterday, and let's invest in the energy sources of tomorrow. That's what we're going to do because of you.

Because of you, we've put hundreds of thousands of folks back to work rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our infrastructure. Now we've got to make sure America is not just rebuilding and repairing the old infrastructure.

We've got to be building the new infrastructure: the high-speed rail, the high-speed Internet, the smart grid that could help electricity move around in more efficient ways. That's part of what America has always been about.

We've had—I mean, I hate to be parochial here, but we've had the best stuff. [Laughter] But you know what, in some areas we don't. South Korea now has faster high-speed Internet than we do. You go to Beijing airport or Singapore airport—I mean, LAX—[laughter]—I'm just saying. It does not have to be that way. We can put Americans to work right now doing the work that needs to be done, but I'm going to need your help doing it, because our job is not yet finished.

Because of you, we did what folks have talked about for a hundred years. We said health care should no longer be a privilege in this country; it should be affordable and available to every single American. We said in America you shouldn't go broke just because you got sick. But we've got more work to do. We're implementing it now, and many of you are already benefiting from the changes we made, but there are some folks who want to dismantle it. We're going to have to protect it.

Because of you, we passed Wall Street reform to make sure that we don't have the same kinds of bailouts that we had before and to make sure that consumers are protected and not cheated when you take out a mortgage or a credit card. But there are some folks who want to roll that back; we've got to protect it.

Because of you, we passed a law that says women should get an equal day's pay for an equal day's work. Because of you, we overturned "don't ask, don't tell" so everybody could serve their country. Because of you, we got two more women on the Supreme Court, one of them the first Latina. And because of you, we removed a hundred thousand troops from Iraq and we have ended combat missions there just like I promised. That happened because of you.

But now we've got to protect the changes that we've made. We've got to—we've got some more changes we've got to make. We've still got to pass comprehensive immigration

reform so that we are a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. We've still got to have a more comprehensive energy policy. We've got to keep moving forward. We have to keep working for the America that we believe in, the America we want to leave to our children.

And that is the debate that we're having in Washington right now. That's what this budget debate is all about. You hear people talking about debt and deficits and spending and budgets. And yes, this is about numbers, but this debate is really about the kind of future that we want. It's about what kind of country we believe in. I believe in a country where the Government lives within its means. We've got to cut spending in Washington. We've got to cut domestic spending. We've got to cut defense spending. We've got to cut health care inflation. We've got to cut spending in our Tax Code, because we spend a lot through our Tax Code with loopholes and tricks. We've got to eliminate every dime of waste. And if we want to take responsibility for the debt that we owe, then we're going to have to make some tough decisions.

We've got to decide what we can do without to make sure we maintain those things that we care deeply about. And that requires shared sacrifice.

But let me tell you what I won't do. I will not reduce our deficit by sacrificing the things that have always made America great, the things that have made Americans prosper. I will not sacrifice our investment in education. I won't sacrifice scholarships for our students or medical research for our scientists. I won't sacrifice the safety of our highways or our airports. I will not sacrifice our investment in clean energy at a time when our dependence on foreign oil is causing Americans so much pain at the pump. I won't sacrifice clean air and clean water. I will not sacrifice America's future.

We need shared sacrifice, and that means, as part of our overall approach, ending tax cuts for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans in this country. Let me tell you something. This is important. You know, look, a lot of folks right now, somehow they've gotten the idea that we've raised taxes. I have lowered everybody's

taxes since I came into office. That's part of what the Recovery Act was all about; 30 percent of it were tax cuts. Folks might not have noticed it. *[Laughter]* It got spread out over all your paychecks. But those were tax cuts. And then this December we cut some taxes. Your payroll tax got cut because we wanted to make sure that we kept on going with the recovery.

So nobody here is just loving taxes. I just paid my taxes. *[Laughter]* And it was a pretty big tax bill. *[Laughter]* But I want everybody to understand it's not that I want to punish success. I want everybody here to be rich.

[At this point, there was a disruption in the audience.]

I think somebody may have fainted here. This happens. They'll be fine. Give them some room. If we can get some medics in the front. Probably what they need is just a little bit of air, maybe a little bit of juice. They'll be okay. We'll get the medics up here in a second.

But in the meantime, look, I want all of you to be rich. Now, I don't mean just going out and buying lottery tickets. *[Laughter]* I want your small business to be successful. I want you to succeed in your careers. I want everybody to be successful. We don't want to punish success. But what we do want is a society where if we're going to ask everybody to sacrifice a little bit, we don't just tell millionaires and billionaires, oh, you don't have to do anything; you go ahead and just relax, count your money. *[Laughter]*

Look, I don't want a \$200,000 tax cut for me that's paid for by asking 33 seniors each to pay more than \$6,000 in extra Medicare costs. I don't want my tax cut paid for by cutting children from Head Start or doing away with health insurance for millions of people on Medicaid, for seniors in nursing homes or poor children or families that have a disabled child. I don't want to make that tradeoff.

And that's not a tradeoff that I think most Americans want to see, no matter what party you belong to, because that's not who we are as a country. We're better than that.

The America we know is great not just because of the height of our skyscrapers, not just

because of the size of our GDP. It comes because we've been able to keep two ideas together at the same time. The first is, is that we're all individuals endowed with certain inalienable rights and freedoms. We are self-reliant. We don't expect others to do for us what we can do for ourselves, and we don't like other people telling us what to do. That's part of what it's like to be an American.

But the second idea is that we're all in this together, that we look out for one another, that I am my brother's keeper, that I am my sister's keeper, that I want that child born in a tough neighborhood to have the same opportunities that I had so that someday they may be standing here instead of me.

And so, given the blessings that I've received, I want to look out for them, not out of charity, but it's because my life benefits from knowing when I'm driving down the street, look at that school that's well funded and those kids that are learning. And I see an elderly couple strolling down the street, and I say to myself, look at those folks, they're secure and they're comfortable in their retirement. And I see that person in a wheelchair going to work because somebody gave them opportunity, and I say, that's how we make sure that everybody can use their talents.

That makes my life better. That makes my life richer, knowing that everybody has a measure of dignity and respect and a shot at the American Dream. I don't do that for somebody else. I do it because it improves my life and it's going to improve Malia's life and Sasha's life.

That's our vision for America. It's not a vision of a small America; it's a vision of a big America—we do big things—a vision of a compassionate America and a caring America, an ambitious America. When I look at some of the debate in Washington and what some folks are saying, I say, they have a pessimistic view of who we are. Their basic attitude is we can't afford to look out for kids in poor neighborhoods. We can't afford to invest in our infrastructure. Yes, we're going to be driving around potholes and our airports are going to be mangy and—[laughter]—there's nothing we can do about it. We can't afford to make

sure all of our seniors have the health care that they need.

That's not my vision for America; that's not your vision for America. My vision is for one where we're living within our means, but we're still investing in our future, and everybody is making sacrifices and nobody bears all the burden, and we live up to the idea that no matter what you look like or where you come from, whether you landed here—your ancestors landed here on Ellis Island or they came here on a slave ship or they just came over the Rio Grande, that we are all connected to one another and we all rise and fall together.

Los Angeles, that's the idea at the heart of America. That's the idea at the heart of our last campaign. That's the idea at the heart of this campaign. And that's why I'm going to need your help now more than ever. This campaign is in its early stages, but now is the time you can step up and help shape it and make sure we're out of the gate strong. And I know there are times where some of you have felt frustrated because we haven't gotten everything we wanted to get done right away. I know who you all are. [Laughter] I know the conversations you've been having: "Oh, I don't know. I don't like that compromise with the Republicans. I don't know. That health care thing, why did it take so long? I don't know. Obama, he's older now." [Laughter] "He used to look so fresh and exciting and—I still got that poster, but I don't know."

Look, there are times where I've been frustrated, just like you have been. But we knew this wasn't going to be easy. What also amuses me is when I hear people say: "Oh, well, the campaign was so smooth. Why is governing so tough?" [Laughter] And I try to remind them, "What campaign were you on?" [Laughter] What campaign were you on? It felt awful hard to me. [Laughter] I thought we made all kinds of mistakes.

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 times where we stumbled and we had to get up and dust ourselves off and then keep going. Because we knew that at each and every juncture in our

history—when the future was on the line, when we were at the crossroads like we are right now—the country somehow came together. The country somehow found a way to make ourselves more prosperous and deal with the transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy and then to an information economy.

And we figured out how to absorb new immigrants and finally deal with the stain of slavery, make sure that women were full participants in our democracy.

At every juncture, we've been able to make the changes that we needed. So when you hear people say our problems are too big or we can't bring about the changes we seek, I want you to

think about all the progress we've already made, and I want you to think about all the unfinished business that lies ahead. I want you to be excited about the next 18 months and then the next 4 years after that. And I want you to remind everybody else those simple words that summed up our campaign in 2008 and still sum up our spirit: Yes, we can.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:18 p.m. on Soundstage 30 at Sony Pictures Studios. In his remarks, he referred to actor Jamie Foxx. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 22.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Los Angeles, California

April 21, 2011

Thank you, Jeffrey. Technically, it's actually 5½ more years. *[Laughter]* Everybody, have a seat. Everybody, have a seat.

I'm going to be very brief. First of all, I just want to thank Jeffrey and Marilyn and all of you who were involved in helping put this together. Jeffrey has been an extraordinary friend from the start, and a lot of you got involved at a time when the prospect of electing a Barack Hussein Obama to the Oval Office was slim. None of you asked for my birth certificate. *[Laughter]* It was a complete leap of faith. *[Laughter]*

And so I don't want to spend a lot of time giving a speech. I want to just spend time with all of you at these tables.

A couple of people I just want to mention who are here. The Governor of the great State of California, Jerry Brown, is in the house. And our Ambassador to the Bahamas, Nicole Avant, is in the house. It's a nice gig, isn't it? *[Laughter]*

Anyway, as Jeffrey said, when we started this journey, and we actually started probably about 4 years ago, I think we understood that the country was at a crossroads and we were going to have to make some fundamental decisions so that we could make sure our kids, our grand-

kids, the next generation inherited the same kind of big-spirited America that we had inherited from our parents and our grandparents.

We didn't even know how steep the climb was going to be to get to where we needed to go, but we understood it was not going to be easy. The campaign wasn't easy. There's a lot of revisionist history going on now that, boy, his campaign was so smooth. It didn't feel that way at the time. *[Laughter]* I mean, it was hard. But we kept at it because we understood that a country that is generous and compassionate, that is looking after our children and making sure they've got a shot at the American Dream, that is making sure our seniors have dignity and security in their old age, that looks after families who've got a disabled child, that is investing in our infrastructure so that we can move products and services and people and information around rapidly, that is a benevolent influence around the world and is respected around the world—we understood that getting to where we needed to go wasn't going to be easy. And it hasn't been.

But we have made extraordinary progress over the last 2½ years. We've pulled this economy out of a recession. We've stabilized the fi-