

And along the way we've made sure that you can serve in our military regardless of who you love and made sure that we had two strong women on the Supreme Court, because you can never have enough women on the Supreme Court.

So I'm extraordinarily proud of what we've accomplished. But we've got more work to do. Even on the things that we've already accomplished—like financial regulatory reform, to make sure that we don't have the kind of financial meltdown that we almost experienced in 2008—we've got to implement that law.

On health care, we achieved what had eluded this country for a hundred years: putting in place a structure so that nobody will go bankrupt when they get sick, everybody has access to affordable health care. But we've got to make sure that it gets implemented and that we follow through.

And so when I spoke at Grant Park back in what seems a long time ago—[laughter]—I had no gray hair back then—[laughter]—I told everybody that wasn't the end, that was the be-

ginning. We're just a quarter of the way through, and we've got to make sure that we finish our task.

We've got to make sure that when we talk to our kids and when we talk to our grandkids, we can say, you know what, we ran the race, we finished the job. And we won't have solved every problem in this country and we can rest assured that that next generation will have challenges that we can't even imagine yet, but we will be able to say to them with conviction that we are passing on to them an America that is stronger and more vibrant, that is as compassionate and generous, and can still do big things, the kind of America that all of us imagine.

And that's worth working for. That's worth fighting for. And I'm ready to fight alongside with you. All right? Thank you very much, everybody. Good. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:59 p.m. at the St. Regis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Alisha Kiner, principal, Booker T. Washington High School in Memphis, TN.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser May 16, 2011

Hello, everybody! Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

Well, it is good to see all of you here tonight. What an incredible honor to be introduced by Ernie Green. Please give Ernie Green a big round of applause. I would not be standing here today were it not for people like Ernie Green.

And how about my new DNC chair, Debbie Wasserman Schultz. She is tireless—tireless. And she's got the most adorable kids, and I don't know how she keeps up with everything. But as Michelle said, "If you want something done, put a woman in charge." So—[applause]—all right, everybody got—women, you got a little too excited on that. [Laughter]

You know, I've been thinking a lot lately about this campaign gearing back up, and obviously, it evokes memories of 2008. And I think back to that night in Grant Park when all the work, all the traveling through Iowa, all the

stops by diners and in folks' living rooms and in barns in some cases—[laughter]—had all culminated in this incredible moment, a moment that was less about me than it was about the American people and the commitment that we made to each other, that we wanted a country that was true to its founding ideals, but had adapted to a new century, an America that was big in spirit and bold in vision.

And I said on that night that this wasn't the end, but rather, it was the beginning. Because what we understood even then was that our country had reached a crossroads. That we had a series of decisions that were going to help determine the future not just of our children, but our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. That we were living in an age in which the world had shrunk; it had become more interconnected than ever before. And that if we did not make some critical decisions now, if we stopped just kicking the can down the road,

but we decided that we were actually going to seize the moment and transform our education system and finally fix our health care system and deal with our energy policy so that we were no longer subject to the whims of the spot oil market, and if we didn't transform our foreign policy to recognize the visions and dreams of billions of people around the world who were yearning to be free—if we didn't make some fundamental changes, that we might be the first generation that was passing on an America that was less hopeful, that was less generous, and that all those people who felt the American Dream slipping out of their fingers, that somehow that loss of hope would continue.

And I said at the time, this is going to be an uphill climb. Now, I didn't know how uphill it was going to be. *[Laughter]* None of us did. It turned out that on that night we had already lost millions of jobs because of the financial meltdown and the recession. And it wasn't until a few months after my Inauguration that we realized we would ultimately lose 8 million jobs before any of our economic plans had a chance to take effect, the worst recession since the Great Depression. And there are families all across the country that are still suffering from the aftershocks of that.

And so we had to immediately start acting. And in some cases, the actions we took weren't always popular. But we knew that it was vital for us to act boldly and swiftly to address the crisis.

And let's take a look at what we were able to accomplish. An economy that was shrinking by about 6 percent has now grown for five consecutive quarters. An economy that was shedding jobs every month now has seen over 2 million jobs created just in the last 14. An auto industry that some had written off now are making profits again and have hired back all their workers. The financial system stabilized. We got the economy moving in the right direction.

And along the way, we did a few other things. *[Laughter]* Along the way, we did a few other things. We decided that we didn't want equal pay for equal work to be just an empty slogan, so we strengthened laws to make sure

that our daughters are treated as well as our sons.

We decided that in a nation as wealthy as ours, it was unacceptable for people to go bankrupt just because they got sick. And so after 100 years, we finally delivered on the promise of making sure that we had affordable, accessible health care in this country for all people.

We made record investments in clean energy, record investments in basic research, and restored science to its rightful place.

We made the largest Federal investment in education in our history, but we didn't just put more money in. We decided we were finally going to deliver on reform and help catalyze reforms in 40 States all across the country to make sure that schools are doing right by every single student, K through 12. And we also made sure that young people are able to afford to go to college, so we took away billions of dollars of subsidies that were going to banks and put those in the student loan system so that millions more young people were able to go to college without taking on tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of debt.

We appointed a couple more women on the Supreme Court, including the first Latina. We ended the law that said that you could not serve your country because of who you loved. We made the biggest infrastructure investment in this country since Dwight Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System.

Internationally, we brought 100,000 troops back from Iraq and are ending combat operations. We regained momentum in Afghanistan and are now in the process of transition, where we can bring our troops home. We have gone after Al Qaida relentlessly and made America safer in the process.

And we've restored around the world a sense of America as a responsible actor that will uphold the principles of human rights and liberty and democracy.

And in between, we've dealt with pirates and—*[laughter]*—do you remember? Remember pirates—*[laughter]*—H1N1 and an oil spill and locusts? *[Laughter]* So we've been pretty busy.

And I couldn't be prouder of our record over the last 2 years. Promises were made during the campaign, and so many promises have been kept.

And yet, all across America, folks are still struggling. We've been able to avert the worst possible crises, but a lot of those challenges that we confronted in 2008, those challenges are still out there. Wages and incomes have flatlined for the middle class all across America. The rates of poverty in too many communities are way too high. In too many schools, too many of our children still drop out without hope, without vision for the future.

We still don't have an energy policy in this country that is equal to our potential and our greatness. And we're still vulnerable to high gas prices that are just killing families all across America right now.

We still haven't reformed our broken immigration system. So we have too many people living in the shadows, being exploited by workers, driving down the wages of workers as a consequence, because those employers aren't subject to the rules. And families are being broken up in the process.

We still haven't fully transformed our economy so that we're competitive the way we need to be and are creating jobs at the pace we need and growth at the rate that we need.

And so we still got so much work to do. The challenges we confronted were not the work of 1 year or 2 years or even one term. And that's why I'm going to need you. That's why, in some ways, this campaign may be even more important and more challenging than 2012. We have to finish what we started. We have to finish what we started, in 2012 and beyond, and that's why I'm going to need you, all in.

Part of what made our campaign special was you, going out knocking on doors and organizing, some of you traveling to other States in the middle of winter, occasionally getting doors slammed in your faces. *[Laughter]* "Obama who?" But that energy, that inspiration that you gave me, the commitments you made to each other about the kind of country you wanted to live in, that spirit we need now more than ever.

And that's part of the reason why we decided not to have our campaign here in Washington, DC, but to have it based again in Chicago. Because I don't want a campaign that suddenly is all about the insiders, suddenly is all about the pundits and the lobbyists. And I wanted to make sure that we had a campaign that was rooted and grounded in what folks are talking about around the kitchen table and around the water coolers all across America. And that's why it's going to be so important that you are as engaged, as involved, as motivated, as you were 2½, 3 years ago. Because what's at stake right now is not any particular policy; it has to do with a broader vision of where we want to take our country.

We—I gave a budget address a while back, and a lot of people reported on the numbers and the debt and the deficit and why this is so important. And let me tell you, we as Democrats, we as progressives, need to be just as concerned about the debt as anybody else. Because that's how we will be able to move our vision forward—investing in education, investing in infrastructure, investing in clean energy—if we've got a government that lives within its means. So we've got to be concerned about that.

But this broader budget debate that is now carrying over and will probably continue all the way until November of next year, it's also about what our vision of the country is. Are we a country that's going to continue to be able to do big things? Are we going to continue to make a commitment that every child, regardless of race or station or region, can achieve their dreams because they've got a school system that's delivering for them? Are we going to continue to be a nation that has the best infrastructure, moving products and services and people and information from place to place, because we've invested not just in roads and bridges and ports and airports, but in broadband lines and smart grids? Are we investing in the future the way previous generations invested in us?

Are we going to continue to make sure that here in the United States of America we're discovering the new great sources of energy that

will help us save the planet, even as we're strengthening our economy and are putting our people back to work? Are we still dreaming big dreams in America? And are we going to continue to be a country that makes sure that our senior citizens can retire with dignity and respect and that Medicare is going to be there for them and Social Security is going to be there for them?

And as we grapple through these problems, are we going to make sure that the burden is shared by everybody? We're going to have to make tough choices. But are we going to make sure that folks like me, who have been so blessed by this country, that we're doing our part?

The other side right now, their only agenda is to provide tax cuts to folks like me. And you know what, we all like tax cuts, but—[laughter]—no, I mean, I've never met somebody who said, "No, no, no." [Laughter] But you know what, I don't want \$200,000 in my pocket if I know that that means that 33 seniors are going to have to pay an extra \$6,000 for their Medicare services. That's not something I want. I don't want special favors for me if it means that a whole bunch of kids are being cut out of Head Start.

See—and the reason I don't want it is not just out of a sense of charity. It's because my life is better when, as I'm driving down the street and I pass by a school, I know, you know what, that school is doing a great job for those kids. And if I pass by a senior couple holding hands and I think to myself, you know what, that might be me and Michelle some day. [Laughter] And I like the fact that I live in a country where they've got some security in their golden years.

I—that makes my life better. That's the kind of America that I want Malia and Sasha to inherit. That's the kind of America I want all of your children and grandchildren inheriting. That's what this debate is about. That's what this campaign is about. That's what this election is about.

So let me just close by saying this. There have been times over the last 2½ years where I know you all have gotten frustrated sometimes. [Laughter] I know all these conversations you're having. [Laughter] "Oh, why did Obama compromise with the Republicans on that?" [Laughter] "Why did health care take so long?" "Where's my public option?" [Laughter] You know?

And I know that even though everybody is saying nice things, people are saying—[laughter]—I know people are also saying, you know, he's looking old. [Laughter] You know, he seemed so fresh and young back in 2008. Now, look, he's all gray and—[laughter].

You know, we've gone through some setbacks. In some cases, we haven't gotten everything we wanted done as quickly as we wanted it done. You know, I'm a little dinged up here and there. [Laughter]

But I tell you what, though. The vision that brought us together in 2008, that's undiminished in me. The confidence I have in the American people, in their decency, that's undiminished. My faith that we can make tough choices on behalf of future generations, that's undiminished. My belief in you has not lessened.

So when you think back to these last 2½ years, I want you to do so not with complacency, not with full satisfaction, but I want it to motivate you. Don't let people tell you that we can't bring about change. We have already brought about change. And we have more work to do.

And if you are with me, if you're all in, if you're willing to knock on doors and call your friends and call your neighbors and keep at it, even when the journey is tough, I have no doubt that we will get to where we set out to go 3½ years ago, and we will deliver the kind of America that we want to our children.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:21 p.m. at the Capital Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Ernest G. Green, board member, Albert Shanker Institute.