

Statement on Washington Governor Christine O. Gregoire's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

June 13, 2011

I applaud Governor Gregoire for her decades of outstanding service to the people of Washington. From Seattle to Pullman, Gov. Gregoire has demonstrated relentless determination in her efforts to foster economic growth, strengthen the communities she serves, and improve the lives of millions of Americans. As a fierce advocate for American businesses, she continues to work tirelessly to promote American goods,

open up new markets, and strengthen American businesses abroad. As chairwoman of the National Governors Association, Gov. Gregoire not only fosters strong bipartisanship among her colleagues, she helps build commonsense solutions to some of our Nation's toughest problems. Michelle and I, along with the people of Washington, will miss her outstanding leadership and thank her for her years of service.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Miami Beach, Florida

June 13, 2011

Thank you, everybody. It is wonderful to see you. Steve, to you and Dorothea, thank you for the incredibly gracious introduction and for opening up this extraordinary home. We really appreciate it.

To everybody who is here, all the cohosts who helped make this event happen, thank you. To Debbie Wasserman Schultz, thank you for letting me in your district. We love Debbie. She—if you're in the foxhole, you want Debbie alongside you, because not only is she charming and has that dazzling smile, but she's tough as nails. And that's what's needed during challenging times.

You know, when I was taking photographs, Steve mentioned—he said, "This must be really the toughest time to be President that I can recall." And Steve has known some Presidents. And what I told him was that there's no doubt that the country has gone through an extraordinary trauma. And there are a lot of folks here who remember my first campaign, that were big supporters during the first campaign. And we talked about the challenges that America had been going through for the previous decade: that job growth had been slow, that inequality was on the rise, that our school system had declined, that we didn't have an energy strategy that was appropriate for the 21st century.

All those challenges were worsened as a consequence of the financial crisis. And so people who were already struggling—middle class families who were already treading water and trying to figure out how to get by when their income and wages had flatlined, even though costs of everything from health care to college tuition to groceries and gas had gone up—they really took it even worse in the chin over the last couple of years.

And my job over these first 2 years has frankly been to clean up a big mess. And so working with Debbie, we were able to make sure that we yanked an economy out of what could have been a second Great Depression, that we stabilized the financial system. We made sure that we ended one war and started putting another war on the path where we could start bringing our troops home. We had to restore a sense around the world of what American values and ideals were all about. We had to make sure that we put in place sensible regulations in the financial system to ensure that another financial meltdown would not happen again. We had to address an auto industry that was on the verge of liquidation. We had to get the economy growing again, and we had to get jobs created again.

And I could not be prouder of the track record that we've put together under these trying

times. Over the last 15 months, we've created over 2 million jobs. The auto industry is now profitable for the first time in a decade and is actually hiring folks and producing cars that not just folks here in America, but all around the world want to buy. And they've paid back most of the money that they got from taxpayers because we had faith in the workers and the people who are producing cars there.

The financial system is now running again, although not as fast as we'd like, and the banks have paid back the money that we put in place because of the strong stewardship that we showed.

Along the way, we got a few other things done, like making sure that you could serve in our military no matter who you love. We made sure that young people could afford to go to college without amassing hundreds of thousands' worth of debt, because we made sure that subsidies that were going to the banks were now going directly to college students.

We appointed the first Latina to the Supreme Court, and we made sure that people get paid an equal day's pay for an equal day's work.

And so even in the midst of struggles, even in the midst of challenges, we were able to move that proactive agenda forward. But here's my main message to you today: We've still got a lot more work to do. We still have a lot more work to do.

We may have made the largest investment in green energy technology in our history, but we still don't have the kind of energy policy that would befit the greatest nation on Earth. We're still too dependent on foreign oil. We're seeing right now the effects of a spot oil market because we haven't thought through how we start freeing ourselves from dependence on foreign oil. And by the way, in the process, we have ended up financing folks who aren't particularly on our side on a whole range of issues. And so we've got to change course. That's work that remains to be done.

We still don't have a smart immigration policy in this country. It still doesn't make sense to think that we attract young people from all around the world to come here, study, get

Ph.D.'s in engineering and math and science, and then we tell them, "Go home," instead of having them stay here and start businesses and create economic growth here in America; and allow people to live in the shadows, separating families, when we know that one of our strengths has been both a nation of—to be a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. We've got more work to do.

I could not be prouder of the work that we've done on health care, making sure that every American in this country can find affordable, accessible health care, which, by the way, will also end up saving us money, because if we've got a more efficient health care system, if we've got a smarter health care system that invests in things like preventive diseases, then we save all the money we're spending in the emergency room. And by the way, we give people some security and peace of mind.

But even though we passed the law, we've still got to implement it. And that's going to require us doing the hard work not just this year, not just next year, but over the next 5 years to make sure that that system is in place and we can start bending the cost curve on health care and save taxpayers money along the way.

We've still got to make sure that around the world, the progress that we've made over the last 2 years is not lost. And we've got to make sure that in certain areas that I know are of huge interest to the people of South Florida, that America is representing our best values and our best ideals.

In the Middle East, we will have to continue to be a stalwart ally of Israel, but we cannot give up on peace in the Middle East, because that's the only way that we can achieve full security.

Our neighbors in Haiti are still going to be depending on us to make sure that in the process of rebuilding, that we don't return to the bad governance that has plagued that country for so long, and that with a new government there, we're actually a partner with them to make sure that all the folks who were devastated by the earthquake are put in a position where they can finally live out their dreams.

Around the world, people are still looking to America for leadership. And we can provide

that leadership, but it starts at home. And so the most important thing we can do is make sure that we are doing the things that are necessary to grow this economy. I was just in—up in North Carolina meeting with my jobs council and some of the CEOs of some of the top businesses in the country. Intel and GE were there. And to a person, everybody said we have what it takes for America to grow and to prosper. What's preventing us right now is a lack of political will that can only be provided, I believe, by a strong Democratic Party and a Democrat in the White House. I believe that.

And the reason I believe it is because the last time we had a balanced budget, who was President? It was a Democratic President. The last time we had the kind of growth that lifted all boats, who was it? It was a Democratic President. And so for us to make the tough decisions that are required to start pulling down our deficit, getting a handle on our debt, but doing so in a way that continues to make investments in those things that have made America the land of opportunity—that's what this next election is going to be about. This is going to be a values debate. It's not just dry numbers, it's not just budgets. It's about who we are as a people, and do we still have a big, optimistic, bold, hopeful, compassionate, generous spirit, and is that reflected in how our Government operates.

I want an America where every young person who is willing to work hard knows that they can still make it, and that they're going to schools that teach them the skills they need to be the best workers in the world. And we're not there yet.

And I want an America where we've got the best infrastructure in the world, where we're not having to fly to Singapore—excuse me, Ambassador—or other places to see an airport that actually works or go to China to see high-speed rail. I want us to know that we can still do big things here in America.

I want an America in which we are still looking out for our seniors. And yes, we've got to make changes so that Medicare and Social Security are there for future generations. But we're not going to do it by privatizing it. We're

not going to have to do it by voucherizing it. We're not going to do it by shifting costs onto folks who are the most vulnerable. We've got to do it in a way that shares the burdens for all people, because we all benefit from this extraordinary country. And obviously, no one has benefited more from the opportunities of this country than I have.

So when I see these young people who are sitting here, my question is: What kind of country are we going to be living—leaving them? Are we doing right by them? And I'm confident that we are in a position to do right by them, but we're going to have to work hard.

This process that began in 2008 is not done. When I stood there in Grant Park on that gorgeous night in November, I said to people, this is not the end, this is the beginning, and we have a steep hill to climb. I didn't know exactly how steep it was going to be. *[Laughter]* But I said we had a steep hill to climb. And we're just part of the way up that hill. We're going to have a lot more work to do.

And so for those of you who were involved in the campaign back in 2008 and you thought, boy, this is so exciting, and Obama is so fresh, and you had the posters and—*[laughter]*—now you look and you say, “Boy, the guy is—his hair is really gray now and”—*[laughter]*—“he's got a few bags under his eyes, and maybe my friends were all saying to me, ‘Oh, I don't know, we thought the change would come faster and’”—I just want to remind you, big changes don't happen overnight.

This is a democracy that we live in. And that's—that is a wonderful thing, but it's messy and it's diverse, and it means there are going to be contentious arguments. And for those of you who think somehow that this period of time, things are more contentious or polarized than they've ever been, just look back at your history. I mean, we've had some big battles in this country around women's rights and worker's rights and civil rights and the shift from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy and huge issues of war and peace. It's always been contentious. That's part of what being a democracy is all about.

But I have never been more optimistic or more hopeful about what we can accomplish. And when I meet young people around the country, there's a spirit in them, a belief, a faith, a confidence, a can-do spirit that continues to inspire me and I hope inspires you.

So bottom line is this: Just as that night at Grant Park was the beginning, well, this is another beginning. And I want all of you to be just as geared up, just as fired up as you were 2½ years ago, as you were 3 years ago. If you are, I guarantee you, not only are we going to win in 2012, but more importantly, we're going

to deliver the kind of country we want to our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you, everybody. Appreciate you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:23 p.m. at the residence of former U.S. Ambassador to Singapore Steven J. Green and his wife Dorothea. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Deborah Wasserman Schultz, chair, Democratic National Committee; Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia M. Sotomayor; and former President William J. Clinton.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Miami, Florida June 13, 2011

The President. Hello, Florida! Hello, Miami! It's good to see you. It is good to be back in Miami. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Everybody have a seat. Have a seat.

What do you guys think of our new DNC chair? Debbie Wasserman Schultz, we are so thrilled to have her. You want Debbie on your side. She's a mom, she's got that cute smile and all that, but she is tough. Don't mess with Debbie. *[Laughter]* We are so glad of her leadership.

I know that a lot of folks have already been acknowledged. I want to make sure to mention Resident Commissioner Pedro Pierluisi of Puerto Rico. Where is he? Pedro, are you still here? There he is right there.

Adrienne Arsht, thank you so much for everything that you've done for the civic life in Miami. Our Florida finance chair, Kirk Wager, is here. Founding cochair of Gen44, Andrew Korge, is here. Alonzo Mourning is in the house. And look, he's not from Miami, but he's got 11 championships, so I've got to mention Bill Russell is in the house. Bill Russell, greatest champion of all time in team sports in North America right here.

It is wonderful to be back. Many of you I've known for a very long time; some of you I'm getting a chance to see for the first time. And it got me thinking back to election night 2½ years ago in Grant Park. It was a beautiful night in Chicago, and everybody was feeling pretty good who had supported me. And it was an in-

credibly hopeful time. And you will recall—maybe you won't, but I'm going to remind you—*[laughter]*—I said, this is not the end, this is the beginning. This is the beginning.

Because what I said to the American people that night was that for almost a decade too many Americans had felt as if the American Dream was slipping away. We had seen economic growth and corporate profits and a stock market that had gone up, but there were too many folks who were struggling each and every day, working as hard as they could, being responsible for their families, being responsible to their communities, but somehow, they just couldn't keep up. Wages and incomes had flat-lined, even though the cost of everything from health care to college tuitions to gas had all skyrocketed.

Around the world, the impression of America as a preeminent force for good had lost sway. We were in the midst of two wars. We didn't seem to be able to tackle challenges that had confronted us for decades: didn't have an energy plan that was worthy of the greatness of America; didn't have an immigration system that would allow us to be a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants; had a school system in which we had no longer—we were no longer at the top and weren't preparing our young people to meet the challenges and demands of the 21st-century global interdependent economy.