

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Dallas, Texas October 4, 2011

Thank you so much, everybody. Thank you. Everybody please have a seat. Oh, it's good to be back in Texas.

First of all, I just want to say thank you to Emmitt Smith, who, the first time we had a big rally here in Dallas—some of you may remember, it was a big auditorium, and he had just won “Dancing With the Stars”—[*laughter*—and he gets up there, and he starts preaching. And the crowd is roaring, and he is—and I'm thinking, is there something this guy cannot do? [*Laughter*] But he was a great friend then, at a time when the campaign was still very much in doubt. He is a great friend now and obviously one of not only the greatest athletes of all time, but also just a great citizen to Dallas. So give Emmitt Smith a big round of applause. We are grateful to him.

It is great to be here. We made sure to schedule this game before the Rangers game. [*Laughter*] I will try to wrap up before the first pitch. In addition, Emmitt, I want to thank you for sending me Ron Kirk. You guys trained him well, because he is doing a great job on behalf of all the American people, making sure that we've got free trade and fair trade. And he could not be a better negotiator and a better advocate.

I want to acknowledge your outstanding new mayor here in Dallas. Mike Rawlings is here. Give him a big round of applause. I did not say anything about the Cowboys when we landed. [*Laughter*] And I also want to acknowledge Texas Democratic State chair, Boyd Richie is here. So give Boyd a big round of applause.

So I've come here today because I need your help. I've come here today because we have to finish what we started in 2008.

Back then—we began this campaign not because we thought it would be a cakewalk. Ron and I were remembering—reminiscing a little bit about when I was still a Senator, traveling with Ron, and most of the time I was flying Southwest or American. And Ron got this private plane for us to fly down to Houston. And it was about 100 degrees in July, and it turned

out to be a prop plane, and we were bouncing all over the place. [*Laughter*] And Ron was sweating all—as he is prone to do sometimes. [*Laughter*]

We knew that running for President was not going to be easy. You knew it. You knew it wasn't going to be a cakewalk. After all, you supported a candidate named Barack Hussein Obama. [*Laughter*] That requires a leap of faith. You didn't need a poll to know that that might be challenging. [*Laughter*] But we forged ahead because we had an idea about what this country is and what it can be.

Many of you, many of our parents, many of our grandparents, we grew up with a faith in an America where hard work and responsibility paid off, where if you stepped up, you did your job, you were loyal to your company, that loyalty would be rewarded with a decent salary and good benefits, a vacation once in a while, a raise, a secure retirement.

But over the last decade, that faith has been shaken. The rules changed. The deck kept being stacked up against middle class Americans. And the truth is, nobody in Washington seemed to be willing or able to do anything about it.

And so in 2007, all this culminated in a once-in-a-lifetime economic crisis, crisis that's been much worse and much longer than your average recession. This is something we have not seen in our lifetimes before.

And from the moment I took office, we knew that because this crisis had been building for years, it would take years for us to fully recover. And the question is not today whether people are still hurting. Of course, they're still hurting. Every night I get letters and e-mails from families who are struggling. Every time I travel on the road I hear from folks who are worried. And some of the stories are heart-breaking: men and women who have had to close down a small business that's been in a family for generations; folks who are crossing items off their grocery list so that they can fill up their gas tank and get to work; parents who

are postponing their retirement so their children can go to college; and obviously, folks who are looking for work, sending out résumé after résumé for month after month and not getting a response back. And that's scary. And it's hard. And a lot of folks are worn down out there.

So the question is not whether this country is going through tough times. You don't need economists, you don't need pundits, you don't need politicians to tell you that. The question is, where are we going next? What does our future look like? Because we're going to have a choice: We have a choice now; we're going to have a choice next year. We can either go back to the same tired, worn-out ideas that held sway over the last decade, ideas that got us into this mess in the first place, ideas that corporations can write their own rules, wealthy folks, like a lot of us, get to keep all our tax breaks, and everybody else is on their own. That's one philosophy.

Or we can decide to build the America we talked about in 2008. An America where everybody gets a fair shake and everybody does their fair share. An America where we're thinking about how we can get ahead and how we can move forward, but also how the guy next to us or the gal over here can also succeed. Because we have confidence that if all of us are pulling in the same direction, then all of us are going to do better.

That's what this election is about. That's what we've been fighting for in Washington. And it has been a contest of ideas in Washington. Because the other side, even in the midst of this crisis, their primary answer has been no. When we wanted to save the auto industry from bankruptcy, there were a whole lot of Republicans in Congress who fought us tooth and nail, said it was a waste of time, waste of money: "Let them liquidate."

Well, you know what? We did it anyway. And we saved hundreds of thousands of American jobs and the taxpayers paid us back—the taxpayers got their money back. And today, the American auto industry is stronger than it's been in years. Today, they're making fuel-efficient cars stamped with three proud words: Made in

America. Because we didn't say no, we said yes. We can move forward together.

When we wanted to pass Wall Street reform to make sure a crisis like this never happens again, lobbyists and special interests spent millions to make sure we didn't succeed. A whole bunch of Republicans said no, despite the fact that we had just gone through the worst financial crisis in our history, despite the obvious irresponsibility that had led to a near meltdown. You know what? They said no, but we did it anyway. We passed the toughest reform in generations, reform that prevents consumers from getting ripped off by mortgage lenders and credit card companies. And today, there are no more hidden credit card fees, no more unfair rate hikes, no more deceptions from banks.

We decided if we're going to be successful, we've got to make sure we got the best educated workforce in the world. We said, we've got to figure out how young people can get more access to college. Most Republicans said no. But we were able to cut \$60 billion in taxpayer subsidies that were going to the big banks and use those savings to make college more affordable for millions of kids who want to go. Instead of more tax breaks for some of the biggest corporations, we've cut taxes for small businesses and for middle class families.

The first law I signed was a bill to make sure that women got equal pay for equal work because I want our daughters to have the same opportunities as our sons do. We appointed two brilliant women to the Supreme Court. We repealed "don't ask, don't tell" so that we are not preventing people from serving this country because of who they love.

And yes, we passed health care reform because nobody in this country should go broke because they get sick. Millions of working folks in Texas who don't have health insurance are going to have the opportunity to get affordable options because of what we did. And for folks who do have health insurance, your care will be stronger. Insurance companies can't drop your coverage for no good reason. Going forward, they won't be able to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition.

Think about what that means. Think about what that means for a low-wage worker, who right now is worried: “You know what? If my kid gets sick, if my spouse gets sick, I may go bankrupt. I may lose my—everything I’ve worked for.” Now they’ve got some protection. Think about what that means for women: breast cancer, cervical cancer, no longer preexisting conditions that can prevent you from getting insurance. They can’t discriminate you and charge higher rates just because you women are the ones who go through childbirth. They now have to cover things like mammograms and contraceptions as preventive care. No more out-of-pocket costs.

Insurance companies all across the country, they now have to spend 80 percent of your premium on your care, not just on profits and bonuses and advertising. And if they don’t do it, you’ll get a rebate. And while it will take a couple years for this reform to fully take effect, nearly 1 million young adults already have health insurance because of this bill—1 million more young people. That’s already happening right now. The Affordable Care Act is working.

And so when you hear—when folks go around saying, “Oh, Obamacare,” that’s right, I care. I don’t know about you, but I care. This is the right thing to do.

I don’t know how the other side goes around running against helping 30 million people have health insurance who didn’t have it. Why is that a—[laughter]—that’s your main agenda? [Laughter] That’s your plank, is making sure 30 million people don’t have health insurance?

Now, all of these were tough fights in Congress. And there are a lot more that we still have to win. We have a long way to go to make sure that everyone in this country gets a fair shake, that every American has the chance to get ahead. And that’s where I need your help. We’ve still got to have a smarter energy policy in this country, free ourselves from dependence on foreign oil. We still have to have comprehensive immigration reform in this country. We’ve got to make sure that we are protecting our borders, but we’re also providing a means for people to get out of the shadows.

And most importantly, we’ve still got to put America back to work. We’ve got to put America back to work. Three weeks ago, I sent Congress a bill called the “American Jobs Act.” Some of you might have heard of it. [Laughter] Everything in it is the kind of proposal that’s been supported by Democrats and Republicans in the past—everything in it. Everything in it will be paid for, so it won’t add to our deficit, ideas that have traditionally been bipartisan. It will put people back to work. It will put money back in the pockets of working people. And Congress should pass this bill right away.

Emmitt is a small-businessman working construction. We’ve got millions of construction workers who don’t have jobs right now. This bill says, let’s put these men and women to work rebuilding our roads, our bridges, modernizing our schools. I don’t want the newest airports, the fastest railroads being built in China. I want them built right here in the United States of America. I want them built here in Dallas, Texas. I don’t want our kids studying in crumbling schools. I want our kids studying in the best schools.

So there is work to be done. There are workers ready to do it. There are companies lined up, ready to go. Let’s tell Congress, pass this jobs bill right away. Pass this jobs bill, and we can start doing more for the education of our kids. In places like South Korea, they can’t hire teachers fast enough. I had lunch with the President of South Korea; I asked him what’s his biggest challenge. He says: “Man, these parents are so demanding. They want all our kids to be learning English when they’re in first grade, so I’m hiring teachers—I’m importing teachers from overseas, that’s how important this is to us. Because we know if we’re investing in the future, our kids will win the race of the 21st century.”

They know that we are now competing in a global economy. So that’s what South Korea is doing. Here, we’re laying teachers off in droves. It’s unfair to our kids; it undermines our future. But if we pass this jobs bill, thousands of teachers in every State will go back to the classroom where they belong. We need

them teaching our children. Let's put them back to work.

If Congress passes this jobs bill, companies will get tax credits for hiring America's veterans. We ask these men and women to leave their careers, their families, to risk their lives for our country. The last thing they should have to do is fight to get a job when they come home.

And the "American Jobs Act" will cut taxes for almost every worker and every small-business owner in America. It will give an extra tax cut to small businesses that are hiring additional workers or raising their wages. We've got a whole bunch of folks in Congress—a bunch of Republicans—who say, well, we're all about helping America's job creators. Well don't just talk about it, you should actually do something. Pass this jobs bill and give those job creators a break.

Now, some folks in Congress have said they're not going to support it. They can't support a bill unless it's paid for. And I think that is important. We've got a serious challenge in terms of dialing down the debt and deficits that have accumulated, not just because of this recession, but because of two wars and because a prescription drug plan and tax cuts that weren't paid for.

So I recently laid out a plan that says not only can we pay for the jobs act, we can also bring down our debt over time. This plan adds to the \$1 trillion in spending cuts that I signed this summer. So this will make it one of the biggest spending cuts in history, but we do it gradually over a 10-year period, and we say, alongside it, let's put people to work right now.

And what we say is, in addition to spending cuts, if we want to actually close this deficit instead of just playing politics, then we've got to ask the wealthiest Americans, the biggest corporations to pay their fair share. Now, this is a pretty straightforward proposition.

The principle we put forward is very simple: Middle class families shouldn't pay higher tax rates than a billionaire. Warren Buffett's secretary shouldn't be paying a higher tax rate than Warren Buffett. In the United States of America, a nurse or a teacher or a construction work-

er making 50,000 shouldn't pay higher tax rates than somebody pulling in 50 million. That's not fair. It's not right. It's got to change. We've got a chance to change it.

Nobody wants to punish success in America. What's great about our country, what's great about Dallas, what's great about Texas is our belief that anybody can make it if they're working hard, if they're trying hard, the idea that any one of us can open up a business and have a new product, a new service that can make us millions, maybe billions. That's great. This is the land of opportunity. But we have to remember, none of us succeed on our own. If we have that great idea, maybe it was planted there by that public schoolteacher. So we've got to make sure that that teacher is there for the next child.

We've got to make sure that we've got infrastructure that allows us to move our products and services all across the country. And in order to make sure that that opportunity is there for the next generation, those of us who have done well—and that includes most of the people in this room—we should pay our fair share in taxes to contribute to the Nation that made our success possible. And you know what? I think most wealthy Americans would agree with that if it helps us grow the economy and it helps to bring down our deficits.

Now, this notion that folks are inherently selfish, that's just not true. But you've got to ask them, right? [*Laughter*] People don't voluntarily pay taxes. But if you ask, most wealthy folks here in Dallas or around the country, they'll tell you, you know what, I want to make sure that I'm doing my share for America to succeed. But somebody has got to ask.

Now, some Republicans in Congress, they're already dusting off the old—their old records: "That's class warfare." Let me tell you something, 26 years ago—some of you may have seen this on television, clips have been circulating—26 years ago, another President said that some of these tax loopholes, and I quote, "made it possible for millionaires to pay nothing, while a bus driver was paying 10 percent of his salary, and that's crazy. It's time we stopped it." That was 26 years ago. You know

the name of that President? Ronald Reagan. [Laughter]

So was that class warfare? By the way, taxes are much lower now than they ever were when Ronald Reagan was President. I know a lot of folks have short memories, but I don't remember Republicans accusing Ronald Reagan of being a Socialist—[laughter]—or engaging in class warfare, because he thought that everybody should do their fair share.

I mean, things have just gotten out of whack. [Laughter] I'll tell you what, if asking a billionaire to pay the same tax rate as a plumber or a teacher or a bus driver makes me a warrior for the middle class, I will wear that charge with honor. Because the only warfare I've seen is the battle waged against middle class Americans for a decade now. And they're hurting, and they need some help.

This is about priorities. It's about choices. If we want to put people back to work and close this deficit and invest in our future, then the money has got to come from somewhere. So you've got a choice. Would you rather keep tax loopholes for oil companies that are doing just fine? I know I'm in Texas. I know there's a lot of oil here. [Laughter] But they're doing fine. They don't need a loophole that nobody else gets. Or do you want to put our construction workers and teachers back to work?

Would you rather keep tax rates for millionaires and billionaires, or do you want to invest in education and medical research and new technologies that can help create a whole new set of businesses out there for the future? Should we be asking seniors to pay thousands of dollars more in Medicare, or should we ask the biggest corporations to pay their fair share? That's what this debate is about. That's what's at stake right now.

This notion that the only thing we should be doing to restore prosperity is to strip away anti-pollution laws and strip away regulations on Wall Street and give tax breaks to the wealthiest few and tell everybody else, you're on your own, good luck, that's not who we are. That's not how America got built. Yes, we are rugged individualists. We are self-reliant. We value our liberty, and we won't sacrifice it merely for

security. I understand that. That's part of our DNA, and it's been the drive and initiative of our workers and our entrepreneurs that made this economy the engine and the envy of the world.

But there's always been another thread running throughout our history, a belief that we're all connected, that I am my brother's keeper and my sister's keeper, that there are some things that we can only do together as a nation. We understand that when it comes to our defense. We understand that when it comes to fire and police protection. But it's also true when it comes to building an economy that works. It's why Republican Presidents like Lincoln and Eisenhower, they invested in railways and highways and science and technology. It's why this country gave millions of returning heroes, including my grandfather, the chance to go to college on the GI bill. It's why Michelle and I had a chance to succeed beyond our wildest dreams, because our parents, who weren't wealthy, who weren't famous, they lived in a country where we, together, said, you know what, every child should have opportunity.

It's why Michelle and I succeeded. A lot of other countries, that wouldn't have happened. I mean, we worked hard, but—and we were lucky—but a lot of it had to do with the fact that the country made an investment in us. And there are a whole bunch of kids out there who are just as talented as we are, maybe more talented, have just as much drive, just as much ambition. Are we going to be there for them?

No single individual built America on their own. We built it together. Don't believe the hype. Don't believe some of the chatter that you hear, that somehow Government had no role to play. We built this thing together. We are "one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." But we are also a nation that has responsibilities to ourselves and to one another. And it's time for us to meet those responsibilities right now.

And maybe some people in Congress would rather wait until the election to settle our differences, and I promise you, I will be ready for that election. I will be ready for that debate. I

am happy to have a debate before the American people because I believe that the American people understand that we're in this together.

So I'm eager to have that debate. But the next election is 13 months away. The American people don't have the luxury of waiting that long. A lot of folks are living week to week, paycheck to paycheck, day to day. They need action, and they need it now.

So I appreciate all of you coming here in support of the campaign, but I need you to speak out now. I need you to lift up your voices and help us out. I'm asking you to put some pressure on Congress and let them know that we've got work to do. And join me in finishing what we started in 2008. Let's keep building an America that we believe in, a place where everybody has a fair shake and everybody does their fair share.

Dallas, we are not a nation that just sits back and waits for things to happen to us. We make

things happen. We're Americans. We are tough and we are resilient, and I am absolutely confident about our future because I believe we are tougher than the times we live in and we are bigger than the politics that we've been seeing.

But we've got to get out there and work. We've got to shape our own destiny. It is fully within our power, but I'm going to need your help. So let's seize this moment. Let's get to work. Let's show them why the United States of America is the greatest country on Earth.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:28 p.m. at the Sheraton Dallas Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Emmitt J. Smith, former running back, National Football League's Dallas Cowboys; President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea; and Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.

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Thank you, everybody. Well, it is wonderful to see all of you. I'm not going to be long. I want to make a few brief remarks and then just have a conversation with all of you.

A lot of folks in this room I know. A lot of you have been there for me in the past. Some of you supported me when I was running for the United States Senate. Downstairs, I was telling the story about Ron Kirk and I—and I think you were with us Lisa, right? Flying down from Dallas to Houston, and it was about 100 degrees, and Ron had a thick wool suit. [Laughter] And we got out on that tarmac, and he was—[laughter]—dripping from head to toe. And I think on that same trip we went to Austin, and we were in somebody's backyard, and it wasn't that big a yard, and there were about 400 people; they had expected 50. [Laughter] And they had to put the sprinklers on to make sure that people didn't pass out. [Laughter]

So I've got a lot of fond memories and a lot of great friends here in Texas. I want to thank

Naomi and everybody who helped put this together on short notice. But I think that—I suspect the reason we were able to do it on short notice is not only do we have relationships and friendships and common experiences to draw upon, but I think everybody here understands that the stakes are enormous in this upcoming election. They were big in 2008. I actually think they're bigger now.

Because in 2008, we recognized that there were a series of issues that had been building up over decades and that nobody had taken on. We hadn't gotten a smart energy policy. We hadn't been dealing with an education system that was inadequate. Our health care system was broken. Most importantly, middle class families were seeing their wages and their incomes flatline even though the costs of everything were going up. And the society was becoming more unequal, and the paths for middle class families to either stay in the middle class or get into the middle class were becoming blocked.