

we didn't say, "No, we can't." Our grandparents and great-grandparents, they didn't say: "Nothing we can do about this. Let's just spend all our time arguing in Washington." They didn't say, "It's too hard." They didn't say, "We give up." They said, "Let's roll up our sleeves, let's fight back." And America won. When the space race started, Kennedy didn't say, "We can't go to the Moon; that's too far." He said: "Come on, America. Let's go." America won. We can win the space race. When we confront tough times, we don't give in to what is, we think about what ought to be.

There are too many Americans who are hurting right now for us to just sit by and do nothing. Now is the time to act. Now is the time to say, "Yes, we can." We can create jobs. We can restore the middle class. We can reduce our deficits. We can build an economy that works for everybody. We are not a people who just sit around doing nothing when things

aren't right. We are Americans, and we stand up and we decide that the problem's going to be fixed. And that's the spirit we need to muster right now.

Let's meet this moment. Let's get to work. And let's remind everybody just why the United States of America is the greatest country on Earth.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless North Carolina. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. at the Mary Perry Ragsdale Family YMCA. In his remarks, he referred to Jamestown, NC, teacher Linda Phillips; Gov. Beverly E. Perdue of North Carolina; President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea; and Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.

Remarks at Greensville County High School in Emporia, Virginia October 18, 2011

The President. Hello! Thank you. Hello, Eagles! Well, it is good to be here. Thank you very much. It's great to be back in Virginia. It is great to be here at Greensville County High School.

I want to thank Jami Clements not only for the gracious introduction, but congratulate her on being selected as Greensville County Teacher of the Year. We're proud of everything that Jami has accomplished here at the school, but we also want to thank her for her service in our Armed Forces, and that is an extraordinary combination of service: teaching and serving. And I know that the students feel very lucky to have her in the classroom. And I like that she's teaching biology, because we need some scientists out there.

In addition, I want to acknowledge, first of all, the superintendent of schools, Philip Worrell. Give your superintendent a big round of applause. And I want to acknowledge the principal, Wayne Scott. And finally, I want to thank your mayor, Mr. Sam Adams, for being with us here today.

Now, some of you may have heard we're taking a little road trip at the beginning of this week. The RV is a little bigger than most. [*Laughter*] We've got it parked outside. But I decided it was time to get out of Washington and hit the open road. So we landed in Asheville, North Carolina—and that truly is God's country—and we drove through beautiful mountain roads and stopped for some barbecue and a little sweet tea. And we went to Boone County, North Carolina, and they had a general store there with big barrels of candy, and so we stocked up for Halloween. And don't tell Michelle—[*laughter*]—but we bought a lot of candy. [*Laughter*]

But most importantly, the reason that we have been traveling on the road is because I wanted to hear from folks like you. It doesn't seem like your voices are heard enough in Washington. They don't seem to be listening. So I figured if I brought the press here, then they could hear you.

Because times are tough for a lot of Americans. Here in Virginia, there are a lot of folks

who've spent months, maybe some folks spent years, looking for work. Others are doing their best just to get by. Maybe they're giving up going out to a restaurant; they just can't afford it. They've got to save on gas. End of the month they're worried about making the mortgage payment. Some people are postponing retirement to make sure that their children can go to college. Hours have been cut back. Family businesses on the brink of being shut down. So it's hard.

And I think most Americans know that our economic problems weren't caused overnight. Obviously, we're going through the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, and the aftermath hit Main Streets all across the country. But even before the financial crisis hit, people had seen their wages flat, their incomes flat.

Had a chance to meet some farmers back here today—crops are good this year, but family farms have been going through tough times: health care skyrocketing in terms of cost, college tuition skyrocketing.

We don't have an energy policy in this country, so we're still dependent on foreign oil. When gas shoots up, suddenly, everybody doesn't know what to do. These are problems that built up over a decade or more. They won't be solved overnight. It's going to take time to rebuild an America where hard work is valued and responsibility is rewarded, where people don't feel like they've got the deck stacked against them, where everybody is getting a fair shot and everybody is contributing their fair share.

It is going to take time to rebuild an America where we restore security for the middle class and opportunity for folks trying to get in the middle class, an economy that works for everybody and not just for folks at the top. That's our goal.

And it will take time to rebuild an economy that is competitive in the 21st century, that's built to last—one where we can outbuild and outcompete, outeducate, outinnovate other nations—which means we've got to step up on our education. We've got to invest in basic science. We've got to improve our infrastructure.

We've got to close our deficits. We've got to get our fiscal house in order. We've got a lot of work to do. It's going to take time.

But I'm here to tell you we are going to get it done. We are going to keep fighting. We're going to keep striving. We're going to focus on putting people back to work and helping middle class Americans get ahead, and we will give the economy the jolt that it needs.

And there are things that we can be doing right now to help the American people. That's why I sent Congress the "American Jobs Act." This is a jobs bill that contains the kind of proposals that in the past have been supported by both Democrats and Republicans. It's a bill that's paid for. It will not add to the deficit. It will not be going on the credit card. It will be paid for by asking our wealthiest citizens, our most fortunate, people like me, people who are making more than a million dollars, to pay their fair share.

Independent economists have looked at this jobs bill, and they've said it will create nearly 2 million jobs. That's not my opinion, that's not the opinion of folks who work for me, that's the opinion of people who study the economy for a living. They tell us this will grow the economy and put people back to work right away.

So the question is, if it's paid for, won't add to the deficit, won't result in increasing your taxes, will instead result in lowering your taxes, will put people back to work at a time when the unemployment rate is too high, why wouldn't we do it? Why wouldn't we pass it? It turns out the folks in Washington aren't listening to you.

Last week, all the Republicans in the United States Senate got together and they blocked this jobs bill. They refused to even debate it, even though a majority of Senators wanted it debated. But in the Senate you've got this rule where you got to get these days 60 votes to get something through. Just a majority doesn't seem to be enough.

Meanwhile, one poll found that 63 percent of Americans support the ideas in this jobs bill. And yet a hundred percent of Republicans in the Senate voted against it. Does that make any sense?

Audience members. No!

The President. Now, some people asked me yesterday why I'm visiting some place in North Carolina and Virginia that are mostly Republican. [Laughter] What I said was, "I'm not the Democratic President, I'm not the Republican President, I'm the President." I'm everybody's President. I don't care if you're a Republican or a Democrat. This is not the Republican jobs act, this is not called the Democratic jobs act, this is the "American Jobs Act." And everybody would be better off if we passed it.

Now, in fairness, let me say that after I sent Congress the "American Jobs Act," Republicans decided, well, we'd better put out our own jobs act. So they started out calling it the "Real American Jobs Act." That's what they called it, so they don't get points for originality. [Laughter] But let's examine what was in this jobs act. I said let's see what you've got.

As it turns out, the Republicans' plan boils down to a few basic ideas. And these are ideas we've heard before. They said, we're going to lower taxes for the wealthiest Americans and corporations. We're going to gut environmental regulations. We're going to drill more. We're going to let Wall Street do what they were doing before we got into this mess. And we're going to repeal health care reform.

All right, now, that is a plan, but it's not a jobs plan. That's a plan, but it's a plan to go back to doing the exact things that we were doing before we had a financial crisis that put so many people out of work. Why would we think that it would work now?

I mean, let's do a little comparison shopping here. Let's kick the tires a little bit on each plan.

The Republican plan says that the only thing that's standing between us and full employment are laws that keep our companies from polluting our air and our water. My plan says let's put teachers back in the classroom. Let's put police and firefighters back on the job. Let's hire construction workers to rebuild America. Let's put our veterans back on the job.

Their plan says we'd be better off if we kick the 30 million Americans who are slated to get health care off the rolls. So the young people,

for example, who are already getting health insurance by staying on their parent's plan, they'd be out of luck. I don't know how that will contribute to creating jobs.

Our plan says we're better off if we give a tax cut to virtually every small business and every worker in America. That's in the "American Jobs Act."

Their plan says let's go back and let Wall Street do exactly what they were doing before the financial crisis. Let's roll back all the Wall Street reforms that we fought tooth and nail to pass over the objections of lobbyists and special interests in Washington.

Our plan says we need to make it easier for small businesses on Main Street to get financing and to hire and to push this economy forward.

Now—so those are the two plans. Remember those group of economists who said our plan would create jobs? Well, we asked one of them to take a look at the Republican plan. We said, well, maybe we're missing something here. Maybe we don't understand exactly what their strategy is. So we asked independent economists, please evaluate their plan. And the economist says: "Well, you know what, this plan would actually cost jobs. It won't do much to help the economy right now when folks are hurting, and could actually result in fewer jobs, not more jobs."

So I don't know how you present a plan for jobs that results in less jobs—[laughter]—right? I mean, they didn't call it the "American No Jobs Act." [Laughter] So the question is, Virginia, do you want a plan that results in dirtier air and water for our kids and fewer people on health care and less accountability on Wall Street? Or do we want to keep pushing a plan that puts more teachers in the classroom, more construction workers rebuilding our schools, tax cuts for small-business owners and working families?

That's the choice that we face, and I'll let you decide which plan is the real "American Jobs Act."

I just want to be clear. I want desperately to work with Republicans on ways to create jobs right now. Think about it. Nobody is more interested—other than the folks who are actually

out of work—than me in seeing this economy growing strong. I'm open to any serious idea that is presented to create jobs.

Just last week, Congress passed a bipartisan trade deal with Korea that will allow us to sell more American goods overseas, create more jobs here. My attitude is, we're buying a whole lot of Hyundais and Kias; I want to see some Koreans buying some Fords and Chryslers and Chevys. I want them to buy some fine Virginia peanuts. I know they use peanuts over there, but I'll bet they're not as good as Virginia peanuts. [Laughter] These are some good peanuts. [Laughter]

So that's the kind of progress on our economy that we can keep on making, but to do so we've got to stop playing politics all the time. We can't just try to satisfy one wing of one party. We've got to pull together, focus on creating jobs and helping the middle class right now and helping people get into the middle class.

So what I decided was let's give Congress another chance. We're going to give them another chance to listen to you, to step up to the plate, to do the right thing. We will give them another chance to do their jobs so that you can keep your job or get a job. [Laughter]

And so I was thinking about it. I was thinking, well, maybe there was just too much stuff in my bill. Maybe it was confusing to have all these component parts. So what we decided is we're going to break it up into smaller pieces so that we don't confuse anybody, and let them vote on each piece one at a time. That way, you can be crystal clear on where everybody stands on the different components of the "American Jobs Act."

So the first vote we asked Congress to take is scheduled for later this week. And it's a vote that is going to put hundreds of thousands of police back on the beat and firefighters back on the job and teachers back in the classroom where they belong.

And you know why this is so important. I don't have to tell you this. We are competing against Germany and China and Korea and all these countries, and they are hiring teachers in droves. They are focused on making sure their children are top notch in math and science and

technology. And yet here, all over the country, including here in Virginia, budget cuts are forcing schools to lay off teachers in disturbing numbers.

Here in Greensville County, you've lost some teachers. You could lose more if we don't pass this jobs bill, and that's not right. It's unfair to our kids. It undermines our future. We can't have other countries adding teachers to prepare their kids for the global economy while we sit by and do nothing.

As one teacher down in North Carolina said: "We didn't cause the poor economy, us teachers. If anything, we built the good parts." He is right. Teachers build the good parts of our economy. They give our children a chance. They create—they give young people the skills that allow them to go out and find a good job or start a business or invent a product. Our plan would mean nearly 11,000 education jobs right here in Virginia.

So I need all of you to tell the Senate: Put those teachers back to work. Put those teachers back to work. Pass the jobs bill, and put those teachers back to work.

But we're not going to stop with that vote. We're going to have a few more votes. We'll give the Senate a chance to vote on putting unemployed construction workers back on the job. Listen, I do not want China and Germany and other countries to build the newest roads and the newest bridges and the newest airports while ours are crumbling. Farmers can't get their products to market if we've got broken-down infrastructure. Businesses can't move their products and their people if we've got infrastructure that isn't state of the art. If we don't have the best airports, if we don't have the best roads, that will hurt our economy over the long term.

Think about it. We are the United States of America. People used to travel from all around the world to look at what we built: the Hoover Dam, Golden Gate Bridge, Grand Central station, Interstate Highway System. Now people aren't coming to see what we built because they're building it over there.

So what we said was, well, the "American Jobs Act," let's put those construction workers

back to work. Let's rebuild and make sure our bridges are safe and our roads are safe and our airports are state of the art.

The Senate will have an opportunity to vote on that bill. Then they're going to have a chance to vote on giving unemployed Americans the support they need to get back into the workforce and build a better life. Because in this country, if you're willing to work hard, you should have the chance to get ahead.

And then we're going to ask the Senate to vote on a provision that says veterans—if you are a small business and you hire a veteran, you should get a tax break. Because I don't want folks who have sacrificed halfway around the world for our safety to come back here and not be able to find a job.

And then we're going to ask the Senate to pay for it by making sure that folks like me are paying their fair share. And if I'm paying my fair share, then you get a tax cut or a tax break. Small businesses get a tax cut.

And I have to say there's been a lot of misleading information about this, so let me just be perfectly clear here. Let me be painfully clear, just in case anybody asks you about it. What we are proposing is that the payroll tax cut that we passed in December gets extended, gets expanded, and that will mean an extra \$1,500 in your pocket compared to if we do nothing.

If we don't pass this bill your taxes will go up by \$1,000 for the average family. I know, everybody says, I don't want that. [*Laughter*]

And to pay for it, people like me can afford to pay a little bit more. Now, understand, we're talking about the top 1, 2 percent of people at the very top of the incomes scales. And we can afford it. We don't need a tax cut. We didn't ask for a tax break. You got corporations who are getting special deals on their Tax Codes. They don't need a special deal. Let's give a good deal to hard-working men and women who are out there struggling to make ends meet.

So if anybody—if you hear anybody saying, "Oh, Obama's plan, he's going to raise your taxes," tell them, no. I'm going to keep your taxes low for 97, 98 percent of the American people.

For the top 1, 2 percent, you'll go up a little bit, but you can afford it. You can afford it. A fair shot for everybody, a fair share from everybody.

So those are the choices that the American people are going to have to face. And those are the choices that the Members of Congress are going to have to face in the coming weeks. And if they vote against taking steps that we know will put people back to work, they're not going to have to answer to me, they're going to have to answer to you. They're going to have to come down to Virginia and tell their kids why they can't have their teachers back. They're going to have to look those construction workers in the eye and say why we shouldn't rebuild America. They're going to have to explain to working families why their taxes are going up, while the taxes of well-to-do people keep on going down.

So that's where you come in. I need your voices heard. I need you to give Congress a piece of your mind.

Tell these Members of Congress they're supposed to be working for you, not working for special interests, not working for campaign contributions. They're working for you, the American people. And they need to deliver, because they're not delivering right now.

You've got to get on the phone—you got to get on the phone and write letters and pay visits and tweet—[*laughter*—whatever you do, and remind your elected leaders to do the right thing. Tell them what's at stake.

Remind them that "No, we can't" is not a good motto. "No, we can't" is not how we get through tough times. That's not how—this is a country that's gone through a Revolutionary War. This is a country that's gone through a Civil War. This is a country that went through two World Wars, a Great Depression, and we didn't just fold, we didn't just give up. Our grandparents, our great-grandparents, they didn't just say, "No, we can't." They didn't say, "This is too hard." They didn't say, "We give up." They didn't settle on the status quo. They rolled up their sleeves. They went after it. They said, "America can do whatever we put our minds to when we are unified."

President Kennedy didn't look up at the Moon and say: "Oh, that's too far! We can't go there." He said, "We can make it." And we did, because that's the American spirit when it is unleashed.

I know we've been going through tough times. But that's not an excuse for us to just sit back. That should be a motivation for us to try that much harder. There are too many of our fellow Americans who are hurting too bad for us to just sit by and do nothing. Now is the time for us to act. Now is the time for us to say, "Yes, we can." We don't sit back and do nothing when things aren't right. We set our minds to it, and we fix it. We make things work. We

stick with it. And that's the spirit we've got to bring right now.

So I just want to say to all of you, Virginia, I hope and I pray that all of us can get together and stay focused on what it takes to continue to make this a great nation. I don't want us to be playing politics all the time. I want us to meet this moment. I want us to get to work. And I want us to show the world once again why the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:43 p.m.

Remarks at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia October 19, 2011

Hello, Joint Base Langley-Eustis! Thank you very much.

I hate following Michelle. [Laughter] She's so good. How lucky am I to be married to Michelle Obama? See, for you men out there who are not yet married, let me explain: The whole goal is to marry up, to try to improve your gene pool. [Laughter] And we're lucky to have her as First Lady of the United States, I think.

I am thrilled to be here. I want to thank the outstanding leaders who welcomed us here today: Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley is here; General Mike Hostage is here; Colonels Kory Auch and Kevin Robbins and Reggie Austin are here. I want to give a shout-out to your outstanding senior enlisted leaders, including Chief Master Sergeants Kevin Howell and Marty Klukas. I want you to give a big round of applause to the Air Combat Command Heritage of America Band.

We've got a lot of folks in the house today. We've got Air Combat Command. We've got the 633d Air Base Wing. We've got the 1st Fighter Wing, with our amazing F-22 Raptors. I want to ride in one of those some day. [Laughter] We're going to have to set that up.

We've got the 480th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing. They can cheer, but they can't talk about what they do.

[Laughter] They'd have to kill you. And I see we've got some Army too.

I want to salute Melissa Lee. Thank you so much. I want to salute Kathy Hostage. I want to salute Kristen Auch and the extraordinary military spouses who are here as well. We are inspired by them. Michelle is an honorary military spouse because she has to put up with me. [Laughter] But she and I both share such incredible admiration for the families of those who are serving in uniform.

We are grateful for our veterans who are here, including some very special airmen who taught the Nation the true meaning of service and honor and equality. We are honored to be joined by several of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen in the house. That's what heroes look like, right there.

Finally, I want to acknowledge your Governor, Bob McDonnell, and his lovely wife Maureen for joining us here today, as well as Congressman Bobby Scott, who's in the house. And I want to thank all the business leaders who have committed to hiring our Nation's heroes.

Those of you here today who have worn the uniform of these United States have done so with honor and have done so with distinction. Some of the most dangerous places on the planet, you have heroically performed and done everything that's been asked of you. Al-