

thing we as volunteers can do to further your campaign?

The President. Well, we've already talked about it. The most important thing you can do is to be engaged and to reach out to your circle of friends and family, not to try to give them just a laundry list of things that we've already done, but to listen to them and give them a sense that they can make a difference if they get involved.

This democracy works when people get involved. This democracy works when people are paying attention. And this democracy works when people are joining together to make their voices heard. And that's what all of you are all about.

The more you guys are out there engaging people, talking to people, listening to them, asking their ideas, the more this is a bottom-up as opposed to a top-down operation.

One of the great things in 2008 was folks were just starting their own organizations. We had folks in Idaho who just decided out of the—we're going to start a Idaho for Obama. And we didn't have any staff there, we didn't have any money. And yet they were able to organize an 18,000-person rally just out of their own energy and input, and they owned this thing.

And that's the thing I want to emphasize to all of you. You own this campaign. You own this country. And if you use that power that you've got, then we're going to be able to continue to get all the things done that we want to get done. I know that over the last 2½ years there have been times where people have been frustrated. This past week was a frustrating week. But think about all we've accomplished together. We've been able to start turning around this economy. We've been able to get health care passed. We've been able to make sure that there's an equal day's pay for an equal

day's work. We've been able to make sure that children were able to get health insurance that didn't have it before. We've been able to end this war in Iraq in a responsible way.

And so that should give us confidence that we can make happen all the things that are still undone, whether it's making sure that the economy is growing faster and creating more jobs to getting immigration reform passed, to making sure that we've got an energy policy that makes sense in this country and making sure that we've got a Tax Code that's fair and that's just and that we're dealing with our deficits and debt in a responsible way, and it's not all on the backs of middle class families.

Those are things that I know we can accomplish, but this election is going to be a seminal election, in some ways maybe more important than the last one. And with your voices, I'm absolutely confident that we not only can win, but more importantly, we can deliver the change that's needed for the American people.

So I've got to go downstairs. I'm going to have to—there's a big crowd wanting to sing me "Happy Birthday." I don't know if there's cake down there. But I know they've been waiting for me. But I want to say to all of you, thank you for your good wishes. Thanks for your courage. Thanks for your determination and tenacity. And I'm going to see you all, hopefully, when I get to the various States and cities and towns where you guys are gathered.

All right? Have fun. See you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:59 p.m. at the Aragon Entertainment Center. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 4. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Chicago August 3, 2011

The President. Thank you. Everybody have a seat, have a seat, have a seat.

Well, if you guys are taking off your jackets, I'm going to take mine off too. [*Laughter*] It's too hot. It is too hot.

Well, it is wonderful to see all of you.

[*At this point, Mayor Rahm I. Emanuel of Chicago took the President's jacket.*]

The President. Thank you. Now, that's service. [*Laughter*] I still have that pothole in front of my house. [*Laughter*] Golly, I've been

working on that. Trees need trimming. [Laughter]

It is wonderful to see all of you. I know that most of you had a chance to listen to me speak downstairs, so I'm not going to give another long speech. The main thing I just want to do is to say thank you to all of you. A lot of folks came, traveled from across the country.

And obviously, we've just gone through an extraordinary week in Washington, an extraordinary 2 weeks in Washington. It's not the kind of extraordinary that the American people are looking for. [Laughter] Because at a time when so many families are struggling, at a time when we should be singularly focused on how to make ourselves more competitive and make sure our kids have the best educations possible and how are we transforming our energy strategy and how are we building on high-tech industries and the huge competitive advantages that we have, politics continues to get in the way.

And I think this episode was just a severe example of what's been going on for quite some time. And it's part of what led me to run for President. It's part of what led Rahm to get into public service. And it's part of the reason why, hopefully, all of you are here tonight, because you recognize we've still got some more work to do.

The good news is that after this week we have made a legitimate downpayment on deficit reduction in a way that's actually responsible, that is not going to dismantle our social safety net, isn't going to prevent us from making the key investments we need to win the future.

But it also sets the stage for what is going to be a singular debate over the next year and a half, and that is two alternative visions about where the country needs to go.

I give the other side credit. They are single minded in their focus in wanting to cut programs and shrink Government. My argument, Dick Durbin's argument, the argument that I think all of you believe in, is that we need a Government that is smart, that is living within its

means, but also we need a Government that is making the kind of commitment to opportunity for everybody, for every child; that is making investments that the private sector alone can't make; that are setting policies that allow us to be competitive into the future; that is looking after our seniors and poor children and the disabled and empowering them; and that all of us have a role to play in that kind of America and all of us have to make some sacrifices to deliver that kind of America.

And I think most of the American people believe the same thing. But in this kind of environment of 24-hour cable chatter and big money flooding the airwaves and slash-and-burn politics, sometimes I think that core belief in what is possible here in America gets lost. It's our job to constantly restore it and revitalize it and to have confidence in the American people, that if we're making our arguments with the same kind of passion and commitment that the other side is showing, that ultimately our democracy will make a decision, and I think it will be a decision to pursue the kind of vision that all of us believe in.

But we're going to have a lot of work to do, and it's going to be tough. And this week, I think, signifies not only how tough it's going to be, but exactly what's at stake. And for you to make the kind of commitment to be here tonight, to be committed to engaging, the fact that you're in, is going to make all the difference in the world.

So thank you very much, everybody. And I think we're going to just take a bunch of questions. Then, I'm going to have a chance to walk around the room and shake everybody's hands before I head back home and see my kids. Malia is coming home from camp tomorrow just for her daddy's birthday, and I'm very happy about that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:21 p.m. at the Aragon Entertainment Center. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 4. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.