

fairness, I think, is the right thing to do. So there are a bunch of other issues at stake here: Supreme Court appointments, you name it.

But the central question is going to be how do we create an economy that works for everybody. And I have to tell you, I generally have patience with what the other side says about me. That's the requirement of this job. [Laughter] And if you don't like folks talking about you, you probably shouldn't run for President.

The one thing I do have no patience for is this argument that somehow what I'm criticizing is success. That's an argument you hear from the other side: "Oh, he wants to punish success." I want to promote success.

But what I know is that Jim's story, my story, the story of so many of you, our success was made possible in this country because our parents, our grandparents, our great-grandparents—stretching all the way back to the Founders—they had a vision that says, you know what, we're going to insist on hard work and individual initiative and we're going to reward risk and entrepreneurship and people are going to have to sweat and sacrifice for their success. But there are some things we're also going to do together to make sure that everybody has a

chance. Not everybody is going to succeed, but everybody is going to have a shot at success.

That's why we set up a public school system that works. That's how we built extraordinary colleges and universities. That's how we created this amazing infrastructure that allows businesses to move goods and services, not just throughout this Nation, but eventually throughout the world. That's how we sent a man to the Moon. That's how we made the investments that helped to create the Internet.

So we want success. We just want to make sure that everybody has a shot. That's what we're fighting for. That's what's at stake in this election. And I hope you guys are willing to work as hard as I am over the next 106 days—not that I'm counting—[laughter]—and then you're willing to work with me over another 4 years to make sure that we are moving towards that goal that I think the vast majority of Americans, regardless of whether they're Democrats or Republicans or Independents, all share.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:24 p.m. at the residence of James D. and Janet Sinegal. In his remarks, he referred to Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in New Orleans, Louisiana July 25, 2012

The President. How's it going, Big Easy? Oh, it is good to be in New Orleans. Now, I've got to admit I was thinking about just blowing everything off and going and getting something to eat. [Laughter]

Audience member. Where we going?

The President. Say where we going, huh? [Laughter] I don't know. You tell me, this is your town. [Laughter]

[At this point, audience members yelled out places to go.]

The President. Huh? All right. Well, let me tell you, the next time I come down, drinks are

on me. We'll all go party, so—[applause]—but until then, we've got a little work to do.

Couple of folks I want to acknowledge. First of all, your outstanding mayor, Mitch Landrieu in the house. Congressman Cedric Richmond is in the house. State Senator Karen Carter Peterson is in the house. One of my favorite actors, a great friend, and a big booster of New Orleans: Wendell Pierce is here. Give it up for Terence Blanchard and his band. And I'm not the only out-of-town visitor here today; we also have the outstanding mayor of Philadelphia, Mayor Michael Nutter is here. Give him a big round of applause.

Audience members. And your volunteers!

The President. And your volunteers—my volunteers are all here. And you are all here. We're happy about that. Thank you.

Now, this is my last political campaign. You know, I'm term limited. You only get two of these. But it has made me a little nostalgic. It makes me think about some of my first political campaigns.

Audience members. Fired up! Ready to go!

The President. You know, when I first started in politics, I was a law professor, I was practicing civil rights law, and then I decided to run for the State senate in my area. And I didn't have a lot of backup, so we'd have to go to Kinko's and print up flyers. [Laughter] And Michelle and me and some friends, we'd just go knocking on doors. And then when I ran for the United States Senate—Illinois is a big State so we had to drive around all over the place. But I didn't have Marine One or Air Force One or a motorcade. We had me—[laughter]—in my car.

I'd usually have a staff person with me. And the young people, you wouldn't understand this, but back then we had to use these things called maps. [Laughter] So they were pieces of paper, and you had to unfold them and try to figure out where you were going, and then you had to try to figure out how to fold them back. [Laughter]

And we would travel all across the State, and I'd go to inner cities and farm towns and suburban areas, and you'd meet people from all walks of life, all income levels. And what was interesting, what inspired me, what made me realize that this might be a worthy pursuit was the sense that wherever I went, no matter how different people looked on the surface, there was a common thread to their story. And it connected with my story.

So if I saw an elderly couple, they'd remind me of my grandparents. And I'd think about my grandfather, who fought in World War II and then came home. My grandmother, during the war, worked on a bomber assembly line, like Rosie the Riveter. But when my grandfather came back he was able to get a college education because of the GI bill, and they were able to buy their first home with the help of an

FHA loan. And I'd think about the journey they had traveled and everything that that generation had done for America, but also what America had done for them.

And sometimes, I'd meet a single mom, and I'd think about my mom. My dad left, and I didn't know him. So my mother didn't have a lot of money. She had to work, put herself through school, but with the help of scholarships and grants, she was able to get ahead, and then she was able to pass on a great education to me and my sister. And I'd think about how in America, unlike a lot of other countries, she could make something out of herself even in those circumstances.

And then I'd meet a working couple, and I'd think about Michelle's parents. Her dad, by the time I met him, could barely walk. He had multiple sclerosis, so he had to use two canes, and he had to wake up an hour early, earlier than everybody else because that's how long it took him just to get dressed and get ready and get to the job. But he didn't miss a day of work, because he believed in his responsibilities and looking after his family. And Michelle's mom worked as a secretary at a bank. And so they never had a lot of money, but they had a lot of love, and they understood the concept of hard work and responsibility, and so they were able to pass on an extraordinary life to Michelle and her brother.

And as I traveled around the State of Illinois, it was clear to me that my story wasn't unique and the stories of people I was meeting weren't unique. It was the American story. It was this idea that here in this country, we don't believe in handouts, we don't believe in bailouts, we believe in people earning what they get. We believe in people working hard, we believe in people looking after their own families and taking responsibility and taking initiative. But we also believe that in this country, hard work should pay off, that responsibility should be rewarded. And we believe that in this country, no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, you should be able to make it if you try.

That has been the central notion that built this country. That has been our hallmark.

That's been the core idea that drove America, this idea that in this country, you can get a fair shot and everybody does their fair share and everybody is playing by the same set of rules, and so if you work hard, you can get ahead. And that's what created this economic superpower, and that's what created the greatest and largest middle class in the history of the world.

Now, in 2008, when I was first running for President, we came together and a lot of you supported me in that race because we believed in those values and we believed in those ideas, and we had seen that, for almost a decade, that idea that had built America's middle class seemed as if it was slipping away.

We had gone through a decade in which hard work wasn't always rewarded. Middle class folks saw their incomes actually going down. So while their paychecks are shrinking, the cost of everything from health care to a college education kept on going up. A few people were doing really well, but the vast majority was struggling. Meanwhile, in Washington, we financed two wars on a credit card, turning a surplus into a deficit. And because nobody was making sure that folks on Wall Street were doing what they were supposed to be doing, all this culminated in the worst financial crisis and the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes.

We didn't know all that when I started to run. But what we understood was, what we were fighting for was the kind of change that would once again make real this idea that if you work hard you'll be rewarded and you can get ahead. We were fighting for policies that would grow the middle class and provide them with that sense of security.

And by the way, it's not just a matter of how much money you have in your bank account when we talk about being middle class. It's the idea that if you work hard you can find a job that supports your family and you can maybe get a home you call your own and you're not going to go bankrupt if you get sick. You're going to be able to retire with dignity and respect, that—and most importantly, that your kids and your grandkids can do even better than you did, that they can achieve what you didn't even imagine.

For the last 3½ years, everything I have done as President has been focused on that principle. And obviously, as we saw this economic crisis unfold, we understood that the change we believed in would take more than one year, more than one term, and probably take more than one President. But over the last 3½ years, we've started to steer things in the right direction.

We were losing 800,000 jobs a month when I was sworn in. Now we've seen more than 2 years of job growth every single month, more than 4½ million new jobs. An auto industry on the brink of collapse—we made sure that we bet on American workers and American manufacturing. And it's come roaring back. We moved to make sure that college was more affordable for young people and that more Americans had access to health care.

And so, over the last 3½ years, everything we've done has been focused on how do we create an economy that is built to last, that's not built on speculation, that doesn't just benefit the few, but that consistently builds the middle class so that they can achieve their dreams.

Now, for all the work that we've done, we know we've got more work to do, because there are still millions of people out there out of work. Too many people still have homes whose values have dropped because of this housing bubble bursting. So we understand that we've got more work to do. But sometimes, particularly during political season, when I hear cynics who say that our best days are behind us, I tell them, you don't know the American people. You don't know their grit, and you don't know their determination.

You haven't met the small-business owners who decided to keep everybody on payroll, even if they couldn't pay themselves, because they believed in doing the right thing. You haven't talked to some of these autoworkers in these plants that folks thought would never build another car again and now can't build them fast enough. You haven't met folks who, at the age of 50 or 55, went back to community college, sitting next to a bunch of 20-year-olds, because they believed in retraining themselves

and now are finding jobs in biotechnology or clean energy.

When you travel around this country, you understand that the American people are tougher than any tough times. And although there are no quick fixes or easy solutions, there's no doubt that we can solve every challenge that we face. What's holding us back right now is not the lack of solutions. What's holding us back is a stalemate in Washington. What's holding us back is a few folks who say, we are going to take the uncompromising view that the only path forward is to go back to what we were doing that got us into this mess in the first place, the same top-down economics that we are now debating in this campaign.

Now, let me be specific here. This afternoon the Senate passed a bill that says if you earn \$250,000 a year or less, your taxes should not go up next year. This is something I deeply believe in, because the middle class is still struggling, recovering from this recession. You don't need your taxes to go up, and we could give you certainty right now. But, of course, we're dealing with Washington. So Republicans in the House, they've said, we're going to hold the middle class tax cut hostage unless they get another trillion dollars' worth of tax cuts for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Now, I've got to tell you, this makes no sense. If Congress doesn't act, the typical middle class family is going to see their tax bill go up about \$2,200. Small businesses will also see their taxes go up. So I've called on the House Republicans to drop their demands for another trillion-dollar giveaway for millionaires and billionaires so that we can make sure that middle class families and small businesses have the financial security and certainty that they need.

But so far they don't see it that way. Governor Romney doesn't see it that way.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Because they've got a fundamentally different vision about how we move this country forward. They believe in top-down economics. Their plan is to cut more taxes for the wealthy, cut more regulations on banks and

corporations, cut more investments in things like education, job training, science, research, all with the thought that somehow that's going to help us create jobs. That's what Mitt Romney believes. That's what Washington Republicans believe.

I think they're wrong. That's not what I believe. That's not what you believe. That's not what most Americans believe. We believe not in top-down economics, we believe in middle-class-out economics. We believe in bottom-up economics. That's what we're fighting for. That's what I have fought for for 3½ years. That's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States of America.

So the good thing is, you've got the power to break this stalemate. But you need to understand there are two fundamentally different visions about how we move forward. There's a real choice. I believe that hard work should be rewarded, and I believe that although all of us have to take individual initiative, there are also some things that we have to do together as a country to make sure that we grow.

I don't believe that tax cuts for folks like me who don't need them and weren't even asking for them is going to grow the economy. But I do think that if we invest in outstanding education for every child in New Orleans and every child across America, that will help grow the economy.

So what I've said is let's help local school districts hire the best teachers, especially in math and science. Let's help folks go to—2 million more people go to community colleges so that they can retrain for the jobs that businesses are hiring for right now. Let's make sure—building off the work we've already done to expand Pell grants and to provide tuition tax credits for middle class families—let's make sure that college tuition goes down instead of up. Because in the 21st century, a higher education is not a luxury, it's an economic necessity that everybody should have access to. That's one of the reasons I'm running for a second term as President of the United States, to make sure everybody gets a great education.

Here's another difference: I don't believe in giving tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. I want to give tax breaks to companies that invest right here in New Orleans, right here in Louisiana, right here in the United States of America, hiring American workers to make American products to sell around the world, stamped with three proud words: Made in America. That's a difference in this campaign.

My opponent's got different ideas. He says he's qualified to turn around the economy because of all his private sector experience. Turns out that experience is investing in companies that have been called "pioneers" of outsourcing. I don't believe in being a pioneer in outsourcing. I want some insourcing. I want to bring jobs back to the United States, not send them someplace else. That's a choice in this election.

Back in 2008, I said I would end the war in Iraq, and I did. Thanks to the extraordinary service of our men and women in uniform, not only have we given Iraqis an opportunity to determine their own destiny, but we were able to refocus our attention on Al Qaida, the folks who actually carried out the 9/11 attacks. So we've got them on their heels and decimated their leadership, including Usama bin Laden. And if—and now in Afghanistan we're starting to transition and bring our troops home so that Afghans can take a lead for securing their own country.

So after almost a decade of war, I think it's time to do some nation-building here at home. I want to take half the money that we are saving and put people back to work rebuilding roads and bridges and ports and new schools. That's good for the construction industry, it's good for the construction worker, but it also means that those folks have some money in their pockets and they can come down to New Orleans and spend some of that money and help this local economy. And it lays the foundation for economic growth for decades to come.

Mr. Romney has got different ideas. And we tried those ideas, and they didn't work. I believe that we did the right thing in providing health care to every American. I don't think you should go bankrupt because you got sick. I don't believe that children should not be able to get health insurance because of a preexisting condition. I think we did the right thing to make sure that young people could stay on their parent's plan until they're 26. I think we did the right thing to make sure that seniors have lower prescription drug costs.

The Supreme Court has spoken. We are going to implement this law. We're not going backwards, we're going forward. That's a choice in this election. That's what we're fighting for. That's why I'm running for a second term as President.

We're not going back to the day when you had to scramble and try to figure out how you were going to care for your loved ones if they got sick. We're not going to go back to the day when whether you could serve the country you loved depended on who you love. We ended "don't ask, don't tell." That was the right thing to do. We're not going back.

We passed the Lilly Ledbetter Act to make sure that women got equal pay for equal work, because I've got two daughters and think that they should be treated just like somebody else's sons. And we're not going to go back to the days when women did not have control of their health care choices. We are moving forward, we're not going backwards.

On almost every issue there is a choice. And you see it in terms of how we deal with the deficit. I—the deficit's a real problem. We've got to reduce it. I inherited a big deficit, and we've got to now bring it down. But we can't bring it down just on the backs of the poor. We can't bring it down on the backs of the middle class. We can't bring it down in a way that prevents us from making investments in the future.

So what I've said is, look, we've already cut a trillion dollars in programs that we don't need, and I'm willing to do a little bit more, but I'm not going to do more if we're not asking folks who have been most blessed by this country—like me—to just pay a little bit more in taxes, to

go back to the rates that existed under Bill Clinton. And by the way, we've tried that, and that worked: 23 million new jobs, surplus instead of deficits.

And here's the thing, New Orleans, here's the thing: We created a lot of millionaires then too. Because what happens is when people in the middle and at the bottom have a chance and are doing well, then lo and behold, folks at the top got more customers. Everybody does better. Everybody benefits. We all grow.

So those are the choices that we have in this election, and you're going to be the tiebreaker. You will break the stalemate.

I've got to tell you, over the next 4 months you are going to hear a lot of stuff. [Laughter] That's what it is—stuff. [Laughter] And sometimes, they will play around with things I say. They'll take out whole sentences. They've got an ad right now where they just spliced it and diced it, make it seem like I don't appreciate the incredible work of small-businesspeople. And I say, look, everything I've done over the last 3½ years has been focused on how do we create greater opportunity for entrepreneurs and small-businesspeople—cutting their taxes 18 times.

I understand the sacrifice and the sweat and the tears that they put in. But that's not going to be how it's presented because that's the nature of politics these days. We're going to see more money spent on negative ads than we've ever seen before. You've got folks writing \$10 million checks. And the message in all these ads is going to be the same. There will be variations on it, but it's all going to be the same message, which basically is: The economy is still struggling, and it's Obama's fault. It's a very succinct message.

And the reason that that's their message is because they know that their actual ideas won't sell, that their approach is not one that's going to work and the American people have rejected in the past. So all they can do is try to argue that just by getting rid of me, somehow everything is going to be solved.

And look, when folks who are writing \$10 million checks are going after you, you think about it. [Laughter] No, you think about it. But

here's the thing. The reason I stand before you feeling good and feeling confident about America's future, not just about this election, is because I've been the underdog before, I've been counted out before, I've been outspent before. But what I learned in those very first campaigns, and has been confirmed for me ever since, is that when the American people really started focusing and paying attention, when they started cutting through the nonsense, when they start listening to what folks actually have to say, and when the American people start reflecting on their own lives, they think about their parents and their grandparents and their great-grandparents and the story of how some of them maybe came to this country as immigrants, some came in chains, but all of those forebearers of ours understood there was something about this country where we could make it.

It might be hard sometimes. There might be times where we have setbacks. But if we applied ourselves, we could pass on a better America to the next generation. That idea—that idea that led me into politics, that idea that is true for all of our families—when we focus on that idea, when we remember that we rise or fall together as one Nation and as one people, when that idea comes to the fore, the American people can't be stopped. It doesn't matter how many negative ads are out there. It doesn't matter how much money is spent. Change happens when the American people are focusing on those things that are best in us.

And so, over these next 4 months, I will be carrying your stories with me, and it will give me confidence, and it will give me inspiration, just like it did in 2008.

And I have to tell you, New Orleans, back in 2008, I tried to not make promises that I couldn't keep. So I promised to end the war in Iraq; I kept that promise. I said I'd cut taxes for middle class families, average families; taxes are \$3,600 lower than when I came into office. Kept that promise.

One of the other promises I kept was, I said, you know I'm not a perfect man—Michelle will tell you that—[laughter]—and I won't be a perfect President, but what I can promise is

that I'll always tell you what I think and I'll always tell you where I stand and, most importantly, I will wake up every morning and fight as hard as I know how for you.

Because I see myself in you. In your grandparents, I see my grandparents. In your children, I see Malia and Sasha. I see my own story in your story. And so I've kept that promise, New Orleans. I've been fighting for you. I believe in you.

And if you still believe in me and you're willing to stand with me and fight with me and organize with me and make phone calls with me and knock on doors with me, if you see what I see—a bold, generous, optimistic America where all people have a fair shot at success and

everybody is doing their fair share—I promise you, we will finish what we started and we will remind the world just why it is that the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:49 p.m. at the House of Blues. In his remarks, he referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng, mother-in-law Marian Robinson, and brother-in-law Craig M. Robinson; and Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts. He also referred to S. 3412.

Remarks at the National Urban League Conference in New Orleans July 25, 2012

The President. Hello, Urban League! Thank you. It is good to be with the Urban League. And it's good to be in the Big Easy.

Now, I don't know if the fact that this is called the Morial Convention Center had anything to do with folks coming down to New Orleans—[laughter]—but it is good to be with all of you. And I'm glad I caught you at the beginning of the conference, before Bourbon Street has a chance to take a toll on you. [Laughter] All right. You all stay out of trouble now. [Laughter]

Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat, have a seat.

Audience member. Four more years!

The President. A couple of people that I want to acknowledge. Obviously, first of all, I want to acknowledge your outstanding president and CEO who has shown such extraordinary leadership for so many years, Marc Morial. Just like we've got an outstanding former mayor of New Orleans, we've also got the outstanding current mayor of New Orleans: Mitch Landrieu is in the house. Fine young Congressman from this area, Cedric Richmond is here. And one of the best mayors in the country, we're glad he came down from his hometown of Philadelphia, Mayor Michael Nutter is in the house.

And all of you are here, and I am grateful for it. And we love the young people who are in the house. Mitch, don't you—I wasn't referring to you, man, I was talking to those folks over there. [Laughter] Mitch is all waving, "Thank you." [Laughter]

For nearly a century, the National Urban League has been inspiring people of every race and every religion and every walk of life to reach for the dream that lies at the heart of our founding: the promise that no matter who you are, no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, no matter how modest your beginnings, no matter what the circumstances of your birth, here in America, you can make it if you try.

Of course, this dream has never come easy. That's why the Urban League was formed. In the aftermath of the Civil War, with the South in the grips of Jim Crow, the waves of men and women who traveled north to urban centers discovered that even in their new homes, opportunity was not guaranteed. It was something you had to work for, something you had to fight for, not just on your own, but side by side with people who believed in that same dream.

And so the White widow of a railroad tycoon and a Black social worker from Arkansas