

## Statement on the First Anniversary of the Repeal of the United States Military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy September 20, 2012

A year ago today, we upheld the fundamental American values of fairness and equality by finally and formally repealing "don't ask, don't tell." Gay and lesbian Americans now no longer need to hide who they love in order to serve the country they love. It is a testament to the professionalism of our men and women in uniform that this change was implemented in an orderly manner, preserving unit cohesion, recruitment, retention, and military effectiveness.

As Commander in Chief, I've seen that our national security has been strengthened because we are no longer denied the skills and talents of those patriotic Americans who happen to be gay or lesbian. The ability of servicemembers to be open and honest about their families and the people they love honors the integrity of the individuals who serve, strengthens the institutions they serve, and is one of the many reasons why our military remains the finest in the world.

## Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in Tampa, Florida September 20, 2012

Hello, everybody! It is so good to see all of you, and I'm going to have a chance to, I know, take some pictures and spend a little time with you.

But let me begin by thanking Eddie Vedder for that unbelievable performance, but more importantly, for that story, which is the first time I've ever heard that story. And for you to share that with us, Eddie, I think speaks volumes not just about you and who you are, but it also speaks volumes about our country, because that story, I think, captures better than anything what this campaign is about and what this country is about. At any given moment, all of us may have challenges. At any given moment, all of us may need a helping hand. And that's not inconsistent with individual initiative and risk-taking and pursuing the American Dream. It's part and parcel of it. And so I'm so grateful for your friendship and your support, but I'm really grateful for you sharing that story with all of us. Thank you.

To Lisa and Don, thank you for opening up your extraordinary home. We are so grateful.

I want to thank Tyler Florence for all the outstanding food. And I want to acknowledge your former Governor, a great friend—and I can admit it now—Charlie Crist. I'm allowed to hug him as much as I want. *[Laughter]*

We are less than 50 days away from the election. And this is my last election, so I get nostalgic sometimes thinking about all my previous races. And my first race where Michelle and I would go door to door with these xeroxed—we'd gone to Kinko's, and we kind of printed up these little hand cards. And people would look and say, what name is this? *[Laughter]* And they couldn't pronounce it, and people wouldn't answer the door. And the campaign was run out of our kitchen in a small condo in Chicago.

And obviously, now things have changed. Our budget is a little bit bigger. Our mode of transport—as opposed to me driving around with one staff person in the passenger seat and unfolding maps and trying to figure out where I'm supposed to go, and trying to find a parking spot, and getting there and it turns out it's raining and I don't have an umbrella and so I walk into people's houses soaked—things are a little smoother for me now, I've got to admit. *[Laughter]*

But the motivation, the reason that I'm running now is no different from that first race, and it's no different than the sentiment that Eddie just expressed up here on stage. Because, like him, I've traveled the long way, but it's been an unlikely journey, and the reason