

from or who you love, you can make it if you try.

That's what's at stake, New Hampshire. That's why I'm asking for your vote. I believe in you. I need you to keep believing in me.

I'm asking for your help to finish the job. And if you'll stand with me and work with me and knock on some doors for me, make some phone calls with me, if you'll vote for me, New Hampshire, we'll win New Hampshire again. We'll win this election. We'll finish what we started and remind the world why the United

States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:02 p.m. at Veteran's Memorial Park. In his remarks, he referred to Elle Shaheen, granddaughter of Sen. C. Jeanne Shaheen; Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization; and Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney.

Remarks at the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation Dinner in New York City

October 18, 2012

The President. Thank you. Everyone, please take your seats; otherwise, Clint Eastwood will yell at them. [Laughter]

Thank you to Al and Nan; to Your Eminence; Governor, Mrs. Romney; Governor Cuomo; Mayor Bloomberg; Senator Schumer; all the distinguished guests who are here.

In less than 3 weeks, voters in States like Ohio, Virginia, and Florida will decide this incredibly important election, which begs the question, what are we doing here? [Laughter]

Of course, New Yorkers also have a big choice to make: You have to decide which one of us you want holding up traffic for the next 4 years. [Laughter]

Tonight I am here with a man whose father was a popular Governor and who knows what it's like to run a major northeastern State and who could very well be President someday, and I'm hoping it is Andrew Cuomo. [Laughter]

This is the third time that Governor Romney and I have met recently. As some of you may have noticed, I had a lot more energy at our second debate. [Laughter] I felt really well rested after the nice, long nap I had in the first debate. [Laughter] Although it turns out millions of Americans focused in on the second debate who didn't focus in on the first debate, and I happen to be one of them. [Laughter]

I particularly want to apologize to Chris Matthews. [Laughter] Four years ago, I gave

him a thrill up his leg—[laughter]—this time around I gave him a stroke. [Laughter]

Of course, there's a lot of things I learned from that experience. For example, I learned that there are worse things that can happen to you on your anniversary than forgetting to buy a gift. [Laughter] So take note, gentlemen.

Now, win or lose, this is my last political campaign. So I'm trying to drink it all in. Unfortunately, Mayor Bloomberg will only let me have 16 ounces of it. [Laughter] But that's okay. I'm still making the most of my time in the city. Earlier today I went shopping at some stores in Midtown. I understand Governor Romney went shopping for some stores in Midtown. [Laughter]

And it brought back some great memories because, some of you know, I went to school here in New York, had a wonderful experience here. I used to love walking through Central Park, loved to go to old Yankee Stadium, the house that Ruth built, although he really did not build that. [Laughter] I hope everybody is aware of that.

It's been 4 years since I was last at the Al Smith Dinner. And I have to admit some things have changed since then. I've heard some people say: "Barack, you're not as young as you used to be. Where's that golden smile? Where's that pep in your step?" And I say: "Settle down, Joe. I'm trying to run a Cabinet

meeting here.” [Laughter] He does smile when he says it though.

Tomorrow it’s back to campaigning. I visit cities and towns across our great country, and I hear the same thing everywhere I go: Honestly, we were hoping to see Michelle. [Laughter] And I have to admit it can be a grind. Sometimes it feels like this race has dragged on forever. But Paul Ryan assured me that we’ve only been running for 2 hours and 50-something minutes. [Laughter]

Of course, the economy is on everybody’s minds. The unemployment rate is at its lowest level since I took office. I don’t have a joke here. I just thought it would be useful to remind everybody that the unemployment rate is at the lowest it’s been since I took office. [Laughter]

And we’re getting to that time when folks are making up their minds. Just the other day, Honey Boo Boo endorsed me. [Laughter] So that’s a big relief.

Ultimately, though, tonight is not about the disagreements Governor Romney and I may have. It’s what we have in common, beginning with our unusual names. Actually, Mitt is his middle name. I wish I could use my middle name. [Laughter]

And even though we’re enjoying ourselves tonight, we’re both thinking ahead of our final debate on Monday. I’m hoping that Governor Romney and I will have a chance to answer the question that is on the minds of millions of Americans watching at home: Is this happening again? [Laughter] Why aren’t they putting on “The Voice”? [Laughter]

Now, Monday’s debate is a little bit different because the topic is foreign policy. Spoiler alert: We got bin Laden. [Applause] Of course, world affairs are a challenge for every candidate. After—some of you guys remember, after my foreign trip in 2008, I was attacked as a celebrity because I was so popular with our allies overseas. And I have to say, I’m impressed with how well Governor Romney has avoided that problem. [Laughter]

Now, just so everyone knows, in our third debate, we won’t spend a whole lot of time in-

terrupting each other. We will also interrupt the moderator, just to mix things up.

And finally, let me say that I’ve been doing some thinking, and I’ve decided that for our final debate, I’m going to go back to the strategy I used to prepare for the first debate. [Laughter] I’m just kidding; I’m trying to make Axelrod sweat a little bit. [Laughter] Get him a little nervous. [Laughter]

In all seriousness, I couldn’t be more honored to be here this evening. I’m honored to be with leaders of both the private and public sectors, and particularly, the extraordinary work that is done by the Catholic Church.

It’s written in Scripture that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance, character, and character, hope. This country has fought through some very tough years together, and while we still have a lot of work ahead, we’ve come as far as we have mainly because of the perseverance and character of ordinary Americans. And it says something about who we are as a people that in the middle of a contentious election season, opposing candidates can share the same stage, people from both parties can come together to support a worthy cause.

And I particularly want to thank Governor Romney for joining me because I admire him very much as a family man and a loving father, and those are two titles that will always matter more than any political ones.

So we may have different political perspectives, but I think—in fact, I’m certain—that we share the hope that the next 4 years will reflect the same decency and the same willingness to come together for a higher purpose that are on display this evening. May we all, in the words of Al Smith, do our full duty as citizens.

God bless you. God bless your families. And may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:23 p.m. at the Waldorf Astoria New York hotel. In his remarks, he referred to actor Clint Eastwood; Alfred E. Smith IV, great-grandson of former Gov. Alfred E. Smith of New York, and his wife Nan; Archbishop of New York Cardinal

Timothy M. Dolan, president, Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation; Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney and his wife Ann; Chris Matthews, host, MSNBC's "Hardball With Chris Matthews" program; Vice President Joe Biden; Republican Vice Presi-

dential nominee Paul D. Ryan; 6-year-old beauty pageant participant Alana Thompson, in her role on TLC's "Here Comes Honey Boo Boo!" program; and David M. Axelrod, communications director, Obama 2012 reelection campaign.

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Fairfax, Virginia October 19, 2012

The President. Hello, Virginia! Are you fired up? Are you ready to go? I can't hear you! Well, it's good to be back. Thank you.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Can everybody please give Cecile a big round of applause for the great introduction and the work she does? We've got your Congressman here, Gerry Connolly in the house.

Eighteen days. Eighteen days, Virginia. Eighteen days and you're going to step into a voting booth. And you're going to have a very big choice to make, not just a choice between two candidates or two parties, but between two fundamentally different visions for this country that we love.

Governor Romney has got his sales pitch. We heard it the other night in the debate. He's been running around talking about his five-point plan for the economy.

Audience member. Boo!

The President. Don't boo, vote. [Applause] Vote!

He wants you to believe that somehow he'll create 12 million jobs, cut taxes by \$5 trillion, even though it favors the wealthiest Americans. None of this will add to the deficit.

When folks who don't actually work for Governor Romney start crunching the numbers, it turns out, the tax plan doesn't add up, jobs plan doesn't create jobs, deficit plan doesn't reduce the deficit. An economist at the New York Times put it this morning, "There's no jobs plan; there's just a snow job on the American people." A snow job.

Virginia, you've heard of the New Deal, you've heard of the Square Deal, the Fair

Deal. Mitt Romney is trying to give you a sketchy deal. [Laughter] A sketchy deal.

And it's really just a one-point plan, not a five point plan: one point, folks at the very top play by a different set of rules than all of you.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Listen, don't boo, vote. [Laughter]

If he offered you that deal when he was in corporate finance, you wouldn't give him a dime. So why would you give him his vote?

This same philosophy that's been squeezing the middle class family for more than a decade, the same philosophy that got us into this mess. We can't go back to that.

Audience members. No!

The President. I've met too many good Americans who work so hard, show so much resilience, so much resolve; we have been fighting our way back from some of the same policies he's advocating. We have been there, we have tried it, we can't go back. We are moving forward. And that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

Now, I believe that the biggest issue in this election is how do we rebuild a strong middle class and provide ladders for opportunity all those who want to get into the middle class, who are willing to work hard, willing to take responsibility. Are we going to make sure that we're a country where everybody gets a fair shot and everybody is doing their fair share and everybody is playing by the same rules?

So the economy is the dominant issue. But I want everybody to understand that that's not the only place where Governor Romney is offering you a sketchy deal. It's bad enough that my opponent wants to take us back to the failed economic policies of the past. But when it comes to issues critical to women—the right