

they're more conscientious than we were. So this is—the generation coming behind us, I mean, they are spectacular. We've just got to make sure that we leave for them a political system that allows them to express all that incredible creativity and ingenuity and wonderful values that they're going to be able to express through our politics. That's what this project is about, and we can't do it without you. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. at the Hilton Chicago hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Michael J. Jordan, board member, Obama for America; Reps. Robin L. Kelly, Cheri Bustos, Bill Foster, and Richard M. Kelly; Ann Callis, former chief judge, Madison County Circuit Court in Edwardsville, IL; and former White House Counsel Abner J. Mikva.

## Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in Chicago

May 29, 2013

*The President.* Thank you, everybody. Thank you. No, no, no, don't do that. This is my—you know, this is like old home week.

*Bettylu K. Saltzman.* Mr. President.

*The President.* Yes?

*Mrs. Saltzman.* Sandy Levin is here from Michigan.

*The President.* Yes.

*Mrs. Saltzman.* Sandy Levin.

*The President.* We've got a—that's because he's got a relative here. [Laughter] The good excuse to—

*Rep. Sander M. Levin.* I came here to cheer for the Red Wings.

*The President.* Oh, no!

*Audience members.* Boo!

*The President.* Secret Service, can you have this man removed, please? [Laughter] The—[laughter].

*Audience member.* What's the score?

*The President.* We don't know yet. If anybody is monitoring the score, please let us know. I'll make the announcement.

Well, look, everybody here has been introduced, but I want to say something about everybody. First of all, the Whip, Steny Hoyer, does a great job every single day. And there's nobody in the House of Representatives who understands the mechanics of getting things done and is able to deliver on behalf of the values that we care about than an outstanding Congressman from Maryland: Steny Hoyer.

Steve Israel has the thankless job of traveling around the country every day on behalf of Democrats, trying to get a Democratic House back. And he does it with good humor and grace and has been outstanding. And we're so grateful for him. It also happens to be the day before his birthday, so wish every—everybody wish Steve a happy birthday.

I was going to say nice things about Sandy Levin, but we'll skip over that. [Laughter] Actually, Sandy is wonderful, and nobody fights for working people harder than Sandy Levin. And we're just grateful him, for everything that he does.

Jan Schakowsky has been a progressive champion in this State for so many years and was one of my earliest supporters when I ran for the United States Senate. And I could not have ever achieved what I did nationally without the support of Jan Schakowsky. So we're grateful for her.

Nancy Pelosi. It is absolutely true that the things I'm proudest of having accomplished as President, I accomplished with Nancy Pelosi fighting every step of the way. You could not have a better partner than her. She is tough as nails. She is a great politician. She is a great leader. But all that's in service of a mission, which is to make sure that the American people can achieve their dreams through hard work and responsibility.

And I was mentioning this to the other—we had a little event—larger event downtown; I guess we’re now in River North. But I said to them that one of—we’re all politicians; we’re all members of parties. But one of the things that I’m proud of as a Democrat is the fact that at certain critical junctures, we’re willing to put what is politically expedient aside to do what’s right. And I’ve seen Nancy do that, consistently. I’ve seen her be willing, not just to stare down the other side and say, “No, this is what’s important for the American people,” I’ve seen her—to her own constituencies and her own base—say: “You know what? This is something that we need to do to compromise and get something done.”

And I’ve got to tell you, I could not be prouder of Nancy Pelosi and the work that she’s done, and I could not be more anxious and eager to have her back as Speaker of the House. She is a great friend. So, finally, before I just make some very brief remarks and then I want to spend some time on questions, I’ve got to talk about Bettylu and Paul. No, it’s going to—you know, don’t worry. [Laughter]

*Mrs. Saltzman.* Should I leave the room?

*The President.* No, no, it’s just an expression of love. The—I don’t know if Bettylu actually told me that she thought I could be President. [Laughter] But what I do know is this, that I—when I had just gotten out of law school and was still finding my way, and I had come back here, and I was assigned to work to register voters with Project Vote, Bettylu even then was at the forefront of a nonpartisan effort to get people registered and voting, back in 1992. And right away, Bettylu treated me like a son and with the warmth and concern, and she was somebody who introduced me to so many of the people in this room and introduced me to so many people here in Chicago.

And so when I look around the room and I see folks like Joan Harris and Judy Gaynor and people who have been supporters of mine from the get-go, I can all trace that back to Bettylu. And we’ve got kind of a Obama cabal here in this room. [Laughter] But it’s fitting that we’re here, because she invested high hopes and expectations in me. And through all

the ups and downs of my political career, she has been a constant, and she’s always been there and has always been supportive. And when times have been tough, she was right there and stepping up all over again. And Paul, who may have been skeptical during this whole time—[laughter]—was kind enough to go along with it.

And so I make this point only—there are very few people—Steny or Nancy, you may have somebody in your life like this, where you can honestly say—it’s not just words—you can honestly say, I probably would not be here today were it not for—I can honestly say I probably would not be President of the United States were it not for Bettylu Saltzman. And so I just wanted to say that. That’s true. [Applause] That’s true. That is true. Love that woman. Love Bettylu. It’s true. Love that woman. [Laughter] All right.

*Mrs. Saltzman.* Thank you, thank you.

*The President.* It’s true.

So we’re going to have time for questions. I’m just going to make a couple of quick remarks to give you a sense of where we are now.

If you read the headlines over the last couple of days, you’d actually see housing recovering, the economy stronger than expected, stock market hitting record highs. And you’d have an impression, rightly, that having—after having gone through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, that we are—we have recovered faster, we have gone further, our economy is doing better than just about every industrialized country in the world, or at least a large portion of them. And that’s good news, and we should celebrate that.

But if you go beneath the headlines, what we also know is that there are huge numbers of people all across America who are still seeing their house underwater, huge numbers of Americans who want to work, believe in the dignity of work, but no matter how hard they try right now, still can’t find a job.

There are still kids just a few miles from here, who are threatened by gun violence, who aren’t in a school that is giving them what they need to compete in this 21st century, and whose prospects are dim, if we’re honest, not

because they don't have the innate capacity, but because we as a society have decided, that's not our priority.

We still have a situation in which, on the one hand, our energy future is more promising than we've ever allowed ourselves to believe. I mean, we will probably be a net exporter of traditional fossil fuels over the next 20 years—within the next 20 years; probably a net exporter of natural gas in the next 3 or 4 years—something that could not be imagined even 5, 10 years ago—because of the dynamism and technology that America has produced.

But the flipside is, we also know that the climate is warming faster than anybody anticipated 5 or 10 years ago, and that the future of Bettylu's grandkids, in part, is going to depend on our willingness to deal with something that we may not be able to see or smell, the way you could when the Chicago River was on fire, or at least could have caught on fire, but is in some ways more serious, more fundamental.

America is probably more tolerant, more accepting of difference than any time in our history. Obviously, you've got an African American President, a former and soon-to-be-again female Speaker of the House. The work that we did together to end "don't ask, don't tell" is something that I could not be prouder of. But we also know that there's still a lot of people who are excluded in our society and we've got more work to do.

Here in Illinois, we've got a vote on same-sex marriage that's going to be coming up in the State legislature. And I just want to say for the record, it's something that I deeply support. I wrestled with this for a long time, and I am absolutely convinced, it is the right thing to do. And we have to make sure that wherever we go, we are reminding people that the essence of America is that everybody is treated equally under the law, without exception.

And so, across the board—whether it's getting early childhood education done or rebuilding our infrastructure when we've got bridges that are buckling all across the country and airports that aren't working the way they're supposed to and ports that are too small to accommodate the big ships that are going to be

coming through the Panama Canal; whether it's making sure that we've got job training for people who have to retrain for the jobs of the future—we have a lot of business to do.

And the good news is that we have all the ingredients for success. We've got the best cards. And there's not a country on Earth that would not gladly trade places with the United States of America. The bad news is, is that what's stopping us from making more progress than we've already made is a situation in Washington in which people are willing to put the next election ahead of the next generation.

And I've said this before, and I will say it again: I've run my last election. My only interest at this point is effective governance. My only interest is making sure that when I look back 20 years from now, I say I accomplished everything that I could while I had this incredible privilege to advance the interests of the broadest number of Americans and to make sure that this country was stronger and more prosperous than it was when I came into office. That's my only interest.

And that means that I am willing to work with anybody—Republican, Democrat, or Independent—to get stuff done. And I am not going to put the pause button on for the next year and a half or 2 years or whatever it is simply to position myself for the next election. If I've got a Republican who's willing to work with me to rebuild our infrastructure, let's go. I've got a Republican out there who's willing to get serious about what we need to deal with our long-term deficit challenges, I'm prepared; come on, let's talk. I've got somebody who has a different approach to dealing with climate change—I don't have much patience for people who deny climate change, but if you've got creative approaches, market-based approaches, tell me about them. If you think I'm doing it the wrong way, let me know. I'm happy to work with you.

But what I have not seen so far is the same willingness that I saw and continue to see in Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer and Jan Schakowsky and Sandy Levin, that same willingness to put party interests or political interests aside

to advance the interests of the American people. I have not seen that on the other side yet.

And what that tells me is, is that they've still got their minds on winning another election. And if that's the case, then even as we're doing everything we can to govern and even as I'm going to continue to reach out to the other side, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that we've got Nancy Pelosi back in the speakership, because that's where she belongs. And I know the American people will benefit from her leadership.

So, last thing I'll say, and then we'll open it up for questions: This will be hard. And frankly, the way gerrymandering now works and the geographical distribution of the population makes winning back the House a challenge. But you know what? Me winning the Presidency was a challenge. Nancy Pelosi becoming the first female Speaker, that was a challenge. It wasn't easy back in 2006. It wasn't easy back in 2008. So it's always challenging. Politics in America is tough, and it's competitive, and the country does have some very deep divisions on a whole range of issues. But it can be done.

## Remarks on the Federal Student Loan Program May 31, 2013

Good morning, everybody. Have a seat, have a seat. Welcome to the White House. I know it's a little warm. *[Laughter]*

One of my favorite things about this job is that I get to spend some time with remarkable young people from all across the country. It inspires me. It makes me feel good. Those of you who have had to put on suits and ties and show up at the White House first thing on a Friday morning may not feel the same way I do—*[laughter]*—but I appreciate all of you being here. You cleaned up very well.

And these students and graduates are here to talk about something that matters to millions of young people and their families, and that's the cost of a college education. Because this isn't just critical for their futures, but it's also critical for America's futures.

Over the past 4½ years, we've been fighting our way back from a financial crisis and an in-

And the question is going to be, are not only the folks in this room, who are the choir, but are we able and willing to mobilize friends, neighbors, coworkers, business partners, and grab them by the collar—not literally, necessarily, but figuratively—and say to them, “The stakes are big here, and we've got to stop fooling around”?

If all of you feel the same passion and intensity around this midterm election as so many of you felt in 2007, 2008 when I was running for President or in 2004 when I was running for Senate, then we're going to get the House back. And when we do, we're going to be in a position to deliver for that next generation. And nothing else should matter. Nothing else is more important.

Thank you. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:37 p.m. at the residence of Bettylu K. and Paul W. Saltzman. In his remarks, he referred to Joan W. Harris, chairwoman, Irving B. Harris Foundation; and Judith Gaynor, founding cochair, Human Rights Watch Chicago Committee.

credibly punishing recession—the worst since the Great Depression—and it cost millions of Americans their jobs and their homes, the sense of security that they'd spent their lives building up.

The good news is, today, our businesses have created nearly 7 million new jobs over the past 38 months. Five hundred thousand of those jobs are in manufacturing. We're producing more of our own energy, we're consuming less energy, and we're importing less from other countries. The housing market is coming back. The stock market has rebounded. Our deficits are shrinking at the fastest pace in 50 years. People's retirement savings are growing again. The rise of health care costs are slowing. The American auto industry is back.

So we're seeing progress, and the economy is starting to pick up steam. The gears are starting to turn again, and we're getting some trac-