

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in New York City

October 25, 2013

Good to see you. Thank you, everybody, thank you! Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat, have a seat. It is wonderful to be here. Thank you so much to all of you, not just for what you're doing now for the Democratic Party, but what so many of you have done in the past.

There are a couple of people I want to acknowledge. Obviously, first of all, Dennis and Karen, thank you so much for your incredible hospitality. To Ken and Kathryn, thank you so much for everything that you do as well. Our outstanding leader in the House of Representatives and inductee into the Women's Hall of Fame, Nancy Pelosi. Steve Israel, for the thankless, but critical job that he has done, thank you. And then three outstanding members of the delegation—Nita Lowey, Tim Bishop, and Paul Tonko—thank you, guys, for the great work that you guys do.

I want to spend most of my time just answering questions and having a good conversation with you. But today I had this wonderful visit in the afternoon—some of you may have seen—I went over to P-TECH, a high school collaboration with not only the New York public school system, but also with IBM and the city colleges and the CUNY system. And the concept is that we can get young people engaged in STEM education—science, technology, engineering, math—and create a pathway for them so that they enter in ninth grade and they can go through, effectively, grade 14, and by the time they finish, not only have they completed their high school degree, they've completed an associate's degree. And IBM has basically designed the curriculum in such a way where these young people are at the front of the line in applying for jobs with IBM.

And there are mentorship programs, and these young people—I had a chance to spend time in the classroom, and they were incredible. And they were doing projects, and they were working on computers, and they had a peer teaching system. And I asked them if they could help me help Malia with some math

homework because—[laughter]—I don't know if some of you have experienced this, where you get to the point where your children ask you for help and you suddenly realize you have no idea what's going on. [Laughter]

And the enthusiasm and the sense of possibility that these young people expressed made you incredibly optimistic about the country. And that's what we should be thinking about every single day. That's what Washington should be about every single day. Because there are young people like that all across the country where, when you meet them, you're optimistic. Regardless of the news, regardless of the blogs, when you see what's happening on the ground, it reminds you of why this is the greatest country on Earth.

Now, that spirit obviously hasn't always been reflected in Washington, and we just went through an episode that expressed Washington's dysfunctions in ways that we haven't seen in quite some time. I don't have to comment on it too much. I think everybody saw how destructive it was. But it was a symptom of a larger challenge that we have, and that's that too often, our politics have become detached from the day-to-day lives of ordinary people and ideology ends up overcoming common sense, and folks are more determined to beat the other side than they are to actually deliver for the people who sent them there. And that's why the stakes for next year are high, and that's why the commitment that all of you have expressed by being here tonight is so important.

If you scan this room and you talk to people, my suspicion is there are a wide range of views on a lot of issues: on social issues, on economic issues. We're not uniform. And one of the great things about the Democratic Party has always been that there is a lot of room for dissent. It's not always pleasant for me and Nancy, but it's healthy, because our basic principle is, how do we get at the right answer, how do we figure out a problem in front of us and make sure that in everything we do, we're

keeping uppermost in our minds providing opportunity and growing the economy and creating jobs and building a middle class. And we don't assume that we have a monopoly on wisdom, and so we want that debate and that discussion.

So not everybody here agrees on everything, but we agree on the vision of what this country should be, that it is one in which opportunity and prosperity should be broad based. We believe that every child should have a chance, regardless of what they look like, where they come from, what their last name is. We believe in treating everybody fairly, regardless of what they look like or who they love or what God they worship. And we believe that government has a role to play. And part of what the debate and the battle has been about over the last several years—what role do we have as a country, collectively, to create the platform and the tools for people to succeed.

So the shutdown was about more than just health care. It was about sort of a contrast in visions about what our obligations are to each other as fellow citizens. And we've got the better side of that argument, one that's truer to our history. But we're going to have to continue to push. We're going to have to continue to fight.

As we close out the new year, we still have a chance to get immigration reform done and a chance to affirm that we're a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. As we come to the end of the year, we still have a chance to do something like the farm bill that is important for rural America, but is also important for making sure that kids don't go hungry in this country and we've got a budget that is going to have to

reflect our priorities. And if we're not investing in places like P-TECH, if we're not investing in science and technology, if we're not making sure that we're rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our airports—if we're not doing those things, then we're not true to the vision that allowed a lot of us to be in a room like this even though we weren't born into a room like this.

So the stakes are high. And the one thing I'm absolutely confident about is that if we work hard, that we can make a case to the American people and we can win. Because what we care about—and what was expressed in that school that I was in today—is what this country is all about. And what I also know is, is that when Nancy Pelosi is Speaker of the House of Representatives, she acts on behalf of that vision, even when it's hard and even when it's inconvenient and even when it runs contrary to the politics and the polls. I've seen it before, and I'll see it again. But I'll only be able to see it because of all of you.

So thank you so much, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:38 p.m. at the residence of Dennis and Karen Mehiel. In his remarks, he referred to Kenneth I. Chenault, chairman and chief executive officer, American Express Co., and his wife Kathryn; and Rep. Steven J. Israel, in his capacity as chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. He also referred to Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) in New York City. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address

October 26, 2013

Hi, everybody. A few weeks ago, we launched an important new part of the Affordable Care Act. It's called the marketplace. And for Americans without health insurance and Americans who buy insurance on their own because they can't get it at work, it's a very big deal.

If you're one of those people, the Affordable Care Act makes you part of a big group plan for the first time. The marketplace is where you can apply and shop for affordable new health insurance choices. It gathers insurers under one system to compete for your busi-