

So we've got to get folks activated and involved. And ultimately, what you do day to day, away from the TV cameras, that's what is going to make a powerful difference. In the same way that Bill used some of the skills that he learned during the campaign to now organize around wildfires and environmental issues in Colorado, hopefully, all of you have taken away something from your involvement and made it manifest throughout communities all across the country. We need you to keep on doing that. That's the essence of citizenship. If nothing else, that's what the campaign was about.

And I always remind people, I've run my last campaign. Michelle is not sorry about that. [*Laughter*] I've got a little over 1,200 days left in office. I am going to spend every waking minute of every one of those days thinking about and then acting upon any good ideas out there that are going to help ordinary Ameri-

cans succeed, that are going to make sure that the next generation believes in the American Dream because they've seen it in their own lives. That's how I'm going to spend my time. I hope that's how you're going to spend your time. Because if you do, I guarantee you, we will continue to make progress, and we will deliver on everything that we talked about in 2008 and 2012.

Thank you very much, OFA. I love you guys. Keep it up! Keep it up! Are you still fired up?

*Audience members.* Fired up!

*The President.* All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:45 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom of the Mandarin Oriental Washington, DC, hotel. In his remarks, he referred to William Townsend, field representative, Organizing for Action; and actor George T. Clooney.

## Remarks at an Organizing for Action Dinner

July 22, 2013

Hey! Hello, everybody! Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. Everybody, have a seat. We're among friends here; we don't have to be too formal.

Well, first of all, those of you who don't know Jon Carson, Jon didn't get on TV much during the campaign, and Messina was hogging all the attention. [*Laughter*] But there is nobody who is a better grassroots organizer than Jon Carson. And we owe so much to him, and we're so proud of all the work he's doing now. He is outstanding.

I want to thank our outstanding Democratic leader in the House of Representatives—perhaps soon to be Speaker again—Nancy Pelosi in the house. Fighting the good fight. I could not have a better partner than Nancy. And alongside her is my dear friend—and I think he probably had to take off, but I just want to still acknowledge him publicly—Harry Reid is fighting the good fight every single day, and we're so proud of him.

So I'm not going to give a long set of remarks, because I know all of you and mostly I just want to hear from you and have a good

conversation for about 45 minutes. This week, I'm going to Galesburg, Illinois. I see an Illinois table here, so a number of you know where Galesburg is. Galesburg is where I gave my first big speech after I had been elected to the United States Senate. It was the commencement at Knox College, and it was a speech about the economy. This was in 2005, so well before the financial crisis. The housing bubble was still going strong; people were still maxing out on their credit cards. On paper at least, it looked like the economy was growing.

But in this speech, what I said was that the world has changed. Technology, globalization, the weakening of unions, all of this had shifted the basic bargain that had existed basically during the post-World War II era. So that for a lot of folks, the idea that if you worked hard, you could make it, you could get a good job that paid a living wage, that you would have the security of decent health care, that you would be able to retire with dignity and respect, that you could count on your kids having a better future than you did—that those things were slipping out of the grasp of a lot of folks.

And in Galesburg, Illinois, Maytag had been a massive employer there, and Maytag had moved out to Mexico. And what had swept through a lot of towns throughout the Midwest and Northeast had happened in Galesburg, where people were left high and dry. Tax base had declined, unemployment had soared, a lot of folks out of work; the jobs that replaced them generally were jobs that paid a much lower wage.

And all these trends that had been taking place were visible at the time—rising inequality, struggles in the middle class—but they were papered over to some extent by the bubble. And by the time I took office, the bottom had fallen out.

Now, the good news is, over the last 5 years, we fought alongside people like Nancy Pelosi. But most importantly, because of the grit and resilience and determination of the American people, we've been able to clear away the rubble and get back to where we were.

The speech I'm going to be giving on Wednesday focuses on the fact that those underlying trends still exist. They are still a central challenge that we face. That there's no more important question for this country than how do we create an economy in which everybody who works hard feels like they can get ahead and feel some measure of security. It isn't to say that other issues are not important. Obviously, if we don't do something about climate change, that has an impact for generations to come. Obviously, if we're not vigilant, we can see a continued erosion in women's rights and civil rights. Obviously, the scourge of gun violence is something that we still have to stay focused on. But what we also know is, is that so many of the issues that we care about are more likely to progress if people feel good about their own lives and their economic situation.

So this is going to be more of a thematic speech, and then we're going to follow it up with a series of more concrete proposals, some of which I've made before, some of which will be new. But the key is to try to make sure that this town refocuses on the issues that matter most to people day to day. Because I think a lot of Americans out there, they're watching—well, they don't watch cable TV, but if they did—or they're listening to the talking heads, they would say to themselves, this doesn't connect with me and what I'm going through and what my children are going through.

And so I'm excited about the speech, not because I think the speech is going to change any minds, but because it gives us an opportunity to refocus attention on the thing that the American people sent me to focus on. And some of the proposals that we've put forward are ones that are going to be very difficult to get through this Congress. Of course, everything is very difficult to get through this Congress. [*Laughter*]

But our goal, I think, is to lay out a vision and a plan and then to just keep on pushing, not just legislatively, but across the board, so that we're changing the nature of the conversation and focusing on what matters. For us to be able to amplify that, we're going to need OFA to get behind it. And for all of you to be here and to be willing to invest your time and energy and money into that effort makes all the difference in the world.

So for that, I'm thankful. And with that, I will take some questions. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:13 p.m. at the Mandarin Oriental Washington, DC, hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jon Carson, executive director, and James A. Messina, national chairman, Organizing for Action.