

Statement on the Observance of Ash Wednesday

March 5, 2014

Today Michelle and I join our fellow Christians in the United States and around the world in marking Ash Wednesday. Lent is a season of reflection, repentance, and re-

newal, a chance to recommit to loving and serving one another and to deepen our faith in preparation for the Easter celebration to come.

Statement on the Senate's Failure To Confirm Debo P. Adebile as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights

March 5, 2014

The Senate's failure to confirm Debo Adebile to lead the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice is a travesty based on wildly unfair character attacks against a good and qualified public servant. Mr. Adebile's qualifications are impeccable. He represents the best of the legal profession, with wide-ranging experience and the deep respect of those with whom he has worked. His unwavering dedication to protecting every American's civil and constitutional rights under the law—including voting rights—could not be more important right now. And Mr. Adebile's personal story—rising from adversity to become someone who President Bush's Solicitor General referred to as one of the Nation's most capable litigators—is a story that proves what America

has been and can be for people who work hard and play by the rules. As a lawyer, Mr. Adebile has played by the rules. And now Washington politics have used the rules against him. The fact that his nomination was defeated solely based on his legal representation of a defendant runs contrary to a fundamental principle of our system of justice, and those who voted against his nomination denied the American people an outstanding public servant.

NOTE: The statement referred to former President George W. Bush; former U.S. Solicitor General Paul D. Clement; and Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was convicted for the 1981 murder of Philadelphia, PA, police officer Daniel Faulkner.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Boston, Massachusetts

March 5, 2014

Thank you. Hello! Everybody, have a seat, have a seat. First of all, I love Deval Patrick, and Massachusetts has been extraordinarily fortunate to have him as your Governor. And I believe that. And I'm fortunate to have him as a friend. And if you look at the track record of what's happened in Massachusetts, then it's a testimony in terms of jobs and growth and infrastructure and progress on schools. It's all a testimony to Deval's ability to bring people together and get them working on behalf of the Commonwealth.

You are also lucky to have an outstanding young new mayor, replacing an outstanding older mayor. I don't think Tom would object to me characterizing him that way. But all reports are, Marty Walsh is doing just a great job. So congratulations for your efforts.

A couple of former public servants who have not given up engaging in public service, one of them a great friend and a great Governor, who is actually an import, but did extraordinary work in Ohio, is teaching here now at Harvard. But very proud to call him a friend: Ted Strickland is here, former Governor of Ohio. And

somebody who I've known for a long time, is just a good, kind man who cares deeply about all people—and some of that frankly is inherited, and some of it is just unique to who he is, and he's got just an extraordinary family—former Congressman Patrick Kennedy. Where's Patrick? There he is over there.

[At this point, former Rep. Kennedy held up his son Owen.]

Yes! The newest member—some new members of the Kennedy clan, right there. [Laughter] When are you running? Isn't that how that works? [Laughter] Absolutely.

So Deval said it well, and I want to spend most of my time in conversation as opposed to just giving a long speech. We are in this remarkable, tumultuous time, and because the world is changing rapidly in almost every respect, it can be scary, and it can make folks anxious. But I am so extraordinarily hopeful about this country of ours.

When I took office, we were in the midst of crisis. We've now seen over 4 years of economic growth. We've seen 8.5 million new jobs created. We've seen the housing market bounce back. We've seen an auto industry that has come roaring back. We've seen manufacturing return for the first time since the 1990s. There has been an extraordinary energy boom, both in traditional energy sources and clean energy, at the same time as we've reduced our carbon emissions more than any other nation on Earth during this period.

We've made progress on school reform. We have made sure that every American is able to get access to health insurance, something that Presidents from both parties have fought for, for almost 100 years. And the country has moved decisively in the direction of justice when it comes to the LGBT community. We've gone—more to do, but the trends are inexorable.

We see in our children and in our grandchildren greater tolerance, greater willingness to work with other people, desire for service. We've got the best universities in the world. We've got the best workforce in the world. We've got the best scientists in the world. We

have all the ingredients to make sure the 21st century is an American century just like the 20th.

And yet folks are anxious, because in the midst of all this, there's also great change. And what I've tried to do as President—the President of all people, but also as the leader of the party, as a Democrat—is to make sure that we're translating old, tried-and-true values into policies that meet the challenges of this time of change.

And at the heart of it, the heart of who we are as Americans, but also who we are as Democrats, as the party of Jefferson and FDR and JFK, is the simple premise that everybody in this country, if they work hard, can get ahead; that everybody has a chance to live out their dreams; that opportunity is there for the taking if you work hard, if you are responsible. It doesn't matter the circumstances into which you are born. It doesn't matter if you're born on the South Side of Chicago and your grandpa was a janitor or if you're born in Hawaii to a teenage mom who ends up raising you without a dad. It doesn't matter. You've got a shot if you're willing to work hard. And we as a society are going to create a platform and provide the tools to make sure people can succeed.

That's the idea. That's what makes me a proud American and a proud Democrat. And part of the change that has made folks anxious is they're not sure whether that still holds true, whether the trend lines are going to allow us to sustain that. And so what I've been talking about since I was first elected to this office, what I talked about in getting reelected, and what I talked about in this year's State of the Union and what I talked about today and what I'm going to be talking about tomorrow and for the next 3 years of my Presidency is, how do we make sure we're advancing policies that assure those ideals are alive and well not just now, but for future generations?

So whether it's creating more good jobs or making sure our workers are trained for those jobs, or making sure that every child is getting a world-class education, or making sure that work pays in this society, or making sure that people are not discriminated against on the ba-

sis of race or religion or sexual orientation, or making sure that we have an immigration system that is just and can advance our economy, or making sure that we have an energy policy that is visionary and doesn't just look to the past, but looks to the future, and also make sure that we are good stewards of this planet—all these policies come down to me insisting that it is within our means, within our power, to pass on this wonderful gift, this idea of opportunity for all, to the next generation.

And it turns out, most of these ideas garner majority support out in the country. When I talk about minimum wage, not only is it good policy, but the majority of the country, including half of Republicans, agree with it. You go into a room, I don't care how conservative a county, and you ask, "Do you want your daughters to be treated the same on the job as your sons?"—everybody is going to say yes.

But our political system is not reflecting that consensus, and that's what we are fighting for. And that's why these midterms are so important, as Deval said. I won't go through a litany of the challenges we've had with a certain set of Republicans in Congress that have then set the tone for the entire party, because it's not uniform. When you talk to them privately, there are still folks in that party who long to get stuff done and work in a bipartisan basis, but they're intimidated by the "say no" crowd.

But we have to recognize that part of it is up to us. It's not just on them. In the midterms, Democrats too often don't vote. Too often, when there's not a Presidential election, we don't think it's sexy, we don't think it's interesting. People tune out. And because the electorate has changed, we get walloped. It's happened before, and it could happen again if we do not fight on behalf of the things we care about in this election, not keeping our eye to the next election. And nobody is going to be more invested than me in having a Democrat

succeed me, to consolidate and solidify the gains that we've made during my Presidency. But right now we've got to make sure we're fighting in this election.

And the DNC helps. The DNC can make sure that instead of restricting the franchise for people all across the country, it's expanded. The DNC can make sure that the message we're talking about on minimum wage or equal pay or immigration reform gets out there and people hear it and they recognize how that can have an impact on their own lives.

So I'm going to need you. I'm going to put Deval to work—[laughter]—and I'm going to be asking the mayor to perhaps travel to some places. But most importantly, we're going to need a lot of young people who are out there fanning all across the country, working hard, just like they did in 2008, just like they did in 2012. And your efforts make a huge difference.

So I hope that just because I'm not on the ballot that people aren't going to take it easy this time. Because the ideas I care about and am fighting for are on the ballot. The progress we've made is on the ballot. The things that Deval has fought for here in Massachusetts are on the ballot. The things that Ted Strickland fought for when he was in Ohio and Patrick Kennedy fought for when it comes to mental health services, those things, they're all on the ballot. This counts. And I'm going to need you guys to step up, send a message to your friends and people who profess to care about these ideas: They better get involved this time out.

All right. Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:48 p.m. at the Artists for Humanity EpiCenter. In his remarks, he referred to former Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston, MA. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the Situation in Ukraine March 6, 2014

Good afternoon, everybody. Before Jay takes some of your questions, I wanted to pro-

vide a brief update on our efforts to address the ongoing crisis in Ukraine.