

Statement on the Death of Thomas M. Menino

October 30, 2014

Michelle and I were saddened to hear of the passing of Tom Menino. Bold, big-hearted, and Boston strong, Tom was the embodiment of the city he loved and led for more than two decades. As Boston's longest serving mayor, Tom helped make his hometown the vibrant, welcoming, world-class place it is today. His legacy lives on in every neighborhood he

helped revitalize, every school he helped turn around, and every community he helped make a safer, better place to live. I had a chance to speak with Tom's wife Angela yesterday, and today our thoughts and prayers are with her, with the entire Menino family, and with the people of Boston who Tom loved so much and who loved him in return.

Remarks at a Campaign Rally for Gubernatorial Candidate Michael H. Michaud in Portland, Maine

October 30, 2014

The President. Hello, Portland! Hello, Maine! Oh, it is good to be back in Maine.

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you too! And I love the State of Maine. I mean, you guys just have a pretty State. It is just spectacular. And I appreciate whoever arranged for it to be in the fifties today. [Laughter]

Please give it up for your next Governor, Mike Michaud! "I like Mike!" "We like Mike!" We like Mike!

Audience members. We like Mike! We like Mike! We like Mike!

The President. We like Mike! We like Mike! We like Mike!

Audience members. We like Mike! We like Mike! We like Mike!

The President. And I want to thank a legendary son of Maine, Senator George Mitchell, for being here tonight. We've got your former Governor, John Baldacci is here. Your Congresswoman, Chellie Pingree is here. We've got your mayor, Mike Brennan is here.

And while he can't be here tonight, I want to say a few words about Senator Angus King. Angus is proudly independent. He's not focused on what's best for a political party, he's focused on what's best for the people of Maine. He's a gentleman and brings civility down to Washington. And I agree with what he said yesterday: that it's time to come together around

Mike Michaud as our choice to lead Maine forward.

But that depends on what happens in the next 5 days. Five days. Five days from now, you get to choose a new Governor. So you're going to have to grab your friends. You've got to grab your classmates, your coworkers. You've got to knock on some doors. You've got to make some phone calls. You have to visit mainedems.org and find your polling place. You've got to take everyone you know to cast a ballot for Mike Michaud.

And let me tell you why. George Mitchell talked about this. Mike talked about it. I'm proud to be a Democrat in part because of the traditions we represent. And one of those traditions is the idea that everybody who works hard and takes responsibility in this country should be able to make it.

And this country has made real progress since the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes. Over the last—over the past 4½ years, in part because of some really good work by people like Mike, who didn't forget where they came from and understood what it means to work hard—over the last 4½ years, American businesses have created more than 10 million new jobs. This morning we learned that our economy grew at a strong clip over the summer, even stronger than we'd expected. In fact, over the past 6 months, our economy has grown at the fastest pace in more than 10

years. So the truth is, America is outpacing most of the rest of the world. We've created more jobs here in the United States over the last 6 years than Japan, Europe, and all of the advanced nations combined. We've made real progress.

But what's also true is, is that the gains of a growing economy haven't been fully felt by everybody. You know all too well that Maine lags behind the rest of New England when it comes to job growth. Over the next week, you've got a chance to change that. You have a chance to choose a Governor who doesn't put political ideology first. You have a chance to choose a Governor that puts you first. And that's why it's so important for you to vote.

Mike learned the meaning of hard work by following in his dad's footsteps and his granddad's footsteps and punching a clock every day at the Great Northern Paper mill. And when sludge from that mill started to leak into the Penobscot River, Mike decided somebody had to stand up for families like his. So he ran for the State legislature, not because he wanted to be somebody, but because he wanted to do something, because he wanted to fight for somebody. He didn't care about fancy titles. He wanted to deliver for his neighbors and his friends and his family. And he helped clean up that river. And Mike has been fighting ever since for ordinary Mainers: That's who he is.

As your State senate president, Mike brought Democrats and Republicans together, balanced Maine's budget, gave workers who were struggling a hike in the minimum wage. In Congress, he worked across the aisle to pass a VA reform bill earlier this year, fought to make sure Maine's rural veterans get the health care that they've earned.

He's fought for job-creating investments throughout this State. He's helped make sure military families—our soldiers are equipped with American-made athletic footwear, like the kind the folks turn out at New Balance right here in Maine. He's fought for the investments in the kind of clean energy from the wind and the sea that's already creating good middle class jobs for Mainers. And if he had been Governor over the last 4 years, there'd have been

\$120 million of extra investment right here in Maine on clean energy. Apparently, your current Governor doesn't really believe that windmills work—[laughter]—which I thought was pretty interesting. I hadn't heard that one.

So that's why I like Mike. He wakes up every day fighting to make sure Mainers see their hard work pay off, making sure that responsibility is rewarded. He fights to make sure every kid, every worker across this State gets the same chance that he had—in fact, an even better chance—because he believes, like I believe, that America is a place where no matter what you look like, where you come from, what your last name is, who you love, you can make it if you try. That's the essence of what America is about.

And that's what this election is all about. When you step into the voting booth, you make a choice, and it's not just a choice between candidates or parties. It's a choice about your vision for America. It boils down to the simple question: Who's on your side?

Audience member. You!

The President. Who's expressing the values you care about? Who's going to fight for your future?

Audience members. Mike!

The President. This is a smart crowd. [Laughter]

Look, Republicans are patriots. They love this country. They love their families. There are all kinds of good people in the Republican Party. But they've got some bad ideas, which is okay. [Laughter] I mean, there are a lot of people I love. I've got a bunch of folks in my family who have got bad ideas. I love them—[laughter]—but I don't want them in charge of stuff.

So—and what's happened is, like a broken record, they just keep on offering the same tired theories of the economy that we know haven't worked—in fact, that have undermined the middle class. More tax breaks for those at the top, fewer investments in things like education, looser rules for polluters and credit card companies, a thinner safety net for folks who fall on hard times. We've tried those things. We tried those things before I got into office, and you saw how it turned out.

We know those ideas don't work. So Mike has got a different vision for what the future looks like, and I think most of you do too. And it's a vision rooted in our conviction that in America prosperity doesn't trickle down from the top. Prosperity grows from a rising, thriving middle class, from—[*applause*]. It happens because we build ladders for people to get into the middle class.

We think the economy grows best when it works for the many, not for the few. And that's what Mike believes. He believes it because that's his experience, that's his life. That's what he knows. He's seen it. He's not running to cut taxes for folks who don't need it, he's running to build the Maine economy from the middle class out. He knows that ideas should be judged not by whether they're Democrat or Republican, but whether they work.

And here's what we know works. We know that in this country, education is not just the key to economic growth, it's the best path into the middle class. So Mike is not running to tell parents that if you can't afford private schools, tough luck. I mean, think about that, Maine. He's running to invest in our public schools, bring down the cost of higher education, make college a reality for more people. That's what Mike believes.

Mike believes in access to affordable health care, that it's not a privilege, it's a right. So Mike is not running to block hard-working Americans from getting health insurance just because it doesn't fit your ideology. He's running to do what nine Republican Governors have already done. He's running to do what Democrats and Republicans here in Maine have already voted to do five separate times: expand access to Medicaid because it's good for our people. It makes sense for State budgets. That's not a red or blue issue, that's an American issue. Why wouldn't we want to make sure everybody has the chance to get decent health care?

Sometimes, issues are complicated, and then sometimes, issues are simple. And let me tell you, if your choice is between somebody whose platform is "don't let people get health care" and "let's make sure people have health

care and aren't going to emergency rooms, and it won't cost the State money because the Federal Government is helping," why wouldn't you want to do that? [*Laughter*] Why wouldn't you want to do that? Why wouldn't you want people to be healthier?

Mike believes that in America, nobody who works full time should have to raise their families in poverty. Which is why Mike Michaud would never veto a buck-fifty-an-hour raise for Maine's lowest income workers. He knows that can be the difference between a hard-working mom or dad being able to pay the bills and keep a roof over the heads of their kids. Mike wouldn't use the Governor's office to side with corporate interests at the expense of working families. Mike is running to give Maine a raise, because he understands that if somebody who right now is making \$14,000 a year working full time starts making \$15,000 or \$16,000, they're going to spend that money. And if they spend that money, then the businesses have more customers. And if businesses have more customers, then they make more profit. And if they make more profit, they hire more workers, and everybody benefits. And it's the right thing to do. And that's how America grows: when everybody who's working hard has a chance.

Mike Michaud believes America is stronger when women are full and equal participants in our economy. Earlier this year, Republicans in Washington said no to a national fair pay law.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Don't boo, vote. [*Laughter*] One of—yes, this is a solvable problem.

One of the Republicans running for national office—running right now, he's running right now, I'm quoting here—he said, "You could argue that money is more important to men." [*Laughter*] That's what he said. I'm not kidding. Now, women, let me just ask you, was he speaking for you? Do you agree with that?

Audience members. No!

The President. Look, if we're going to strengthen the middle class for the 21st century, then we need leaders from the 21st century who believe that women care just as much

about what they get paid as men care. We want women paid fairly. It's common sense.

Women are more and more not just contributors to the family budget, oftentimes, they may be the primary breadwinner. So this isn't just a woman's issue. This is a family issue; this is an American issue. Let's make sure women are treated fairly on the job. And while we're at it, let's make sure women control their own health care choices, not politicians, not insurers, not their bosses.

This is—like I said, some things are complicated, some things are not. Treating women fairly, that shouldn't be complicated. You know, "Mad Men" is a good show. I like it. But that's not what we need in Augusta or in Washington. When women succeed, America succeeds. And Mike is going to make sure that women succeed here in Maine.

Who is going to fight for you?

Audience members. Mike!

The President. The biggest corporations, they don't need another champion. They've already got a lot of lobbyists working for them. You need a champion. The folks who are doing really, really well, at the top of the economic pyramid, they don't need a champion. You do. Opportunity for a few, that's not what Maine is about, opportunity for all is what Maine is about. And those of you who've seen Mike, who know Mike, who've met him, you know what's in his heart. You know who he cares about. And that's why you have to vote.

If you want something better, you've got to vote for it. If you believe working families deserve a tax break, not millionaires, you've got to vote. If you want to invest in kids' schools, not ignore those schools, you've got to vote. If you think we should make it easier for young people to go to college, you've got to vote. If you think you deserve an honest day's pay for an honest day's work, you've got to vote.

Four years ago, Republicans won the Governor's race in Maine by less than 18 votes per precinct. Eighteen votes. Those 18 votes could be the difference between an economy that works for everybody or just for some. Those 18 votes, that could decide whether 135,000 Maine workers get the raise they deserve.

Those 18 votes could decide whether tens of thousands of Mainers are locked out of health insurance or they finally get the kind of coverage that allows them to take their kid to see a doctor. That's up to you.

So your vote will decide the course that Maine takes. That's why it's time for you to come together around one choice, one candidate, who you know will fight for you. And that candidate is Mike Michaud.

And let me just say this—[*applause*—]—let me say this: If you've come to this rally, you're probably going to vote.

Audience members. Right!

The President. I mean, you might have wandered in here thinking there was a basketball game going on. [*Laughter*] And if so, I want you to vote. But most of you who are here—most of you are here because you understand what's at stake, which is why you can't just stop at voting. You've got to get involved. I'm asking you to go talk to your neighbors and your friends and talk to one of the organizers in this room, or go to mainedems.org. Volunteer, make some phone calls for Mike, knock on some doors for Mike. Grab everybody you know, get them to vote for Mike. This election is too important to stay at home. Don't let somebody else choose your future for you.

I'm not on the ballot this time, and this is, sort of, the last election cycle in which I'm involved as President. And I know the hardest—look, it makes you a little wistful. You kind of—[*laughter*—]—because I do like campaigning. It's fun. And I know as I reflect back on the thing that I love so much about campaigning is that it reminds me about the American people, because you get to meet everybody, from all walks of life. You get to meet young moms who are just valiantly working on behalf of making sure their kids have a better life. You get to meet business owners who take pride in making something here in America and providing their workers a decent wage and showing what's possible for some young worker who comes in and can move up the ranks. You have a chance to meet veterans who just render extraordinary service to our country and then come back and suddenly are critical parts of

their community and giving back as first responders or as Little League coaches.

You just meet people from all walks of life, and it makes you so optimistic about the American people: how decent they are, how good they are, how hard-working they are, how resilient they are. And sometimes, it seems as if our political process doesn't reflect that. And it's not what we see on television; it's not what we read in the newspapers. And that's part of what makes it so hard to change the status quo.

So often, the people in power seem to be more concerned about getting more power than making sure that they're doing right by the people who sent them. And when you get discouraged—they're counting on you getting discouraged and cynical—they want you to think you're not going to make a difference so you don't get involved and you won't organize, you won't vote. And everybody gets caught up in this sense of sort of helplessness. Even when there are good decisions to be made right there that would make a difference in people's lives, nobody actually thinks they can happen.

And I'm here to tell you, don't buy into that cynicism, because despite what the cynics say, America is making progress. It's always making progress. That's what the American people do. They're strivers and dreamers, and they care about one another. We care about each other.

And despite unyielding opposition over these last 6 years, there are workers with jobs who

didn't have them before. There are families with health insurance who didn't have them before. There are students going to college who couldn't afford to attend it before. There are troops who have come home from Iraq and Afghanistan and are now with their families.

Cynicism didn't make that happen. Cynicism didn't put a man on the Moon. Cynicism has never ended a war or cured disease or built a business or taught a young mind. Cynicism is a choice that you make. And it's being fed to you all the time. Don't accept it.

Hope is a better choice. Hope is what gives those soldiers in World War II the courage to storm a beach. Hope is what allows young people to march on behalf of women's rights and worker's rights and civil rights and voting rights and gay rights and immigration rights.

Hope in the better days that are ahead if we are working together: That's what Mike Michaud stands for; that's what this election is about. Hope's what built America. Show that you still have hope, and go out there and vote on November 4.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:22 p.m. at the Portland Metropolitan Exposition Center. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. George J. Mitchell; Gov. Paul R. LePage of Maine; and State Sen. Glenn Grothman of Wisconsin.

Remarks at Rhode Island College in Providence, Rhode Island October 31, 2014

The President. Hello, everybody! Well, can everybody please give Lisbeth a big round of applause? That was a great introduction.

Happy Halloween, everybody. I see a lot of you came as college students. [Laughter]

Audience members. We love you, Obama! We love you!

The President. I love you too. Those of you who have seats, feel free to sit down. Those of you who don't, don't. [Laughter] I am not going to be too long. I've got to get back and trick-or-treat tonight with Michelle. Although, Malia and Sasha are a little old and—

Audience members. Aww!

The President. It's so sad. [Laughter] I used to be able to—I mean, we'd dress them up, and we still have the pictures. They'll resent them later, but at the time, they were fine with it. They were so cute.

A good thing about being President is, we never run out of Presidential M&Ms—[laughter]—and so we're going to be giving those out.

Audience members. [Inaudible]

The President. [Laughter] You want some? Is that what you said? Only to kids. [Laughter]