

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:03 p.m. in the house chamber of the Illinois State Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to John J. Cullerton, president, Emil Jones, Jr., James “Pate” Philip, Rickey R. Hendon, Alice J. Palmer, and Kirk W. Dillard, former senators, and David S. Luechtefeld, Terry Link, Christine Radogno, Dave Syverson, and Kenneth Dunkin, senators, Illinois State Senate; Sen. Richard J. Durbin; Boro Reljic, former vice president, Illinois Manufacturers’ Association; John Bou-

man, president, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law; Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White, in his capacity as founder and coach of the Jesse White Tumblers, a mentoring program for inner-city youth; Robert F. Bauer, former White House Counsel, and Benjamin L. Ginsberg, partner, Patton Boggs LLP, in their capacity as Cochairs of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration; and 2012 Republican Presidential nominee W. Mitt Romney.

Remarks in Springfield February 10, 2016

The President. Hello, everybody. Oh, I see some familiar faces here. I’ve got Halstead over here. We’ve got—I see all kinds of folks in the audience. It is good to see all of you. And let me start by just saying that in addition to being President of the United States, I happen to be a voter in Illinois. And I couldn’t be prouder of the fact that our senior Senator is one of the finest Senators in the country. My friend, Dick Durbin! Give Dick Durbin a big round of applause.

We were reminiscing a little bit in the back. Now, there was a little nostalgia going on here. And we were talking about the 2004 convention. So I had won the primary, I’m invited to speak at the convention; it’s this great honor. And Dick tells the story of how right before I’m about to give the keynote address at the Democratic Convention, I’m looking a little nervous and a little stressed. And Dick comes over, and he says, “Listen, Barack, it’s going to be fine.” And I said, “I don’t know, I don’t think my speech is very good.” Dick says, “No, no, really, it’s going to connect, you’re going to do fine.” I said: “You know what, I’ve wrestled with this thing, I’ve worked on it. I just don’t think it’s going to really meet the moment.” And Dick said: “Well, look, Barack, you know what, you know how much I’ve worked for you. One of the earliest people to endorse you, supported you the whole way. So, here, why don’t you do this? You take my speech, but first, I’ve got to cross out Lithuanian, and we’ll put Kenyan in there, and go ahead and deliver it, and

I’ll do whatever, I’ll make something up.” And according to Dick Durbin, that’s exactly how I ended up being so successful at the Democratic Convention, stealing his speech.

Now, there’s a little revisionist history there, but what is absolutely true is, is that I would not be a United States Senator and I certainly would not be President had it not been for the support of Dick Durbin. That is the truth. And I like Loretta Durbin even more than I like Dick Durbin. [*Applause*]

But what I said about Dick is actually true for a lot of people in this room. When I was speaking over at the capitol, I mentioned there was an article just recently, I think in the last couple days. They had looked at all the data, all the demographics of every State in the Nation to see what was the most representative State, what is the State that has the same mixture of people and regions and occupations and educational levels. And it turns out that the most representative State of the entire country is right here in Illinois.

[*At this point, there was a disruption in the audience.*]

If we’ve got an EMT, I think it looks like somebody dropped down. It’s okay, they’ll be all right. They were just standing too long. Just give them a little bit of air. I’ve been through this before. [*Laughter*] They’ll be okay. They probably just—you’ve got to drink a little juice or something before you’re standing too long.

EMT, are we back there? Yes. Plus, there's somebody back there who's grumpy because they did not get their nap. [Laughter] All right.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you too. We okay? All right. Why don't you get a chair at least. There you go, sweetheart. All right, she's good. Walking out on her own two feet.

So the reason this is important, the fact that Illinois is so representative is, is that, as I was explaining, when I first came down here as a State senator, I was in the minority. I didn't have a chance to talk to a lot—or get a lot of stuff done, because Pate Philip was the president of the Senate. He and I didn't share a lot of views in common. But it gave me a chance to get to know people. And I would go to fish fries and union halls, and I'd travel around the State and visit people in their districts. And you'd talk to hog farmers, and you'd talk to folks in inner cities, and you'd talk to suburban businesspeople, and you got a sense of what not only Illinois was all about, but what America was all about. And—

Audience member. We need 4 more years!

The President. Oh, definitely—no, we're not doing that. [Laughter] Not only because of the Constitution, but because, more importantly, Michelle would kill me. [Laughter]

But what it did was, it confirmed what I had already suspected, which is, there are a lot of differences in this country, and people come from different places, they're of different faiths, they've got different beliefs about certain issues. But you know, generally, folks are the same. People have same hopes, same dreams, same aspirations for their kids, same worries: trying to figure out how to pay the bills, trying to figure out, are their kids going to do as well as they did? There—and it was that common thread that allowed me then, when I finally got in the majority, to get some bills passed. And it was also during that time where I also got a chance to make sure—

[A baby cried.]

The President. —yes, you're tired, I know! [Laughter] I don't know—Mom, she or he are just tired. [Laughter] I—oh, there you are up

there. I hear you. You need to go to bed. [Laughter] I feel like that sometimes, but I can't say that to my staff. They wouldn't listen to me anyway.

But it's that sense that we all had something in common that actually led me to be able to make that speech in 2004. It was that sense that led me to announce for President of the United States. It was that sense that we have some common bonds that has motivated me over the last 9 years since I announced.

And that faith in the common values of the American people have been affirmed every single day. I mean, yes, politics in Washington can get ugly. And I talked a lot today at the capitol about the needs to change the politics. And it's not just because—it's not just a matter of changing elected officials. The system itself—the way our media is splintered up so some folks are watching Fox News and some folks are reading the Huffington Post, the fact of gerrymandering, and the fact that a lot of people don't participate—there are a lot of things that pull us apart.

But despite all that, every day I meet somebody who reminds me about why I'm so proud to do what I'm doing, why I'm so glad I went into public service.

Audience member. We're so proud of you!

The President. And—thank you. And—but, here's the main point that I wanted to make—and I'm not going to give a long speech because I just gave one—[laughter]—and I want to shake some hands. Yes, although, no selfies. I want to tell you ahead of time. Now, this is one thing that changed, by the way. [Laughter] If we had had smartphones when I ran for President, I'm not sure I would have run. Because everybody—folks just have their phones, they won't shake my hand anymore. They're just, like—[laughter]. It's, like, hey, I'm here, live in front of you. So we're not taking selfies, but I want to shake as many hands as possible.

But the point is that every day, I've been reminded of the goodness of the American people. And that all started with so many of you. As I look around the room, I see people I worked with in the State legislature. I see union leaders who supported me early on

when I didn't have much of a shot. I see some farmers who were wondering what the heck is this kid from Chicago doing down here? He got lost and took a wrong turn somewhere. But they took me in and fed me and had me shuck some corn. [Laughter]

I see people who worked on our campaigns. I see people who we worked on together to get kids health care that didn't have it or early childhood education that needed it or helped send some kid to college. All of you helped to shape me, and allowed me to do what I did. And some of you now have kids of your own that has—not as many of you have gray hair as I would have expected, given how much I have. [Laughter]

And this is just my opportunity to say thank you. I appreciate what you guys have done. And I could not have done what I did without the people here in Illinois and the people here in Springfield. It has been an extraordinary privilege. And I've got a lot of work left before I leave. But just in case I don't see you in the interim, I'll see you on the back end once I'm back in Illinois. But for now, I just want to let you know that it has been an extraordinary privilege, and it was because of all of you.

And I hope that you continue to work just as hard on behalf of folks here in Illinois and folks on the national level who are trying to make sure that everybody gets a fair shot and that we have a world that is safe and secure for our kids.

I said the other day, and I'll repeat in closing, I think it was Justice Brandeis who once said that the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. It's more important than the office of President. It's more important than a Congressman. Because citizen, that's the predicate on which our democracy works: your participation, your values, your vision. You guys have done an extraordinary job as citizens. And I'm looking forward to joining you—[laughter]—in standing alongside you for years to come.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:57 p.m. at the Hoogland Center for the Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Billy Halstead, central committee chairman, Peoria County Democrats; Sen. Richard J. Durbin, who introduced the President, and his wife Loretta; and former State Sen. James "Pate" Philip of Illinois.

Statement on the Observance of Ash Wednesday February 10, 2016

Today Michelle and I join our fellow Christians in marking Ash Wednesday. Lent is a season of reflection, repentance, and renewal: a time to rededicate ourselves to God and one another. We remember the sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ. We pray for all those

who suffer, including those Christians who are subjected to unspeakable violence and persecution for their faith. And we join millions here at home and around the world in giving thanks for this sacred and solemn season that guides us toward the Easter celebration.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Marrakesh Treaty To Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled February 10, 2016

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit

herewith the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled, done at Marrakesh on June 27,