

## Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in Los Angeles, California

April 7, 2016

*The President.* Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. Well, first of all, let me just say that I love Cindy and Alan and the family—the Horn family. They have just been such great friends and supporters for so long. And all the things that she listed we would not have done without them. So we are grateful for them.

We've got a number of Members of Congress here who I just want to acknowledge, because part of what we're here about tonight is, democracy doesn't function unless we've got Members of Congress who are serious about their jobs. It doesn't matter who's in the White House if we don't have the kind of hard work and dedication that these Members display. So I just want to acknowledge them real quick. Xavier Becerra. Karen Bass. Where's Karen? Ted Lieu. Brad Sherman. The DCCC chair, Ben Ray Lujan. And my copartner in everything good that we've been able to accomplish—if something didn't work, it was my mistake. [Laughter] Whatever did work, it was because of the outstanding work of Nancy Pelosi. So we're grateful to her.

You guys have been in these before. I'm not going to give a long speech. I actually was—I conducted a class today. I was back in my old haunts in Chicago. I've been accused of being professorial sometimes—[laughter]—so I just decided, you know what, I'm just going to roll with this. And I had a bunch of law students, and they're used to it, and it was fine. [Laughter] And we talked about Merrick Garland and the vacancy that currently exists in the Supreme Court.

And no one disputes Mr. Garland's credentials. Uniformly, Democrats, Republicans, jurists, lawyers, editorial boards—they all acknowledge that rarely has there been somebody this well-qualified to send to the Supreme Court. And yet what we've seen out of the Republicans in the Senate is not simply a refusal to confirm him thus far, but a refusal to meet with him or to have a hearing or to have a

vote. And the point that I made to these sharp young law students—who, by the way, were all wearing suits and ties. And I said, this is not how you go to class. [Laughter] I taught here. You can't fool me.

*Audience member.* This isn't how we go—

*The President.* That's what I figured. Right. But what I told them was, that setting aside whatever political predispositions you may have, our democracy only works if there's a respect and appreciation of the process of self-governance; that there's a belief that we can be principled and passionate about the issues that we care about, but we also have an obligation to make sure that this incredible experiment in self-governance continues. And that requires an adherence to facts and science. It requires a sense of compromise. It requires a realization that the institutions that the Founders set up only work effectively if people bring some measure of good will and appreciation that we're not just always thinking about the next election, but we're thinking about the next generation.

And I made the argument—which I deeply believe—that if in fact the Senate refuses to even give a hearing to Mr. Garland, that the basic compact that we have in a big, diverse country like this, our ability to cooperate and find the solutions to the big challenges that we face will deteriorate to such a point where it's going to be very difficult for anybody—and any President—to do what it needs to do.

And this is just one example of the challenges that we've been facing for a while now. Most of us aren't born partisan. I mean, Nancy—maybe. [Laughter] But most of us at the age of 2 or 3, we're not thinking blue and red. And so I believe in an honest debate, and I don't believe that Democrats have a monopoly on wisdom. And I think that the country benefits from a strong two-party system. And during the course of my Presidency, one of the things I desperately sought is a loyal opposition that could challenge me and to point out my blind

spots and engage in a back and forth so that I could make better decisions and we could move the country forward more effectively.

But that's not what we've had. And I've said this before: It's not as if Democrats don't think about politics. This is a business in which we're trying to get people elected. And we have a point of view. And we care about making sure that we're dealing with climate change. And we believe in immigration reform. And we want every child in America to get a decent education. And we believe that the economy works best when everybody gets a shot. And we are passionate about equal rights and that every American is deserving of dignity, regardless of race and gender and sexual orientation. We believe in these things deeply. We believe in them strongly. But we're also politicians. We care about getting elected. And we recognize that there are times in a big democracy like this that we've got to compromise.

But in each instance—and I can say this about Nancy Pelosi, and I can say this about every Member of Congress who's here—when we've had to get something done on behalf of the country as a whole, when something really counts, when it's really important, even if it's not politically convenient but we've been willing to do that, these folks have taken tough votes that were contrary to their political interests and, in some cases, contrary to what their most ardent supporters want, because we understood we had a certain responsibility to get things done.

And that's what we have not seen from the other side. And that's why this election is so important. And I recognize that there is a deep obsession right now about Mr. Trump. And one of you pulled me aside and squeezed me hard and said, tell me that Mr. Trump is not succeeding you. And I said, Mr. Trump is not succeeding me. [*Laughter*] But what I also said was, Mr. Trump has actually done a service, as Mr. Cruz is doing a service. And that is, laying bare unvarnished some of the nonsense that we've been dealing with in Congress on a daily basis. People act as if these folks are outliers. But they're not. Listen to talk radio, watch their interviews. Look at how they operate in

town halls. They're saying stuff that's just as wacky as what we're hearing out of the Presidential candidates. It's just nobody was paying attention. And so we should thank Mr. Trump and Mr. Cruz for just being honest. This is how we're thinking these days—we're not thinking these days.

But it gives you a sense of what's at stake in this election. I mean, I can give you a long list of particulars about any issue under the Sun and why the positions we take are sound and will help move America in a better direction, and the positions that they take will take us backwards. That's not hard to do. But what I'm suggesting is it's more than that. What's at stake right now is how our democracy functions. What's at stake right now is do we make sure that the highest offices in the land, the people who represent us and who are shaping the future for our kids and our grandkids and children after then, that they act responsibly; that they don't consider compromise a dirty word; that they listen to what people who disagree with them have to say; that they're respectful of those who are not like them; that they care about what is happening beyond our borders, and recognize that ultimately our well-being and our children's well-being and our grandchildren's well-being is tied up with what's happening to some kid in Guatemala or some child in sub-Saharan Africa.

And so I'll just close with this, and then I'll be happy to take some questions. There are times where, as devoted as all of you are, when I'm traveling through Democratic circles I see: "Oh, Mr. President, we love you so, and we're going to miss you so. And sometimes, I'm not that excited about this election." And I say, I have no patience for that. I say thank you very much, first. [*Laughter*] But then I say to folks, we cannot be complacent, and we cannot be cynical, because the stakes are too high. And we should take pride in what we've accomplished over the last 7½ years, not because every problem was fixed, but because it showed the steady progress that happens when people who love this country decide to change it. And that should be a spur, a call to action. And it starts not just at the Presidential level, but in us

recognizing the enormous power of Congress and the difference between a Nancy Pelosi being Speaker of the House and a Paul Ryan being Speaker of the House.

So I hope all of you are fired up and ready to go, because I am. I'm not on the ballot. I'm just fine with that. *[Laughter]* But I've said this before—quoting Louis Brandeis, I believe—the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And even if I'm not President, and contrary to the assertions of some, I will continue to be a citizen. *[Laughter]* And I care

deeply about what happens next. So let's get going. Let's get to work.

Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:13 p.m. at the residence of Cindy and Alan Horn. In his remarks, he referred to Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, and Sen. R. Edward “Ted” Cruz, in their capacity as Republican Presidential candidates. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in San Francisco, California

*April 8, 2016*

Thank you, everybody. Well, it is so good to see all of you.

I will begin where Nancy began, and that is just thanking Ann and Gordon for their incredible hospitality. They have been great friends to a lot of causes and a lot of civic efforts, but they've been great friends to me, personally. And in some ways, I almost feel like I'm coming full circle here because the first time I was here I had no gray hair—*[laughter]*—and I was just beginning what would end up being this remarkable journey of ours, and it was by no means clear how it would turn out. But they were early friends and supporters and have been with me through thick and thin. And I'm so proud of them and so thankful for everything they have done. So give them one more round of applause.

Of course, the reason we're here is because we think a Democratic Congress is good for America. And if you need some evidence of that, then you can look at the Members who are here—Jared, Anna, Barbara—bringing passion and dedication and common sense and hard work to the business of making sure every kid in this country gets a decent education, and that we're protecting our planet from the ravages of climate change and making sure that our international relations are based on firmness and toughness and an outstanding mili-

tary, but also a generosity of spirit and a willingness to engage former adversaries.

I've done a lot of tough stuff since I've been President. I couldn't do it unless I had outstanding legislators who had my back, even when it wasn't politically convenient. And these three are just a sampling of the great folks that we've got in Congress. And so please give them a big round of applause. I'm thankful to them.

And then, at the risk of being a member of the mutual admiration society, I love me some Nancy Pelosi. I was with some folks last night; we had done an event down in L.A., and afterwards I'm talking to some friends and supporters. And they were extolling Nancy's virtues, and they were explaining how, oh, and she is just so intelligent and so passionate, and she cares about all these issues, and so full of integrity, I don't know how she gets it all done. And I said, all those things are true, but she also is at daughter of a former Baltimore mayor. *[Laughter]* So don't let the whole Northern California, cappuccino-sipping thing fool you. *[Laughter]* And that combination of idealism and just tough-as-nails conviction and savvy is the reason why this country has made such enormous strides over these last 7 years. I could not have had a better partner than Nancy Pelosi. And I mean that. It's true.