

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser
in New York City
September 13, 2016

Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. Everybody have a seat. Well, first of all, let me thank Jim and Crystal for their incredible hospitality and this beautiful home. And we are very, very appreciative of them.

A couple other people I need to acknowledge. First of all, the Chairman of the DCCC, Ben Ray Lujan is right here. A thankless job, but he's always got a smile on his face. *[Laughter]*

And I have to introduce somebody who I believe will go down as one of the finest public servants we've ever had and has been a partner on every single thing I've done, especially the tough stuff, because she has principles, she's tough, she's smart, she's practical, and she cares about the right stuff. She cares about all these beautiful grandchildren that she constantly is bringing to these things. *[Laughter]* So I just could not be prouder of her: Nancy Pelosi.

And let me mention New York's own, Steve Israel. Where is Steve? There he is.

So the tradition at these kinds of gatherings, because they're pretty intimate, is I'll just say a few things and then we'll open it up for questions and comments.

Jim stole some of my best lines. *[Laughter]* But let me just amplify the Census report that came out today, which—economists are different. So my chief economist Jason Furman explained to me that this is the Super Bowl for economists, the Census report. I didn't think it was as exciting as a Super Bowl. *[Laughter]* I wouldn't have bought commercials for this event. But this is the most comprehensive snapshot of the economy that we receive each year. And the headline news is that incomes rose last year more than any time on record. More than any time on record, over 5 percent.

And what was particularly striking was that they rose for every demographic: every race, men and women, every quintile. The increases were particularly stark for the lowest income Americans and middle-income Americans, although everybody saw improvement.

Poverty went down last year more sharply than any time since 1968. And the pay gap between men and women closed so that, although it is still there, still nagging, it is now the smallest that it has ever been. It confirmed the reports that we had already seen that the number of uninsured are lower than they have ever been in the United States.

And if you combine that with some of the other statistics that Jim mentioned, the picture we have is not of an economy that is at full potential. There are still a lot of folks out there unemployed, underemployed. Because of a previous decade of flat or declining wage growth, income growth, there is still catching up to do. But what we see is a serious recovery from what was the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, one in which actually the economy contracted faster than it did in 1929. It's just that we stopped it faster and more effectively than they did during the Great Depression.

Now, this is not a cause to run victory laps, because people do feel as if even if their own circumstances are better, they worry about are their kids going to be able to succeed. They worry about student debt. They worry about the vulnerabilities that were revealed as a consequence of the post-Lehman world. They worry about globalization. They worry about technology. They worry about foreign competition. And those fears are real, and they are justified.

But what it does argue is that we have been moving in the right direction, that the trend lines are sound, that good policy matters, that the decisions we made early—decisions that often were unpopular—paid off. It means that facts and evidence are important and that you need a President and a Congress that makes decisions based on facts and evidence.

So I think you kind of know where I'm going here. We have one Presidential candidate, one set of congressional candidates, who look at the facts, look at the evidence, study policy, and

conclude that climate change is real; that budgets should add up; that we should be investing in infrastructure to put millions of Americans back to work, with ripple effects throughout the economy; that investing in early childhood education is a smart thing to do; that equal pay for equal work will benefit men and women and families; that raising minimum wages in an economy that is increasingly service based is not going to destroy jobs; that putting more money in the pockets of ordinary people and consumers will, in fact, be good for business; that we should be investing in research and development; that we have the capacity to provide health insurance for all Americans and do it smarter and better, with higher quality, more satisfaction, and ultimately lower costs, because we're investing more on the front end than on the back end.

So that's one set of folks. And then you have another set of people who basically believe in the opposite: don't believe in climate change; insist on austerity even when that's bad economics; put forward tax breaks for folks who don't need them, but will explode the deficit; underfund human capital; underfund research; reject the idea that we can develop clean energy in a way that's good for our economy; think that the pay gap between men and women is imaginary or a matter of women's decisions; and want to make sure that women can make the decision to make less money, but not the decision to control their own bodies and their own health care. And it doesn't matter to them that the facts do not match their positions and have been repeatedly refuted.

I mean, one of the things about having a crisis is, is that you actually end up having some interesting experiments playing themselves out over time. So the Republican recipe for economic recovery was actually tried for quite some time in Europe, and they still have not recovered from 2007. But it doesn't matter because their positions are based on ideology.

So I recognize the degree to which politics has been discouraging over the last several years. The Congress has been discouraging over the last several years, since Nancy Pelosi wasn't Speaker. And the degree to which the

current majorities in the House and the Senate—but we're focused here on the House today—can't even pass their own priorities, so that I don't generally even have to veto anything because they can't get organized enough even to present the cockamamie legislation that they're interested in passing—[laughter]—I recognize must be discouraging for people.

And we get all these strange distractions of—here's one that's coming up. There's a strong faction in the House of Representatives right now whose major priority is impeaching our IRS Commissioner. You're laughing. This is, like, a big deal. This has never happened before. And the reason, is not because this guy is venal or he somehow stole money or abused his office. The reason is, is because stuff that happened before he even got into office. He responded to inquiries from one of the many congressional hearings to try to ferret out a scandal and, I guess, left some documents out inadvertently, and they decided, well, this is a good reason to impeach the guy. This is crazy. And yes, no wonder then, people end up being discouraged and dispirited.

So we have made progress despite an opposition party, which has been now in the majority in Congress for the last 2 years, which is not functioning. Look, I recognize I am the head of the Democratic Party and that necessarily makes me a partisan. But I'm actually not somebody who believes Democrat—I think back to 2008, and I meant what I said. I don't think any party traditionally has a monopoly on what's right. I come from the Land of Lincoln. Richard Nixon set up the EPA. The Civil Rights Act was passed by Lyndon Johnson, but also a whole bunch of Republican votes. So it's not inevitable that this is what we deal with, but it is what's going on right now.

And that is why you have to take this race so seriously. It is a cliché that every election is the most important in our lifetime. But I've got to tell you—[laughter]—this one? This one counts. You have a nominee of a major party that shows no awareness of just basic, rudimentary domestic or foreign policy; advertises his ignorance every day; who proclaims his role

model for leadership is Vladimir Putin. Think about that.

This is the party that extolls freedom and America and the flag and Ronald Reagan, and whose main criticism of me lately has been my tyrannical abuse of power: that I'm trying to take away their guns and I'm filing executive actions and I'm circumventing the Constitution. And we're going to nominate the guy who actively promotes and admires a guy who jails dissidents and controls all state media, all media in his country, and hence has an 82-percent approval rating.

Can you imagine what my approval rating would be if all those folks lined up in the back worked for me—[laughter]—and I was writing their stories? Wow. [Laughter] I'd be doing really well. I'm doing okay as it is, but—so you've got that, but also somebody who's explicitly tapping into some of the worst impulses in each of us, the notion that somebody who's not like me is bad, is dangerous, is not a real American.

And we followed that path before. That's woven into our history. And it's woven into world history, and it usually turns out really badly.

And we have a Congress that purports to want to be a champion for working class and middle class folks, but cannot describe any concrete proposals that would actually help the working class and the middle class and deal with the challenges of this new global economy.

So I say all this because this shouldn't be close, but it's close. The Presidential race we should win, but Donald Trump got the nomination, so weird stuff happens. [Laughter] The

House we have a chance to win because the Republican nominee has revealed the dysfunction of that party for quite some time. But it's hard. Because of gerrymandering and entrenched incumbents, it's going to be challenging. But we have a chance.

So we have to make this investment now. And I'm not on the ballot, and in 6 months, I'll be a private citizen once again. But I have two daughters, and I hope I'll have some grandkids—not too soon. [Laughter] But sometime. And I genuinely believe that the basic character of this country and our capacity to meet the challenges that all of you are aware of is dependent on what happens now. The stakes are really high.

So I need all of you to step up. And if you do, I think that the American people will make the right choice and Nancy Pelosi will be Speaker again and Hillary Clinton will be President, and Chuck Schumer of New York will be Majority Leader. And we'll have a burst of productivity like we did the last time we had a Democratic President and Democratic majority, and we'll lay the groundwork for more prosperity and security in the future.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:10 p.m. at the residence of James S. Chanos and Crystal Connors. In his remarks, he referred to Democratic Presidential nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton; Republican Presidential nominee Donald J. Trump; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma and an Exchange With Reporters *September 14, 2016*

President Obama. It is an extraordinary pleasure for me to welcome State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi and her delegation to the White House. This is not her first visit to the Oval Office, but it is her first visit in her official capacity. And it represents a re-

markable process that Burma is undergoing.

When I was first elected, Daw Suu was still under house arrest. And because, in part, of advocacy by the United States and others in the international community, but more importantly,