

the way it's supposed to, because we've got 2 million people working in the Federal Government, if you're including the military, and so we had to just try to institutionalize this as much as we could. And that takes a lot of work.

And one of my suggestions to the incoming President is, is that he take that part of the job seriously as well. Again, you wouldn't know this if you were listening to some news outlets or some members of oversight committees in Congress. [Laughter] But if you actually look at the facts, it works.

And this is just one example of the numerous ways in which the Federal Government is much better today than it was, without people really knowing. You look at VA. People remember the legitimate problems that were publicized in Phoenix. It was scandalous what happened. What people don't remember is, is that we've brought in well over a million people who are getting benefits that weren't getting it before, driven the backlog for disability benefits way down, cut homelessness in half. Just made the agency work better—not work perfect, but work better.

And one of the mottos I always had with my staff was, better is good. Perfect is unattainable. Better is possible.

Remarks During a Conference Call With Grassroots Supporters and Organizing for Action Alumni November 14, 2016

The President. Hey, Jon Carson!

Organizing for Action Advisory Board Chair and Former Executive Director Jon Carson. There you are, President Obama.

The President. Are you stalling for me? [Laughter]

Mr. Carson. That's what I was doing. We're here now, so it's all yours.

The President. Has Plouffe made any sense?

Organizing for Action Adviser and Former White House Counselor David A. Plouffe. None at all, sir. That's why we've been waiting for you. [Laughter]

And so we will try to share the lessons that we've learned over these last 8 years with the incoming President. And my hope is, he makes things better. And if he does, we'll all benefit from it.

All right? Thank you, everybody. You guys, some of you who are traveling, you'll get a chance to ask more questions. All right?

[At this point, several reporters began asking questions.]

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3:35 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Gwendolyn L. Ifill, moderator and managing editor of PBS's "Washington Week" program and coanchor and managing editor of PBS's "PBS NewsHour" program, who died on November 14; Secretary of State John F. Kerry, in his capacity as the 2004 Democratic Presidential nominee; and former Sens. Thomas A. Daschle and Kenneth L. Salazar. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. A reporter referred to Stephen K. Bannon, chief executive officer, President-elect Trump's election campaign.

The President. All right. Well, listen, everybody, I apologize, my press conference went a little bit long. Shockingly, people have a—lots of questions for me.

I wanted to get everybody on the phone, first and foremost, just to say thank you. I mean, I could not be prouder of everything that you helped us accomplish. There are people on this phone who joined up on this amazing journey when I was running for Senate. There are people who joined us on our first forays into Iowa, back in 2007. And all of you, in all your different ways, have contributed to

what has been an amazing run over these last 8 years.

For those of you who didn't hear the press conference, basically, I just ticked off what we've accomplished in terms of saving the economy, cutting unemployment in half, lowest uninsured in history, incomes up, wages up, historic climate deal—all these things. And what I said was that the measure of what we worked so hard for is, during our period driving this bus, was the country going to end up in better place? And it indisputably has. When we turn over the keys—the country will know it because we will have the data and the metrics, the measuring sticks, to prove it—that by almost every measure, America is better off than it was.

Now, that doesn't mean that we're not all disappointed by what happened last week. I think it's fair to say that your President feels your pain on this one. It doesn't feel good. And in some ways, it feels worse because, for a lot of us, I think we didn't see it coming. Surprising losses are harder than losses you see. And I know it's also difficult in part because, when you look at public opinion around the current performance of my administration, it's higher than it's been since probably the first 3 months of the administration. And so there's that little mismatch, and that also makes it more difficult.

But I've always said, progress doesn't follow a straight line. It zigs and zags, and sometimes, it moves forward, and sometimes, it moves backwards or moves sideways. I am a firm believer that ultimately it moves in the direction of justice and more prosperity and more freedom and more inclusion. And the reason it happens is because of the people on this phone call and people like you and your idealism and your energy and your resilience over the course of American history.

So, as a consequence, I think it is fine for everybody to feel stressed, sad, discouraged for a while, but I'm giving you, like, a week and a half to get over it. And if you need the rest of this week, that's fine. But by next week, and Thanksgiving—because you're going to be talking to your family and friends, and some of

them may even have voted the wrong way, you're in danger of having, like, some big argument that spoils the whole family get-together—you're going to have to be in a more positive place. And what that means is staying engaged, staying involved, and figuring out how do we move forward not only to protect what we've accomplished, but also to see this as an opportunity, because a lot of conventional wisdom has been upended.

I was asked about this during the press conference. People are going to be asking more questions about how we can organize at a grassroots level. People are going to be asking more questions about how do we communicate our issues more effectively. People are going to be looking at how do you make sure that the work that's done isn't just in Washington or in New York or L.A., but in towns and small communities all across the country.

And the network that you represent, you're perfectly poised to do that. In other words, now is the time for some organizing. An election just finished, so it's not going to be straight political organizing, but it is going to be raising awareness; it's going to be the work you're doing in nonprofits and advocacy and community-building. And over time, what's going to happen is, is that you will reinvigorate and inform our politics in ways that we can't anticipate.

So don't mope. And don't get complacent. The majority of the American people believe in a diverse, tolerant, optimistic, dynamic, inclusive vision. And as somebody who knows a thing or two about organizing, I want you to remember never to underestimate yourselves, because you guys are the best organizers I know. So don't suddenly veer off into isolation. Keep on working. Stay connected.

I know David and others are going to convene folks at other times. So stay close to each other. Generate ideas. Take some time to reflect and let's brainstorm in terms of how you're going to work together to move forward. Understand that I'm going to be constrained in what I do with all of you until I am again a private citizen. But that's not so far off. It's basically 6, 8 weeks away. And I will have some

time for vacation, but you're going to see me early next year, and we're going to be in a position where we can start cooking up all kinds of great stuff to do.

In the meantime, make sure that you stay involved locally. Find organizations that are speaking to your passions. Continue to be engaged with OFA around issues that—or just information and networking and ideas-sharing that can be done. And if you do those things, I promise you that next year Michelle and I are going to be right there with you and the clouds are going to start parting and the sun is going to come back out and we're going to be busy, involved in the amazing stuff that we've been doing all these years before.

And I've got all kinds of thoughts and ideas about it, but this isn't the best time to share them. The point is, I'm still fired up and I'm still ready to go. And I hope that all of you are, as well. And just in pure political terms, I've been reminding my staff that when I came into Washington in 2005 and was sworn in as a Sen-

ator, it was the same moment that George Bush was sworn back in as President of the United States for the second term, and Republican controlled the House and Republicans controlled the Senate. And Tom Daschle, who had been the Democratic majority leader, had lost his seat, and it looked very, very bleak. Two years later, Democrats were winning back the Congress, and 4 years later I was President.

That's pretty unlikely, but that's how stuff works when you've got amazing people all across the country who are willing to put their all into making this country better. What was true then is true now. So, like I said, you've got another few days to feel bad, and then we've got to get busy. All right?

Thank you, guys. Carson, Plouffe, I'll talk to you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:03 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks During a Conference Call With Democratic National Committee Stakeholders

November 14, 2016

Josh, thank you for the amazing introduction. And thanks, Donna, for your wonderful work. Thanks all of you for hopping on the phone.

Look, first of all, I just want to say thank you. The incredible support you've shown me over the years has allowed me to do the good that we have done. And it is indisputable that the country is better off today than it was 8 years ago. I ticked off some of the reasons for that during the press conference that I had right before I got on the line here. And it's pretty hard to argue with. And in fact, the American people—based on their assessments of our performance right now—tend to agree.

And I always tell my team that our job when we are entrusted with this amazing office at the pinnacle of our democracy is to make sure that the country is better off than it was when we started. And having done that, we have run our

stage of the race. And it has been a singular honor. But more importantly, it's helped millions of people in this country and probably billions around the world—what we've done. And that was all based on the work that you guys do all across this country at the State and local and grassroots levels. Delegates, members, donors—I couldn't have done it without you. And for that I will always be grateful.

Now, I know that you put that same kind of effort into this cycle, and I want to publicly say how proud I am of Hillary Clinton on a history-making race. We did not get the results we wanted, but we took a step in shattering a barrier that's still there. And little girls and little boys are going to have a different sense of the possible thanks to her nomination and her candidacy.

That doesn't mean we don't hurt for what was an unexpected loss. And expected losses