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October 25, 2011

Remarks by the President at a Campaign Event

Private Residence
Los Angeles, California

6:04 P.M. PDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you so much. Well, it is wonderful to see all of you here tonight, and I want to thank, first of all, J.L. and Mai for hosting us in this beautiful home. And the Smiths and the Browns and the Carters, thank you guys for your friendship and your support. You guys have just been wonderful.

I'm not going to make a long speech. What I'd rather do is have a conversation session with a group this size.

And by the way, I want to excuse if anybody smells chicken on me. (Laughter.) We stopped at Roscoe's on the way down. (Laughter.) I think I have a spot on my tie from the hot sauce.

You know, a lot of you were involved in the campaign back in 2008, and it was an extraordinary time, because what we wanted to do was see if we could have a politics that reflected the best of who we are, a politics that was inclusive, a politics that was hopeful, a politics that wasn't just about tearing the other guy down but was about lifting the whole country up. But also a politics that would focus on challenges that had been weighing down this country for decades: lack of health care for too many people and a system that was way too expensive even if you had health insurance; lack of an energy policy; a foreign policy where we were engaged in wars that weren't making us safer necessarily and costing us huge amounts in terms of lives and treasure. Most importantly, an economy that wasn't working for the American people as a whole.

There were a lot of us who were lucky, who were blessed and were doing well. But for middle-class families all across the country, you saw a flatlining of wages and incomes while the costs of everything from college to health care to retirement were going up and up.

And a lot of us who had been blessed, we know a lot of family members who still found themselves trapped and struggling in those circumstances.

And what I'm proud of is that over the last three years, we didn't know when I first started running that we would end up being confronted with the worst financial crisis and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We didn't understand at that time, even after Lehman's went down, how perilous things might be.

But in addition to making sure that we didn't go into a Great Depression and stabilizing the financial system and reversing a contracting economy to one that was growing so that over the last two years we've seen private sector job growth just about every month, and 2 million jobs created just over the last two years -- in addition to all that, what we've also been able to do is still make progress on the things that we talked about making progress on.

And sometimes I think people forget how much has gotten done -- whether it's passing health care for 30 million Americans who didn't have it, and making sure that young people are able to stay on their parents' health insurance and insurance companies aren't dropping you when you've got coverage, to making sure that we were ending "don't ask, don't tell" so that anybody could serve this country that they love regardless of who they love, to ending the war in Iraq, to making sure that college loans and scholarships were accessible to young people all across the country, to saving the auto industry.

A lot of the things that we promised we'd do, we've done. And I carry around a little checklist, and I think we've gotten about 60 percent of it done so far. And that's not bad for three years, because I need another five. (Laughter)

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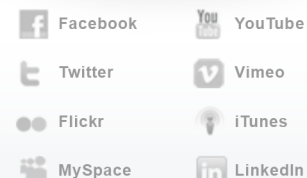
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and applause.)

So we've made great progress, but we've got so much more work to do. And obviously, in Washington, the politics that I think people are hoping for is not what they're getting. It's still dysfunctional. It's still too deeply partisan. You still have folks who seem to be more interested in the short term and the party and elections than they are in the long term and the future and the next generation.

And we are fighting hard to break through and have the decency of the American people reflected in the decisions we make. Right now, we've got a big debate about a jobs bill that we're putting forward. Obviously, the biggest problem we have right now is we stabilized the economy but with an unemployment rate that's way too high. And we're going to have to make a lot of progress if we're going to be able to put people back to work.

And so we put forward ideas that traditionally have been supported by Democrats and Republicans — let's get construction workers who have been laid off and let's put them back on the job rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our hospitals and our schools. Let's make sure that teachers are back in the classroom -- we're laying them off in droves all across the country at a time when it's critical that our young people are able to succeed. Let's make sure that we're giving tax breaks to small businesses that need financing, but also small businesses who are hiring veterans, for example. These young men and women who have served us -- and I get the chance to meet them every day; incredibly talented -- and they've gone and fought for us and then suddenly they come back here and they've got to fight for a job? It makes no sense.

And yet, we have not gotten a single Republican vote out of this current Senate. And it's primarily because they don't think that, politically, it's advantageous to do so. And I think that's a mistake, and so we're putting pressure on them.

Today, I announced helping homeowners refinance their homes, because a lot of them are underwater now and so they're having trouble refinancing. But that could free up billions of dollars for American consumers who can then shop and go to Will's movies -- (laughter) -- and spend money at whatever business Magic has -- (laughter) -- and could help grow the economy overall.

So the only way that we're going to make progress is, I'm going to keep on making the case, I'm going to keep on pushing, but I'm also going to need to know that we've got a strong base of support behind us that is able to amplify our message, support our message, and get out there and have the same enthusiasm, the same passion as we did the first time.

And I've said this before -- this election will not be as sexy as the first one. Back then, I was -- it was still fresh and new, and I didn't have any gray hair -- (laughter) -- and everybody loved the "Hope" posters and all that. (Laughter.) But this time it's -- we've got to grind it out a little bit. We've got to grind it out.

But the cause is the same, and my passion is the same, and my commitment is the same. And so I hope all of you will join me, because I'm confident if you do that we're going to win. And more importantly, we're going to be able to guide the country in a path that helps over the long term.

So, all right. Thank you very much, everybody. (Applause.)

END

6:13 P.M. PDT

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