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MITT ROMNEY DELIVERS PREBUTTAL TO PRESIDENT OBAMA'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

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Location

Boston, MA
United States

Mitt Romney today delivered prebuttal remarks to President Obama's State of the Union Address in Tampa, Florida. The following remarks were prepared for delivery:

Thank you. It's good to be in the Sunshine State. It breaks my heart to visit plants like this one.

In 2008, this plant closed because of the economic downturn. In a normal recovery under strong leadership, it could now be full of workers.

Here in Florida, people used to wake up and look forward to a hard day's work and a good, honest wage. The money they earned helped support families and build communities. Today too many factory floors are silent, warehouses are deserted, corporate offices are empty, and real estate endeavors are abandoned. Floridians are struggling to find a job, keep a home, and raise a family.

As I've traveled across America, I've heard similar stories in virtually every corner of this country. High unemployment and record home foreclosures. Debt that's too high and opportunities that are too few. This is the real state of our union. But you won't hear stories like these in President Obama's address tonight. The unemployed don't get invitations to sit with the First Lady.

Instead, tonight, the President will do what he does best. He will give a nice speech with a lot of memorable phrases. But he won't give you the hard numbers.

Like 9.9 – that's the unemployment rate in this state.

Or 25 percent – that's the percentage of foreclosed homes in America that are right here in Florida.

Or \$15 trillion – that's the size of our national debt.

Instead, tonight, President Obama will make the opening argument in his campaign against a "Do Nothing Congress." But, we shouldn't forget that for two years, this President had a Congress that could do everything he wanted.

With huge Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, President Obama was free to pursue any policy he pleased.

Did he fix the economy?

Did he tackle the housing crisis?

Did he get Americans back to work?

No.

He spent \$787 billion on a stimulus bill and put us on track to borrow and spend \$5 trillion in just his first term.

He forced through Obamacare – a trillion-dollar entitlement we don't want and can't afford.

He took over auto companies and student loans.

He stacked the National Labor Relations Board with union yes-men who, in turn, did favors for his campaign contributors and favorite friends.

When we needed stability and solvency, he gave us Solyndra.

When we needed a climate for private investment, he gave us Cash for Clunkers.

When we needed more domestic energy to keep prices low and create jobs, he imposed bans on oil drilling and turned his EPA regulators loose to slow our development of natural gas.

He's spearheaded one of the largest expansions of government in American history. And he's paying for it with money borrowed from China.

Three years ago, we measured Candidate Obama by his hopeful promises and slogans.

Today, President Obama has amassed an actual record of debt, decline, and disappointment.

This President's agenda made these troubled times last longer. He and his allies made it harder for the economy to recover.

Instead of solving the housing crisis and getting Americans back to work, President Obama has been building a European-style welfare state. He has pushed for a second stimulus and deep cuts to our national defense. He's asking the American people for another trillion dollars – and another term in office.

He keeps telling people, "We can't wait." To which I say, "Yes, we can."

Tonight, the President will deliver his State of the Union. But make no mistake: What he's really offering are partisan planks for his re-election campaign.

The President has been telling people that his agenda will create an economy that's "built to last."

Well, let's talk about what has lasted.

What has lasted is unemployment above 8% for 35 straight months. What will last is almost as much debt in four years as all the prior presidents combined. What will last are home values that are too low and foreclosure rates that are too high. And a legacy of debt that will imperil future generations.

What is critical is that we make today Barack Obama's last State of the Union.

The President's agenda sounds less like "built to last" and more like doomed to fail. What he's proposing is more of the same: more taxes, more spending, and more regulation. And all of his proposals involve "big" government and "big" price tags.

Tonight, we'll also be treated to more divisive rhetoric from a desperate campaigner-in-chief. It's shameful for a President to use the State of the Union to divide our nation. And someone ought to tell him: In order for the economy to truly "work for everyone," everyone needs to be working.

But more than anything, I expect the President will take this opportunity to take another victory lap. In big speeches, he tends to tell tall tales about an America that's thriving on his watch.

In 2010, he announced that "the worst of this economic storm has passed." I know the people of Tampa don't believe that. Today, 24 million Americans are struggling for work. 2.8 million Americans have lost their homes. But President Obama believes he ranks among the four best presidents in history.

Here in Florida, you know better. You know that this President has run out of ideas. He's run out of excuses. And, with your help, 2012 will be the year he runs out of time.

If tonight were the first message to Congress in a Romney administration, I'd have the courage to tell the American people how it is and tell Congress what we really need to do. I wouldn't spend my time blaming others for how we got in this mess; I'd explain how we're going to get out of it. I'd use the State of the Union to lay out an agenda that will get our country back on track and get our fiscal house in order.

My agenda would make government simpler, smaller, and smarter.

As President, I will repeal unnecessary regulations and restore our good credit rating.

I will reduce tax rates and simplify the tax code, especially for middle-income Americans.

I will streamline regulation, ensure the prompt review of projects, and order agencies to focus on economic growth. The Keystone Pipeline is a real "shovel-ready" project that would put 20,000 Americans back to work. Three years of review is long enough. The President was wrong to reject it. I will approve it.

I will open up new markets for American goods, and open up our lands so that we can finally develop our energy resources. A revolution in drilling for natural gas has opened up new supplies that will create American jobs, provide affordable energy, and offer our manufacturers a competitive edge. My administration will support the development of these resources, not find excuses to stand in the way.

If I were speaking to Congress tonight, I'd note that it's now been one thousand days since the Senate last passed a budget. That's irresponsible. It's unacceptable. And, as President, I will cut spending, cap spending, and finally balance the budget.

I would pledge to do all that a President can to get America working again. When it comes to the economy, my highest priority would be worrying about your job, not saving my own.

As President, I will reverse the Obama-era defense cuts. I believe a strong America must – and will – lead the future. I will insist on a military so powerful that no one would ever think of challenging it.

That is the State of the Union I would deliver tonight. My plans protect our freedom and preserve opportunity. They reflect common-sense solutions and conservative values. And, over the past seven months, that agenda has rallied millions of Americans to our cause.

Our campaign is about more than replacing a President; it is about saving the soul of America. This election is a choice between two very different

destinies.

President Obama wants to “fundamentally transform” America. We want to restore America to the founding principles that made this country great.

This President puts his faith in government. We put our faith in the American people.

Ours is the party of free enterprise, free markets, and consumer choice. The Republican Party stands for personal responsibility and equal opportunity. We don’t demonize prosperity. We celebrate success.

That’s the difference between our party and this President. He leads the party of big government. He believes in ever-expanding entitlement.

He’s wrong. We’re right. And this is a battle we cannot lose.

During my 25 years in business, I helped companies like Staples and the Sports Authority grow from start-ups to international enterprises. I turned around companies, a state government, and an Olympics. And I am passionate about our economic liberty because I have seen it reward the hard work of many – and create prosperity for all.

I have the experience to get America back to work. I have the judgment we need in the White House. And I will offer a real choice in the coming campaign.

Tonight will mark another chapter in the misguided policies of the last three years – and the failed leadership of one man. But Americans know that our future is brighter and better than these troubled times.

We still believe in the hope, the promise, and the dream of America. We still believe in that shining city on a hill.

A year from now a President will be giving another State of the Union address. The choice before us is clear.

Do we want a president who will try to explain again why his policies haven’t worked?

Do we want a president who will keep promising that this time he will get it right?

Do we want a president who keep telling us why he’s right and why we’re wrong?

Or do we want the sense of excitement that comes with a new beginning?

We are Americans and Americans don’t have to settle for a president who argues that things could be worse. We know that things can – and must – be better.

If you want to make this election about restoring American greatness, then I hope you will join us.

If you believe the disappointments of the last few years are a detour, not our destiny, then I am asking for your support.

If you share my belief that we need to scale back government so that we can expand prosperity, then I need your vote.

Thank you. And God bless the United States of America.

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