

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks at a Rally for Governor Martin O'Malley of Maryland in Bowie, Maryland

October 7, 2010

The President. Hello, Bowie! Oh, it is good to see you all. Thank you. Thank you so much. It is——

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, BSU. Thank you. Thank you so much. It's good to be back in Maryland.

It is an honor to be standing here with one of the best Governors in the United States of America, Martin O'Malley. It's great to be with someone who has always had my back, your Congressman and our majority leader, Steny Hoyer, in the house. I'm proud to be here with your outstanding Senators, Barbara Mikulski and Ben Cardin, some of your outstanding Congressmen, Chris Van Hollen and Elijah Cummings and Donna Edwards and John Sarbanes. I'm proud to be here with Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown.

Anthony and I went to law school together. He looks younger than me, though. [*Laughter*] Doesn't have as much gray hair. [*Laughter*]

And I want to thank the president of Bowie State, Mickey Burnim. Thank you so much for your hospitality.

Now, let me say up front a few words about Martin. Here is a man who made tough choices in tough times to move Maryland forward. His rock-solid support for public education has made Maryland schools the best in America 2 years in a row, the best in America—not the best on the East Coast, not the best in the Mid-Atlantic States, the best in America.

His innovative policies have helped drive violent crime down to its lowest level since 1975. His smart leadership helped turn around Chesapeake Bay. And thanks to decisions that he made, along with my good friend, Tim Kaine, in Virginia, the blue crab population is up 60 percent over last year. And that's good news to folks who make their living on the Bay, and it's good news to folks who like good eating.

So Martin has been a great Governor for a great State, which is why I hope you are fired up in these last few weeks. I hope you're ready to fight for Martin so he can keep fighting for you. Because there's an election coming up that's going to say a lot about the future—your future, but also the future of this country.

Audience members. We love you, Obama!

The President. I love you back. But I've got a good—[*applause*]—but I want to talk about this election now. [*Laughter*] I do love you, though.

Two years ago, you defied the conventional wisdom in Washington. You remember. They said, you can't overcome the cynicism of our politics. You can't overcome the power of the special interests. You can't make progress on the big challenges of our time.

Audience members. Yes we can!

The President. You can't elect an African American with a funny name. They said, no, you can't.

Audience members. Yes we can!

The President. I'm sorry, what did you say?

Audience members. Yes we can!

The President. You said, yes, we can.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Now, here's the thing, though, here's the trick. Because I know everybody here remembers the Inauguration, and even though it was cold, everybody was having a great time. And Beyonce was singing and—[laughter]—and Bono. And everybody thought this is great.

But our victory in that campaign, that wasn't the end of the road. That was the beginning. The campaign by itself didn't deliver the change that we needed. It just gave us the chance to make change happen. And it made each of you shareholders in the mission of rebuilding our country and reclaiming our future. And I'm back today, 2 years later, because the success of that mission is at stake. We've got a lot at stake right now. On November 2, I'm going to need you just as fired up as you were in 2008. Just as fired up.

I want to just go down memory lane here for the last 20 months, so we understand where we've been, what we have to do, and where we're going. After that last election, it was my hope that we could pull people together, Democrats and Republicans, because we had to confront the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the worst by far in most of our lifetimes. Because although we're proud to be Democrats, we're prouder to be Americans. We wanted to bring everybody together. And I know there are plenty of Republicans who feel the same way in this country.

But, unfortunately, when we arrived in Washington, the Republicans in Congress, they had a different idea. They knew it would take more than a couple of years to climb out of this unbelievable recession that they had created. They knew that by the time the midterm rolled around that people would still be out of work; that people would still be frustrated. And they figured that if we just sat on the sidelines and opposed every idea, every compromise that I offered, if they spent all their time attacking Democrats instead of attacking problems, that somehow they would prosper at the polls.

So they spent the last 20 months saying no, even to policies that they'd supported in the past. No to middle class tax cuts, no to help for small businesses, no to a bipartisan deficit reduction commission that they had once sponsored. I said yes, they said no. I'm pretty sure if I said the sky was blue, they'd say no. [Laughter] If I said there are fish in the sea, they'd say no. See, their calculation was if Obama fails, then we win.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That was their calculation. Well, they might have thought that playing political games would get them through an election, but I knew it wasn't going to get America through our crisis. So I made a different choice. Instead of playing politics, I took whatever steps were necessary to stop an economic freefall. I did what we needed to do even if it wasn't popular, even if it wasn't easy. Because you all did not elect me to do what was easy. You didn't

elect me to spend all day looking at the polls and figuring out how to keep me in office. You elected me to do what was right. That's why you elected me, to do what's right.

And 20 months later, 20 months later, we no longer face the possibility of a second depression. Our economy is growing again. Private sector jobs have grown 8 months in a row. Thanks to Martin O'Malley's leadership, Maryland has gained over 33,000 jobs since January, the best start of a year since 2000, which, by the way, was the last time Democrats were in charge. There are 3 million Americans who wouldn't be working today if it weren't for the economic plan we put in place.

But the truth is we've still got a long way to go. We all know that. The hole we were in was so deep. There are still millions of Americans without work. There are still millions of families who can barely pay the bills or make a mortgage; middle class families who were struggling even before the crisis hit and now they're just treading water.

So, of course people are frustrated. People are impatient with the pace of change. They want things to move a little quicker. I understand that. I'm impatient too. But the other side, they don't have an answer. All they have decided to do is to ride that frustration and that anger all the way to the ballot box. And right now you've got pundits who are saying, well, the other party's supporters are more excited. They're saying they're going to turn out at higher levels.

Audience members. No!

The President. They say that all of you who worked so hard in 2008, you might not be as pumped up, might not be as energized.

Audience members. No!

The President. You might not care as much; that you might be willing to let the other folks who left the economy in a shambles go back to Washington and go back to Annapolis.

Audience members. No!

The President. Well, Maryland, I think the pundits are wrong. But it's up to you to prove them wrong. Don't make me look bad, now. [*Laughter*] I'm betting on you, not on them. But it's up to you to defy the conventional wisdom. It's up to you to show the pundits that you care too much to let this country fall backwards. You want it to keep moving forward; that you're ready to fight for our future.

So, make no mistake. This election is a choice. And that choice could not be clearer. I mean, think about it. This is not as if candidates in the other party were offering new ideas. They didn't go meditate and say, boy, we really messed up, let's try to figure out if we can do some things better. That's not what happened. It's not as if they've changed their agenda since the last time they ran Washington or the last time they ran Annapolis.

In fact, the chairman of one of their campaign committees promised that if Republicans take control of Congress, they will follow the exact same agenda they pursued during the last administration.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That's what they said. And we all know what that agenda was. Basically, you've been there, done that. [*Laughter*] Basically, what they're saying is we're going to cut taxes, mostly for millionaires and billionaires. Then we're going to cut regulations for special interests. We're going to cut back on investments in education and clean energy, in research

and technology. And basically, the idea is if we just put blind faith in the marketplace and if we let corporations play by their own rules, and we leave everybody else to fend for themselves, then America is going to somehow grow and prosper. What did this young lady say? Been there, done that.

I mean, there is a problem with their approach, which is we tried it, and it didn't work. It didn't work for middle class families who saw their incomes fall by 5 percent when they were in power. Middle class incomes fell. That's not—don't take my word for it. That's the Wall Street Journal. Meanwhile, your costs for everything from health care to college tuition went up when they were in charge. Job growth, when they were in charge, was slower than any time since World War II. Think about that. They weren't creating jobs. They're going around talking about jobs now. They had 8 years. They took a record surplus left by President Bill Clinton—they came back with a record deficit by the time I took office. Now, they're out there talking about deficit reduction. We saw what you had to do with the deficit. It didn't work when there was a free-for-all on Wall Street that led to a crisis that we're still struggling through today.

Now, I bring this up not to re-litigate the past. I just don't want to relive the past. I don't want to go through that mess again. That's the philosophy the other side wants to bring to Washington and wants to bring to Annapolis if they win in November. That's the philosophy that Martin's opponent espouses. Republicans might have given it a new name—they called it "The Pledge to America"—but it's the same old snake oil they've been peddling for years. Same old stuff. Same old stuff.

Now, I want everybody to take a look at this "Pledge to America." It's interesting. They put it out with great fanfare, but now nobody is really talking about it. But let's examine their pledge. For starters, it turns out the pledge was actually written in part by a former lobbyist for AIG and Exxon-Mobil.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. You can't make this stuff up. [*Laughter*] So they helped write this thing. The centerpiece of the pledge, their big idea, is a \$700 billion tax cut for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans. That's their big idea. So how many folks here make more than \$250,000 a year? Just a show of hands here. All right. You need to donate to Martin O'Malley's campaign. [*Laughter*] For the rest of you, their idea isn't much. I mean, these are the folks who want to lecture us on fiscal responsibility. They want to borrow \$700 billion, and then they want to give out tax cuts worth an average of \$100,000 to millionaires and billionaires.

And when you ask them, well, where are going to get this \$700 billion, they don't have an answer. They don't have an answer. They don't know. I guess we'd have to borrow it from China. [*Laughter*]

But when you look at the "Pledge to America," it turns out they do have an idea about how to pay for a small portion of it. They want to cut education by 20 percent.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That's a cut that would reduce financial aid for 8 million college students, including a whole bunch of college students right here at BSU.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Now, I want to just focus on this for a minute, because here in Maryland, you know understand how important education is to our economy, how important it is to our

future. Martin O'Malley knows that too. His opponent raised college tuition in this State by 40 percent when he was in charge. This is at a time when the economy was doing better. Now, even in the toughest of times, over the last 2 years, Martin O'Malley froze in-State tuition, so he kept the cost of this school and other schools affordable for Maryland's families. And thanks to his unprecedented investment in Maryland's education, as I said before, you've been ranked the best when it comes to public schools the last 2 years in a row. That's what Martin O'Malley does. He walks the walk, doesn't just talk the talk.

But we can't maintain this progress if our opponents have their way. At a time when the education of our country's citizens is one of the biggest predictors of economic success, they think it's more important to give another tax break to folks who don't need it and weren't even asking for them than to invest in our young people.

Let me ask you—I want to ask my Republican friends a question here: Do you think China is cutting back on education right now?

Audience members. No!

The President. Do you think South Korea is making it harder for its citizens to get a college education?

Audience members. No!

The President. Those countries aren't playing for second place. And guess what. The United States does not play for second place. We play for first place. We're going to make investments in you.

As long as I am President, and as long as Martin O'Malley is your Governor, we will not allow politicians in Washington or Annapolis sacrifice your education for tax cuts we can't afford. That is the choice in this election.

Martin, me, Barbara, Steny, the rest of the folks up on this stage, we've got a different idea about what the next 2 years should look like, and it's an idea rooted in our belief about how this country was built. We know government doesn't have all the answers to our problems. We don't believe that government's main role is to create jobs or prosperity. We think government should be lean; we think it should be efficient.

That's why Martin actually cut spending by \$5 billion. He's reduced the size of government in this State. That's why I've proposed a 3-year freeze and set up a bipartisan fiscal commission to deal with our deficit.

But what we also understand, in the words of the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, is that government should do for the people what they cannot do better for themselves.

I think we might have had somebody faint down here. So if we got the paramedics—right here up front, everybody is pointing at him. Now—they'll be all right, just make sure you give him some space. And if somebody has a bottle of water, you might want to get it to him.

Look, we believe in a country that rewards hard work and responsibility. We believe in a country where we look after one another; where say, I am my brother's keeper; I am my sister's keeper. That's the America I know. That's the America Martin cares about. That's the choice in this election.

Instead of tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, we want to make permanent the tax cuts we gave to middle class Americans, because you deserve a break. [Laughter] Instead of the other side's plan to keep tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas, we want to give tax breaks to companies that invest right here in the United States of America, to small businesses, American manufacturers, American clean energy companies. I don't want solar panels and wind turbines and electric cars built in Asia or built in Europe. I want them made right here in the United States of America by American workers.

Audience members. USA! USA! USA!

The President. Instead of cutting education, cutting student aid, we want to make permanent our new college tax credit. This is a credit worth \$10,000 in tuition relief for every young person going to 4 years of college. That means you, Bowie State.

We will fight to keep the reforms we've made to the student loan system. Thanks to those reforms, tens of billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies that would have gone to big banks are now going to where they should, to students like you.

If the other side wins, they'll try their hardest to give free rein back to the insurance companies, and the credit card companies, and the Wall Street banks that we're finally holding accountable. We can't let them do that. We can't go back to the days of taxpayer-funded bailouts or when credit card companies could just jack up your rates without reason. We can't go back to the days when insurance companies could just drop your coverage because you're sick. We've got to keep in place the new law that says if you're out there looking for a job or have one that don't offer you coverage, you should be able to stay on your parents' insurance policy until you're 26 years old.

That's the choice in this election. That's what's at stake right now. So, Maryland, it comes down to this: A lot of folks running in the other party, these are the exact same people who spent the last decade driving this economy into a ditch. And so, for the last 20 months, me and Martin and Steny and Barbara and all these folks, we have gotten down into the ditch, put on our boots. We're down there. It's hot. We were sweating, bugs everywhere. We're down there pushing, pushing, pushing on the car. Every once in a while we'd look up and see the Republicans standing there. They're just standing there fanning themselves—[laughter]—sipping on a Slurpee. [Laughter] And we'd say, "Come on down and help." They'd say, "No, that's all right." [Laughter] They'd say, "You're not pushing the right way. You got to push faster."

And we just kept on pushing and pushing. And finally we got this car up on level ground. Finally we got it up on level ground. Now, this car is a little beat up now because they drove it into the ditch. It's got some dents, needs a tune-up. But it's pointing in the right direction.

We want to start back on that road to prosperity, but suddenly we feel this tap on our shoulder—we look back, who is it? It's the Republicans. And they say, "We want the keys back." And we got to tell them, you can't have the keys back because you don't know how to drive. You don't know how to drive. We'll give you a ride if you want, but you got to sit in the backseat. We'll take you to prosperity but you got to sit in the backseat because you don't know how to drive.

Have you ever noticed, when you get in your car if you want to go forward, what do you do? You got to put it in "D." If you want to go backwards, what do you do? You put it in "R." That is not a coincidence. We don't want to go backwards.

But it's up to you to make sure they don't get the keys back. See, the other side sees a chance to get back in the driver's seat. And, by the way, thanks to a recent Supreme Court decision, they are being helped this year like we've never seen before by special interest groups that are spending unlimited amounts of money on attack ads. And then they don't disclose who is behind them. Because of the Supreme Court law, they don't have to disclose who is behind it.

It could be the oil companies. It could be the insurance industry. It could be Wall Street. You don't know. Their lips are sealed. The floodgates are open, though. And almost every one of these independent organizations is run by Republican operatives. They're posing as nonprofit, nonpolitical groups. They've got names like Americans for Prosperity or the Committee for Truth in Politics or Moms for Motherhood. Actually, the last one I made up. *[Laughter]*

But you'd think—there was a recent report that in recent weeks, conservative groups like this have outspent Democratic groups by seven to one.

There's another one up here who got a little hot. Let him sit down. Let him sit down. All right, you got another bottle of water? If we can get another bottle of water up here and a medic up here.

Now, I want to remember, next time you guys come out here, make sure you drink something and eat something before you're standing here, especially when you got a bunch of politicians talking. *[Laughter]*

But I want you to understand this, because this is important. It is estimated that Democratic groups are being outspent seven to one. In Indiana's Senate race, it's nearly six to one. In a House race there, a conservative group has spent nearly as much as both parties combined. In Colorado, they're outspending the Democratic Party nearly two to one. In Missouri, the Republicans' Senate committee hasn't spent a dime, but outside groups have dropped \$2 million of negative ads to help the Republican candidate.

Just this week, we learned that one of the largest groups paying for these ads regularly takes in money from foreign corporations. So groups that receive foreign money are spending huge sums to influence American elections, and they won't tell you where the money for their ads come from.

So this isn't just a threat to Democrats. All Republicans should be concerned. Independents should be concerned. This is a threat to our democracy. The American people deserve to know who's trying to sway their elections. And if we just stand by and allow the special interests to silence anybody who's got the guts to stand up to them, our country is going to be a very different place.

So here's the bottom line. We're going to need to work even harder in this election. We're going to need to fight their millions of dollars with millions of voices—everybody here who is ready to finish what we started in 2008. Because if everybody who fought for change in 2008 shows up on November 2, I am absolutely confident we will win.

What the other side is counting on, the other side is counting on, is that this time around you're going to stay home. They're counting on your silence. They're counting on amnesia. They're counting on your apathy, especially the young people here. They don't believe you're going to come out and vote. They figure Obama is not on the ballot; you're not going to come out and vote.

Maryland, you've got to prove them wrong. Let's show Washington one more time change doesn't come from the top. It doesn't come from millions of dollars of attack ads funded by special interests. Change happens from the bottom up. Change happens because of you.

So I know times are tough. And I know we're a long way from the hope and the excitement we all felt on election night and Inauguration Day. But we always knew this was going to take time. We always knew it was going to be hard. I said it was going to be hard. Change has always been hard.

From the first days of our Nation, every time Americans have tried to bring about real, meaningful change, we faced setbacks and disappointments. From the founding of this country—George Washington experienced setbacks and disappointments. We've had to face fear and doubt. Harriet Tubman had fear and doubt. But as Americans, we have always moved forward. We have always kept fighting. We've always remembered that in the United States of America, our destiny is not written for us; it is written by us. That's how we got through war. That's how we got through depression. That's what civil rights workers understood. That's how we got women's rights and workers' rights. And that's what's being tested right now.

And if we've got the courage to keep moving forward, even in the face of difficulty, even in the face of uncertainty, I guarantee if all of you are out there knocking on doors and making phone calls, and voting for Martin O'Malley and Barbara Mikulski and the rest of the Democratic ticket, then we are not just going to win this election, but we are going to make sure that the American Dream is alive and well for future generations.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. at Bowie State University. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia, chairman of the Democratic National Committee; entertainers Beyonce G. Knowles and Paul D. "Bono" Hewson; Rep. Pete Sessions; and former lobbyist Brian Wild.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Gubernatorial candidate Martin O'Malley, rally in Bowie, MD.

Locations: Bowie, MD.

Economy, national : Economic concerns

Names: Brown, Anthony G.; Burnim, Mickey L.; Cardin, Benjamin L.; Clinton, William J.; Cummings, Elijah E.; Edwards, Donna F.; Ehrlich, Robert L., Jr.; Hewson, Paul D. "Bono"; Hoyer, Steny H.; Kaine, Timothy M.; Knowles, Beyonce G.; Mikulski, Barbara A.; O'Malley, Martin J.; Sarbanes, John P.; Sessions, Pete; Van Hollen, Christopher; Wild, Brian.

Subjects: ; Budget, Federal : Congressional spending restraint; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Budget, Federal : Deficit reduction commission, proposed :: Congressional establishment; Business and industry : Credit cards, regulations and consumer protections; Business and industry : Domestic investment, proposed tax breaks for; Congress : Bipartisan fiscal commission, proposed; Congress : Bipartisanship; ducation : Standards and school accountability; Economy, national : Financial regulations, modernization efforts; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : Postsecondary education :: Tax credits, expansion; Elections :

2010 congressional elections; Elections : Campaign finance laws; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Energy : Alternative energy products and technologies, U.S. production; Energy : Battery technology for hybrid automobiles; Energy : Solar and wind energy; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Health and medical care : Young adults, insurance coverage as dependents, age limit extension; Maryland : Democratic Party events; Maryland : Governor; Maryland : President's visit; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Taxation : Tax relief.

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