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**REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON AT
I.B.E.W. FUNDRAISER
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

MRS. CLINTON: I am delighted to be here and want to thank all of you for joining us this morning. I want to thank Jack and Jack. I was telling them earlier I wish that there were a way that we could kind of combine them together because the energy that they have brought not only to this union but to Democratic politics and just decent, caring American solutions for problems is really unmatched anywhere in the country. I'm so pleased every time I get to see them -- they just kind of lift your spirits. They always make you happy, but I'm not going to tell you what was in that birthday card. I have learned a few things in Washington.

I also want to commend Terry and his staff. There are those in this audience who have been stalwart supporters of my husband and the Clinton-Gore Administration and I'm very grateful for all that you have done. And we've had great leadership in the past year from Terry McAuliffe who when he told me, I have to confess, that he was going to get all the fundraising done by the end of November, I was a little bit disbelieving but he has proven all of us wrong who thought it couldn't be done because of the energy that he's brought to this task.

This really is a watershed election and I suppose every election that's held, people who have a stake in it say the same thing because you always put your heart and your efforts into getting the person you want elected and of course you take it very seriously and many of us in this room have been in more elections than we can remember probably.

But this is, you know like floods sometimes are said to be hundred year floods, this is a hundred year election because we are debating first principles about what it means to be an American and what we owe each other and what the role and obligation of the different sectors in our society will be.

We haven't had this kind of debate really since the turn of the last century. And maybe there's something about centuries ending and millennia particularly ending that brings this kind of intense debate and scrutiny to the forefront. But that's what we're in the midst of.

You know a hundred years ago, the Progressive Era began because we were not taking well enough care of each other. We had people -- new immigrants, children, people all over the cities of our country in tenements and sweat shops. They were working twelve, fifteen hours a day -- six, seven days a week.

I've been reading some of the work of Jane Adams recently and reading how Miss Adams would walk through the neighborhoods in Chicago and children would be either locked into the tenement rooms while their parents and older siblings went to work, sometimes tied to kitchen table legs or else left to wander the streets at the age of three, four, and five because there was no where for them to go.

We also began to see movements arising about the concerns that we should have about how to regulate the various markets in our country. How were we going to be sure that food was safe? If you think way back to your high school years, maybe like me you read Sinclair Lewis when you were in high school and you remember the reasons why we created some reign on the competition that existed in the market place to be sure people didn't sell us spoiled meat or they didn't try to pass off products that were dangerous and defective to people who didn't know any better.

We certainly know that we had to have a market kind of regulation on the financial markets and we also began to see the efforts to try to preserve our natural environment in those years. It was Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican president, who championed the Park Service in bringing in lots of the land that otherwise would have been destroyed because of development.

You can go on and on. And you can see how those tensions around the end of the last century are being played out again. You know we always have to relearn old lessons and so here in this election we have to be absolutely committed to our beliefs that the kind of America we want is an America where people's needs are given priority -- where they are put first, where all of us have a role to play.

Everybody wants the marketplace to generate wealth. We want as many people to make as much money as possible. But we know from human experience, not just in the nineteenth century of America, but going back through time that we have to look out for each other. That a society that doesn't consider itself as its brothers' keeper is a society that falls prey to the law of the jungle. And that's not the kind of America we were brought up in nor the kind we want to leave to our children and our grandchildren.

There's absolutely no mistaking that a lot of the forces that do not believe this are in control in the Congress right now. Let's give them credit. Let's assume that most of them

over there who spout this kind of Social Darwinism honestly believe it because they think everybody would be better off if people were just basically turned loose to fend for themselves and the strong would triumph and that would be ultimately good for the rest of us.

Let's give them that benefit of the doubt. Even giving them that, they're dead wrong. It runs against our religious traditions. It runs against our ideals as a nation. It runs against what a democracy is supposed to be and it runs against our own history and human nature.

But a lot of them are not sincere about this belief. A lot of them are bought hook, line, and sinker. And so their attitude is they're going to feather the nest of those people who brought them there. Look at these appropriation bills that they're passing. They're making up for lost time, enlarging them with all kinds of special interest favors.

Watch the hearings -- the few that they had on TV. Who sits behind them? People representing those who will benefit from the destruction of Medicare or Medicaid, who will benefit from opening up our national wildlife areas for exploitation and development.

So giving them the benefit of the doubt, being realistic about who will actually benefit from a lot of these changes, the net result is the same. They're absolutely wrong about the kind of society that we want to leave for the next generation.

Now the answer to that is not to wring our hands because that doesn't get anywhere and we've done more than enough of that. And Democrats, in particular, have done more wringing of hands than rolling up of sleeves than getting disciplined to work to fight back. But those days are behind us I hope. Now we need to run a very focused, top Democratic campaign to remind people about what the real choices are.

And the Republicans have helped us in this regard. Who would have thought they would have gone so far so fast? I would have thought they would have held some of their fire until perhaps they got by the next election and kept selling people the line that they were going to remove the government from their backs. But no, they couldn't wait and so their plans are fairly transparent. We see them most clearly in what they want to do with programs like Medicare and Medicaid that have helped literally millions and millions of Americans.

I don't know what world they live in sometimes. I don't know who these people are. When I read that a Republican member of Congress goes home to North Carolina and tells his local civic clubs that the tax cuts they're proposing are for middle class

people because middle class people are like him. He makes a \$133,000 in Congress and he has a \$50,000 police pension and he considers himself lower middle class. I don't know who these people represent.

The average median income of a woman over 65 in the United States is less than \$9,000. Most people, three quarters plus, who are on Medicare have combined incomes of less than \$25,000. Now who are these folks talking to? They're certainly not talking to the people I see and that I visit with day in and day out around this country who are scared to death.

But we have to give them some reason not to be scared but to have some courage to stand up for what is in their interest and the interest of this country.

The President and the Vice-President have, as Terry said, compiled an extraordinary record but it's not one that gets a lot of attention because a lot of it is ground-work laying -- people trying to make sure that we put into place the conditions that we will need for the future.

A lot of the work on reinventing government and a lot of the work that's boring about things like procurement reform -- all of that is what is laying the ground work for the kind of economic recovery that is still continuing and we believe will continue on into the next couple of years.

But it hasn't touched everybody. It hasn't brought out wages. It certainly hasn't done much to reverse shrinking benefits. And we have been fighting rear guard actions to protect pensions and health benefits, and if it weren't for the labor movement in this country you would have even more people losing their health insurance. The numbers are now over 41 million people with absolutely no health insurance and the projections are that that will continue to rise.

So we need as strong and focused partnership as we have ever had. We were listening, my husband and I, last night to some old speeches. Not very romantic, but you know (inaudible) sometimes. And he was listening to one of Roosevelt's speeches.

Franklin Roosevelt had this great line in which he said: "The Democrats are found on the same side of the street as the Good Samaritan. The other people are the ones passing by."

And I really think we should all remember that. Who do we want to be at the end of the day? Do we want to be the people who pass others by? Do we want to be someone who thinks that the lower middle class of Americans have \$180,000 worth of income?

Do we want to be people who vote to strip the assets of the lives of middle class Americans when the spouse has to go into the nursing home and even if they only have a house and a car left, they are going to be ordered to sell it?

Do we want to be among those who are going to be slashing Medicaid so that millions of children will no longer have access to the health care services they need and deserve? Do we want to be the people who destroy the national parks and the environment?

Do we want to be the people who say no to education when we need it so badly to prepare, not just our children, but a lot of older workers who have to be retrained for the future?

The reason you are here is because you want to say "yes" -- you want to say "yes" to common sense and realistic plans for the future. This campaign is going to be very hard fought. You know, every time the President goes up, they got all these little -- I've got these images in my mind of all these people in dark rooms, underground somewhere, thinking about more stuff to say about us you know and making up more stories.

I have no illusions about how difficult this campaign will be or how mean-spirited the other side will be. But I know we are going to win, and I know we are going to win because history is on our side. The better instincts of America are on our side.

And when it's all said and done, Americans will know who is on their side and the people who are the side of the street with the Good Samaritan, who are willing to lend a hand to a neighbor in trouble, who care about each other -- that's the kind of America folks are going to vote for next November.

And you're making it possible that they will be able to have that choice, that we will be able to get the message out, and then once the election is held -- we can get back to work to doing what needs to be done, to get the country back in the kind of shape to make sure everybody profits from the Information Age and this new global economy, that we bring everybody willing to work hard and take responsibility along with us.

That's the kind of America I want and is particularly the kind of America I want to leave to my daughter.

Thank you for your support.

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