

Remarks To NALEO: "Growing Opportunity For All Americans"

Mitt Romney | June 21, 2012



Thank you for inviting me to your annual conference. It's an honor to be here among so many dedicated elected leaders.

I come to you today as a candidate for President of the United States of America. I will govern from the principle that while this is a land of extraordinary diversity, there is much more that unites us than divides us. Though each of us walks a different path in life, we are united by one great, overwhelming passion: We love America. We believe in America. We are one nation, under God.

Today, we are united not only by our faith in America. We are united also by our concern for America.

This country we love is in peril. That is why I am running for President.

Almost four years ago, Americans did something that was very much the sort of thing Americans like to do: We gave someone new a chance to lead; someone we hadn't known for very long, who didn't have much of a record but promised to lead us to a better place.

At the time, we didn't know what sort of a President he would make. It was a moment of crisis for our economy, and when Barack Obama came to office, America wished him well and hoped for the best.

Three and a half years later, over 23 million Americans are out of work, underemployed or have just quit looking for work. At a time when we should be gaining momentum, we're losing it. Job growth has slowed and this week, we learned that the number of job openings has fallen again.

Hispanics have been hit disproportionately hard. While national unemployment is still above 8%, Hispanic unemployment is at 11%.

The middle class has been crushed under President Obama. More Americans are living in poverty today than at any point in history. Over two million more Hispanics are living in poverty today than the day President Obama took office.

Home values have plunged, our national debt is at record levels and families are buried under higher prices for food and gasoline.

And yet our President says the private sector is doing fine. This is more than a policy failure; it is a moral failure.

Now, I know the President will say that he inherited an economic crisis. But we shouldn't allow the challenges he faced four years ago to divert our attention from another important fact: The President pursued policies that have made this the slowest recovery since the Great Depression. And he broke promises many were counting on to build a brighter future.

It did not have to be this way.

Just compare this President's record with Ronald Reagan's first term. President Reagan also faced an economic crisis. In fact, in 1982, the unemployment rate peaked at nearly 11 percent. But in the two years that followed, he delivered a true recovery – economic growth and job creation were three times higher than in the Obama Economy.

If President Obama had delivered a real recovery – a Reagan recovery – we would have five million more jobs today. The unemployment rate would be about six percent. And our economy would be at least one trillion dollars larger.

Tomorrow, President Obama will speak here, for the first time since his last campaign. He may admit that he hasn't kept every promise. And he'll probably say that, even though you aren't better off today than you were four years ago, things could be worse. He'll imply that you really don't have an alternative. He's taking your vote for granted.

I've come here today with a simple message: You do have an alternative. Your vote should be respected. And your voice is more important now than ever before.

This November, we'll make a choice. We can continue along the path we're on – or we can choose a better way.

Instead of continuing with the policies of the last three and a half years, we can revitalize our free-enterprise economy. We can lead the world in what we invent and build and create. And let me make this very clear—this is the only way we can strengthen the middle class. And this is the only way we can create sustained prosperity. Raising taxes to grow government does not grow the middle class.

Today, I am asking you to join me because, while we may not agree on everything, we share the same goal, the same vision, and the same belief in American greatness that draws so many to our

shores. Liberty's torch can burn just as brightly for future generations of immigrants as it has burned for immigrants past.

We know our businesses can't succeed, grow, and hire more workers without a more competitive tax code. That's why I will lower our corporate tax rate, and reduce individual marginal rates by 20 percent, across the board.

We also know that our businesses and families need affordable and reliable energy. Producing more of our energy resources will create jobs in America and generate greater revenues for America. It will also help bring manufacturing back to our shores.

We know our economy can't grow if we're mortgaging our future to pay for the big government programs of today. As President, I will rein in spending and balance the budget. And I will repeal Obamacare. We cannot afford another \$2 trillion entitlement. Obamacare depresses job growth. In one study, 73 percent of business owners said that Obamacare has made it harder for them to hire people. Repealing Obamacare and replacing it will give businesses the certainty they need to hire, expand, and grow.

We can also jumpstart our economy by expanding trade in our hemisphere. Yet, the President has not completed a single new trade agreement with Latin America. And he's failed to crack down on countries like China that don't follow the rules.

We know our kids can't succeed if they're trapped in failing schools. That's why, as President, I will give the parents of every low-income and special-needs student the chance to choose where their child goes to school. When it comes to education, a choice for every parent means a chance for every child.

An effective immigration system can also strengthen our economy, as it has since the nation's founding.

Unfortunately, despite his promises, President Obama has failed to address immigration reform.

For two years, this President had huge majorities in the House and Senate – he was free to pursue any policy he pleased. But he did nothing to advance a permanent fix for our broken immigration system. Instead, he failed to act until facing a tough re-election and trying to secure your vote.

Last week, the President finally offered a temporary measure that he seems to think will be just enough to get him through the election. After three and a half years of putting every issue from loan guarantees for his donors to Cash For Clunkers before immigration, now the President has been seized by an overwhelming need to do what he could have done on Day One. I think you deserve better.

Some people have asked if I will let stand the President's executive action. The answer is that I will put in place my own long-term solution that will replace and supersede the President's temporary measure.

As President, I won't settle for a stop-gap measure. I will work with Republicans and Democrats to find a long-term solution. I will prioritize measures that strengthen legal immigration and make it easier. And I will address the problem of illegal immigration in a civil but resolute manner. We may not always agree, but when I make a promise to you, I will keep it.

Let me speak to a few principles that will guide me.

As I have said many times, it is critical that we redouble our efforts to secure the borders. That means both preventing illegal border crossings and making it harder to illegally overstay a visa. We should field enough border patrol agents, complete a high-tech fence, and implement an improved exit verification system.

Our immigration system should help promote strong families, not keep them apart. Our nation benefits when moms and dads and their kids are all living together under the same roof. But, today, too many families are caught in a broken system that costs them time and money and entangles them in red tape. For those seeking to come to America the right way, that kind of bureaucratic nightmare has to end. And we can do this with just a few common-sense reforms.

As President, I will reallocate Green Cards to those seeking to keep their families under one roof. We will exempt from caps the spouses and minor children of legal permanent residents. And we will eliminate other forms of bureaucratic red tape that keep families from being together.

Immigration reform is not just a moral imperative, but an economic necessity as well.

Immigrants with advanced degrees start companies, create jobs, and drive innovation at a high rate. Immigrants founded or cofounded nearly half of our 50 top venture-backed companies. They are nearly 30 percent more likely to start a business. And that kind of risk taking is something we need more than ever because new business starts are now at a 30-year low.

I will work with states and employers to update our temporary worker visa program so that it meets our economic needs.

And if you get an advanced degree here, we want you to stay here – so we will staple a green card to your diploma. We want the best and brightest to enrich the nation through the jobs and technologies they will help create.

We also have a strong tradition in this country of honoring immigrants who join our military and put their lives on the line to keep this country safe. Since September 11, 2001, the United States has naturalized almost 75,000 members of the Armed Forces. Too many of these patriots died on distant battlefields for our freedom before receiving full citizenship here in the country they called “home.”

As President, I will stand for a path to legal status for anyone who is willing to stand up and defend this great nation through military service. Those who have risked their lives in defense of America have earned the right to make their life in America.

But improving access to legal immigration is only one part of the equation. We must also make legal immigration more attractive than illegal immigration, so that people are rewarded for waiting patiently in line. That's why my administration will establish a strong employment verification system so that every business can know with confidence that the people it hires are legally eligible for employment.

We can find common ground here, and we must. We owe it to ourselves as Americans to ensure that our country remains a land of opportunity – both for those who were born here and for those who share our values, respect our laws, and want to come to our shores.

I've spoken often about how proud I am of my father. He was born to American parents living in Mexico. When he was five, they left everything behind, and started over in the United States.

His dad – my grandfather – was a builder who went bust more than once. My grandfather didn't make much money. There were times in my dad's life when he lived in poverty. But my grandfather had big hopes for my dad, and tried to help him as best he could.

My Dad didn't finish college. But he believed in a country where the circumstances of one's birth were not a barrier to achievement – and he wasn't afraid of hard work. He held odd jobs – lath and plaster and selling paint. He was lucky enough to live in America, where hard work can turn aspirations into realities. And he became the leader of a great car company and the governor of a great state.

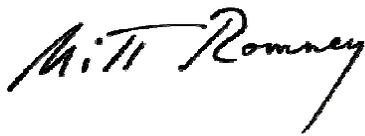
This is my father's story – but it could be any American's. Most of you here today are leaders in your community. You are here because you have benefitted from this land of opportunity, and you want to give back to this country, to fight for its people, so that they have the same chance to succeed.

We are truly one America. Everyone here has made this exceptional nation what it is today.

This isn't an election about two people. This isn't an election about being a Republican, Democrat, or an independent. This is an election about the future of America. I would ask each of you to look at the last three and a half years, and ask whether we can do better.

Is the America of 11% Hispanic unemployment the America of our dreams? I know we can do better. We can prosper again, with the powerful recovery we have all been waiting for, the good jobs that so many still need, and, above all, the opportunities we owe to our children and grandchildren.

Thank you all, and God bless America.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mitt Romney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'y'.