

Set 1: thank, togeth, hope, trust, promis, futur, elect, opportun

Set 2: congress, night, littl, control, program, industri, interest, run

Set 3: tax, incom, class, middl, relief, pay, rais, corpor

Set 4: bank, financi, crisi, mortgag, street, home, regul, wall

AUDIENCE With the economy on the downturn and retired and older citizens and workers losing their incomes, whats the fastest, most positive solution to bail these people out of the economic ruin?

BARACK OBAMA Well, Alan (ph) , thank you very much for the question. I want to first, obviously, thank Belmont University, Tom, thank you, and to all of you who are participating tonight and those of you who sent e- mail questions in. I think everybody knows now we are in the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. And a lot of you I think are worried about your jobs, your pensions, your retirement accounts, your ability to send your child or your grandchild to college. And I believe this is a final verdict on the failed economic policies of the last eight years, strongly promoted by President Bush and supported by Senator McCain, that essentially said that we should strip away regulations, consumer protections, let the market run wild, and prosperity would rain down on all of us. It hasnt worked out that way. And so now weve got to take some decisive action. Now, step one was a rescue package that was passed last week. Weve got to make sure that works properly. And that means strong oversight, making sure that investors, taxpayers are getting their money back and treated as investors. It means that we are cracking down on CEOs and making sure that theyre not getting bonuses or golden parachutes as a consequence of this package. And, in fact, we just found out that AIG, a company that got a bailout, just a week after they got help went on a \$400, 000 junket. And Ill tell you what, the Treasury should demand that money back and those executives should be fired. But thats only step one. The middle- class need a rescue package. And that means tax cuts for the middle-class. It means help for homeowners so that they can stay in their homes. It means that we are helping state and local governments set up road projects and bridge projects that keep people in their jobs. And then long- term weve got to fix our health care system, weve got to fix our energy system that is putting such an enormous burden on families. You need somebody working for you and youve got to have somebody in Washington who is thinking about the middle class and not just those who can afford to hire lobbyists.

MODERATOR Senator McCain?

JOHN MCCAIN Well, thank you, Tom. Thank you, Belmont University. And Senator Obama, its good to be with you at a town hall meeting. And, Alan (ph) , thank you for your question. You go to the heart of Americas worries tonight. Americans are angry, theyre upset, and theyre a little fearful. Its our job to fix the problem. Now, I have a plan to fix this problem and it has got to do with energy independence. Weve got to stop sending \$700 billion a year to countries that dont want us very — like us very much. We have to keep Americans taxes low. All Americans taxes low. Lets not raise taxes on anybody today. We obviously have to stop this spending spree thats going on in Washington. Do you know that weve laid a \$10 trillion debt on these young Americans who are here with us tonight,

\$500 billion of it we owe to China? Weve got to have a package of reforms and it has got to lead to reform prosperity and peace in the world. And I think that this problem has become so severe, as you know, that were going to have to do something about home values. You know that home values of retirees continues to decline and people are no longer able to afford their mortgage payments. As president of the United States, Alan, I would order the secretary of the treasury to immediately buy up the bad home loan mortgages in America and renegotiate at the new value of those homes — at the diminished value of those homes and let people be able to make those — be able to make those payments and stay in their homes. Is it expensive? Yes. But we all know, my friends, until we stabilize home values in America, were never going to start turning around and creating jobs and fixing our economy. And weve got to give some trust and confidence back to America. I know how the do that, my friends. And its my proposal, its not Senator Obamas proposal, its not President Bushs proposal. But I know how to get America working again, restore our economy and take care of working Americans. Thank you.

MODERATOR Senator, we have one minute for a discussion here. Obviously the powers of the treasury secretary have been greatly expanded. The most powerful officer in the cabinet now. Hank Paulson says he wont stay on. Who do you have in mind to appoint to that very important post? Senator McCain?

JOHN MCCAIN Not you, Tom. (LAUGHTER)

MODERATOR No, with good reason.

JOHN MCCAIN You know, thats a tough question and theres a lot of qualified Americans. But I think the first criteria, Tom, would have to be somebody who immediately Americans identify with, immediately say, we can trust that individual. A supporter of Senator Obamas is Warren Buffett. He has already weighed in and helped stabilize some of the difficulties in the markets and with companies and corporations, institutions today. I like Meg Whitman, she knows what its like to be out there in the marketplace. She knows how to create jobs. Meg Whitman was CEO of a company that started with 12 people and is now 1. 3 million people in America make their living off eBay. Maybe somebody here has done a little business with them. But the point is its going to have to be somebody who inspires trust and confidence. Because the problem in America today to a large extent, Tom, is that we dont have trust and confidence in our institutions because of the corruption on Wall Street and the greed and excess and the cronyism in Washington, D. C.

MODERATOR All right. Senator McCain — Senator Obama, who do you have in mind for treasury secretary?

BARACK OBAMA Well, Warren would be a pretty good choice — Warren Buffett, and Im pleased to have his support. But there are other folks out there. The key is making sure that the next treasury secretary understands that its not enough just to help those at the top. Prosperity is not just going to trickle down. Weve got to help the middle class. And weve — you know, Senator McCain and I have some fundamental disagreements on the economy, starting with Senator McCains statement earlier that he thought the fundamentals of the economy were sound. Part of the problem here is that for many of you, wages and incomes have flat- lined. For many of you, it is getting harder and harder to save, harder and harder to retire. And thats why, for example, on tax policy, what I want to do is provide a middle class tax cut to 95 percent of working Americans, those who are working two jobs, people

who are not spending enough time with their kids, because they are struggling to make ends meet. Senator McCain is right that weve got to stabilize housing prices. But underlying that is loss of jobs and loss of income. Thats something that the next treasury secretary is going to have to work on.