

American Voices Abroad Berlin happily celebrates this second inauguration of President Barack Obama because we believe that he shares our vision of the future.

We applaud his landmark achievements: the Affordable Care Act, the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. Thank you, President Obama, for taking the Federal Student Loan Program out of the hands of loan sharks and for creating the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Thank you for making the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy a thing of the past and for declaring the Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional. Thank you for appointing Sonia Sotomajor and Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court. Thank you for withdrawing from Iraq.

We share with you, Mr. President, a vision of government, both its unique capacities and its limitations.

§ We believe that government must play a key role in ensuring the integrity of the ecosystems on which we all depend for life, enforcing air and water quality, guarding the safety of our food supply and establishing an energy policy that reduces greenhouse gases.

§ We believe that government must regulate the marketplace – to ensure fairness and prevent fraud.

§ We value the contributions of everyone in our society: those who work primarily with their hands, those who care for others, those who clean up after others, those who work in offices, factories, classrooms, in the fields, on construction sites. And we believe that workers have a right to organize themselves in trade unions, and that there should be a path to citizenship for the undocumented.

§ We believe in the abolition of the death penalty and in the reform of the prison system.

§ We believe in serious national gun control.

§ We believe that an excellent public education system is vital to our democracy and our economic self-interest, and that the public has an interest as well in supporting scientific research.

§ We celebrate, too, a shared vision with you concerning areas in which government should NOT, in our opinion, play a role: in our private lives, in whom we love and whom we marry, in whether or not to have a child.

And so, as you begin your second term and approach the multiple problems of the economy, the deficit, energy and environmental policy, we encourage you to reject the false dichotomy of jobs versus climate change. We believe they belong together in a sustainable economy designed for peace, an economy

- in which energy policies do not lead to war,
- in which war is not regarded as an economic solution,
- in which environmental policies do not leave the public with the cleanup bill,
- in which economic growth is integrated with sound energy and environmental policies,
- in which we do not subsidize oil companies or agri-business, big insurance or big pharma,
- in which the tax code is made more progressive; a financial transaction tax is levied to curb speculation, promote fairness and raise revenue; and long discredited trickle-down fantasies are no longer the basis of policy.

Mr. President: We know that in your first term you were faced with vicious obstructionism and had to sacrifice some of your goals. We hope that in this second term you will stand your ground: expand Obamacare to include everyone; strengthen our Social Security system, especially by lifting the income cap; secure Medicare and Medicaid; reject the Keystone XL pipeline; tax carbon; and fight to require wealthy donors and corporations to disclose political spending.

And, Mr. President, very specifically, don't give up on diplomacy with Iran, withdraw our troops from Afghanistan, keep the window open for a two-state solution in Israel/Palestine, and reconsider whether your drone policy is really effective counter-terrorism strategy. And one thing we urge you to do right away: close the prison camp in Guantánamo.

We voted for you because we believe you want to do these things. **STAND YOUR GROUND**, Mr. President, and we will stand with you.



This speech celebrates the second inauguration of President Barack Obama on December 21, 2012, also Martin Luther King Day. It was written by Carolyn Prescott and Ann Wertheimer on behalf of American Voices Abroad Berlin (AVA-Berlin) www.avaberlin.org and www.facebook.com/AmericanVoicesAbroadBerlin.

AVA-Berlin offers a community for engaged US citizens and provides a forum for a wide spectrum of views. We seek to foster open and constructive discussions among Americans on the sometimes contentious issues most important to us.

We are independent of all political parties both in the United States and in Germany.