

Separating the myth and reality of Obama's accomplishments

By Donna Brazile

In the depths of the Watergate scandal, a persistent theory emerged that President Richard Nixon would cancel the 1972 election. It became so rampant that The Washington Post ran a story headlined, "The Anatomy of a Rumor."

The core of the story was that for a rumor to have legs — for it to circulate and frame the dialogue — there must be a "predisposition to believe it."

My thoughts went back to the Watergate rumor when a colleague sent me a compilation of President Barack Obama's accomplishments. The misperception, given legs by the both mainstream and partisan media outlets, is that Obama has accomplished little. This is a myth, a false rumor reinforced by a predisposition — or prejudice — to believe it.

Four days before Obama's inauguration, on Jan. 16, 2009, conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh told listeners, "I hope Obama fails." Limbaugh's craving became a verbal reflex, a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Before long, prominent politicians repeated Limbaugh's "fail" refrain like a schoolyard chant. Truth be damned, during the last Republican debate in Iowa a line of presidential candidates declared Obama had failed.

Actually, Obama is succeeding. I didn't

realize the extent of his accomplishments until I was referred to several Internet sources that have compiled extensive lists.

As we enter the silly season where the media focus is on nonstop election coverage, it's helpful to recall some of the facts.

The Obama presidency is responsible for:

— The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, creating 2.1 million jobs and firing up the economy by a significant 3.5 percent.

— The Helping Families Save Their Homes Act, which helped to stabilize the housing market and fight homelessness.

— The Dodd-Frank law, likely the largest and most comprehensive Wall Street reform since the Great Depression.

— The "CARD Act" to protect consumers from deceptive bank credit-card practices.

— The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act constructed to stop pay discrimination against women and other workers.

— A law that allows the government to close offshore tax-avoidance loopholes.

— Tax credits to first-time homebuyers, which helped the U.S. housing market.

— A \$15 billion plan that provides increased lending for small businesses.

— Expanded funding for the Violence Against Women Act.

— State aid to prevent thousands of teachers, police, and firefighters from losing their jobs.

— The auto industry rescue plan, which saved 1 million jobs. These firms have since returned to private hands and taxpayer money has been fully recovered.

Beyond legislation, Obama used his executive authority to:

— Freeze White House staff salaries

— Create the post of chief performance officer, charged with making government operations more efficient.

— Order 65 Wall Street executives who took bailout money to reduce their own pay until the funds were paid back in full to the federal government.

— Negotiate an unprecedented deal that gives the U.S. access for the first time ever to Swiss bank records of criminals and tax evaders.

— Recover TARP money and pass it along to local housing finance agencies in California, Florida, Nevada, Arizona, and Michigan to fund homebuying.

— Obama created more jobs in 2010 alone than Bush did in eight years.

Obama has been just as successful in foreign affairs:

— His leadership at the G-20 Summit created a \$1.1 trillion fund to combat the global financial crisis.

— Obama visited more countries and met with more world leaders than any previous president during his first six months in office.

— He created a comprehensive new strategy for dealing with the international nuclear threat.

— Obama directed the efforts that killed Osama bin Laden and 27 of 32 top al-Qaida leaders in three years.

— Obama ended the Iraq War, and put into action his plan to achieve Afghanistan War goals and to draw down our troops.

— His new foreign-policy strategy directed the U.N. and NATO to take the lead in saving thousands of Libyan citizens from slaughter.

Let me add my own: Obama has carried out an unrelenting campaign to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons, including countermeasures and crippling sanctions. As a result, despite the Republican rumor, Obama has made Israel the safest it has been since 2000.

After three years, that's quite a list of accomplishments — and it's only a partial list, a sampling. (To read them all, Google "The PCTC blog.")

Would that congressional Republicans were less interested in blocking good bills and more interested in rebuilding and strengthening America — and in sharing in the success. Call me an optimist, but I'm predisposed to believe it can happen, and it's my dearest hope for 2012.

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