

PAGINA BILINGUE

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February 16, 2008

Wisconsin Founders Day Gala Remarks

Thank you all so much. Thank you. Thank you. Oh, thank you so much, it may be a little cold outside but it sure is warm with all these Democrats making a lot of noise about what we believe in and what we care about. I am thrilled to be with you. I want to thank Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton for her leadership and for that really extraordinary introduction. I am so grateful to her. I want to recognize and thank Governor Jim Doyle, who is here as well, Chairman Joe Wineke and the entire Wisconsin Democratic Party. I want to thank also my colleagues in the Senate. But I really should thank all of you for sending Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold to Washington.

I don't have to tell you what extraordinary leaders they are, how much influence they exercise. We all listen when either one of them speak. And it is a great personal privilege for me to serve with them and consider them friends. I also want to recognize your Congressional Democratic Delegation, Gwen Moore and Steve Kagen. They have been extraordinary in a short period of time, and of course my dear friend and one of my co-chairs Tammy Baldwin- thank you all very much.

I know former Congressman and now Mayor Tom Barrett is here, and to all of you who are supporting this event, raising money for this party, committed to not only doing everything possible to have a great election on Tuesday with as big a turnout as we can muster, but then to make sure we go on to victory in November and that Wisconsin is in the column of the Democratic president who we will be electing.

I know we are ready. We are long past ready, we are anxious to take back the White House. And on January 20, 2009, the next president of the United States will raise his or her hand and take the oath of office, and then will immediately inherit the problems that will be left to us to solve by President Bush.

Now we're here tonight to make sure that our next president is a Democrat, because after seven long years of George W. Bush, seven years of incompetence, corruption, cronyism, seven years of this government of the few, by the few, and for the few, we have to bring change to America and put our country back on the right track.

I think about that day because obviously I've been deeply honored and privileged to have lived it in the past with my husband. I know that after the swearing in ceremony and all of the activities at the Capitol, after the walk down Pennsylvania avenue and the parade, after the Inaugural Balls, the president will walk into the Oval Office and waiting there will be two wars, an economy in trouble, millions and millions of our fellow citizens, including 547,000 right here in Wisconsin without health care, problems that we think we can predict now, and all of those that we can't even imagine: an energy crisis to solve, alliances to rebuild, a homeland to protect. Instead of solving our problems we've had a president who has stood in our way. He's used fear to divide us and fatalism to discourage us. He wants us to believe we can't solve our problems. He wants us to think we shouldn't even try. Well, like so much of George Bush's Presidency, this has done a grave disservice to America. America's character is strong, our resilience is ever-present. We will survive the eight years of George Bush and Dick Cheney and enter the future with confidence and optimism again.

Unlike our Republican friends, we Democrats still believe America is the "can do" nation. We still believe that tomorrow will be better than today, and we know it is time we started acting like Americans again. It has been disheartening, to say the least, to see the narrowing of horizons, the loss of opportunity, the sense that the American dream is receding and eroding. I have been given opportunities because of this country that my parents never had and my grandparents never dreamt of, opportunities that came because of people who, generation after generation, believed with all their heart there wasn't a problem we couldn't solve, a challenge we couldn't meet, an opportunity we could not seize; people who built our country, who raised the families, who marched and protested and risked their lives because they looked into their children's eyes and they saw reflected back at them the promise of a better future. Senator Obama and I stand here tonight because of all those who came before; who sacrificed so much to bring us to this moment in our history and it is a moment to celebrate.

Because this nation gave me every chance, because during my lifetime I have seen the barriers tumble down, the obstacles overcome, I am running for president because I believe we can do the same for every single child. We can, once again, have an America where we can say to every boy and every girl that we will give you the opportunity to live up to your God-given potential. That, for me, is what this election is about. It's not about those of us who are running; it's about your families, your futures, and

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your country.

Tonight across Wisconsin and across America teachers are grading papers and nurses are caring for the sick, and they need a president who hears their voices and listens to them. Tonight, here in Milwaukee and in cities across America, janitors are cleaning up, waitresses are pouring coffee, police officers are standing guard, and they need a president who stands up for them. Tonight families are sitting down to talk after losing a job or losing a home. They need a president who will deliver solutions for them.

Earlier today in Kenosha I was at a town hall event and I was reminded once again of why I do this work. You heard Barbara say that for 35 years starting when I was a young lawyer for the Children's Defense Fund, I have wanted to be a voice for those who are voiceless. I started representing abused and neglected children, children who were in the foster care system who didn't have educational or health care opportunities. I worked as the Chair of the Legal Services Corporation, appointed by President Carter to expand legal services for the poor across our nation because I had a passionate commitment to equal justice under the law. In Arkansas I reformed the education system so that children in the poorest community in the delta or in the inner city would have some shot at finding out what they could do if they were motivated and would work hard. And in the White House years we tackled a lot of tough problems, and one that I worked on and helped to make progress on was to create the Children's Health Insurance Program, to give six million kids across our country a chance to have health care.

As I was shaking hands in the crowd after my event today in Kenosha, a woman held up a sign and said, "Thank you for saving my daughter's life." I said, "what did I do?" She said, "The Children's Health Insurance Program." Then I met a young boy named Jacob who has cerebral palsy but he is doing really well. He was standing between his two proud parents. They thanked me because they never could've afforded the operations that he had.

During the town hall, I called on a little girl. She said, "What are you going to do for people who don't have homes?" I thought like many children that I've talked to across America that the plight of the homeless had really struck her heart. And I said, "well, are you concerned about people who don't have homes?" She said, "Yes, my mommy and me." So I asked them to come up and her mother talked about being a hairdresser. She said, "My business is not as good as it was. People aren't coming in as often. They are not willing to pay what I need to make a living. I'm about to be foreclosed on. I have one of those adjustable rate mortgages. I've gone from paying \$600 a month to \$1,000 a month. I don't think we will be able to stay in our home."

I'm reminded every single day why I do this. It's not about speeches for me, it's not about the bright lights and the cameras, it is about the changes we can make that actually deliver results in people's lives that give them a chance to live up and fulfill their own dreams.

Far from here in this beautiful ballroom, across the world our men and women in uniform are serving our country bravely and honorably, some on their second or third or even fourth tour of duty. They deserve a Commander in Chief who will bring them home.

All Americans again want, need and deserve a president who will bring your voices and your values back to the White House. I know we will all breathe a sigh of relief when that moving van pulls up in the back of the White House and George Bush and Dick Cheney turn over the keys. But this election is not just about the failures of the past seven years or the divisions of the present or the excitement of the moment. This election must be about the future we want and how we can make it a reality. We all have dreams. We have dreams for our families, for our future. Our country is founded on the idea of the American dream, that with optimism and confidence and without fear, we can make the future happen by working hard and taking responsibility. That's what has always made America great and different. This generation, like generations before us, is called to make its own commitment and sacrifice.

We, too, can be a great generation to make the American dream real in the 21st century. But to do that we must get real about what it will take to have the future we dream of. I once wrote a book called "It Takes a Village." Well, I still believe that's true. I will be a president for all of you but for me to be your president and for us to reach America's promise in this century, we also have to agree that shared opportunities and shared prosperity require shared responsibility as parents, as neighbors, as workers, as business and political leaders, as a nation. This is about all of us coming together to stake our claim on what it means to be an American in this century. There are people saying that America's best days are behind us, that the competition we face from China and elsewhere will mean that we can't continue to have a strong middle class with rising incomes and the kind of quality of life and standard of living that we have taken for granted. Well, I reject that. I know this will not be easy. Those who claim that it can be done with relatively little effort don't understand what we're up against. We face real challenges, real threats, we have to be ready to summon the experience, the wisdom and the determination to solve our problems. It will take more than just speeches to fulfill our dreams. It will take a lot of hard work.

So, if we get America back into the solutions business, if we get real about our future, I am confident that we'll be back here in five years and we will say "weren't we on top of it, didn't we understand what we had to do to make a difference." Because together there isn't anything that can stop us. So let's get real about the economy. We see an America where our economy works not just for the few, the wealthy and the well-connected, but works for all of us. How will we do that? Well, we're going to start by creating good jobs again and by keeping the jobs we have here and preventing them from being exported like they were some disposable commodity.

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We can do this, we have to change our trade policy, we have to change our tax policy, we have to change our vision and understanding about what it will take to create the jobs of the future. But that's what I've been doing for years. Upstate New York has a lot in common with Wisconsin. We've lost our manufacturing base but I didn't say "well that's the end, we can't do it," because, you see, I don't believe we can have a strong economy and a strong country without a strong manufacturing base. So I'm going to work to make sure we get it back.

Let's get real about our energy policy. Let's see an America that stands up to the oil companies and the oil producing countries and says, "you don't need our tax dollars any longer to make outrageous profits." Let's begin to take the tax subsidies away from the oil companies. Let's impose a windfall profits tax on these outrageous profits and put it to work on clean renewable energy.

Now, I know we can't do any of this until the two oil men leave the White House but as soon as they do, we're going to be ready for a new energy future with the millions and millions of jobs that we can create. I think we can create five million jobs in the next ten years if we do this right. And there's no reason we can't. Earlier today I said to the folks at the Brat Shop, I said look Germany's creating jobs with solar power, hundreds of thousands of them. We have a lot of people in Wisconsin of German descent, there are as many sunny days in Wisconsin as there are in Germany -- let's get busy and create these jobs right here in Milwaukee and in Oshkosh and in Green Bay and in Eau Claire and Madison.

Let's get real about health care. Now we have a choice we have 47 million people uninsured and we can continue to think that's a terrible problem and do nothing about it or we can roll up our sleeves and come up with a uniquely American solution. That is what I have proposed. You see, I think it is morally wrong that you have 547,000 people in Wisconsin who don't have health insurance. I think it is a national disgrace. Are we saying to ourselves we just can't figure this out? We can't take on the health insurance companies; we can't take on the Republicans to achieve universal health care? I don't accept that for a minute. Universal health care has been a fundamental Democratic party; it's been part of the progressive tradition here in Wisconsin for as long as anyone can remember. We cannot in anyway cede universal health care; it should be a defining issue in this general election. I believe we can win on universal health care.

Let's get real about education. You know, we can't continue to have unfunded mandates coming from Washington, so let's figure out what we're going to do. I will do everything possible to fully fund special education something that has been promised but never fulfilled for more than 30 years. And I will end the unfunded mandate known as No Child Left Behind, it is not working for our kids and our teachers.

And I believe we can make college affordable again if we take on the student loan industry and get them out of the way, get back to direct lending from the federal government - the way it used to work

Let's get real about restoring America's role in the world. You know as well as I do that our relationships have been destroyed. We have to rebuild our alliances. We have to be willing to find common ground with the rest of the world again. And this is not about getting everybody to like us, that's not what it's about. This is about having allies to deal with the big problems we face -- global terrorism global warming global epidemics. We can't tackle those on our own. And you know you can't be a leader if no one is following. We've got to get into the leadership business again in the world.

We also have to do everything we can to make it clear that restoring our leadership and our moral authority in the world starts with ending the war in Iraq and bringing our troops home responsibly and quickly.

I have said that I will start bringing them home within the first 60 days. From my position on the Senate Armed Services Committee I've been working to make sure that we are prepared to do that. You know, this administration has not planned for withdrawing our troops because they don't want to do it. They are going to leave it completely to us. So we have to be prepared to think this through, to make sure that we protect our young men and women as they depart. And then we have to ask ourselves, what do we do with the 100,000 plus civilians who are there. See, I think about this because I imagine what the responsibility will be like sitting alone in the Oval Office. You know, the advisors have given you their advice but ultimately it's up to you to decide. And what do we do about the Iraqis who helped us, the translators who made the difference between life and death for our soldiers and our marines. We are an honorable country and we have to withdraw in a way that keeps faith with the sacrifice of those who have been lost, with those who have been injured. And we must make it clear there is no military solution, bring our people home and tell the Iraqis they have to take responsibility for their own future.

And as we bring them home, we have to take care of them. You know in Kenosha again, a young man reached out his hand; he had a t-shirt on which said US Marine Corps. He said, "Take care of my buddies, a lot of them are still over there." He said, "And then will you please help take care of me." He said, "I can't get an appointment for months to get my problems taken care of at the V.A." You know, I think when young men and women sign up to serve America, we sign up to serve them. They deserve the health care, the compensation, the services they have earned.

Obviously to do all of this we have to take on the power structure in Washington. I'm always a little amused when someone says, "we're going to go after the special interests." There isn't anything more important than reining them in. But we've got to do it in a way that brings the American people along with us. It's not enough just to impose rules on them, which Senator Feingold has been such a leader on, we've got to figure out how we prevent them from taking advantage of the American people with higher

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prescription drug costs, with higher energy costs, with lost jobs that go overseas. This is a job for all of us, not just for our next president. We have to have a coalition that takes on all of these interests. I have an aggressive agenda that will save the American people at least 55 billion dollars a year. If we impose that windfall profits tax, if we get aggressive in going after the oil companies who always seem to be raising the price no matter what else is going on. If we rein in health insurance, rein in drug costs, we can begin to end these subsidies that have unfortunately shifted so much wealth away from the middle class. That's the kind of America that we have to build again. It's not going to be easy but it's doable. It's going to take strength and experience, something that goes along with the job. Change is going to happen. The question is, are we going to get the right kind of change. Because what I'm interested in is not just change for the sake of change, but progress. The kind of progress that will make a difference in the lives of the people of this country.

And we know pretty well what the Republicans will do because they're likely nominee will be Senator McCain. He's a man whom I consider a friend and whom I deeply respect for his lifetime of service to our country. He's a good man with the wrong ideas. And I believe we need a nominee who can go toe-to-toe with John McCain to make the differences absolutely clear to the American people. He wants to keep troops in Iraq for 50 to 100 years. I'll start bringing them home within 60 days.

He's admitted he doesn't understand the economy. Well, I have a strategy to end the housing crisis. When that young girl and her mother came up, I told them I'd been pushing on a moratorium on home foreclosures. End the home foreclosures for 90 days. Let people work out a chance to stay in their homes, have the lenders understand that somebody paying \$600 is better than an empty house because they couldn't pay \$1000.

Senator McCain won't deliver universal health care. I'm the only candidate left in either party with a plan to cover every single American. And these are big differences.

So Wisconsin Democrats have a choice on Tuesday. It's not an easy choice. I recognize that. It's kind of a good problem to have in a way because either Senator Obama or I will make history and we'll make history because of all that we are able to exemplify, everything that was done to bring both of us to this point. But the question is not who will make history, but who will change America. Who will bring about the positive differences, the 21st century solutions that we so desperately need? I think that the choice is really whether we're going to have a fighter, a doer and a champion again in the White House, somebody who gets up every single day with determination, backbone and, yes, toughness.

I know some people have said that I am tough. You know what? We need a tough president because we have tough problems waiting for us.

When I say I'll stand with you, I will stand with you. When I say I will fight for you, I will fight for you. That's what I've done my whole life. When I started my career fighting for abused and neglected children and children with disabilities, I was standing with the children who had drawn the short straw in life. Well I'm still standing with them today. When I went to Beijing as first lady, I stood up for the core American value that women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights.

I took that message to more than 80 countries, to women who couldn't vote or own property or earn a salary or send their daughters to school. And I'm still standing for women's rights and human rights. When I took on the special interests to try to bring health care to every American back in 1993, the insurance companies and the lobbyists came at me with everything they had. But I'm still here and I'm still standing up to the special interests and I am still standing and fighting for health care for every man, woman and child.

When the Republicans come after our nominee, and you know they will -- now I personally believe they should be so embarrassed by the failed record of President Bush that they should say they won't field a candidate, but I'm afraid they will -- and so once again we know exactly what they will do. They'll throw everything they've got at whichever one of us is nominated. Well, I've been through it, I've beaten it, I'm still standing and I will beat them again if I am your nominee.

If you stand with me on Tuesday, then come January 20th, 2009 I will be standing on the steps of the Capitol and I will be expressing for all of us our passionate commitment to this country and what it stands for. Our belief that we may have been on a detour from our destiny but we are back on the right track and that with all of us together we can turn this country around. We are a nation of idealists, holding fast to our deepest values, that we are all created equal, that this generation of Americans is destined for greatness, that every child deserves to fulfill his or her God-given potential.

It's the ideal that is inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty, the words that give voice to America's embrace, "give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masse yearning to breath free." Lady Liberty has overlooked the New York harbor through wars and depression and the dark, dark day of September 11th -- a constant reminder that here in America we face our challenges and we embrace all of our people.

So tonight, let us say with one voice, "give us the child who wants to learn, give us the people in need of work, give us the veterans who need our care, give us this economy to rebuild and this war to end, give us this nation to heal, this world to lead, this moment to seize." I know that the people of Wisconsin and America are ready to meet that challenge.

Thank you all very, very much and God bless you.

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