



## Address to the IAFF Convention in Portsmouth, NH

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Thank you very much. Thank you very much. You're very kind. Heck, if I had to listen to all those guys who went before me, I'd stand up too, man. You must be tired.

Well, you know, I am one of the most important men in America... and it is nice of you to -- how the heck do you guys and women go through this, man, having all of us -- all 800 candidates showing up?

You know what I mean? I just saw Dodd out there in the hall, you know? If it ain't me, go with Dodd.

But, you know, I mean -- but you better be me, I've got to tell you. I've never gone anywhere without the firefighters.

Mickey, thank you very much for that introduction.

By the way, I wanted to see the neighborhood he was from. That's why I went down to Southie with him. And let me tell you, his neighborhood and my neighborhood in Claymont, Delaware, they're just the same.

Foreign policy for him in his neighborhood was going on up to the North End.

Foreign policy for me in Claymont was what the hell was happening in Chester, Pennsylvania. That was foreign policy. That's how I learned my foreign policy.

And I might add, folks, by the way, all foreign policy is -- I love, now that I'm a so-called expert on foreign policy, I can introduce that way.

All foreign policy is is a logical extension of personal relationships with a whole lot less information to act on. And that's what it is. So if you learn it in the neighborhood, you can learn it anywhere.

Folks, look, I want to say -- and David, thanks for letting us in your territory -- Dave Lang (ph), there he is -- letting in your territory here. And Kevin standing is standing in for Harold. I don't know what the hell is going on here. I mean, where is Harold? Is he in the Bahamas?

England? Well, I tell you what, my mother, Jean Finnegan, wouldn't like that.

You know, I actually got a call -- this is a true story. I got a call from a local radio guy who is big in Irish issues, and he called up very indignant when -- this is just when the queen was there. Wanted to know one thing: "Did Biden ever curtsy" -- who the hell -- who curtsies? "Did Biden ever curtsy or kiss the queen's ring?"

And I want to assure everyone, I never kissed the queen's ring. And I want you to know... she's a lovely lady. She's a lovely lady. As President Bush said, he congratulated her on winning an Academy Award.

I am only joking.

Just kidding guys, just kidding. No, don't want to get in too much trouble here.

I guess I should move, huh, Bobby?

Bobby, if I had your hair, I could get elected. I know I could.

I know I could make it. Man, I'm working on this.

Hey, couple things to cut right to it, if I can.

I've never gone anywhere in my life without the firefighters. I've never gone anywhere. From the time I went to Holy Rosary grade school, looking across the street to the Claymont Volunteer Fire Company in my town, to just a couple years ago, every single solitary place in my life, you guys have been. And I won't go into it, but both politically and personally you have been the centerpiece of everything I've done.

I actually understand one of your guys are stealing my line. I initiated a saying in Delaware in 1972. I said, "There's three political parties in Delaware. There's the Democrats, the Republicans and the firefighters. If I only get one, I want the firefighters."

Well, the truth of the matter is, that's what this is about, guys.

Because the interesting thing is, you firefighters are engaged in every single thing in your community. You're the same guys that go out and -- when you're off -- and grade the Little League field. You're the same guys that go out and coach. You're the same guys who show up at the Boys & Girls Club. You are the people. You are the real deal in this country.

And, as I won't -- it's not, I guess not appropriate. But you really -- I really owe you. I really owe you. And I owe the firefighters in my state, and the firefighters nationally.

I mean, as I said before, my wife and daughter were killed. It was a well-trained firefighter with the jaws of life who saved my, was able -- not able to save my wife and daughter, but saved my two sons.

When I had a cranial aneurysm that burst, and if I had a chance to go -- I had to get to Walter Reed in a

snowstorm.

And they asked me what I wanted to do -- asked my brother. He said, "Get the fire company." The fire company took me 140 miles in a snowstorm and saved my life.

When, not too long ago, my wife was home alone, I was doing "Meet the Press" in Washington, lightning struck the home and just about ruined my home, within seven minutes there were three companies, saved my wife and my home.

Just every single place. I wouldn't be a United States senator were it not for the Delaware firefighters. And that's no malarkey. That's flat-out no malarkey.

You know, up in Claymont, where I started off, either in my neighborhood you became, you know -- you joined a labor union, including and/or a firefighter, you became a cop, or you became a priest. I wasn't qualified to do any one of them... and so disappointed my mother. But, so, you know.

And I'm sure you guys find it the same way no matter where you go in the country, no matter where you go in the country, if you're at a meeting or not, you can tell whether the people you're meeting in other parts of the country are from the neighborhoods, because that's where you're all from. You can tell. You know.

And so I admit to you there's a comfort zone here that sometimes I hope I don't trespass on it and take it for granted or act too familiar.

But you guys own me, you guys own my heart. So the easy thing for you is, unlike the other candidates, you can endorse somebody else, that's not going to change my view of what I do, firefighters.

You could be against me -- it won't change my view. Nothing changes my view, because, as I said, you are -- you have just every place in my life. It's that important.

There's a saying that says -- excuse the point of personal privilege, and that's all personal.

We have an expression in my neighborhood: A promise made is a promise kept. We made a lot of promises to all of you, after we finally recognized, as a nation, how important you were in 9/11. It's kind of like all of a sudden there's an epiphany, as we Catholics say.

All of a sudden, it was like, "My God! Firefighters are really critical; they're really important."

Because the problem with you all is you do your job too well, and everybody takes it for granted. They just expect -- you guys do it, you don't claim credit, you don't go around beating your chest, you don't insist on anything -- you don't insist on anything.

And, but, you know, we made a lot of promises to firefighters after 9/11. And we haven't kept a whole lot of them -- haven't kept a whole lot of them.

Ladies and gentlemen, in order for us to regain the flexibility to be able to do the things we have to do to affect you and your union brothers and sisters in unions all across the country, and working men and women as well, in order to gain the credibility to deal with the problems we have at home, we have to do one important thing first: We've got to end this war.

This war is costing us \$100 billion a year. It's sucking all the oxygen out of the air. It's taking every bit of our political, emotional and the bulk of our financial resources in order to deal with it.

And, ladies and gentlemen, what's happening if you listen to the debate in Washington, you had a president who took us to war unnecessarily, took us to war without a sufficient number of troops, took us to war without supplying those troops when we sent them, brought the troops home without taking care of them, but, most of all, went without any plan at all.

And the price we're paying as a nation can be measured in the blood and treasure that we have expended: 3,300 dead and no end in sight, 24,000 wounded, an inordinately high percentage of amputees, people with serious brain injuries and head injuries that are going to require care for them for the rest of their lives. An accumulated responsibility will be passed down to our kids of a \$1.4 trillion.

Folks, the most important thing the president did that would damage this is he went without a plan, and now you hear in Washington, offered false choices. The one choice you hear is, you hear talking about how we have to -- on the Republican side, what they want you to do is they want you to go out there and do more of the same and hand the problem off to the next president.

On the Democratic side, you hear a lot of people talking about --which is understandably frustrating -- "Leave and hope for the best."

They're false choices. They're false choices.

The real choice is, how do we leave without mortgage on our interest for another 20 years in that region? How do we end this in a way that prevents my son in the National Guard from going over to Iraq, but also doesn't do it in a way that I got to send my grandson there 15 years from now or 20 years from now?

Look guys, it's -- back to this notion here, everybody says, "Look, there's no political -- there's no military solution in Iraq; there's only a political solution."

You hear that all the time. You hear it from the president, you hear it from everybody running for office.

But yet isn't it kind of -- find it interesting, you can't name me one single person who's suggested a political solution.

A political solution means this thing can end without a war, it can by ending the war, bring our troops home.

And, folks, there's only one thing we've learned over the years. I've put forward a political solution, a detailed solution well over a year ago. Been talking about it for three years.

And here's what it says: What we learned from history is real simple. There's never been a circumstance where there's been a self-sustaining cycle of sectarian violence like going on now that's ended in any other than one of four ways.

Either you occupy the country for a generation. We're not the Persian Empire, we're not the British Empire, we're not the Ottoman Empire, and it's not in our DNA.

The second way in which these wars end, these cycles end, is you impose a dictator. Wouldn't that be the ultimate irony, for the United States to go back and say, "Now we got a new dictator"?

The third option is you let them fight it out or join one side until they wipe out the other side. Not an option we have available to us. The last thing we need are the Shia and the Sunni igniting a 700-year-old fight from the Mediterranean to the Himalaya Mountains. That's not in our interest.

There's a fourth way these things end. The fourth way is you separate the parties, you give them breathing room, you give them control over the fabric of their daily lives. You let them have their own police forces.

You let them have their own laws relating to their religion and relating to education, or relating to marriage and divorce; kind of like the difference between the laws in New Hampshire and the laws in Nevada and the laws in Louisiana and the laws in Alaska.

So you let them be in their own regions. You decentralize power. You have a federal government that's limited, that controls the borders, that decides what the coinage is -- money, currency -- and distributes the wealth, which is what? Oil. Oil should be the thing binding this country together.

But look what everybody else is talking about. They insist on the possibility of there being a strong central government in Baghdad that'll be democratic. Not even in your lifetime is that going to happen. It will not happen -- not possible, in my humble opinion.

And so what happens? You have the president say, "Surge troops to give breathing room." And the question is, then what? Well, the then-what he hopes is they'll get together and reach a compromise in Baghdad.

You have the Democratic -- my colleagues saying, "Cut troops, add troops, move troops, change" -- you've got to ask the next question, then what? After you do what they're recommending, then what?

Well, the then-what is, they think that's going to put pressure on the parties in Iraq -- Sunnis, Shia and Kurds -- to get together and have a strong central government. Not going to happen.

So we've got to start to draw down our troops now, redefine their mission, tell them they can be there for the purpose of training Iraqis, denying Al Qaida occupation of large swathes of territory, force protection,

implement their constitution by making this the world's problem.

When I'm your president, if this isn't over, I'll call the United Nations Security Council -- the Permanent Five. I'd add Germany and the four largest Muslim nations in the world and say, "Here's the deal. The deal is, they have to have regional power. Back it up. Then impose it on the neighbors by indicating stay out. You can't get involved, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria." It's not in their interests to get involved. They're all thinking of getting involved because the other guy's going to get involved.

There's a way to end this. This is not rocket science. We did it in the Balkans.

What did we do in the Balkans? We said to the -- we said to the Croats and we said to the Serbs and we said to the Muslims, called Bosniaks "You each got your own basic territory. We even have a thing called the Republika Srpska. All within one government. But you have local control."

We've had over 20,000 NATO troops there for 10 years. And, knock on wood, not one has been killed.

The carnage and the ethnic cleansing and the sectarian violence is stopped.

And now, what are they doing? They're amending their constitution to bring it closer together, a stronger central power, to become part of Europe.

So what are we doing? What are we doing?

Ladies and gentlemen, this is not the only war, though, this president's waged. He's waged a war on labor's house. He's waged a war on labor. He has done everything from manipulate the NLRB to try to make sure that you all -- it's harder for you to organize. He's tried to move on the courts -- individuals at the Circuit Court of Appeals and even the Supreme Court that do not have a pro-labor view. These guys are lined up a hundred deep to change the contract that's been in place for 100 years, since the New Deal.

That's what this is about. Don't kid yourself.

I know you're tired -- some of you are tired of hearing me say this. You heard me say this five years ago, that this is what this is about. This is a war. These guys never take their eye off the ball.

If you notice, there's three things this administration never takes its eye off: court reform, tort reform and labor reform.

Translate it: "With you guys out of the way, with unions out of the way, the barbarians can get through the gate, man." You're the only counterweight we have.

And what you guys underestimate, in my opinion, is unions built the middle class in this country. The reason there is a middle class is because of unions.

And, folks, it's not enough that we change the law of the free choice -- we're going to begin to change the law now that we're in control to make it easier to organize. If you get register to vote by signing your name, you ought to be able to register to join a union by signing your name.

But, folks, it's more than that. It's more than that. We've got an incredible opportunity. If we elect a president who can say the word "union, union"... not "organized labor" and "working men and women" -- "union"-- if we have a president who understand union and is willing to stand up before the Chamber of Commerce as well as, quote, "organized labor" and talk about the value and necessity of unions, we can begin to remake this deal.

Since I've been a senator, organized labor has declined in number every year. Folks, we've got an incredible opportunity but it's going to take presidential leadership. And what's that opportunity? White collar workers who had the benefit of union organizations but not having to join them, all of a sudden they're finding out their corporations they love ain't taking such good care of them.

Not a joke, right?

I'll bet you guys showing up at the neighborhood picnic or at the family barbecue, and your sister and your sister who married the brother-in-law from out of state who works for the big company, I'll bet he ain't so cocky about unions anymore. Because, all of a sudden, like my next door neighbor, five, seven -- actually now it's 11 years ago at DuPont -- came and said -- you know, he always used to give me heat about how I'd always stick up for the autoworkers when they'd be down time and when they'd lay them off and all the rest.

Because this guy says, "You know, God, DuPont company just sold the textile division. I've lost my job."

My point is this, fellas -- and ladies. We've got a chance at a new union movement that embraces people we were not able to attract before, because they didn't want to be associated with the neighborhood. They didn't think of themselves as, quote, "labor." All of a sudden they're figuring out they need something more than the gold watch that they get after 30 years working for the corporation.

But that's going to take a president. That's not enough. It's going to take a president, for real, to change -- use the bully pulpit to talk about the value of -- the value of -- organized labor. The value of it. We've all -- we've been playing defense for the last 30 years.

The last point I'll make to you is this, and I'll get out of your hair -- or I guess I'll take questions, if you have any.

Folks, look, just imagine what I can do as president of the United States of America, if in fact I'm able to do what I believe I can do -- end this war. That's \$100 billion a year we're now spending. \$100 billion a year.

Number two, end the tax cut for people in the top 1 percent. You've got to have an average of \$1.4 million or \$1.5 million to be in there. They're not bad people. They're as patriotic as we are. We just don't ask anything

of them.

They didn't ask for the tax cut...

Seriously, we don't. We don't.

You know, one of my problems with some of my Democratic friends -- they think, "Oh, rich folks aren't patriotic." They're patriotic. You've just got to ask.

They know they don't need that tax cut in that bracket. They know taking that tax cut away isn't going to affect the economy. And they know it could be put to good use. That's \$85 billion a year.

Just take those two -- or let's add the interest cut that they -- the tax cut they get for profits on dividends and capital gains that got put in six years ago.

That's \$196 billion. Just add those three up. As your president, that gives me \$200 billion.

So when they tell you now, "We can't afford health care, we can't afford education opportunities, we can't afford a massive change in our energy policy," tell them what my dad always used to say: "Don't tell me what you value; show me your budget. Show me your budget, I'll tell you what you value."

How can we possibly value giving the top 1 percent of the country an \$85 billion a year tax cut when, in fact, for \$26 billion a year, we could insure every single, solitary uninsured kid in America? How can that be equal? How can we say we value our children and our health care?

How can we say we value making sure our neighborhoods are safe and homeland security is real, when for \$50 billion we can restore the Biden COP program, and implement every major recommendation in the 9/11 Commission -- \$50 billion over five years. That's \$10 billion a year.

They tell us we can't afford it. If we can afford over 10 years \$196 billion tax cut for people cutting coupons?

Folks, I'm tired of it. I don't know about you. I'm tired of it. We can change this country. We can change the direction of this country. And I think all we've got to do, my party, as well as all of you, we've got to stop being timid.

We got to stop being timid.

I'll conclude by saying, I think one of the things that we've, kind of, lost is I think there's a lot of, in the Democratic Party, kind of, lost faith in the American people. They think if we really tell them the truth, we tell them these are some hard decisions have to be made, they're going to back away. They're going to say, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, I'm not so sure about that. I don't want to do that."

I think they're dead wrong.

I think the American people are so ready -- so ready to step up to the ball to deal with the energy crisis, to step up to the ball to deal with the health care crisis, to step up to the ball to deal with college education, to step up to the ball to deal with regulation education needs.

You know, we all make it sound really complicated. We talk about No Child Left Behind and all. Hey, it's really simple. Any one of your neighbors anybody not know the following? One, if you send kids to school at age 3 instead of age 6 they got three times the shot of doing better when they're in eighth grade, especially if they come from a dysfunctional family. Is that rocket science, as my mother would say?

Does anybody think we don't -- everybody doesn't understand the smaller the class size the better the chance, whether you're teaching an advanced course of kids or you're teaching kids who are remedial, the smaller the class the better the opportunity?

Does anybody think in the 21st century you can get a ticket to the middle class without a college education or at least post-graduate -- post-high school education? What are we talking about?

Does anybody think it doesn't make sense for the United States government to have the first two years of college at a public institution paid for, just like we do high school, if we're going to compete around the world?

Does anybody not know that we're losing all our best teachers because a whole generations of teachers is leaving, and most of the kids coming out of college now that are going into teaching, after six years they're leaving?

Look what they're doing in Germany, in Japan, in other nations. They're literally paying their kids coming out of college to go into teaching the same what they pay their engineers in the first year.

I want the kid graduating from the University of New Hampshire doing two things: one, get beat by Delaware.

And the second thing I want them doing, is I want if they're graduating with a math degree be able to make a choice between going to work for Microsoft and going to teach. You've got to make it competitive.

But why are we afraid to say that? It costs money. Yes. Good things cost money.

And so I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm not afraid about the American people's reaction to telling the truth. And I get asked sometimes by the press, why -- how could I be so certain the American public's ready to step up to the ball?

I'll tell you why, because of the neighborhood I grew up in. Because what I saw, what you saw, what you did on 9/11.

You know, everybody remembers a lot of things. There's two vivid memories I have beyond the towers coming down and the Pentagon ablaze and the plane going down in the field. The other two things I remember most -- well, one thing I remember most is that grizzled fireman coming out of the dust and human debris, hunched over with a look of absolute determination on his face.

That one photograph lifted America off its knees -- lifted America off its knees. That one image was the most profound image about the determination and grit of the American people that any was shown during that entire time.

And the second thing I remember -- I think it was the CNN broadcast, but I'm told it was on all the networks. After the towers came down, seeing -- looked like relatively young people between their thirties and forties lined up single file on a New York street as far as the eye could see.

Remember why they were all standing there? To give blood. They stood there for four, five, six, seven hours.

If that wasn't a silent scream by a whole generation saying, "Let me do something to help mend this nation's broken heart," I don't know what was.

Folks, they're ready. They're ready. They're ready.

I'll end by doing what Chris Dodd always kides me and other of my colleagues -- I'm always quoting Irish poets. They think I do it because I'm Irish; I don't do it for that reason. I do it because they're the best poets.

But there's a -- my favorite modern Irish poet is a guy named Seamus Heaney and he won the Nobel Prize for poetry back in the mid-'90s. And he had a poem called "The Cure at Troy." There's a stanza in there that I think summarizes where the heart of the American people are right now, whether they're Democrats, Republicans, independents, where I think they are, what they're ready for.

And the stanza goes like this: It says, "History teaches us not to hope on this side of the grave. But then, once in a lifetime, that longed-for tidal wave of justice rises up and hope and history rhyme."

Join me. Join me. We have a shot to make hope and history rhyme. It's totally within our power to change this nation now. The public is ready.

And you -- you -- are the ones who can lead the charge because you are the ones who can play the most significant role in the union movement in who's likely to be the next nominee for the Democratic Party because of your involvement in the states that are involved, and because how up-front you've been in the past.

All I ask you is, look me over. If you like what you see, help out. If not, vote for the other guy or woman. But look me over, because, folks, I guarantee you, we will change this nation, and we'll change it now. Thank you all very much.

Thank you very much.