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February 9, 2008

## Hillary Clinton's Remarks at the Virginia Jefferson-Jackson Dinner

Hello Virginia Democrats - that sounds so good.

Let me ask you something. Are you ready to take back the White House and take back our country? Well, so am I and I am so ready to see Virginia in the winning Democratic column in November.

I am delighted and honored to be here with you this evening. I want to thank delegate Jennifer McClellan for not only that introduction, but her commitment to public service and leadership. And it is a special treat to be here with Governor Tim Kaine and former Governor Mark Warner, current Richmond Mayor and former Governor Doug Wilder. I want to thank you so much for sending Jim Webb to the Senate. And I hope he will soon be joined by the next Senator Warner from the state of Virginia.

I want to acknowledge your congressional delegation, Congressman Moran, and Scott, and Voucher, and the Executive Director of the party Amy Reger who has done a wonderful job with this huge Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner.

Now let me ask you for a moment to imagine that it is finally January 20, 2009 - somebody standing on the steps of the Capitol will place his or her hand on the Bible and be sworn in as the 44th president of the United States. Our task tonight is to make sure that president is a Democrat because after 7 long years of George W. Bush, 7 years of incompetence, corruption and cronyism, 7 years of government of the few, by the few, and for the few, the next president will face tremendous challenges. As the president walks into the Oval Office, waiting there will be 2 wars, an economy in trouble, the health care crisis, the energy crisis, all of the problems that I hear about every day from people across America.

People who whisper to me about the mortgages they can't afford, the medical bills that wiped out their life savings, the tuition bills that cut short their children's dreams. People who work the day shift and the night shift because they want the world for their children, people whose names don't make the headlines but who have all re-written America's story. It's about the woman who grabbed my hand and told me her insurance company wouldn't pay for the treatment her child needed. It's about the man who asked me what to do after his job was shipped overseas and he was told to train his replacement. It's about the couple so determined to send their daughter to college that they mortgaged their home with a subprime mortgage and now may lose that as well. It's about the dedicated government employees who stop me and tell me that they are working hard despite the all out assault on government workers by this administration.

For me, politics isn't a game. It's not about who is up, or who is down. It's about your livers, your families, and your future. And isn't it about time you had a president who brought your voice and your values to your White House.

This election is also about all those Americans who want to seize this moment. To build the kind of future that we know awaits. It's about teachers determined to see their students succeed in this new century and young people, hungry for opportunities their parents never dreamed of. It's about the businesses and unions training people for green collar jobs, the high wage, high-skilled, high-energy jobs of the future. It's about the scientists and researchers who want to do stem cell research and find treatments and cures for devastating diseases. It's about our contractors and construction workers who want to rebuild America from the bridges in Minnesota to the levees in New Orleans. It's about the men and women who wear the uniform of our country who deserve a Commander in Chief who knows they are magnificent but that force should be used as a last resort and not a first resort.

For 7 long years we have neither addressed our problems, nor seized our opportunities. We have tried it President Bush's way - concentrate wealth, hoard power, disregard science, shred the Constitution, smear dissenters, impugn patriots, go it alone in the world wherever you can and cooperate only when you have to. And now with Senator McCain as the likely nominee, the Republicans have chosen more of the same. President Bush has already put his stamp of approval on Senator McCain's conservative credentials and I am sure that will help.

Now I understand there are some people who say they can't tell the difference between me and George Bush. I don't think anyone here believes that the Republicans are confusing me and George Bush. And certainly, having fought George Bush every day for the last 7 years, I will be among those most happy

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to see the moving van leave the white house.

Voters certainly won't have any problems seeing the differences. Senator McCain wants to keep troops in Iraq for 50-100 years. I will start bringing them home within 60 days of becoming president of our country. Senator McCain has admitted he doesn't understand the economy. I have a strategy to end the housing crisis, create 5 million new clean energy jobs and rebuild a strong and prosperous middle class again.

And one thing we know for sure is that Senator McCain won't deliver universal health care. In fact I am the only candidate left in this race - Democrat or Republican - with a health care plan to cover every single man, woman and child. Because you see I believe health care is a fundamental human right and a moral obligation of the United States of America finally to achieve for our people. If I'm your nominee, you'll never have to be worried that I will be knocked out of the ring because I do have the strength and experience to lead this country and I am ready to go toe to toe with Senator McCain whenever and wherever he desires.

I am ready to make the case for the Democratic Party from universal health care to making it clear that once again America is open for business to the rest of the world, and the era of cowboy diplomacy is over.

I am ready to make your case because your voices are the change we seek and together we will take back the White House and take back America because I see an America where our economy works for everyone not just those at the top, where our prosperity is shared and we create good jobs that stay right here in the United States.

I see an America where we stand up to the oil companies and the oil-producing countries, where we do launch a clean energy revolution and finally confront our climate crisis. I am well aware that we cannot be serious about our energy policy and our security, our environment, and our economy until the two oil men leave the White House. But when they do, we will be ready.

I see an America where we say that 47 million people uninsured - more than 950,000 right here in Virginia alone - is a disgrace. And we don't just provide health care for some people or most people, but for everyone with no one left out. I see an America where we have schools worthy of our children starting with pre-kindergarten. I know how passionate Governor Kaine has been advocating for pre-kindergarten programs right here in the Commonwealth. I see an America where college is affordable again for hard working families. I see an America where when young men and women sign up to serve our country, we sign up to serve them too. An America with a 21st century GI Bill Of Rights to help our veterans go to college, buy a home, and start their own businesses. I see an America respected around the world again where we reach out to our allies to confront our shared challenges from global terrorism to global warming to global epidemics. That is the America we will build together. An America where the next generation is always better off than the last.

That has been the work of my life. It's why I started my career fighting for abused and neglected children. Children who had drawn the short straw in life because I believe all of our children deserve the chance to fulfill their own God-given potential. This nation gave me every opportunity and I believe we can do the same for every child. It's a matter of living up to the ideals that our founders, many of them Virginians, set forth more than 200 years ago, that we are all created equal, all entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Now neither Senator Obama nor I - nor many of you in this room - were fully included in that original vision. But it was the beginning of an extraordinary journey. A journey rooted in our ideals when our laws were not. A movement of men and women in each generation, who led us through uncharted territory, to higher ground. The abolitionists like Harriet Tubman, who told the people she led to freedom, 'if you are tired, keep going. If you are scared, keep going. If you are hungry, keep going. If you want to taste freedom, keep going.'

The audacious women and a few brave men who gathered at Seneca Falls, New York, back in 1848, demanding their rights including the right to vote. It took more than 70 years of struggle and ridicule, and grinding hard work, and only one of them lived long enough to see women pass their first ballot.

The progressives who met the inequities of a new age with a new spirit of reform - back in the progressive era, even the Republicans understood that we were all in this together. And then we had so much progress during the 21st century. And as men and women marched and picketed, as they faced dogs and tear gas as they risked their lives, they did so because they looked into the eyes of their children and they saw the promise of a better future and they decided to just keep going. Because of them, my generation grew up taking for granted that women could vote. Because of them my daughter's generation took for granted that children of all colors would attend school together. Because of them, Virginia made history becoming the first state in America to elect an African American governor, Governor Wilder. Because of them, Senator Obama and I share this stage today and because of them and because of you, less than a year from now, one of us will take the oath of office. And children of today and of future generations will take it for granted that a woman or an African American can be President of the United States.

That is the genius of our constitution. It was crafted to expand as our hearts do, allowing each generation to lead us closer to that more perfect union. That is America's purpose. That is our purpose

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as Democrats and our mission in this election - to build a nation that is more inclusive, more equal, more fair, more free, and more just. That work is never finished but we get better as we go. Always striving to heed the words 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 masses yearning to breathe free. Lady liberty has overlooked the New York harbor through wars and depression, and through the dark day of September 11, a constant reminder that here in America we face our challenges and embrace all of our people.

So today we 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 of care, give us this economy to rebuild and this war to end, give us this nation to lift this world, to lead this moment to seize.

I know we're ready and I need your help. I need your involvement and your participation starting tonight. Together we can make history. Come join me, come to my website hillaryclinton.com, be part of this campaign, work until Tuesday when Virginia holds its primary because it is not me you're working for, it is you. It is your future, your family, and your beloved country.

We have an opportunity together to make history, but not just to change who lives in the White House but to change our hearts. To change our attitudes. To once again know that there isn't anything America can't do if we start acting like Americans. Please join this campaign, be part of making history and giving us back the country we love to be proud of again, and to make progress towards that more perfect union.

Thank you and God bless you.

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