

SPEECH

March 19, 2008

Hillary's Remarks at the "Solutions for America" Event in Detroit, MI

Thank you very, very much. Wow. I am thrilled to be here. It is great being here at AFSCME Council 25. I want to thank President Al Garrett for inviting us to his house and have this opportunity to be with you. I want to also thank Javier for his wonderful comments. I love seeing the way so many young people are intensely involved in this campaign and we want to keep it that way, including the young people right here in Michigan. I want to recognize just a few other people that I am pleased to be here with: Jim Blanchard, former Governor of Michigan, along with his wife Janet. Jewel Ware, who has done a wonderful job as the chair of the Wayne County Commission. I know her husband is here, and I am grateful Jewel's support. David Hecker, president of the Michigan AFT, Ron Duncan of RWDSU. I know that Debbie Stabenow your fabulous Senator was here earlier and her husband Tom Athans is here. I am thrilled to be with you in Michigan once again, because Michigan is a Bellwether state, it is a diverse state, it's a proud union state, and is a critical state for Democrats to win in November. I am here for one simple reason - to make sure Michigan votes are counted and your voices are heard in this election.

I know that Governor Granholm couldn't here because she was long scheduled to be in Western Michigan, where she is working to help create jobs and grow the economy. But I want to applaud her for her energy, her creativity, her tenacity and dedication in tackling the problems that Michigan faces. Let's give Governor Granholm a big round of applause. I know Michigan, probably more than any other state, deserves a president who understands the challenges of a struggling economy, unfair trade policies, the loss of manufacturing jobs, the deterioration of health care coverage, and all of the other challenges from rising gas process to rising college costs. You deserve a president who will be your partner and that is what I intend to be if given the chance to serve.

This has been an incredible primary season so far. There's been more passion and enthusiasm than anyone could have ever predicted. Democrats across the country are turning out in record numbers to have their say in this historic election. Here in Michigan, 600,000 people turned out on a cold and snowy day in January to cast your votes and you made it abundantly clear that you wanted your voices to be heard and your votes to be counted. In Florida, 1.7 million people did exactly the same. Now, these nearly 2.5 million Americans are in danger of being shut out of our democratic process. I think that is wrong and, frankly, it is un-American, and we cannot let that continue. My very first job in politics was working for the Democratic National Committee, going door-to-door, registering voters in Texas in 1972. I threw myself in to that hard work because I believed then, as I believe now, that every American has a right to be part of our great democracy.

Every voice should have the chance to be heard and every vote counted. This goes way beyond this election and it goes way beyond who's running, because no matter where you were born, or how much money you were born into, no matter where you worship or the color of your skin, it is a bedrock American principle that we are all equal in the voting booth. For me, it has been a long struggle to get to the point where barriers were knocked down and doors opened and we still haven't completed that journey.

But it is the vote that has given voice to the voiceless and power to the powerless. It is through that vote that women, African American, Latinos and so many others have claimed their rights as full and equal citizens. We have made our laws more just and our society more fair. Each vote is a declaration of our dreams for our children and a reflection of our prayers for our nation's future. That is why generations of brave men and women marched and protested, risked and gave their lives for this right.

It is because of them that both Senator Obama and I stand before you as candidates for the Democratic nomination. It is because of all those who came before that we are both in this race today. We should carry on that legacy by saying clearly that we will protect and cherish the right to vote for all people.

I've always stood up for voting rights. I'm proud of the legislation I've sponsored in the Senate to

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assure that every eligible voter can count and every vote is counted and I will always defend your right to vote, no matter whom you choose to vote for in the end, it is not about that at all. Because I believe that Michigan's families are just as important as the families of any other state. The father in Detroit wants the same opportunities for his children as the father in Des Moines, and he deserves the same voice in the future. The mother in Lansing needs access to health care just as much as the mother in Los Angeles, and she deserves the same voice and how we will provide quality, affordable health care to everyone. The families in the U.P. need good paying jobs that stay right here in America just as much as the families in Central PA, and they deserve the same voice in trying to get that done. The soldiers from across this great state need a Commander-in-Chief who will end the war in Iraq and bring them home.

They certainly deserve the same voice in choosing that person. That's why I've been saying for some time that the people of Michigan and Florida must have a voice in selecting our nominee for president. I have called repeatedly for an agreement that would seat Michigan delegates at our national convention, because I believe your voices and your votes should count. When others made the decision to remove their names from the ballot, I didn't, because I believe your voices and your votes should count. That's why I've been saying we need to either count the votes that have already been cast in Michigan and Florida or have new, full, and fair elections so that we can have your voices and your votes counted.

Senator Obama speaks passionately on the campaign trail about empowering the American people. Today, I'm urging him to match those words with action, to make sure the people of Michigan and Florida have a voice and a vote in this election. I have accepted the plan for a new vote in Michigan, proposed in draft legislation and approved by the Democratic National Committee. In fact, the DNC put out a statement earlier this morning making clear that the proposal fits within the DNC rules. It is fully within the party's rules. I call on Senator Obama to do the same.

This is a crucial test. Does he mean what he says or not? I am pleased and grateful that on this issue, the people of Michigan have had such outstanding advocates in their Democratic leaders, and there are so many, including the Governor and Senator Stabenow and members of the legislature. But I especially want to thank four who have really been at the forefront: Senator Carl Levin, Congresswoman Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick, Debbie Dingell and Ron Gettelfinger of the UAW.

People in Michigan and particularly Democrats in Michigan know that Michigan matters, both in the primary and in the general election. The road to a Democratic White House goes through Michigan and Florida. If Democrats send the message that we don't care about your vote, I'm sure John McCain and the Republicans would be happy to have them. In fact, the Republicans will argue that Michigan and Florida voters shouldn't trust the Democrats to look out for them when we won't even listen to you. Ignoring Michigan and Florida would be a grave mistake. We won't be able to end the war in Iraq, we won't achieve universal health care, we won't end the housing crisis and get the economy moving again unless we win in Michigan and Florida in November.

For me, it's really very simple. We need your voices and you have a right to your vote. I am proud to stand with the people of Michigan in this cause and I hope that Senator Obama will join me, because when we look at the stakes of this election, they could not be higher. The next president of the United States will inherit a huge mess from George W. Bush and we're going to have to do a lot of cleaning up. I can just imagine what it will be like to try to undo the damage that we will inherit plus taking on the neglected agenda that the votes and families of Michigan and American are waiting to have addressed.

I've been criss-crossing our country, saying very clearly that I offer solutions, 21st century solutions about how we're going to get the economy moving again and creating good jobs with particular emphasis on a state like Michigan that deserves even more attention from the next president because you've been neglected and you've been ignored and your needs have been denied.

It was amazing to me that the big three auto companies in the UAW had to beg for years just to have a meeting with the president. I met with them more than the president met with them, and what we were waiting for was just a smidgen of presidential leadership - we didn't ask for a lot. A little would have been welcome. Some idea that, you know what, the auto industry and our big three manufacturers and the hard-working members of the UAW deserve some help as we make this transition into a higher gas mileage economy, as we look for ways to support innovation from hybrid cars to more flexible fuel. That's all they were looking for, a partner who would be with them in this fight to save American jobs, to make sure that we retained leadership globally as we navigated through a much more challenging economy. But it didn't happen.

So we're going to really have to go into high gear starting in January 2009 because we're going to have to make up for all the lost time and the lost opportunities. We have big challenges - how are we going to create new jobs? How are we going to get the tax codes to quit rewarding businesses for exporting jobs out of Michigan to foreign countries? How are we going to make that tax code fair and quit yielding a lower tax rate to some Wall Street money manager who makes 50 million dollars? Then what is paid by nurse, a teacher or a truck driver making \$50,000 right here in Detroit or elsewhere across Michigan? And what are we going to do to finally tackle our energy dependence? We can't live with \$112 a barrel, oil and gas moving up to \$4 a gallon. The average American is going

to just be bewildered and distressed trying to figure out how to cover all the expenses because the price of everything is going up, but wages are not going up. People are not being rewarded for working harder, doing more, and more, and more. How many of you know someone with two, and even three, jobs that don't pay what used to be paid in the job they used to have before it was exported or done away with?

And we cannot continue the moral outrage and the economic calamity of having a health care system that doesn't cover everyone and continues to cost more and more and more every single year. We've got to move for universal health care and we've got to do it quickly because we can't be globally competitive and expect to have our individual businesses bear all these costs. And we're sure going to have to deal with our education system, with more opportunities for children in the pre-school years so that they're better prepared to go to school, with universal pre-kindergarten and more Head Start and early childhood development. And I will end the unfunded mandate known as No Child Left Behind, which hasn't worked and is not working. And we will make college affordable again for young people from middle class and working families.

There's so much to be done here at home and, of course, around the world we have to restore America's leadership and our moral authority and that means we've got to begin ending the war in Iraq. And I have been outlining this week, as we mark the fifth anniversary of George Bush's preemptive war that he waged, I have been outlining plans as to what we can and must do to begin bringing our sons and daughters home. I am convinced that we can start within 60 days and do it in a responsible and careful manner, recognizing that the Iraqi government has to take responsibility for its own future, that we have given them the precious gift of freedom and it is up to them to decide whether or not they will use it. But we cannot win their civil war. There is no military solution.

And as we bring our troops home we must take care of them. Our veterans deserve our greatest efforts to fulfill our obligations to them. Get the healthcare and the other services that they have so richly earned and we've got to have a 21st century GI Bill of Rights for these young men and women so they can go to school or start a business or buy a home.

So there's a lot of work ahead but I am confident and optimistic that we can do this work together. And I know that the next president of the United States is going to have to have a united country with everyone once again believing that our best days are ahead, and working to achieve big goals again like universal healthcare and energy independence and so much more. Well, I sure want Michigan and Florida to be right in the forefront of helping to make the choice as to who will walk into that Oval Office next January.

Thank you all very, very much.