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Hillary's Remarks at the Montana Democratic Party Mansfield-Metcalf Dinner in Butte, MT

Hello, Montana Democrats. Let me ask you something: Are you ready to take back the White House and take back this country? Well, so am I.

I am thrilled to be here tonight on the "richest hill on earth." I wanted to come out here for St. Patrick's Day, but I'm glad I decided to come tonight instead. Because the only party in Butte that is better than St. Patrick's Day is the Democratic Party.

They say Butte could be considered the birthplace of the Democratic Party in the Rocky Mountain West. And I am pleased to be where Mike Mansfield walked these streets and worked in the mines up the hills. I am also pleased to be here with your great governor, Governor Schweitzer, who has made such an impression far beyond the borders of Montana.

In New York, we love to quote Schweitzer-isms, there's a growing body of them. But it's great to be here and to be with my two colleagues, your great senators, Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester. Having Max and Jon in the Senate is such a great tribute to the people of Montana. I want to thank you for sending them there, and I know that you'll keep sending Max and you'll keep sending Jon because we need them there every step of the way.

I also want to thank Congressman Pat Williams and State Senate Majority Leader Carol Williams for their support and endorsement.

To all the elected officials, the active and committed Democrats in this audience: who says there aren't a lot of Democrats in Montana; there are people outside who couldn't get in tonight.

This Mansfield-Metcalf dinner is a great place for us to celebrate the resurgence in the West of the Democratic Party. I am so glad that this election will go on because by holding the last primary, the "last, best place" is going to help choose the next president of the United States.

It will not be a moment too soon. As I have travelled across our great country, the overwhelming feeling that I see expressed by not just Democrats, but even Republicans, Independents and people who don't frankly get very much involved in politics, is that we stand on the cusp of a new beginning for America. If you listen closely, you can almost hear it in the distance - the sound of the moving van pulling away from the back of the White House.

We all wish that it would be tomorrow that President Bush would return to that ranch and cut that brush instead of cutting back on children's health care and cutting back on veteran's health care and cutting back on the future for our children.

But I believe the whole world will breathe a sigh of relief when George Bush and Dick Cheney finally hand over those keys. But that's not when our work ends, that's when our work begins. I don't think we even know how much damage has been done to our country by the failed policies and the wrong-headed priorities of this administration. For the past seven years, President Bush has conducted a dangerous experiment in extremism. It has failed our country.

He has had two priorities: tax cuts for the wealthiest and the war in Iraq, and he hasn't paid for either one of them. He inherited a balanced budget and a surplus and he's leaving behind a mountain of debt. He's mortgaged our future with his reckless spending, while ignoring the problems that continue to pile up. So here we are, in April of 2008, and we are borrowing money from the Chinese to buy oil from the Saudis. I don't believe it is right to stick our children and our grandchildren with the bill for President Bush's failed presidency.

It will be up to us as Democrats to reassert the confidence and competence of our country's future. I am totally optimistic. I know how severe the problems are that we face. I understand completely how difficult it will be to turn our country around. But there isn't any problem America can't solve, there isn't any challenge we can't meet so long as we start acting like Americans again; rolling up our sleeves and getting to work together.

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The contrasts could not be greater. Instead of trying to solve our problems, President Bush has used fear to divide us and fatalism to discourage us. He wants us to believe that we can't solve our problems, and that we shouldn't even try. Moving toward energy independence, well that would wreck our economy, they tell us. Moving toward universal health care, well that would wreck our health care system. Since when did America become the can't-do nation? As far as I know and the way I was raised, we know that you roll up your sleeves and you face the future realistically. Yes, we do have to do what is necessary to take back the future. But I am convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that America is ready. We are ready to be called to greatness again. We are ready to be asked to sacrifice on behalf of this country that we love.

For seven years, the drug companies, the insurance companies, the oil companies and Wall Street have had a President; I think it's time the American people had a President again.

We need a Commander-in-Chief who is ready on day one to end the war in Iraq and keep our children safe, someone who knows how to manage this economy and strengthen the middle class. The American people need a fighter on their side, a President who will get up every single day and work her heart out for you, for your families, for your jobs and your futures. I am here tonight because I am ready to be that President.

If there is one word that sums up my campaign and what it's all about, its solutions. I'm offering real solutions, not just speeches. I want to create a better future by making it clear that we have to not only set out a vision, we've got to know how to get there. You know that old story about how our political parties are like driving a car, don't you? If you want to go forward, you put it in D. If you want to go backwards, you put it in R. Well, we're going forward in D. And here's why Democrats need to drive that car forward again.

Tonight, across Montana and across America, teachers are grading papers and nurses are caring for the sick, and they need a President who listens to them. Tonight, janitors are cleaning up, and waitresses are pouring coffee, and police officers are standing guard. And they need a President who stands with them. Tonight, families are sitting down around the dinner table, talking about how to keep the farm in the family or how to keep up with the bills that are mounting, and they need a President who will deliver for them. Tonight, our brave men and women in uniform are serving across the globe, some on their second, their third or their fourth deployment. And they deserve a Commander-in-Chief who respects them, who cares for them and their families, and who brings them home and takes care of them once they do come back.

Americans deserve so much better. I am in this race to offer those solutions, because I believe America's best days are still ahead of us. For me, this is not just about the next election. This is about the next generation and what we must do to keep faith, to ensure that our children and our grandchildren have the same blessings and opportunities that we were given, to make the most of their own lives, to take the tools that are the product of a free market and the incredible entrepreneurial energy and innovation of America and put it to work, not only for a better future for themselves but for our country and our world.

So when I say solutions, I mean an economy that works for everyone, not just those at the top. An economy where prosperity is shared again, and we create good jobs, jobs that will rebuild our infrastructure, jobs in clean, renewable energy, jobs in science and research, jobs that can support a family with a middle class standard of living that gives people hope in the future that they are building for themselves.

When I say solutions, I mean reigning in those corporate special interests and rebuilding the middle class. I have proposed \$100 billion in middle class tax cuts, tax cuts that will go for healthcare, to make college affordable, for secure retirement. Part of the way we'll do that is to take away the \$55 billion in tax cuts that have gone to those who, frankly, do not need your money more than you need your money. Explain to me how it can make any sense that we have a tax code that still gives tax benefits to companies that move jobs and profits out of Montana to foreign countries. We're going to end that. We're going to tell people the tax code of the United States will reflect the patriotic investment in jobs and businesses right here, in order to build a stronger economy. How is it fair that a Wall Street money manager making \$50 million a year pays a lower percentage in taxes to our government than a nurse, a teacher, or a truck driver right here in Montana pays to that government of ours?

And when I say solutions, I mean a return to fiscal responsibility. I was raised by a father who didn't believe in credit, didn't have a credit card, didn't buy a house until he could pay for it; so I'm a little cheap. But I think that's what we need in a president again, who starts having the federal government live within our means.

We're going to get back to pay-as-you-go, and we're going to take a scalpel to that budget and look for anything we can take out so that we put our priorities back in. Enough with the no-bid contracts to Halliburton and all of those crony companies of George Bush's. There is absolutely no evidence that outsourcing our government saves money, but what it does is line the pockets of those companies and remove accountability.

Back in the 1990's, we saw rising incomes. The typical family saw \$7,000 in income that came to

them because the economy was moving up. More people were lifted out of poverty. It was a good time for America. Occasionally, in this campaign, I hear somebody criticize the 90's. That's fair. But I always wonder to myself, what is it they didn't like, the peace, or the prosperity? I could never figure that part out.

When I say solutions, I mean making our federal government a partner with rural America. Now I don't want to shock you tonight, but you may be surprised to learn that New York is home to 34,000 family farms. I know, where do they all go under the Empire State Building? But across our state and across so much of rural America, there is a feeling that the deck is stacked against family farms. I'm committed to working with your two great senators, to pass a strong Farm Bill that works for true family farms, with priorities like permanent disaster relief, strengthening country of origin labeling, renewable energy advances, rural development, broadband deployment.

And I want to salute the leadership of Senator Baucus and Senator Tester. This Farm Bill needs to move and the president needs to get out of the way so that we can start taking care of rural America.

It is great to have Senator Tester in the Congress as a family farmer and an organic farmer. He has been a breath of fresh air. And of course we couldn't have a Farm Bill or nearly any other bill that actually had any money attached to it without Senator Baucus. So Montana is right in the middle of these debates.

When I say solutions, I mean declaring energy independence. I want America to sign a declaration of energy independence. I want our citizens to sign it because there's work for all of us to do to move toward energy independence. It's time we declared our independence from foreign oil. It's time we began looking for solutions from home grown energy.

I want to be a president who is a good partner for Governor Schweitzer to help tap into the natural resources right here in Montana - biofuels, clean coal, wind energy. The future has so much potential but we've been going backwards. We are actually more dependent on foreign oil today than we were on 9/11. Explain how that makes any sense. I was waiting for President Bush after 9/11 to say here's how we will respond, a goal that will move us away from our dependence on foreign oil. Well, we've never heard a word like that and I know we're not going to move on clean coal or biofuels or wind or solar or the transmission and distribution system we need to transport what is created here elsewhere in the country. I know we won't do that until the two oil men leave the White House but as soon as they do, let's be ready.

As President, I will invest in alternative energy with a \$50 billion strategic energy fund paid for in two ways, by taking the tax subsidies away from the oil companies. It is hard to explain how a company like Exxon Mobil that makes \$40 billion in profits last year needs your money to be successful. And certainly, when you look at what we need to do, that \$50 billion strategic energy fund, we'll also ask the oil companies to be part of the solution instead of the problem. They can invest in renewable sources. They can clean up their facilities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, or they can be subject to a windfall profits tax which we will take and put to work on developing alternative renewable energy here in Montana.

I figure we can create at least five million new good jobs and these are jobs that can't be outsourced. These are jobs that can be done right here in Montana. Because it is way passed time for us to stop holding hands with the Saudis, and started holding them accountable. That's the kind of president that you can expect me to be.

When I say solutions, I mean it is time to finally get tough on China. Right now, China's products come here and our jobs go there. We play by the rules, they manipulate their currency. We get tainted fish, lead-laced toys, contaminated pet food and polluted pharmaceuticals. I think that's a raw deal - and the United States government should say no more, no how, we're going to have new rules, they're going to play by the same rules and we're going to stand up for our consumers and our workers.

When I say solutions, I mean finally providing universal health care. Every single American will be covered. We have two big problems. We have the problem of 47 million uninsured - including more than 160,000 right here in Montana - and then we have the problem of people who are insured except when it comes time to have the insurance company pay the bill, the insurance company won't pay the doctor or the hospital. So here's what I believe. If you have health insurance and you're happy with it, nothing changes. But if you are uninsured or underinsured, we're going to open up the Congressional Health Plan. Congress has a plan for itself and federal employees with more than 250 choices. It covers preventive care, mental health care, the kind of comprehensive health care that every American should have access to. For those who can't afford it, we're going to offer health care tax credits and I would like to see us limit the amount of money that anyone ever has to pay for their health care premium to a small percentage of your income.

And we we're going to regulate the insurance companies so they not longer can discriminate against people. I think it is way past time. In our country it is unconstitutional to discriminate on the basis of race or religion or gender or ethnic origin and that is all for the good. But insurance companies can

discriminate against you if you're sick or if you ever have been sick. It's time for us to tell the insurance companies no more discrimination, no more making life and death decisions. That should be left to doctors and nurses, not insurance company bureaucrats, and we're going to move toward universal health care coverage finally in America.

When I say solutions, I mean public schools that are worthy of our children, starting with universal pre-kindergarten going all the way through. I believe you've got to start with pre-school, with Head Start, Early Head Start, universal pre-k so that all of our children get off to a good beginning. And I will end the unfunded mandate known as No Child Left Behind.

I believe in accountability and I have worked for that for more than 25 years, but I don't think you get that by turning our students into little test takers and our teachers into big test givers. We need a new partnership, a new partnership between the federal government, our schools, our students, our families and communities. I will offer that. I will also work to make sure that college is affordable for every single hard working student in America.

When I say solutions, I mean keeping faith with our Native Americans, the first Americans. It is time that we had a president who understood that we should fully fund the Indian Health Service; that we should respect the government-to-government relationship, that we will have, once again, a partnership from the White House across America. Every tribe, both in Indian Country and in urban areas, because I believe we must keep faith with our very first Americans and I pledge, I will do whatever I can to make that happen.

When I say solutions, I mean standing up always for Social Security. Senator Baucus led the fight against President Bush's attempts to privatize Social Security. I was proud to fight alongside him every step of the way. When I am president, you are never going to have to worry about anybody privatizing your Social Security.

Of course, we have a lot of work to do around the world. We have to restore America's leadership and our moral authority. That begins by ending the war in Iraq and bringing our troops home as quickly and responsibly as possible. It means reaching out to the rest of the world to find common ground to combat our challenges. We can't tackle global warming alone; as president I will lead the way to a new global agreement that will include India and China and the other fast developing countries. Every part of the world must be committed to reversing global warming. When we think about taking on global warming or global terrorism or global epidemics, America, once again, must be respected. You cannot be a leader if no one is following and for too long under President Bush countries have been on the sidelines or even actively opposed to us. I will immediately launch comprehensive global diplomatic efforts asking distinguished Americans of both parties to travel across the world, to send a message that once again the United States wants to engage, wants to listen, wants to work with you.

As we move from the war in Iraq to once again standing on behalf of peace and security, we will be bringing our sons and daughters home. They will need a new 21st century G.I. Bill of Rights, with money to go to college, money for a home, money to start a business. It has been heartbreaking as a senator to see how many of our veterans have been left alone to fight a bureaucracy and cut through the red tape to get the health care they need; to get the compensation they deserve. I will be a Commander-in-Chief who recognizes that we have the greatest military in the world but force should be used as a last resort, not a first resort in the interest of our country and furtherance of our values.

And it almost goes without saying but it must be said, that we will bring our Constitution out of cold storage. We will restore the separation of powers, the checks and balances. We will end the abusive practices and power grabs of the Bush/Cheney administration.

This is the America we will build together - an America where the next generation is always better off than the last. But in order to begin to do this work, we have to win in November. That means we have to defeat Senator McCain; a good man with a great record of serving America. He's a friend and colleague of mine and I admire his service, but he is offering the wrong ideas for our country. It is important that in the fall election we have a nominee ready to go toe-to-toe with John McCain on national security. He is willing to keep troops in Iraq for up to 100 years. I'll start bringing them home within the first 60 days of my taking office.

Senator McCain has admitted he doesn't really understand the economy. And unfortunately, he is proving it in this campaign. He looks at the home mortgage crisis and who does he blame? Not Wall Street, which helped create this mess in the first place. He blames the homeowners. He doesn't seem to understand that if our federal government can find \$30 billion to bail out one firm on Wall Street, we ought to be able to find \$30 billion to help homeowners stay in their homes and not lose them to the predatory practices of the mortgage industry.

I think we've had enough of a president who didn't know enough about economics and didn't do enough for the American middle class. We're ready for a President who, no matter whether that 3 a.m. call is about national security or an economic crisis, actually answers the phone and doesn't let it ring and ring and ring, trying to avoid taking responsibility for the mess that will be there when George Bush leaves.

Taking back the White House won't be easy. You'd think that after George Bush's presidency the Republicans would apologize to America. It might go something like this: "We are so sorry. We're not even going to run against you this time." I don't think that'll happen. In fact, I'm pretty sure that it'll be the same old Republican attack machine. They'll be out there in full force, and we're going to have to be ready to take them on.

I want you to know that I'm ready. I've been in there, in their attack mode for a long time. I know what it's like to stumble. I know what it means to get knocked down. But I've never stayed down. I never will. And neither will America.

That's another reason why I feel right at home here because throughout Butte's history, you never quit. When the silver market crashed at the end of the 1800's, you refused to give up, you kept digging, and you found copper. When the deep copper mines closed in the 1950's, you found new mining technology and you kept going.

Many times the national press and the pundits have said: "Butte's a goner." But you said: "No, we aren't." And your progress today proves you were right. I'm awfully happy to be among people who have the spunk, the courage, and the determination to stay in the fight, to keep fighting for a better tomorrow, to know that we're going to bring that same spirit to this campaign. Because one thing you know about me, when I tell you I'll stand with you, I'll stand with you. When I tell you I'll fight for you, I will fight for you. That's what I have done my whole life, and that's what we're going to do all the way to the White House next January 20th, 2009.

We're going to fight across all 50 states. We're going to campaign everywhere in America because we need to keep fighting because America is worth fighting for. Everyday that goes by in this campaign, I become more determined and more convinced that we will be able to convince the American people to believe once again in our future; that we are a nation of optimists, a nation of idealists. We know what it takes to continue the progress that is the American birth right.

So tonight, we say with one voice: give us the child that wants to learn. Give us the people in need of work. Give us the veterans who need our care. We say, 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. The Democrats are ready, I am ready, and I know Montana Democrats, you're ready, too. Let's go forward to victory. Thank you, God bless you and God bless America.