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May 13, 2008

Hillary's Remarks at Charleston, WV Celebration Event

Thank you, West Virginia.

You know, like the song says: "it's almost heaven," and I am so grateful for this overwhelming vote of confidence.

There are some who have wanted to cut this race short. They say "give up, it's too hard, the mountain is too high," but here in West Virginia, you know a thing or two about rough roads to the top of the mountain. We know from the Bible that faith can move mountains and, my friends, the faith of the Mountain State has moved me. I am more determined than ever to carry on this campaign until everyone has had a chance to make their voices heard.

I want to commend Senator Obama and his supporters. This continues to be a hard-fought race, from one end of our country to the other. And yes, we've had a few dust-ups along the way, but our commitment to bring America new leadership that will renew America's promise means that we have always stood together on what is most important.

Now, tonight I need your help to continue this journey. We are in the homestretch. There are only three weeks left in the final contests, and your support can make the difference between winning and losing. So I hope you'll go to HillaryClinton.com and support our campaign.

You've heard this before – there are many who wanted to declare a nominee before the ballots were counted or even cast. Some said our campaign was over after Iowa, but then we won New Hampshire. Then we had big victories on Super Tuesday and in Ohio and Texas and Pennsylvania, and of course, we came from behind to win in Indiana.

So, this race isn't over yet. Neither of us has the total delegates it takes to win and both Senator Obama and I believe that the delegates from Florida and Michigan should be seated. I believe we should honor the votes cast by 2.3 million people in those states and seat all of their delegates. Under the rules of our party, when you include all 50 states, the number of delegates needed to win is 2,209, and neither of us has reached that threshold yet. This win in West Virginia will help me move even closer.

Now, in a campaign, it can be easy to get lost in the political spin and the polls or the punditry, but we must never lose sight of what really counts, of why all of us care so much about who wins and who loses in our political system. An enormous decision falls on the shoulders of Democratic voters in these final contests and those Democrats empowered to vote at our convention. And tonight, in light of our overwhelming victory here in West Virginia, I want to send a message to everyone still making up their mind.

I am in this race because I believe I am the strongest candidate - the strongest candidate to lead our party in November of 2008 and the strongest president to lead our nation starting in January of 2009. I can win this nomination if you decide I should, and I can lead this party to victory in the general election if you lead me to victory now.

The choice falls to all of you, and I don't envy you. I deeply admire Senator Obama, but I believe our case, a case West Virginia has helped to make, our case is stronger. Together, we have won millions and millions of votes - by the time tonight is over, probably 17 million, close to it. We've won them in states that we must be prepared and ready to win in November – Pennsylvania and Ohio, Arkansas and New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Nevada, Michigan, Florida, and now West Virginia. It is a fact that no Democrat has won the White House since 1916 without winning West Virginia.

The bottom line is this – the White House is one in the swing states and I am winning the swing states. And we have done it by standing up for the deepest principles of our party with a vision for an America that rewards hard work again, that values the middle class and helps to make it stronger.

With your help, I am ready to go head-to-head with John McCain to put our vision for America up against the one he shares with President Bush. Now, I believe our party is strong enough for this

Statement from the Clinton Campaign
6/3/2008

HUBdate: Election Day in South Dakota and Montana
6/3/2008

Wyoming Automatic Delegate Backs Hillary
6/3/2008

Response to VP Inquiry
6/3/2008

Louisiana Democratic Party Chair and Automatic Delegate Chris Whittington Endorses Hillary
6/2/2008

Statement from Hillary Clinton On Gay Pride Month
6/2/2008

New York Automatic Delegate Endorses Hillary
6/2/2008

challenge. I am strong enough for it. You know I never give up. I'll keep coming back, and I'll stand with you as long as you stand with me.

Together, we will draw the stark distinctions that will determine the future direction of our nation, the difference between ending the war in Iraq responsibly or continuing it indefinitely, between health care for everyone and more uninsured Americans, between standing up for the middle-class families that you represent or standing up for the corporate special interests.

So, I ask you, Democrats, to choose who you believe will make the strongest candidate in the fall and who is ready to execute the office of the presidency of the United States.

People ask me all the time, why am I in this race. Well, I'm in it because of the people that I have worked for my entire life and the people I meet along the campaign trail, people who need someone who fights for them because they're fighting so hard every single day, the people who drive for miles to show their support, who come with the home-made sign, who raise money by skipping those dinners out, who have stood fast and stood strong. I'm in this race for the millions of Americans who know that we can do better in our country, for the nurse on her second shift, for the worker on the line, for the waitress on her feet, for the small business owner, the farmer, the teacher, the coal miner, the trucker, the soldier, the veteran, the college student.

All of the hardworking men and women who defy the odds to build a better life for themselves and their children. You will never be counted out, and I won't either. You will never quit, and I won't, either.

The question is, why do so many people keep voting? Why did 64% of Democrats say in a recent poll they wanted this race to continue? Because in the face of the pundits and the naysayers, they know what is at stake. They know that we have two wars, an economy in crisis on the brink of a recession, \$9 trillion of debt, oil prices shooting through the roof, gas prices and grocery prices hurting people who desperately are looking for a way to just keep going day to day. They know they need a champion. They need someone who's going to never stop fighting for health care that covers everyone, no exceptions, for an economy that lifts everyone up, for good jobs that won't be shipped overseas, for college affordability, for all that you can do to own a home and then to keep it.

This election is fundamentally about whether or not the American dream remains alive and well, for our children and our grandchildren. This is the core of my life and my political beliefs: that we owe so much to future generations, that we do not want to see that dream recede, that we know people have to work hard, and we expect you to do just that and to take responsibility, but at the very least, you should have a President who is on your side again.

And I believe that this campaign has been good for the Democratic Party and good for our country. People are discussing and debating issues. They are turning out in record numbers to register and to vote. There is an excitement about politics that is the lifeblood of our democracy.

For me, this election isn't about who's in or who's out or who's up or who's down. It's about the common threads that tie us together – rich and poor, young and old, black and white, Latino and Asian, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. We are united by common values. We all want a better world for our children, and we want the best for our country. And we are committed to putting a Democrat back in the White House.

And our nominee – our nominee will be stronger for having campaigned long and hard, building enthusiasm and excitement, hearing your stories and answering your questions. And I will work my heart out for the nominee of the Democratic Party to make sure we have a Democratic President.

As we look at the stakes in this election, I think we can all agree it's been unprecedented. We haven't had an election like it for as long as anyone can remember. It is still so close and it really does depend upon those who will vote in these next contests and those who have the awesome responsibility as delegates of our great Democratic Party.

I'm asking that people think hard about where we are in this election, about how we will win in November, because this is not an abstract exercise. This is for a solemn, crucial purpose: to elect a president to turn our country around, to meet the challenges we face and seize the opportunities. It has been a long campaign, but it is just an instant in time when compared with the lasting consequences of the choice we will make in November. That is why I am carrying on, and if you give me a chance, Democrats, I'll come back to West Virginia in the general election and we'll win this state and we'll win the White House.

I am honored and grateful for the support and hospitality of the people of West Virginia. I spent a few minutes with your wonderful national treasure, Senator Byrd, this morning and we talked about his beloved West Virginia. I told him where I'd gone and what I'd seen. I talked about the people I had met. And he just broke into the biggest smile. I don't know that any man has ever loved a state more than Robert C. Byrd loves West Virginia.

I am grateful for the graciousness of Governor and Mrs. Manchin. Governor Manchin is winning a great victory himself tonight, and I want to thank Joe and Gayle for welcoming me to Governor Manchin's hometown as we went to Fairmont for a great election last night. I want to thank Senate

Majority Leader Truman Chafin, former Governor Hulett Smith, Brigadier General Jack Yeager, all of the West Virginia veterans who honored me by their support and I honor their service.

Thanks to my friends in the labor unions who stood with us every step of the way, we wouldn't be here without you. And a special thanks to my outstanding staff, volunteers and supporters here in West Virginia and across America.

At least once, usually a half a dozen times a day, Bill and Chelsea and I check in with each other and I wish every West Virginian could have heard our calls as we compared our experiences here in this state. We've had the best time.

And I will be back. As we move on now to the next contests, in Kentucky and Oregon, in Puerto Rico, in Montana and South Dakota, tonight I'm thinking about Florence Steen from South Dakota, eighty-eight years old and in failing health when she asked that her daughter bring an absentee ballot to her hospice bedside. Florence was born before women had the right to vote, and she was determined to exercise that right, to cast a ballot for her candidate who just happened to be a woman running for president. Florence passed on a few days ago, but I am eternally grateful to her and her family for making this such an important and incredible milestone in her life that means so much to me. I'm also thinking of Dalton Hatfield, an 11-year-old boy from Kentucky, who sold his bike and sold his video games to raise money to support my campaign.

This is a great and good nation because of people like Florence Steen, Dalton Hatfield, and their families. Her memory and his future are worth fighting for. As long as we remember that there is no challenge we cannot meet, no barrier we cannot break, no dream we cannot realize. So, let's finish the job we started. America is worth fighting for.

Thank you and God bless you and God bless America. Thank you all so very much.