

CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE TAKE BACK AMERICA 2007

REMARKS OF REPRESENTATIVE DENNIS KUCINICH (D-OH)

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REP. KUCINICH: Our nation is waiting for a grand vision which connects us with a deeper sense of who we are as a people. Our nation is waiting for a grand vision which is propelled by a sense of joy and optimism. Our nation's waiting for a grand vision which sees the world as one, which understands that the world is interconnected and interdependent, and that it is indeed our job to heal this planet, to bring this planet together as one people. (Applause.)

I see peace as being the central issue and concern of our time.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you!

REP. KUCINICH: I see all of the issues that we're speaking about connected to peace, with peace at the center. And in a Kucinich administration, we would begin with an understanding of the centrality of peace to life in the United States and to life on our planet. We would begin -- we would begin with policies which reject war as an instrument of policy. (Cheers, applause.) We will -- my plan to end the war in Iraq is as follows. That not only must the Congress take a strong stand, and people are waiting for Democrats to tell President Bush "no more money," this isn't a question of whether or not we have the votes. I want everyone here to understand this. You know, way back in the seventh grade in Mrs. Malone's civics class, she showed us how a bill became law.

Okay? Well, let me tell you how a bill does not become law -- you don't offer it. We shouldn't be offering President Bush another piece of legislation that would appropriate money for the war. We need to tell the president now the occupation will come to an end, the troops will be brought home, the bases will be closed, the contractors must be brought back. (Cheers, applause.) We must stop the effort to take Iraq's oil. We have no right to that. We must repair the breach that we've created. We must achieve a program of reconciliation between the Shi'ites, the Sunnis and the Kurds. And the only way that we can do that is for the United States to leave. We must have an honest reconstruction program in Iraq, and we must stop insisting that Iraq privatize its oil, because that is in and of itself a crime against the people of Iraq. (Cheers, applause.)

We must challenge war as an instrument of policy. We must challenge the very idea of war.

And when we do, then we can start to reconnect with the nations of the world. We need to have an initiative not only to go to Syria and Iran to help us put together an international peacekeeping force that would move in as our troops leave, but we need to go to all the nations of the region to create a design for peace in the region.

I believe that the path to peace runs right through Jerusalem, and it's time a president had the ability to approach things in the Middle East with an even hand, with an understanding of the suffering of the Palestinians and of the desire of the Israelis for dealing with the existential threat.

(Cheers, applause.)

We need a president who understands that peace in the Middle East requires this even-handed approach. We need a president who has compassion for both sides, who has the understanding that a healing hand is needed. My whole public record has been one of seeking to reconcile people. We are commanded to make peace with our brothers and sisters. And a Kucinich administration would take that principle of peace into the domestic life of our nation, through creating a Cabinet-level Department of Peace and Non-Violence -- (cheers, applause) -- which for the first time will address the issues in an organized way, address the national issues of domestic violence, spousal abuse, child abuse, violence in the schools.

The time to deal with domestic violence -- a little bit late when you're in an emergency room or worse or in a courtroom -- the time to deal with domestic violence is through educating our children principles of compassion, of recognizing that the other person is an aspect of oneself. It's taking the concept of, do unto others as you would have them do unto you, to another level, where we see, that other person is an aspect of ourselves. This is not simply a political matter; this is a spiritual principle which we bring into the operation of our country -- (cheers, applause) - - peace, taking the principles of Gandhi and Christ and Dr. King and making non-violence an organizing principle in our society. We can do this; we can be more than we are; we can be better than we are.

And America's waiting for a leader who will call forth that capacity from our people. We need to understand the connection between peace and the environment. We know that life on our planet is threatened by the twin threats of global warring and global warming. They are linked, and we have to understand that as we cognize the world as being interconnected and interdependent, we know that resource wars are passe and that the focus on sustainability will create peace.

We know that as we move away from an addiction to oil and coal and go to green energy, to wind and solar and fuel cell technology, we reduce our carbon footprint; we reduce this quest and lust for oil. We create relations with other nations that -- we do not try to take their resources. We move forward with harmony with each other and harmony with nature. We have to understand that our commerce must be guided by this principle of harmony. A green commerce must be the way that America proceeds. Government has to play a role in recognizing that the economy is part of the environment and not the other way around. (Cheers, applause.)

We need to have renewable energy. We have to preserve our water -- no privatization of water assets in this country. (Cheers, applause.) We need to have reforestation and preserve habitats. And subsequently as we reduce our carbon footprint, simultaneously we work with the world community. The Kyoto Climate Change Treaty is just the first step. We need to go beyond

Kyoto. We need to reach out to the world and reduce our carbon emissions, and we need to have environmental protection to secure our food supplies.

Another path towards peace and connection and harmony with our environment is our trade laws. One of my first acts in office will be to cancel NAFTA and the WTO -- (cheers) -- and move to trade conditioned on environmental quality principles. (Cheers, applause.) Trade must come in harmony with environmental consciousness. Trade must be aware of the imperative of protecting our air, our water and our land.

And under a Kucinich presidency, when we cancel NAFTA, we go to the nations of the world and we say, let us work together to prepare for a time when the air and the water is clean. We need a president who is ready to call that capacity forward from the people. And what would that involve? It would involve the creation of what I call a WGA: a Works Green Administration.

Just like President Roosevelt created a WPA where we built public works all over this country, so I will call forth the capacity of our people to participate in a major environmental effort to not only conserve energy, so that each person participates in what you could call a cap-and-share approach to protecting our environment but also where we use the productive capacity of government in every area, to have NASA help develop a new technology which can protect our environment, to have the Department of Energy shift its focus away from oil, coal and nuclear and towards green energy, to have the Department of Education involve our children in environmental education, to have every area of the government involved in environmental consciousness. (Applause.)

A president can do that, and I intend to, with a WGA that will -- (cheers, applause) -- Works Green Administration, which will produce millions of new jobs; retrofitting homes with green building, putting wind and solar, microtechnology; enabling people to save money, reduce the carbon footprint. We can save our planet. We will save our planet, and we'll do it with leadership and with all of us working together to do that. And that's the connection between peace and sustainability.

We have to have peace connected with our health care systems. Peace of mind is something that is escaping so many Americans when they do not have health care or they have -- or health care is unaffordable. We have 46 million Americans who have no health insurance. Another 50 million Americans are underinsured. Let me tell you, this is a defining economic issue in our country.

I stand for a health care system -- Medicare for all, H.R. 676 -- universal, single-payer, not for profit. Get the private insurers out of health care. (Cheers, applause.) Help the American people break the shackles which the insurance companies have on our political process. (Cheers, applause continue.) It's time for a president who will challenge the private insurance companies, who will challenge their hold on Washington, who will challenge their hold on the family budgets of Americans, who will challenge this system of premiums, co-pays and deductibles.

I understand how families are suffering. I understand how people don't have the health care they want and need. I know that we're already paying. We're already paying for Medicare for all. We're just not getting it. We're not getting it because this private insurance structure has held our country captive. Half the bankruptcies in America are connected to people not being able to pay their doctor bills or their hospital bills. People are losing their savings. They're making choices in their lives where they're working part-time jobs that they would never work, only to have substandard health care benefits.

We're finding people in the twilight of their lives -- when somebody gets sick in the family, they have to go and sign the dotted line and put all of the resources they ever worked in their life for on the line just to get care for long term. That's wrong. It's morally wrong. We need a president who's ready to take that challenge, call the American people, let's unite this country in a call for H.R. 676, Medicare for all. It is time! It is time! (Cheers, applause.)

Peace is connected to a healthy economy. We have to see that we have jobs for all. I reject this idea that a certain amount of unemployment is necessary to the proper functioning of the economy. That's good for the economists who are employed who say that, but it's not good for our people everywhere. I will create millions of new jobs not only with the WGA, but with a new WPA to rebuild America, rebuild our schools, our water systems, our sewer systems, our bridges, new mass transit. We need a multibillion-dollar investment in America every year creating the jobs that will rebuild America.

We need not only when we talk about canceling NAFTA and the WTO, we have to recognize that commerce must be guided by moral principles. This is something that I understand from my own spiritual training: the encyclicals of Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*; the encyclical of Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, talked about the connection between spiritual principles and commerce. Our commerce is devoid of spiritual principles until a president stands up and says, "Workers in this country and all countries must have the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining, the right to strike, the right to decent wages and benefits, the right to a secure retirement, the right to participate in the political process, the right to a safe workplace." Workers rights are human rights, and there is a moral arc that we have to follow in all of our commerce. It's time for a president who understood the concerns of workers, who stood for workers. (Cheers, applause.)

And we need a president with the capacity to challenge corporate America to be responsible in its commercial policies. We need to break up the monopolies in agriculture, in utilities, in oil and in all the areas of the economy -- (cheers, applause) -- where restraint of trade is causing Americans to pay higher prices and get inferior products.

It is time for us to stand with the farmers of America who can't get the price of their product, don't have parity, can't get their product to market, stand with the farmers of America by breaking up those agricultural monopolies -- (applause); stand with the organic farmers of America and protect organic standards -- (applause); stand with the farmers on issues that relate to genetically modified organisms; have safety testing, have laws in regards to that. We need to see an economy which is guided by democratic principles.

From the imperative of peace to the imperative of a healthy planet, to the imperative of health care and the imperative of a healthy economy, we go to the imperative of immigrant rights. When I came to the stage -- (interrupted by cheers). When I came to the stage, I was brought in with a song that all of us know, by Neil Diamond, "Coming to America." And I made that choice because I want this country to reconnect, truly, with the dimension of America which welcomes people.

I want this country to reconnect -- (applause) -- with a deeper understanding of who we are. How many people in this audience alone have family one, two, three generations came from another country. (Cheers.) I want those who are watching on TV to know that most of the people in the audience are affected by and have connections with other countries. The truth is that we're together as one world. That's what America represents. The first motto of this country, "E Pluribus Unum" -- Out of many, one -- was not simply about a collection of states, it was about human unity. It was about connection with all people.

Our policies and this big debate about immigration that has basically cowed the Senate into submission has ignored one fact, and that is that the immigrant workers who have come north of the border were there because after NAFTA passed, wages collapsed in Mexico, the peso dropped, and people were desperate to survive. So what happened? So they came north of the border and they were willing to work for next to nothing.

It is a blot on American history that we have maintained a system of slave labor, and now we're blaming the immigrants for that. (Cheers, applause.) We need a president who understands. We can heal this country. We can have sane immigration policies. But we have to stop blaming the victim. (Cheers, applause.) We have to start enforcing labor law. We have to start enforcing laws that relate to corporate conduct. (Cheers, applause.) We have to have a sane immigration policy, but we have to also make sure that we do not exclude people from an opportunity. Those who have been here, who have paid their taxes and paid their dues and been part of our economy for the last decade need to have a chance to have a path to citizenship. They should not be told, after they've made their contribution to our economy, "No, we don't want you anymore; go home," because America is their new home. And their children should have basic rights. (Cheers, applause.) And we have to make sure that children have a right to education and health care as well.

We need to have an approach where a president will take a healing hand on this country and restore this country's loss of civil liberties. In my first week in office, I will have our Justice Department go to federal court and seek to overturn the Patriot Act as being unconstitutional. (Cheers, applause.) We will work to cancel the Military Commissions Act. It's not worthy of America. (Cheers, applause continue.) We will stop government spying. We will get government out of people's bedrooms. We will make sure that people have a right to the private sphere again. (Cheers, applause continue.) We will make sure our brothers and sisters who are gay or lesbian, transgendered, bisexual have true marriage equality -- (cheers, applause) -- marriage equality.

This country needs a healing hand, one that will look at the issue of abortion and understand that we can reconcile it by saying we can make abortions less necessary, but with a universal health care program, we can finally have prenatal care, post-natal care, child care -- (cheers, applause) - -universal health care, a living wage; help create the climate that will foster people to make choices that will be confirming of life.

We need a president who understands the imperative of our Constitution. When Steve Cobble introduced me, he mentioned the debate in South Carolina. Now, why did I introduce this resolution of impeachment? It wasn't because I am after Mr. Cheney. Let me explain something. I believe that the most important thing that binds us as a people is the Constitution. That is the document, is the sacred text for us in a democratic society. (Applause.)

And when someone takes that oath of office and they pledge to support the Constitution of the United States, that's a sacred oath for our society. And because I see our Constitution at risk, and because I think that the vice presidency and the presidency have to have the highest standards for anyone in a democratic society, I laid down that challenge. And I ask all members of Congress to join me in making the vice president finally accountable. And when we do that, then we will make our president accountable. (Cheers, applause.) This is about our Constitution, it is about our adherence to international law. And there is a connection between peace and international law. There's an imperative to uphold international law.

As president of the United States, I'll move to have the United States join the International Criminal Court. It is absolutely necessary that all of us be held to the same standards that we would want everyone else in the world held to. (Cheers, applause.)

We will work not only to confirm the tenets of the Non- Proliferation Treaty, but we will work to abolish all nuclear weapons. (Cheers.) Life on the planet depends on it, it depends on a president who can work with the world community, who can reach out to the leaders everywhere and say this endangers us all. Let's beat our swords into plowshares, our spears into pruning hooks.

Let's move away from all the threats to our planet. I want to see America take a strong stand for international law by fully participating in the biological weapons convention, the chemical weapons convention, the small arms treaty, the land mine treaty. (Cheers, applause.) We must join Kyoto and go beyond Kyoto, as I mentioned.

My friends, under a Kucinich administration, the world -- which has been separated from America in many ways by the policies of this administration -- will, with a United States president who comes forward with a sense of compassion and integrity and authenticity, who understands the imperative of human unity -- the world is ready to fall in love with America all over again. It's time for us to think in terms of reconnecting with the world community.

I tell you there's a new America out there and a new world out there. I can see it. It is just waiting to be called forward. It is waiting for us to see it together. It is waiting for us to see a nation at peace, a nation with full employment, a nation with health care for all, a nation with education for all, a nation with peace for all, a nation with civil liberties for all, a nation with compassion for all, a nation with love for all! (Cheers, applause.)

This is a new America! Let's call it forward! This is a country we love! Let's make it happen! America, America, America! Thank you! (Cheers, applause.)
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