

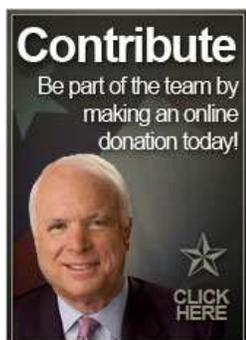


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John McCain Addresses the Presidency IV Forum

October 20, 2007

ARLINGTON, VA -- U.S. Senator John McCain will deliver remarks to the Presidency IV Forum today, Saturday, October 20th at 5:00p.m. EDT in Orlando, Florida. Below are McCain's remarks as prepared for delivery:

Thank you for that kind introduction. It is an honor to speak to you.

We all know how important Florida will be in determining the outcome of this election, no less so than it has been in the last two presidential elections. And I think Republicans in Florida and Republicans everywhere understand that we face substantial challenges and some pretty stiff competition. We're going to have to fight hard to win. But we will win, and we're going to do it by making clear to the American people how high the stakes are in this election, and how important it is that we keep America moving forward and not return to the failed policies of the past as our friends in the other party would have us do. We're going to do it by being honest about the challenges America confronts, and straightforward, bold and brave about the direction we intend to lead the country. We're going to do it by having the courage of our convictions, and by convincing the American people that we will not yield, waffle, mislead, or shirk our responsibilities to keep this country safe, prosperous and proud.

I once lived in this great state. And when I was away from my country on an extended tour of duty, my Florida neighbors looked after my family with great care and affection. I think I know the people of Florida pretty well. I know that before I can win your vote, I have to win your respect. And to do that, you expect me to be honest with you about what I believe. You might not agree with me on every issue, but I hope you know I'm not trying to trick you or misrepresent my intentions should I be so privileged to be elected to the office I seek. A candidate who tells you one thing and tells another group of voters something else, doesn't respect you, and won't lead our party to victory. Because the most important thing we have in this life is our self-respect. I don't expect voters to trade theirs for empty promises. And I'm not going to trade mine for any office. I'm going to tell you what I believe and let the chips fall where they will. Americans are weary of empty promises, spin and election year conversions. They want leadership, and leaders don't prefer expediency to principle. They don't hide from a challenge. They don't put their own interests before our country's. They tell us what they believe and where they intend to lead. They offer their honest judgment not their pollster's advice. They have conviction, courage, and, most of all, the humility to understand they serve a cause greater than self-interest; that our most solemn responsibility is to put the people who have given us their trust before any personal consideration.

If I am privileged to be your nominee, I promise you, I will never forget my obligations to you. Americans have lost trust in their government and I intend to win it back, so help me God. You'll know where I stand, and where I intend to lead. I will defeat the Democratic candidate, whoever he or she is. And when I do, I don't intend to use my presidency to avoid the hardest challenges America faces, and leave them to another, unluckier generation of leaders. I don't want to be remembered for the elections I won, for the celebrity I achieved, or for the personal privileges I enjoyed. I want to be remembered as a man who loved his country; who was proud of his country, and whose country was proud of him. That has been the great ambition of my life. I have no need of any other. And there is only one way I know how to achieve it: to stand up for what I believe even when the road is long and difficult; to stand up for my country against all enemies foreign and domestic; to stand up proudly, honestly, defiantly for the principles, ideals and virtues that have made this country "the last, best hope of earth."

To win this election we need a candidate who can keep the Republican coalition together and appeal to Independents. We need a candidate with a reputation for challenging the Washington establishment and the failed politics of the past. We need a candidate who is sure of his convictions; who hasn't changed his positions on the profound moral issues of our day to fit the politics of the moment. We need a candidate who will keep our economy strong and free from the waste and misuse of politicians for whom re-election is more important than the prosperity of the American people. And, above all, in a time of war against an enemy for whom no atrocity is too cruel, we need a candidate with the strongest national security experience so that there is no doubt in the minds of voters which candidate is best prepared to be commander in chief from day one.

We cannot concede any important issue to the Democrats. But neither can we adopt the flawed solutions they propose or abandon our principles in telling Americans how we intend to address them. We should not avoid the looming bankruptcy of our entitlements. But we must not promise to tax and spend our way to greater prosperity. We should not ignore problems like health care and global warming, but we must not offer Democratic-light proposals that prefer the wisdom of government bureaucrats to the power of free markets and the common sense of the American people.

We are approaching a "perfect storm" of problems that if not addressed by the next president, will cause our health care system to implode. Here is what we know: We currently 2.2 trillion dollars on health care. By 2015, that number will nearly double to four trillion dollars. By 2019 Medicare will be broke. We are currently spending more on Medicare than we are collecting in payroll taxes and cashing in the few IOU's left in the trust fund. By 2017 more money will be going out of Social Security than is coming in. The next president must act to avert the impending "storm." I won't leave office without doing everything I can to fix these problems that so severely threaten our future prosperity and power.

Last week I offered my plan to reform and strengthen our health care system. It's a plan built on a simple premise: bringing spiraling health care costs under control through market competition. It will benefit consumers and improve patient care; increase coverage by making insurance more affordable; and strengthen American economic competitiveness across the globe. My plan puts the needs of individuals and families first, not government and insurance bureaucracies. It promotes strong health care markets by allowing families to purchase insurance across state lines and through any willing provider such as an association or a church. It takes up the challenge of tort reform to stop frivolous lawsuits that enrich trial lawyers while raising health costs for everyone else. It expands the proven benefits of market competition by encouraging a more efficient process for bringing cheaper

generic drugs to consumers sooner and developing a workable system that permits the safe reimportation of drugs to keep competition vigorous.

Americans have lost trust in their government to spend their hard earned money wisely. Today, the government spends more money than ever before. Since Ronald Reagan left office, government spending adjusted for inflation has increased \$2,500 for every man, woman and child in the country. Wasteful spending has gone from irresponsible to indefensible. When Congress sends me one of these huge, pork barrel bills to my desk, I will veto it, and I will make the authors who wrote it famous. You'll know their names, and you can hold them accountable.

Of course, the most important challenge that will confront the next President is defending America from the Islamic extremists who hate us and our values, and who will do anything -- anything, no matter how cruel or violent -- to hurt as many Americans as they can. They are an implacable and unpardonable enemy fiercely dedicated to our destruction. They are global in reach, operating in Europe, the Americas, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Just last month, terrorist plots were uncovered in Denmark and Germany that had the potential to kill hundreds or thousands. Here at home we've disrupted plots against JFK Airport in New York and against American soldiers at Ft. Dix. They intend to acquire weapons of mass destruction to kill as many innocent people as they can. They will not relent. They will not tire of the fight and go away. They must be defeated, defeated utterly, wherever they are. Yet much of Washington remains mired in irresolution and defeatism because the challenge is hard and complex and long. But I am not. I know the country I wish to lead. I know its strength. I know its virtues. And I know we will never face any threat stronger than the courage, resourcefulness, and determination of free people, who will not forget who they are, lose their confidence, succumb to fear, or limit their dreams because a hateful, evil enemy expects them to. They will meet and destroy that enemy, because what Americans believe, what we know, is great, true, and a blessing. We don't hide from history. We make history.

Three decades ago, a visionary politician, a man of firm convictions and an abiding respect for the values and strength of his country, described the dangers in the world. It was, like today, a time when some doubted America's goodness and greatness. Many argued for reconciliation with our global adversary. But this man held firm. He did not care what editorial boards wrote about him. He did what he thought was right. He criticized a foreign policy of weakness and vacillation. He called for resolve and firmness in dealing with the Soviet Union. And, he refused to condemn millions to perpetual Communist tyranny in the false hope that accommodating the Soviet Union would contribute to America's security.

Fortunately, this man became President. How different would our lives be had Ronald Reagan not won election in 1980 and 1984? Does anyone believe a Democratic President would have called the Soviet Union an "evil empire" or would have stood up to the nuclear freeze movement; would have promised that communism would be left on the ash heap of history; would have demanded that a Soviet leader tear down the Berlin Wall? While his critics and opponents tried to hide from history. Ronald Reagan summoned us to make history; to make another, better world, where our interests were secure, and our values ascendant. He was steadfast in the face of fierce criticism, international irresolution and determined adversaries. And he was right. We won the Cold War as we will win this new and dangerous war: on our terms; for the sake of all humanity; for the right of free people to live without fear; and with the promise of another, better world secure and within our reach.

Today, the challenges are at least as severe as they were when Ronald Reagan led us. And, today, the differences between Republicans and Democrats on national security are every bit as stark. Today, leading Democratic presidential candidates vote against funding for our troops engaged in war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Today, leading Democratic presidential candidates question whether there is a war on terror, offer to enter into unconditional negotiations with our worst enemies, and talk about countering the forces of radicalism by advocating surrender to them in Iraq. If the Democrats get their way in Iraq, if we cede Iraq to al Qaeda, death squads and Iran and Syria, how long will they stay the course in Afghanistan? We face grave challenges in the Middle East: halting Iran's nuclear ambitions; protecting our democratic ally, Israel; supporting moderate voices against the killers of Hamas and Hezbollah; defending Lebanon's sovereignty against Syrian and Iranian aggression. Does anyone seriously believe that we can better meet those challenges in the aftermath of an American defeat in Iraq? It is irresponsible to think so, and any man or woman who does isn't prepared to lead our country in this critical hour.

The world Ronald Reagan faced was a dangerous one, but more stable than the world today. It was a world where we confronted a massive, organized threat to our security. Our enemy was evil, but not irrational. And for all the suffering endured by captive nations; for all the fear of global nuclear war; it was a world made fairly predictable by a stable balance of power until our steadfastness and patience yielded an historic victory for our security and ideals. That world is gone, and please don't mistake my reminiscence as an indication that I miss it. That world, after all, had much cruelty and terror, some of which it was my fate to witness personally.

Today, we face an enemy that so despises us and modernity itself that they would use any means, unleash any terror, cause the most unimaginable suffering to harm us, and to destroy the world we have tried throughout our history to share. But we are Americans, and we still have it in our power to make history, a history in which all people might someday bask in the blessings and responsibilities of freedom. Let us accept the challenge that history has assigned to us, bravely, confident in our ideals and purpose, and sure of our strength.

War is a terrible thing, but not the worst thing. Our military men and women have endured the dangers and deprivations of war so that the worst thing would not befall us, so that America might be secure in her freedom. The war in Iraq has divided the American people, but it has divided no American in our admiration for the men and women who are fighting for us there. It is every veteran's hope that should their children be called upon to answer a call to arms, the battle will be necessary and the field well chosen. But that is not their responsibility. It belongs to the government that called them. As it once was for us, their honor will be in their answer not their summons. Whatever we think about how and why we went to war in Iraq, we are all -- those who supported the decision that placed them in harm's way and those who opposed it -- humbled by and grateful for their example. They now deserve the distinction of the best Americans, and we owe them a debt we can never fully repay. We can only offer the small tribute of our humility and our commitment to do all that we can do, in less trying and costly circumstances, to help keep this nation worthy of their sacrifice for us and for the world.

It is a privilege beyond measure to live in a country that has sacrificed so much for the cause of freedom. I have lived a long, eventful and blessed life. I have had the good fortune to know personally a great many brave and selfless patriots who sacrificed and shed blood to defend America. But I have known none braver or better than those who do so today. They are my inspiration. And I pray to a loving God that He bless and protect them.

Thank you.

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