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John McCain Addresses Conference on Bio Economy in Ames, IA

November 5, 2007

U.S. Senator John McCain delivered remarks to a conference on growing the bioeconomy at Iowa State University in Ames today, Monday, November 5th at 7:30 p.m. CST. Below are McCain's remarks as prepared for delivery:

I'm pleased to be here and grateful for this opportunity to share with you my views about the importance of Iowa to our economy and how I believe Iowa's economy is well situated to take advantage of increases in the global trade of goods and services. I've enjoyed getting better acquainted with Iowa this year, and I've learned a lot. I've learned that while Iowa takes great pride in its tradition of family farming, it also has a large manufacturing base, and ranks in the top ten of our fastest growing export states. That's an encouraging statistic for Iowa because, irrespective of the sporadic rise of protectionist sentiment in this country, opening new markets for American goods and services is indispensable to our future prosperity, and those states best prepared to seize the opportunities of the global economy will prosper most. My friends, we can compete with anyone. You wouldn't know that by listening to the protectionists. They think we're lied. They think we should hide behind walls, and hope we have enough left to live on while the world passes us by. That's not leadership, and that's not American.

Many Iowans have heard that I oppose federal subsidies for ethanol production. Some of you will have heard that I oppose a protective tariff against sugar-based ethanol imports from places like Brazil. Some of my opponents will describe my positions as opposition to American ethanol producers or, for some inexplicable reason, a personal dislike of Iowa. Neither is true, of course, and I appreciate the opportunity to set the record straight. But I have always believed before you can win someone's vote, you have to earn their respect. And I intend to earn your respect by being honest with you.

Yes, I oppose subsidies. Not just ethanol subsidies. Subsidies. And not just in Iowa either. I oppose them in my own state of Arizona. I am a proud of the conservative tradition that the government can sometimes best serve the interests of the American people by knowing when to stay out of their way. And I've always been reluctant to grow the size of government to do the business of the American people for them or to favor one industry over another or because one sector of our economy has better lobbyists than another. I want the government to do its job, not your job, to do it better and to do it with less of your money. I want our economy to grow, not the size of government. And I don't want government to divert resources from the growing industries that hold the key to America's continued economic success. Excessive and intrusive regulation undermines the flexibility needed for business success.

There is no economic force on this globe that is stronger than free people. Entrepreneurs lie at the heart of innovation, growth, and advancing prosperity. Entrepreneurs should not be shackled by excessive regulation that raises the cost of business. Entrepreneurs should not be disadvantaged by earmarking and pork-barrel spending that favors politically connected competitors.

I trust Americans, I trust markets and I oppose subsidies. As President, I'll propose a national energy strategy that will amount to a declaration of independence from the risk bred by our reliance on petro-dictators and our vulnerability to the troubled politics of the lands they rule. That strategy won't be another grab bag of handouts to this or that industry and a full employment act for lobbyists.

Yes, that means no ethanol subsidies. But it also means no rifle-shot tax breaks for big oil. It means no line items for hydrogen, no mandates for other renewable fuels, and no big-government debacles like the Dakotas Synfuels plant. It means ethanol entrepreneurs get a level playing field to make their case -- and earn their profits.

I believe this approach allows Iowans their best opportunity to display to the world the ingenuity that has served Iowa through the years. Iowans were the leaders in agricultural advancement, conservation and land stewardship. Iowa gave us Ding Darling, the father of the Federal Duck Stamp whose actions were essential to the genesis of the National Wildlife Refuges land conservation program. Max McGraw was instrumental in advancing the transportation of electricity, which resulted in the development of electrical power as a major source of energy. He also was a champion of industry and land conservation. Iowans, through their abilities, their fine universities, and their tradition of hard work and innovation will transform the energy and agriculture business in America and make us an even more successful competitor on the world stage. They will best do this unencumbered with ill-advised government subsidies that serve in the end to restrict competition, stifle technological advancement and restrain Americans' natural entrepreneurial drive.

If I am elected President, I will change the competitive landscape and finally give Iowans a fair chance and no need for existing subsidies. I have proposed a market-based approach that would set reasonable caps on carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions, and provide industries with tradable credits. By reducing its emissions, a utility or industrial plant can generate credits it may trade on the open market for a profit, offering a powerful incentive to drive the deployment of new and better energy sources and technologies.

This approach will build the business case for alternatives to oil such as ethanol. It will promote the conservation and diversification of energy to include alcohol fuels made from corn, sugar, switchgrass and many other sources; fuel cells; biodiesel derived from waste products; natural gas; and other technologies. These are all promising and available alternatives to oil, and I'll encourage the development of infrastructure and the market growth necessary for these products to compete, and let consumers choose the winners. I've never known an American entrepreneur worthy of the name who wouldn't rather compete for sales than subsidies. I have great faith that many residents of this great state share that same confidence in our unmatched ability to compete anywhere with anyone.

We need to be at the cutting edge of green technologies. Our future prosperity depends on our competitiveness. Globalization is here and globalization is an opportunity not a threat. The American farmer is the most productive and innovative farmer on the planet and can compete with anyone. Period. But farmers can't compete if they can't get into the game. My friends, 95 percent of

the world's customers live outside the borders of the United States. While my Democratic opponents play politics with trade -- using words like a trade "time out" to disguise their protectionism -- I don't intend to sit out opportunities and challenges of the world's economy. I intend to seize those opportunities to ensure, as every American generation has done, that our children's lives will be even more prosperous than were ours.

We need to build on our export strength not by building walls to international commerce. Exports accounted for nearly one-half of our economic growth during the first half of this year, and helped to offset the drag on our economy from the housing slump. Today, despite all the defeatist rhetoric, America is the world's biggest exporter, importer, producer, saver, investor, manufacturer and innovator.

I intend to lead a government that secures access to world markets for our farmers, our entrepreneurs, their workers, and the next generation. I am committed to helping every farmer in this way, not just the big guys who have figured out how to game the subsidy process.

As I said, I intend to be honest with you. Straight talk isn't just a campaign slogan of mine invented by consultants. I don't know any other way to campaign, and have always believed that if I were honest with the voters about what I believe and how I intend to govern, then everything will be alright in the end. 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. I know that you have heard before that subsidies to oil will be eliminated, only to experience another disappointment. My friends, this is one more reason that Americans have lost faith in their government. I'm not going to make promises that aren't in America's interest. The leaders I've always admired most don't prefer expediency to principle. They don't hide from a challenge. They don't put their own interests before those of our country. 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.

To win this election we need a candidate with a reputation and record of 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.

If I am privileged to be your President, 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 am the only conservative Republican who 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."

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