



"I'M ASKING YOU TO BELIEVE. Not just in my ability to bring about real change in Washington ... I'm asking you to believe in yours."

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Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: Plan to Fight for Working Families and Take on Special Interests in Washington

Indianapolis, IN | May 03, 2008

When I began this campaign for the presidency, I said I was running because I believed that the size of our challenges had outgrown the smallness of our politics in Washington - the pettiness and the game-playing and the influence-peddling that always prevents us from solving the problems we face year after year after year.

I ran because I believed that this year - that this moment - was too important to let that happen again. And I had faith that you believed that too - that you were ready for something different; that you were hungry for something new.

Fifteen months later, we're already doing what none of the cynics in Washington thought we could do. In the face of a politics that's tried to divide us and distract us and make this campaign about who's up and who's down and who-said-what-about-who, we've built a movement of Americans from every race and region and party who desperately want change in Washington.

I have no illusions about how far we have to go. Our road is still long. Our climb is still steep. But fifteen months later, I also know that our mission is even more urgent because the challenges facing people across Indiana and the country are growing by the day.

I'm not telling you anything you don't know.

You don't have to turn on the news or follow the stock tickers or wait for all the economists and politicians to agree on what is or is not a recession to know that our economy is in serious trouble. You can feel it in your own lives. And I hear it everywhere I go. Like the young man I met in Pennsylvania who lost his job but can't afford the gas to drive around and look for a new one. Or the woman from Anderson who just lost her job, and her pension, and her insurance when the Delphi plant closed down - even while the top executives walked away with multi-million-dollar bonuses. Or the families across this country who will sit around the kitchen table tonight and wonder whether next week's paycheck will be enough to cover next month's bills - who will look at their children without knowing if they'll be able to give them the same chances that they had.

But here's what Washington and Wall Street don't get:

This economy doesn't just jeopardize our financial well-being, it offends the most basic values that have made this country what it is: the idea that America is the place where you can make it if you try. That no matter how much money you start with or where you come from or who your parents are, opportunity is yours if you're willing to reach for it and work for it. It's the idea that while there are no guarantees in life, you should be able to count on a job that pays the bills; health care for when you get sick; a pension for when you retire; an education for your children that will allow them to fulfill their God-given potential. That's who we are as a country. That's the America most of us here know. It's the America our parents and our grandparents grew up knowing.

This is the country that gave my grandfather a chance to go to college on the GI Bill when he came home from World War II; a country that gave him and my grandmother - a small-town couple from Kansas - the chance to buy their first home with a loan from the government.

This is the country that made it possible for my mother - a single parent who had to go on food stamps at

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Table with columns: OBAMA, CLINTON and rows: Contests, Total Delegates

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one point - to send my sister and me to the best schools in the country with the help of scholarships.

This is the country that allowed my father-in-law - a city worker at a South Side water filtration plant - to provide for his wife and two children on a single salary. This is a man who was diagnosed at age thirty with multiple sclerosis - who relied on a walker to get himself to work. And yet, every day he went, and he labored, and he sent my wife and her brother to one of the best colleges in the nation.

That job didn't just give him a paycheck, it gave him dignity and self-worth. It was an America that didn't just reward and honor wealth, but the work and the workers who helped create it.

And we are here today looking for the answer to the same question:

Where is that America today?

How many veterans come home from this war without the care they need - how many wander the streets of the richest country on Earth without a roof over their heads? How many single parents can't even afford to send their children to the doctor when they get sick, never mind to four years of college? How many workers have suffered the indignity of having to compete with their own children for a minimum wage job at McDonalds after they gave their lives to a company where the CEO just walked off with that multi-million dollar bonus?

And most of all, how many years - how many decades - have we talked and talked and talked about these problems while Washington has done nothing, or tinkered, or made them worse.

There is no doubt that many of these challenges have to do with fundamental shifts in our economy that began decades ago - changes that have torn down borders and barriers and allowed companies to send jobs wherever there's a cheap source of labor. And today, with countries like China and India educating their children longer and better, and revolutions in communication and technology, they can send the jobs wherever there's an internet connection.

I saw the beginnings of these changes up close when I moved to the South Side of Chicago more than two decades ago to help neighborhoods that were devastated when the local steel plant closed. I saw the indignity of joblessness and the hopelessness of lost opportunity.

But I also saw that we are not powerless in the face of these challenges. We don't have to sit here and watch our leaders do nothing. I learned that we don't have to consign our children to a future of diminished dreams - a future of fewer opportunities. And that's why I'm running for President today. Politics didn't lead me to working people - working people led me to politics.

I'm running because we can't afford to settle for a Washington where John McCain gets the chance to give us four more years of the same Bush policies that have failed us for the last eight. More tax breaks for CEOs who make more in a day than some workers make in a year. More tax breaks for the same corporations that ship our jobs overseas. More of the trickle-down, on-your-own philosophy that says there's nothing government can do about the problems we face - so we might as well just hand out a few tax breaks and tell people to buy their own health care, their own education, their own roads, their own bridges. That hasn't worked in the past, and it won't work for our future.

We can't afford to settle for a Washington where our energy policy, and our health care policy, and our tax policy is sold to the highest-bidding lobbyist. We can't keep taking thousands of dollars of their money year after year, election after election. Senator Clinton says they represent real Americans, but you and I know who they really represent - the oil companies and the drug companies and the insurance companies who keep us from bringing down the cost of our premiums and our prescriptions and investing in renewable fuels.

We can't afford to settle for a Washington where politicians only focus on how to win instead of why we should; where they check the polls before they check their gut; where they only tell us whatever we want to hear whenever we want to hear it. That kind of politics may get them where they need to go, but it doesn't get America where we need to go. And it won't change anything.

Some of you might have seen that Senator Clinton's spending a lot of money on a television ad that attacks me for not supporting her and John McCain's idea of a gas tax holiday for the summer. Now, this is an idea that will save you - altogether - half a tank of gas. That's thirty cents a day. For three months. That's if the oil companies don't simply jack up their price to fill the gap, as they've done when this was tried before. Does anyone here really trust the oil companies to give you the savings when they could just pocket the money themselves?

It's a shell game. Literally.

In a moment of candor, her advisors actually admitted that it wouldn't have much of an effect on gas prices. But, they said, it's a great political issue for Senator Clinton. So this is not about getting you through the summer, it's about getting elected.

And this is what passes for leadership in Washington-- phony ideas, calculated to win elections instead of actually solving problems.



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Now Senator Clinton's been using this issue to make the argument that I'm somehow "out of touch."
Well let me tell you - only in Washington can you get away with calling someone out of touch when you're the one who thinks that thirty cents a day is enough to help people who are struggling in this economy. I'll tell you what I think - I think the American people are smarter than Washington gives us credit for.

I wish I could stand up here and tell you that we could fix our energy problems with a holiday. I wish I could tell you that we can take a time-out from trade and bring back the jobs that have gone overseas. I wish I could promise that on day one of my presidency, I could pass every plan and proposal I've outlined in this campaign.

But my guess is that you've heard those promises before. You hear them every year, in every election. And afterwards, when everyone goes back to Washington, the game-playing, and the influence-peddling, and the petty bickering continues. Nothing gets done. And four years later, we're right back here making the very same promises about the very same problems.

Well this year you have a choice. If you want to take another chance on the same kind of politics we've come to know in Washington, there are other candidates to choose from.

But I still believe we need to fundamentally change Washington if we want change in America. I still believe this election is bigger than me, or Senator Clinton, or Senator McCain. It's bigger than Democrats versus Republicans.

It's about who we are as Americans. It's about whether this country, at this moment, will continue to stand by while the wealthy few prosper at the expense of the hardworking many, or whether we'll stand up and reclaim the American dream for every American. It's about whether we'll watch the Chinas and the Indias of the world move past us, or whether we'll decide that in the 21st century, the home of innovation, and discovery, and progress will still be the United States of America.

Reclaiming this dream will take more than one election. It will take more than one person or one party. It will take the effort and sacrifice of a nation united. And that's the truth.

We can provide relief that's more than a holiday to families who are struggling in this economy. I'm the only candidate who's proposed a genuine middle-class tax cut that's paid for in part by closing corporate loopholes and shutting down tax havens. It would save nearly every working family \$1,000, eliminate income taxes for seniors making under \$50,000, and provide a mortgage tax credit to struggling homeowners that would cover ten percent of their mortgage interest payment every year.

I also have a health care plan that would save the average family \$2,500 on their premiums and provide the uninsured with the same kind of health care Members of Congress give themselves. That's real relief, but we can only pay for this if we finally rollback the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest 2% of Americans who don't need them and weren't even asking for them.

We may not be able to bring back all the jobs that we've lost to trade, but we can create tomorrow's jobs in this country. I happen to believe in free trade. But we do the cause of trade no favors when we pass agreements that are filled with perks for every special interest under the sun and absolutely no protections for American workers. There's absolutely no reason we should be giving tax breaks to corporations who ship jobs overseas. When I'm President, I will eliminate those tax breaks and give them to companies who create good jobs right here in America.

We can also create jobs if we finally get serious about rebuilding our crumbling and decaying national infrastructure. A few years ago, one out of three urban bridges were classified as structurally deficient, and we all saw the tragic results of what that could mean in Minnesota last year. It's unacceptable. That's why I'm proposing a National Infrastructure Reinvestment Bank that will invest \$60 billion over ten years and generate nearly two million new jobs - many of them in the construction industry that's been hard hit by this housing crisis. The repairs will be determined not by politics, but by what will maximize our safety. And we'll fund this bank by ending this war in Iraq. It's time to stop spending billions of dollars a week trying to put Iraq back together and start spending the money on putting America back together instead.

And if want to take a permanent holiday from our oil addiction, we can finally get serious about energy independence and create five million new green jobs in the process - jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced. We'll do what I did when I went to Detroit and tell the automakers it's time they raised fuel mileage standards in this country. We'll make companies pay for the pollution they release into the air, we'll tax the record profits of the oil companies, and we'll use that money to invest in clean, affordable, renewable energy like solar power, and wind power, and biofuels.

I'll be honest - this transition to a green economy won't come without costs that all of us will have to pay, but it's the only way we'll free ourselves from the whims of Middle East dictator; the only way we'll make sure we're not talking about high gas prices five years from now and ten years from now; the only way we can pass on a planet that's still recognizable to our children and their children.

And if we want our children to succeed in this global economy - if we want them to be able to compete with children in Beijing and Bangalore - then we need to make sure that every child, everywhere gets a world-class education, from the day they're born until the day they graduate college. That means investing in early childhood education. It means that we need to recruit an army of new teachers by not just talking about how great teachers are, but rewarding them for their greatness with better pay and

more support. And it means that in this country - in this global economy - we will not create a small class of the educated few by allowing thousands and thousands of young people to be priced out of college year after year. We are better than that. When I'm President, we'll create a bargain with every American who wants to go to college: we will pay for your tuition if you serve your country in some way for two years after you graduate.

Real relief for middle-class families, seniors, and homeowners. Lower premiums for those who have health care and coverage for everyone who wants it. Five million green jobs right here in America. A world-class education that will allow every American to reach their God-given potential and compete with any worker in the world.

All of this is possible, but it's just a list of policies until you decide that it's time to make the Washington we have look like the America we know - one where the future is not determined by those with money and influence; where common sense and honesty are cherished values; where we are stronger than that which divides us because we realize that in the end, we rise or fall as one nation - as one people.

It was forty years ago this May that Robert Kennedy took his unlikely campaign to create a new kind of politics to Indiana. And as he campaigned in Fort Wayne, he laid out a vision that America we know. He said, "Income and education and homes do not make a nation. Nor do land and borders. Shared ideals and principles, joined purposes and hopes - these make a nation. And that is our great task."

It is still our task today.

We've always known this wouldn't be easy. The change we're looking for never is. Generations before us have fought wars and revolutions; they've struggled and they've sacrificed; they've stood up and spoke out and marched through the streets for the opportunities that we enjoy.

And that's why the only way a black guy named Barack Obama who was born in Hawaii, and started his career on the streets of Chicago, can win this race - if you decide that you've had enough of the way things are; if you decide that this election is bigger than flag pins and sniper fire and the comments of a former pastor - bigger than the differences between what we look like or where we come from or what party we belong to.

And if you do - if you decide that this moment is about what kind of country we'll be in the next year and the next century; about how we'll provide jobs to the jobless and opportunity to those without it; about health care and good schools and a green planet; about giving our children a better world and a brighter future - then I ask you to enlist your neighbors, and knock on doors, and work your heart out from now until Tuesday. In the face of all cynicism, and doubt, and fear, I ask you to remember what makes a nation - and to believe that we can once again make this nation the land of limitless possibility and unyielding hope - the place where you can still make it if you try. Thank you, and may God Bless the United States of America.

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