



"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 (Jacksonville, FL)

Jacksonville, FL | November 03, 2008

It's great to be back on the First Coast. I have just one word for you, Florida: tomorrow.

After decades of broken politics in Washington, eight years of failed policies from George Bush, and twenty-one months of a campaign that has taken us from the rocky coast of Maine to the sunshine of California, we are one day away from change in America.

Tomorrow, you can turn the page on policies that have put the greed and irresponsibility of Wall Street before the hard work and sacrifice of folks on Main Street.

Tomorrow, you can choose policies that invest in our middle-class, create new jobs, and grow this economy so that everyone has a chance to succeed; from the CEO to the secretary and the janitor; from the factory owner to the men and women who work on its floor.

Tomorrow, you can put an end to the politics that would divide a nation just to win an election; that tries to pit region against region, city against town, Republican against Democrat; that asks us to fear at a time when we need hope.

Tomorrow, at this defining moment in history, you can give this country the change we need.

We began this journey in the depths of winter nearly two years ago, on the steps of the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois. Back then, we didn't have much money or many endorsements. We weren't given much of a chance by the polls or the pundits. We knew how steep our climb would be.

But I also knew this. I knew that the size of our challenges had outgrown the smallness of our politics. I believed that Democrats and Republicans and Americans of every political stripe were hungry for new ideas, new leadership, and a new kind of politics - one that favors common sense over ideology; one that focuses on those values and ideals we hold in common as Americans.

Most of all, I knew the American people were a decent, generous people willing to work hard and sacrifice for future generations. I was convinced that when we come together, our voices are more powerful than the most entrenched lobbyists, or the most vicious political attacks, or the full force of a status quo in Washington that wants to keep things just the way they are.

Twenty-one months later, my faith in the American people has been vindicated. That's how we've come so far and so close - because of you. That's how we'll change this country - with your help. And that's why we can't afford to slow down, sit back, or let up, one minute, or one second in the next twenty-four hours. Not now. Not when so much is at stake.

We are in the middle of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. 760,000 workers have lost their jobs this year. Businesses and families can't get credit. Home values are falling. Pensions are disappearing. It's gotten harder and harder to make the mortgage, or fill up your gas tank, or even keep the electricity on at the end of the month.

At a moment like this, the last thing we can afford is four more years of the tired, old theory that says we should give more to billionaires and big corporations and hope that prosperity trickles down to everyone else. The last thing we can afford is four more years where no one in Washington is watching anyone on Wall Street because politicians and lobbyists killed common-sense regulations. Those are the theories that got us into this mess. They haven't worked, and it's time for change. That's why I'm running for President of the United States.

Now, Senator McCain has served this country honorably. And he can point to a few moments over the

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past eight years where he has broken from George Bush. But when it comes to the economy - when it comes to the central issue of this election - the plain truth is that John McCain has stood with this President every step of the way. Voting for the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy that he once opposed. Voting for the Bush budgets that spent us into debt. Calling for less regulation twenty-one times just this year. Those are the facts.

After twenty-one months and three debates, Senator McCain still has not been able to tell the American people a single major thing he'd do differently from George Bush when it comes to the economy.

John McCain just doesn't get it. Remember what he said when he was here on September 15th?

That day, more than 5,000 jobs were lost and more than 7,000 homes were foreclosed on. The day before, former Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan said we were in a "once in a century" crisis.

And yet, despite our economic crisis, John McCain actually came here, to Veterans' Memorial Arena, and repeated something he's said at least sixteen times on this campaign. He said - and I quote - "the fundamentals of our economy are strong."

Well, Florida, you and I know that's not only fundamentally wrong, it also sums up his out-of-touch, on-your-own economic philosophy. It's a philosophy that says we should give a \$700,000 tax cut to the average Fortune 500 CEO and \$300 billion to the same Wall Street banks that got us into this mess. It's a philosophy that says we shouldn't give a penny of relief to more than 100 million middle-class Americans. And it's a philosophy that will end when I am President of the United States of America.

Look, we've tried it John McCain's way. We've tried it George Bush's way. Deep down, Senator McCain knows that, which is why his campaign said that "if we keep talking about the economy, we're going to lose." That's why I'm talking about the economy. That's why he's spent these last weeks calling me every name in the book. Because that's how you play the game in Washington. When you can't win on the strength of your ideas, you make a big election about small things.

So I expect we're going to see more of that in the next twenty-four hours. More of the slash and burn, say-anything, do-anything politics that's calculated to divide and distract; to tear us apart instead of bringing us together. Well, that's not the kind of politics the American people need right now.

Florida, at this moment, in this election, we have the chance to do more than just beat back this kind of politics in the short-term. We can end it once and for all. We can prove that the one thing more powerful than the politics of anything goes is the will and determination of the American people. We can change this country. Yes we can.

We can prove that we are more than a collection of Red States and Blue States - we are the United States of America. That's who we are, and that's the country we need to be right now.

Florida, I know these are difficult times. But I also know that we have faced difficult times before. The American story has never been about things coming easy - it's been about rising to the moment when the moment was hard. It's about rejecting fear and division for unity of purpose. That's how we've overcome war and depression. That's how we've won great struggles for civil rights and women's rights and workers' rights. And that's how we'll write the next great chapter in the American story.

Understand, if we want to meet the challenges of this moment, we need to get beyond the old ideological debates and divides between left and right. We don't need bigger government or smaller government. We need a better government - a more competent government - a government that upholds the values we hold in common as Americans.

The choice in this election isn't between tax cuts and no tax cuts. It's about whether you believe we should only reward wealth, or whether we should also reward the work and workers who create it. I will give a tax break to 95% of Americans who work every day and get taxes taken out of their paychecks every week. And I'll help pay for this by asking the folks who are making more than \$250,000 a year to go back to the tax rate they were paying in the 1990s. No matter what Senator McCain may claim, here are the facts - if you make under \$250,000, you will not see your taxes increase by a single dime - not your income taxes, not your payroll taxes, not your capital gains taxes. Nothing. Because the last thing we should do in this economy is raise taxes on the middle-class.

When it comes to jobs, the choice in this election is not between putting up a wall around America or standing by and doing nothing. The truth is, we won't be able to bring back every job that we've lost, but that doesn't mean we should follow John McCain's plan to keep promoting unfair trade agreements and keep giving tax breaks to corporations that send American jobs overseas. I will end those breaks as President, and give them to companies that create jobs here in the United States of America. We'll create two million new jobs by rebuilding our crumbling roads, and bridges, and schools. I will invest \$15 billion a year in renewable sources of energy - in wind and solar power and the next generation of biofuels. We'll invest in clean coal technology and find ways to safely harness nuclear power. And we'll create five million new energy jobs over the next decade - jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced.

When it comes to health care, we don't have to choose between a government-run health care system and the unaffordable one we have now. If you already have health insurance, the only thing that will change under my plan is that we will lower premiums. If you don't have health insurance you'll be able to



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get the same kind of health insurance that Members of Congress get for themselves. And as someone who watched his own mother spend the final months of her life arguing with insurance companies because they claimed her cancer was a pre-existing condition and didn't want to pay for treatment, I will stop insurance companies from discriminating against those who are sick and need care most. That's the change we need. That's why I'm running for President of the United States.

When it comes to giving every child a world-class education, the choice is not between more money and more reform - because our schools need both. As President, I will recruit an army of new teachers, pay them more, and give them more support. But I will also demand higher standards and more accountability from our teachers and our schools. And I will make a deal with every American who has the drive and the will but not the money to go to college: if you commit to serving your community or your country, we will make sure you can afford your tuition.

And when it comes to keeping this country safe, we don't have to choose between retreating from the world and fighting a war without end in Iraq. It's time to stop spending \$10 billion a month in Iraq while the Iraqi government sits on a huge surplus. As President, I will end this war. I will ask the Iraqi government to step up for their future, and I will finally finish the fight against bin Laden and the al Qaeda terrorists who attacked us on 9/11. I will never hesitate to defend this nation. And I will make sure our servicemen and women have the best training and equipment when they deploy into combat, and the care and benefits they have earned when they come home. That's what we owe our veterans. That's what I'll do as President.

I won't stand here and pretend that any of this will be easy - especially now. The cost of this economic crisis, and the cost of the war in Iraq, means that Washington will have to tighten its belt and put off spending on things we don't need. As President, I will go through the federal budget, line-by-line, ending programs that we don't need and making the ones we do need work better and cost less.

But as I've said from the day we began this journey, the change we need won't come from government alone. It will come from each of us doing our part in our own lives and our own communities. It will come from each of us looking after ourselves, our families, and our fellow citizens.

Yes, government must lead the way on energy independence, but each of us must do our part to make our homes and our businesses more efficient. Yes, we must put more money into our schools, but government can't be that parent who turns off the TV and makes a child do their homework. We need a return to responsibility and a return to civility. Yes, we can argue and debate our positions passionately, but all of us must summon the strength and grace to bridge our differences and unite in common effort - black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American; Democrat and Republican, young and old, rich and poor, gay and straight, disabled or not.

In this election, we cannot afford the same political games and tactics that are being used to pit us against one another and make us afraid of one another.

Despite what our opponents may claim, there are no real or fake parts of this country. There is no city or town that is more pro-America than anywhere else - we are one nation, all of us proud, all of us patriots. The men and women who serve on our battlefields may be Democrats and Republicans and Independents, but they have fought together and bled together and some died together under the same proud flag. They have not served a Red America or a Blue America - they have served the United States of America.

It won't be easy, Florida. It won't be quick. But you and I know that it is time to come together and change this country. Some of you may be cynical and fed up with politics. You have every right to be. But despite all of this, I ask of you what has been asked of Americans throughout our history.

I ask you to believe - not just in my ability to bring about change, but in yours.

I know this change is possible. Because I have seen it over the last twenty-one months. Because in this campaign, I have had the privilege to witness what is best in America. I've seen it in the faces of the men and women I've met at countless rallies and town halls across the country, men and women who speak of their struggles but also of their hopes and dreams.

I still remember the email that a woman named Robyn sent me after I met her in Ft. Lauderdale. Sometime after our event, her son nearly went into cardiac arrest, and was diagnosed with a heart condition that could only be treated with a procedure that cost tens of thousands of dollars. Her insurance company refused to pay, and their family just didn't have that kind of money.

In her email, Robyn wrote, "I ask only this of you - on the days where you feel so tired you can't think of uttering another word to the people, think of us. When those who oppose you have you down, reach deep and fight back harder."

Florida, that's what hope is.

That's what kept some of our parents and grandparents going when times were tough. What led them to say, "Maybe I can't go to college, but if I save a little bit each week, my child can. Maybe I can't have my own business but if I work really hard my child can open up one of her own." It's what led those who could not vote to say "if I march and organize, maybe my child or grandchild can run for President

someday."

That's what hope is - that thing inside that insists, despite all evidence to the contrary, that there are better days ahead. If we're willing to work for it. If we're willing to shed our fears. If we're willing to reach deep inside ourselves when we're tired, and come back fighting harder.

Don't believe for a second this election is over. Don't think for a minute that power concedes. We have to work like our future depends on it in the next twenty-four hours, because it does.

But I know this, Florida, the time for change has come. We have a righteous wind at our back.

And if in these final hours, you will knock on some doors for me, and make some calls for me, and go to barackobama.com and find out where to vote. If you will stand with me, and fight by my side, and cast your ballot for me, then I promise you this - we will not just win Florida, we will not just win this election, but together, we will change this country and we will change the world. Thank you, God bless you, and may God bless America.

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