

Speeches

Governor Romney's Remarks at the Miami-Dade Lincoln Day Dinner

Friday, Mar 09, 2007

"It is good to be back in Miami. If ever there was a place which shows the vitality and dynamism of the American spirit, this is it. One friend told me that he considers Miami to be the capital of Latin America –and it looks like a capital – bold architecture, bold people ... a truly gleaming city. Miami and Florida owe a great deal to Jeb Bush.

"Thirty years ago, Miami was a different city. And so was America. America faced the menace of global communism, stagnation, and high inflation. Jimmy Carter told us that our problems were the fault of the American people. But one man stood up and said that Carter was wrong; that the fault was in America's politicians. The answer, he said, was in conservatism – strong military, strong economy and strong families. Ronald Reagan said this: 'I have seen the future of conservatism, and it works.'

"Today, we face a new generation of challenges. I believe they are every bit as threatening as was the threat of the Cold War. And the principles of conservatism are once again the answer for America.

"As Governor, I saw the power of fiscal conservatism. The state budget was \$3 billion short. Liberals wanted to raise taxes, but I cut government instead. I eliminated and combined duplicate agencies and wasteful programs, and I balanced the budget four years in a row. One commentator said that I didn't just go after the sacred cows, I went after the whole herd. And after four years as governor, I'm proud to report that Massachusetts has fewer state workers than when I took office.

"Spending isn't the only target of Republican conservatism. I went after taxes as well. We killed a \$250 million capital gains tax increase. We made the investment tax credit permanent. We passed sales tax holidays. We gave real estate tax breaks to seniors. You guys are lucky. You don't have an income tax. That's why in each of my last three years, I submitted a budget that cut the income tax.

"It's time to bring that same kind of Republican economic conservatism to Washington, DC as well.

"We've seen an embarrassing spike in federal spending, even as Republicans held the majority in both houses. As you know, I'm proud to be the first Presidential candidate to sign a pledge

not to raise taxes. But I have another pledge. If I am elected President, I will cap non-defense discretionary spending at inflation minus one percent. That alone will save \$300 billion over 10 years. If Congress sends me a budget that exceeds the cap, I will veto that budget. I don't care if it's a Republican or Democrat Congress, I will veto that budget.

"And one more thing, I will personally lead a top to bottom review of government programs, agencies, procurement and spending. It's time to cut out the mountains of waste and inefficiency and duplication in the federal government. I've done that in business, I've done that in the Olympics, and I've done that in Massachusetts. And boy, I can't wait to get my hands on Washington.

"Democrats in Washington are itching to raise your taxes – 2011 is set to be a record breaking tax hike. Not if I'm President. I'll fight to stop the tax hike. And I'll fight for a new savings plan for middle class Americans as well – one that will grow the economy and help families at the same time. Under my plan, middle-class Americans will be able to earn thousands of dollars in dividends, interest and capital gains entirely tax-free.

"It's high time to take government apart and put it back together, but this time we will make it simpler, smarter and smaller.

"The simple truth is this: Washington is the problem. Big government, big spending Washington saps the vitality and growth of the American people and of American enterprise. It is time once again to bring Republican principles to Washington. It's time to take government apart and put it back together again – only this time, smaller, simpler and smarter.

"As Governor, I also fought to preserve our traditional values. Massachusetts became center stage for the liberal social agenda

"Ten months into my term, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court said our Constitution requires gay marriage.

"Less than a year later, scientists were trying to convince me that it's not a moral issue to clone entirely new human embryos solely for research.

"Not long after that, the Catholic Church was forced to end their adoption service because they preferred placing kids in homes with a mom and a dad, not two dads or two moms.

"I have stood in the center of the battlefield on every major social issue. I fought to preserve our traditional values and to protect the sanctity of life.

"I have been asked why we have fought so hard, for family, for marriage, for life, for religious

freedom. The answer is that I believe that the culture and values of the American people are the source of our strength as a nation. Some liberals believe that America is a great nation because we have a great government. Well, we have a great government, but that is not the source of our strength. The source of our strength is the American people – hard working, educated, risk taking, opportunity loving, God-fearing, family oriented, free American people. And when we need to call on America's strength, you don't strengthen the government, you strengthen the American people.

"You strengthen the American people by making sure their children have good schools and good healthcare. You strengthen the American people by opening the doors to opportunity. And you strengthen the American people by strengthening the American family. There is no work more important to the future of America than the work done within the four walls of the home. Today, far too many of our children are born to a home that has only one parent. My friends, I think we can all agree: every child should have a mother and a father.

"Republicans believe in strength. And American strength starts in the home.

"Republican principles are also needed in national security. Tonight, I'd like to consider two critical regions where the strength and resolve of our foreign policy is being tested: first, in the Middle East. And second, in Latin America.

"In the Middle East and through much of the world, violent Jihadists are intent on replacing moderate Islamic governments with a Caliphate. To do that, they seek the collapse of our economy and our military.

"We will defeat the violent jihad with a two-part strategy. First, an unquestionably strong military. The best ally peace has in the world is a strong America. We need more men and women in the military, better armaments, and a Strategic Defense Initiative. And there's a second aspect of our strategy: we must bring together all the civilized nations of the world in what might be called a Second Marshall Plan. Together with them, and with volunteers, businesses and NGOs, we must support moderate Muslim nations and peoples. They need public schools that are not Wahhabi schools, the rule of law, property rights, modern banking and agriculture and pro-growth economic policies. In the end, it is the Muslim people themselves who will eliminate radical jihad.

"Iraq is just one front in the war. We removed Hussein, but afterward, we were under-prepared, under-planned, under-manned, and under-managed. But walking away now or dividing the country and then walking away would have real and severe risks for America and for our troops. I support the President's troop surge for that reason. And one thing I know, we shouldn't let Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid dictate our battle strategy to the commanders in the field or to the Commander-in-Chief.

"I would like now to turn to another region, to another challenge to America. I want to talk about Latin America and about the unprecedented challenge and opportunity that confront us.

"I owe a great deal to Americans of Latin American descent. When I was starting my business, I came to Miami to find partners that would believe in me, and that would finance my enterprise. My partners were Ricardo Poma, Miguel Duenas, Pancho Soler, Frank Kardonski, and Diego Ribandinarea.

"These friends didn't just help me, they taught me. Ricardo's brother had been tortured and murdered by rebel terrorists in El Salvador. Miguel himself had been chained to a floor in Guatemala for weeks, and tortured. And their torturers were financed by Fidel Castro. I learned from these friends about the human cost when Castro has money.

"So many of you here, in profound and personal ways, know all too well the precious value of liberty – and the agonizing pain of tyranny. You have seen it your families, your friends, your neighbors, and in your own lives.

"In two years, we will mark the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth. We will also note a far more sobering occasion – the half century that will have passed since darkness descended 90 miles to our south, and a despotic reign fell over a proud people. Unless something happens to hasten the demise of a corrupt dictatorship, 50 years will have passed since Fidel and Raul Castro seized Havana, confiscated property, and tore apart families and lives.

"The year 2009 will also mark nearly three decades since Castro set tens of thousands of his countrymen adrift on the open seas, confirming in every rational mind the moral depravity of his tyranny.

"Through the Internet, TV, Radio Marti and other Miami radio stations that broadcast into Cuba, we know that word of news and events here in the U.S. gets back to Cuba. To this daily flow of truth I would like to add my message to your own. America will never back down to the Castro brothers. There will be no accommodation, no appeasement. There will be no end to our insistence that political prisoners are set free, and that Cubans themselves are finally given the privileges that today are enjoyed only by Castro's cronies, and by foreign tourists. After 50 years, with so much suffering, so much sacrifice, we will not relent until the day when the Castro brothers meet their ignominious end and their history is written among the world's most reviled despots, tyrants and frauds.

"As President, I will stand side-by-side with the members of this community in fighting the menace of the Cuban monsters.

"I will work with Mel Martinez – who at age the age of 15 came to Orlando from his native Sagua la Grande as part of 'Operation Pedro Pan.' Mel lived with foster families who generously opened their homes to him until he was reunited with his family a few years later – and the rest, as they say, is history. I will stand side by side with your Congressional leaders – Lincoln and Mario Diaz-Balart, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. And I will work with leading exiles like Armando Perez-Roura, whose life and whose continued commitment to Cuban freedom is nothing short of inspiring. Also, let me say, I know that many of you tonight are mourning the passing of Agustin Tamargo, a local legend in Spanish radio. I offer my deepest condolences to his wife, their seven children and the entire community on the loss of a friend and leader.

"I said at the outset that the threat in Latin America is unprecedented. I say that because the Castros have a second tyrant and he has great wealth, from oil. We must stand just as firm against caudillos like Hugo Chavez, tutored by Fidel Castro. Chavez and Castro are brothers in blood, intent on personal gratification at the expense of their people. Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro have stolen the phrase – 'Patria o muerte, venceremos.' This phrase should not be used by dictators, but by liberators.

"There are two spheres of influence in the Western Hemisphere. One is dark, bellicose and spreads misery by denying people basic freedoms; the other shines like a powerful light, is peaceful and wants only for its people to live in liberty and prosper.

"It is time for the United States to adopt a Latin American strategy that will strengthen human rights and freedom, that will advance our own interests, and that will weaken the threat of the Castros and Chavez. I propose seven elements in this strategy.

"First, we must continue to isolate Castro with economic and diplomatic sanctions.

"Second, we must help our friends. Foreign aid and foreign investments must be focused on those who stand alongside us.

"Third, we must once again act to inform public opinion in Latin America. We should use our world renowned media and communications savvy to spread the truth about American freedom, and Castro tyranny.

"Fourth, we must improve our economic ties. The President has negotiated vital free trade agreements with Latin American neighbors like Peru, Columbia and Panama, but some Democrats in Congress are so beholden to their labor bosses that they have refused to confirm them. It is time to put the interests of humanity and of the nation first.

"Fifth, we must rebuild relationships of respect and trust and friendship. Our Latin American friends must always feel welcome in the White House. And congratulations are in order to the President for his travels this week to Latin America.

"Sixth, as we finally and belatedly secure the border and solve the problem of illegal immigration, we must reaffirm our appreciation of legal immigration. We are a nation of immigrants and refugees, and they have contributed a great deal to our culture of hard work, entrepreneurship, faith in God, love of family, and respect for human life.

"And finally, we must never again ignore Latin America. It is a great deal easier to prevent a crisis than to end one. Since the end of the Cold War and since the terror of 9/11, America has become so preoccupied with other regions that we have forgotten our friends in our own hemisphere. And we have ignored the potential threat. Consider with concern the visit here from Ahmadinejad, the aspiring nuclear terrorist and genocidist.

"As we face these challenges, there is one more principle we must remember. America must remain the world's military superpower.

"It is the strength of our military, the strength of our families, the strength of the American people, the strength of the many Americans who trace their roots to the soil of Cuba and Latin America, it is all this strength that gives me such confidence that someday, soon, the people of Cuba will be free. I look forward to the day when the stain of Castro is rinsed from the Cuban soil, when the Cuban people can stand with their American brothers and sisters and say these words - Libertad, Libertad, Libertad."

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