



JOIN THE CAMPAIGN TO CHANGE AMERICA

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery: "To Build One America, End the Game"

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Hanover, New Hampshire
August 23, 2007

This election is unlike any we have faced before. The stakes are higher. And the challenges we face as a nation are greater than at any time in memory.

We as a nation must choose whether to do what America has always done in times like these -- change direction and move boldly into the future for the sake of our children, if not for ourselves, or wander in the same stale direction we have traveled in our recent past.

The choice we must make is as important as it is clear.

It is a choice between looking back and looking forward.

A choice between the way we've always done it and the way we could do it if we dared.

A choice between corporate power and the power of democracy.

Between a corrupt and corroded system and a government that works for us again.

It is caution versus courage. Old versus new. Calculation versus principle.

It is the establishment elites versus the American people.

It is a choice between the failed compromises of the past and the bright possibilities of our future. Between resigning ourselves to Two Americas or fighting for the One America we all believe in.

As always, at these moments, the choice we make is not for us, but for our children and our great country. And this time, like no other time, the consequences for our children are truly profound.

Will we halt global warming, protect our environment and humanity from the cataclysmic consequences of inaction and leave our children a livable world rich in the resources that were left to us?

Will we prevail against terrorism by stopping those who would harm us and winning over the minds of those who have yet to take sides so that instead of an ever more dangerous and war-torn world, our children live in a nation that is safe, strong and once again viewed throughout the world as a truly moral leader?

Will corporate greed be all we value as we move further into the global economy, or will we put workers and families first, so that all jobs pay fair wages, every American has health care and corporate profits work for democracy and not the other way around?

Will we face our future as individuals, each of us asking, "What's in it for me?" Or will we return to the central value that makes our nation great? That we are all in this together and each of us has a responsibility to the common good.

The choices we make will determine not just the quality of life our children will inherit, but the fate of the world we leave behind.

To succeed for our children where we have too often failed for ourselves, we must choose a new course. Those wedded to the policies of the 70s, 80s, or 90s are wedded to the past -- ideas and policies that are tired, shop worn and obsolete. We will find no answers there.

But small thinking and outdated answers aren't the only problems with a vision for the future that is rooted in nostalgia. The trouble with nostalgia is that you tend to remember what you liked and forget what you didn't. It's not just that the answers of the past aren't up to the job today, it's that the system that produced them was corrupt -- and still is. It's

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controlled by big corporations, the lobbyists they hire to protect their bottom line and the politicians who curry their favor and carry their water. And it's perpetuated by a media that too often fawns over the establishment, but fails to seriously cover the challenges we face or the solutions being proposed. This is the game of American politics and in this game, the interests of regular Americans don't stand a chance.

Real change starts with being honest -- the system in Washington is rigged and our government is broken. It's rigged by greedy corporate powers to protect corporate profits. It's rigged by the very wealthy to ensure they become even wealthier. At the end of the day, it's rigged by all those who benefit from the established order of things. For them, more of the same means more money and more power. They'll do anything they can to keep things just the way they are -- not for the country, but for themselves.

Politicians who care more about their careers than their constituents go along to get elected. They make easy promises to voters instead of challenging them to take responsibility for our country. And then they compromise even those promises to keep the lobbyists happy and the contributions coming.

Instead of serving the people and the nation, too many play the parlor game of Washington -- trading favors and campaign money, influencing votes and compromising legislation. It's a game that never ends, but every American knows -- it's time to end the game.

And it's time for the Democratic Party -- the party of the people -- to end it.

The choice for our party could not be more clear. We cannot replace a group of corporate Republicans with a group of corporate Democrats, just swapping the Washington insiders of one party for the Washington insiders of the other.

The American people deserve to know that their presidency is not for sale, the Lincoln Bedroom is not for rent, and lobbyist money can no longer influence policy in the House or the Senate.

It's time to end the game. It's time to tell the big corporations and the lobbyists who have been running things for too long that their time is over. It's time to challenge politicians to put the American people's interests ahead of their own calculated political interests, to look the lobbyists in the eye and just say no.

And it's time for the American people to take responsibility for our government -- for in our democracy it is truly ours. If we have come to mistrust and question it, it is because we were not vigilant against the forces that have taken it from us. That their game has played on for so long is the fault of each of us -- ending the game and returning government of the people to the people is the responsibility of all of us.

But cleaning up Washington isn't enough. If we are going to meet the challenges we face and prevail over them, two principles must guide us -- yes, we must end the Washington game, but we must also think as big as the challenges we face. Our ideas must be bold enough to succeed and our government must be free to enact them without compromising principle or sacrificing results.

One without the other isn't good enough. All the big ideas in the world won't make a difference if they have to go through this broken system that remains controlled by big business and their lobbyists. And if we fix the system, but aren't honest with the American people about the scope of our challenges and what's required of each of us to meet them, then we'll be left with the baby steps and incremental measures that are Washington's poor excuse for progress.

As Bobby Kennedy said, "If we fail to dare, if we do not try, the next generation will harvest the fruit of our indifference; a world we did not want, a world we did not choose, but a world we could have made better by caring more for the results of our labors."

But if we do both -- if we have the courage to offer real change and the determination to change Washington -- then we will build the One America we dream of, where every man, woman and child is blessed with the same, great opportunity and held to the same, just rules.

For more than 20 years, Democrats have talked about universal health care. And for more than 20 years, we've gotten nowhere, because lobbyists for the big insurance companies, drug companies and HMOs spent millions to block real reform. Instead, they've grudgingly allowed incremental measures that do nothing but tinker around the edges -- or worse, they've hijacked reform to improve their own bottom line. So today, more Americans go without health care than ever before. Instead of prescription drug reform that brought down the cost of drugs, the lobbyists for the big drug companies got us a prescription drug bill that boosts drug company profits but doesn't cut patient costs.

I have a bold plan to finally guarantee true universal health care for every single American and cut health care costs for everyone. My plan will require everyone -- business, government and individuals -- to contribute something to reach universal coverage. And I

Education Roundtable

Oct 23, 2007
Merrimack, N.H.

Community Meeting with John Edwards

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Glenwood, Iowa

Community Meeting with John Edwards

Oct 24, 2007
Sidney, Iowa

Community Meeting with John Edwards

Oct 24, 2007
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am honest about the cost: \$90 to \$120 billion a year, and I'll pay for it by repealing the Bush tax cuts for families above \$200,000. If we end the game in Washington, we can finally have a health care system that treats the health of all our people with equal worth.

Dependence on foreign oil is smothering our economy and choking our environment. Everybody knows it -- politicians from both parties have been calling for energy independence for 30 years. So what did the oilmen in the White House do? They handed the keys to the corridors of government over to the lobbyists for the big oil companies and let them literally write the energy bill. Now, gas prices are through the roof, carbon emissions are unchecked, and global warming is likely getting worse.

When I am president, we will cap greenhouse gas pollution and ratchet it down every year. We will avoid mistakes like nuclear power and liquid coal. We will invest in clean renewable energies generated in America and create a new era in efficient cars, made by union members here at home.

And look at our economic policies -- from top to bottom, they're a twisted reflection of American values. Instead of expanding opportunity for all and preventing special privileges for any, they hoard opportunity and protect special privileges for the very few at the very top.

Trade policy is all about corporate profits for big multinationals and not at all about lifting workers' wages or creating American jobs. The tax code provides breaks for hedge fund managers -- amazingly, even Democrats backed down from asking them to pay their fair share when Wall Street lobbyists put the pressure on. By the time a decade of corporate opposition to a minimal increase in the minimum wage is overcome, even its own supporters admit that the increase isn't enough -- so another decade of corporate opposition begins anew, and workers lose again.

It's time we put our economy back in line with our values. Let's restore fairness to our tax code by insisting on a simple principle -- nobody in the middle class should pay higher taxes on the money they make from hard work than the wealthiest pay on the money they make from their investments. Let's restore opportunity and responsibility to our trade policy by requiring that every new trade deal puts workers and wages first. Let's reward work by strengthening unions, raising the minimum wage, cutting taxes on working families and with a national commitment to end poverty within a generation.

And let's support our troops and end this war in Iraq. We should immediately withdraw 40-50,000 combat troops immediately and have the rest out in about a year. And when President Bush refuses to act, Congress should use its funding power to force him to act.

None of this will be easy, but all of it is possible.

I know. I've been doing it my entire life.

I am the son of Wallace and Bobbie Edwards. My father had to borrow \$50 to bring me and my mother home from the hospital. I am here today because, like all the people my father worked with in the mill, my parents got up every day believing in the promise of America, and they worked hard -- no matter what obstacles were thrown against them -- to give me the chance for a better life.

That's the promise at the heart of the American Dream. What matters to our generation is of little consequence -- in America what has always mattered most is the consequences for our children and their children after them. And no amount of power or money gives anyone the right to break that promise with our future.

I have stood with ordinary Americans at the most difficult times in their lives, when all the power of corporate America was arrayed against them. I have walked into courtrooms alone to face an army of corporate lawyers with all the money in the world. I have walked off the Senate elevator and been besieged by an army of corporate lobbyists. And I have beaten them over and over again.

But let me tell you one thing I have learned from my experience -- you cannot deal with them on their terms. You cannot play by their rules, sit at their table, or give them a seat at yours. They will not give up their power -- you have to take it from them.

We cannot triangulate our way to real change. We cannot compromise our way to real change. But we can lead to real change. And we can start today.

Nearly ten years ago, I made the decision that I would never take a dime from a Washington lobbyist -- I wasn't going to work for them, and I didn't want their money.

Because in the courtroom, when you present your case to the jury, you can offer facts and evidence, you can argue your heart out -- and I have -- but the one thing you can't do, is pay the jury. We call that a bribe. But in Washington when an oil lobbyist gives money to office holders to influence our energy policy, they call it politics. That's exactly what's wrong with this system.

Money flies like lightning between corporations, lobbyists, and politicians. We need full

public financing to reform the system once and for all. But we don't need to wait to reform our party. Two weeks ago, I called on all Democrats to reject contributions from federal lobbyists. To tell them -- we know that you give money to influence politicians on behalf of your corporate clients. Well, we're not going to take it anymore. Your money's no good here.

I repeat that challenge today. Let's show America exactly whose side we're on. We can reform our party and truly be the party of the people. And we can expose for all time who the Republicans in Washington are really working for.

There are 60 lobbyists in Washington for every member of Congress. The big corporations don't need another president that looks out for them -- they've got all the power they need. I want to be the people's president.

A few weeks ago I met a man named James Lowe in Wise, Virginia. James spent the first fifty years of his life without a voice -- literally without a voice -- because he didn't have health care. All he needed was a simple operation to fix a cleft palate. That a man in the richest country in the world could go unable to speak for 50 years because he couldn't pay for a \$3,000 operation is something that should outrage every American. We are better than that. America is better than that.

It's a stark reminder of our broken political system that leaves millions of Americans without a voice in their government -- a government that is supposed to work for them.

But it doesn't have to be that way. And we can change it together.

We must think big and end the game.

It's not about being ready to grab the reigns of establishment Washington and stand on the side of corporate elites. If it is, there are plenty who will do a better job than me at protecting the status quo, and preserving the policies and politics of the past.

It's about being ready to lift our country up, reform our party, and remake our government in line with the values of our people. It's about real change and a new vision that meets the challenges of the future and inspires the American people to work together for the common good.

We're all angry at what George Bush has done to our country. But with courage and conviction, with an unblinking eye on the future we believe in and an unbending knee on the road to get there, not only can we undo the damage, we can transform the world. No matter what life has thrown at us, Elizabeth and I have always chosen to be optimistic about the future -- and determined to make a difference as we strive toward it everyday.

I carry the promise of America in my heart, where my parents placed it. Because of them, I believe in people, hard work and the American Dream. I believe the future belongs to us if we only dare to seize it. And I believe to seize it, we must blaze a new path, firmly grounded in the values that first made America great. We must cast aside the established ways of Washington and replace them with the timeless values of the American people. We must end the game controlled by a privileged few and restore the promise that America owes to us all.

On that new path lies One America, where possibility is unbound and opportunity is the birthright of every American. Where the voices of the people are heard again in the halls of government, and government heeds their call. One America, where every individual takes responsibility for our common good, and the chance to reach one's God-given potential is every individual's common right.

I am the son of Wallace and Bobbie Edwards.

And I believe in the promise of America.

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