



JOIN THE CAMPAIGN TO CHANGE AMERICA

Veterans' Day Remarks by Senator John Edwards

Nov 11, 2007

State Historical Building - Des Moines, Iowa

We set aside a few days each year in honor of America and those ideals that make us Americans - independence, equality, thanks for the blessings of our inheritance. But this weekend one day stands apart - although it began that way, it no longer commemorates a specific event, it is not dedicated to any one individual - instead it honors the sacrifice of millions, across all the generations of America.

Since George Washington's Continental Army fought to create this nation, millions of men and women have put on America's uniform to defend, protect and carry the cause of freedom for all humanity. With valor and sacrifice, through hardship and peril, they have changed the course of history for our nation and the world. Let us begin today with a moment of silent prayer for all those who have served in our armed forces ever since there has been an idea and a place called America. For our veterans, join me in a prayer of thanks.

Thank you.

Veterans Day is a time to remember our men and women in uniform who have served and sacrificed and risked for our nation - and the too many, far too many who have lost life, blood, and limb so that we could live free, and enjoy our rights and liberties. As many of you know, Elizabeth comes from a military family - her father Vincent was a Navy pilot for more than 30 years - a real hero, who flew reconnaissance missions over China and North Korea and won the Distinguished Flying Cross. So we know personally how sacred this day is for all who have served and are serving today.

But this day is about more than remembering and honoring our veterans. It is a day to reflect on what it means to be American. To consider not just the sacrifices of those who serve in uniform, but what their sacrifices demand of each of us.

It is a day to look at the ideal of America and reflect on our own obligation and responsibility to keep that ideal alive. That our veterans have kept faith there can be no doubt. Today we must ask ourselves if we have done the same.

For twenty generations, Americans have kept the one moral commandment that makes us American - to pass a better future on to our children than we received.

My father had to borrow \$50 to bring me home from the hospital. Home was a small house in the mill village owned by the mill where my father worked. 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.

But everywhere I travel today - in every corner of America - I hear uncertainty - a real concern that we could be the first generation of Americans that fails to leave our children a better future than our parents left us.

To be the first generation of Americans to fail that commandment would be an abomination.

This is the great moral test of our generation - to ensure that we give our children a better future than we inherited, just as our parents did for us.

It is not surprising people are worried that the promise of America is at risk - the warning signs are everywhere.

We see the gap between those at the very top and everyone else grow wider and wider every day.

Thirty-seven million Americans - citizens of the richest country on earth - still live in poverty.

Forty-seven million Americans live without health care.

HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

2 SPREAD THE WORD

3 CONTRIBUTE

4 Grassroots FUNDRAISING TODAY

5 JOIN ONE COHORT VOLUNTEER LOCALLY!



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Town Hall Meeting with John Edwards
Jan 16, 2008
Reno, Nevada

Town Hall Meeting with John Edwards
Jan 16, 2008
Las Vegas, Nevada

Lobbyists and corporate power runs rampant in Washington, subverting our government to its own ends - NAFTA-style trade deals pad corporate profits but cost millions of American jobs; so-called prescription drug reform benefits drug companies, not patients; tax breaks and loopholes are showered on the very wealthiest while working Americans struggle to get by.

George Washington led the Continental Army that enabled the creation of our nation - his name symbolizes the greatness of America. And now, the city that bears his name symbolizes what is wrong with America.

Last century, we had a president who reminded us that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. Now we have a president who says be afraid, be very afraid. He used fear to sell us a war we did not need to fight. He uses fear to trample over our civil liberties and deface the Bill of Rights.

But the blame for all of this does not lie only with President Bush. Too many politicians - at worst, without conviction, or at best, without courage - have stood by and let all of this happen.

Here's the hard truth. It's not just politicians. It's not just Republicans or Democrats or even just Washington. It's all of us. This is *our* democracy - if it is failing us, we have nowhere to look but to ourselves.

But here's another, greater truth - in America, true power does not lie in the arms of a deceitful president, cynical politicians, or calculating insiders, it lies with all of us.

This *is* our democracy - to reclaim it, we need only look to ourselves.

Of course, cleaning up Washington won't solve everything by itself - Washington is the problem that stops us from dealing with our problems. If we are going to meet the challenges we face and prevail over them, we must fix our broken system and we must 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.

But if we do both - if we have the courage to offer real change and the determination to change Washington - then we will meet the great moral test of our generation. We will leave our children a greater America - One America, where every man, woman and child is blessed with the same, great opportunity and held to the same, just rules.

Last night, I called on Iowans and Americans to join together and meet the moral test of our generation, which begins by reclaiming our democracy. Today, I am laying out my Plan to Build One America. Over the course of the last year, I have offered detailed, honest plans and specific, forthright proposals. But I don't want anyone in Iowa to have to take my word for it, so I've gone and put them all on paper. Over the next few weeks, we'll be delivering more than 100,000 copies of this book to Iowa caucus-goers. And if you want one, but don't get one, just let our campaign know.

Iowans have a right to know where I stand and what I'll do as president. You are the guardians of what kind of president we'll have, and whether America meets the great challenges we face. I'm not afraid to stand here and answer your tough questions and tell you where I stand.

Now, it's about 80 pages long, so I\xE2\x80\x99m not going to read the whole thing, but here's the big picture. I believe there are four broad areas we must tackle.

First, we need to stand up for working and middle class families.

We need, as a nation, to invest in fighting poverty, strengthening workers right to organize, and smarter and safer trade, if we are to build a stronger and larger middle class.

We need to pass universal health care. Achieving universal health care will help everyone - by covering the 47 million Americans who lack health care - and bringing more choices, more security, lower costs, and better care to the rest of us. But it is only going to happen if we fight for it and share responsibility for getting there. Businesses and the government must sacrifice and pay their fair share.

The second thing we need to do restore America's moral leadership around the world,

My Vote, My Voice Deadline

Jan 16, 2008
National

Town Hall Meeting with John Edwards

Jan 17, 2008
Henderson, Nevada

Rally with John Edwards in Los Angeles

Jan 17, 2008
Los Angeles, Calif.

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which starts with ending the war in Iraq. We need a new path to stop terrorism that brings nations together in a counter-terrorism alliance - we become stronger and safer, not weaker, when we work with the world. And, we need to stand up, together, and tell this Congress that we elected them to end the war in Iraq and bring our brave men and women home.

The third thing we need to do is to invest in a better future for our children.

We need to invest in improving our schools and making college affordable so that we can compete in the 21st century.

And we need to face what may be the great challenge of this generation: addressing global warming. For the sake of our national and domestic security, we need a historic shift in how we make and use energy. We need to cut our emissions of greenhouse gases by 80 percent by 2050. We may face higher energy bills as we make this transition. But the payoff is great - a cleaner, safer world and a new energy economy with more than a million new jobs.

Fourth, we need to create opportunity for all - the promise of America is a promise made to every American - black, white; gay, straight; healthy, sick; working, retired; rich, poor; born, bred, or just arrived. Every man, woman, and child in this country deserves the same, great chance. And I believe there is a sacred contract between our country and our veterans and armed forces. We have a moral obligation to take care of them and their families.

Those who fought to create this nation did not liberate this ground for freedom and democracy so that some two centuries later, on our watch, government of the people would become government of the corporate interests.

Those who gave their lives at Gettysburg and Antietam in the name of Union and equality did not die for a nation, on our watch, still divided by opportunity and justice.

Those who fell at Guadalcanal and at Normandy to save the world from tyranny did not perish to let corruption seep into our government slowly and persistently over decades almost unnoticed until, on our watch, it threatens the lifeblood of our democracy.

Those who fell in Vietnam - who did what their leaders asked of them long after those leaders knew it was a mistake - and whose valor, bravery and sacrifice was all the harder to bear because they suffered their wounds without the full support of the American people - did not fall so that, on our watch, we would tolerate leaders who once more would refuse to admit their mistakes, but instead press on with a war that should have ended a long time ago.

Those who died defending freedom and the rights of Americans for all time did not die so that, on our watch, we would let the president take those rights away. They did not die for a 21st century America where poverty is still endemic, one of every three African-American children has no health care, and one in four homeless people are veterans.

All those who have served our nation from Valley Forge to Baghdad have risked everything they have and everything they are - not so the torch that Americans pass from one generation to the next - the torch of a better America - might be dropped, but to keep it burning strong.

In their name, we must no longer turn our heads. We must no longer live in vague acknowledgment of the corruption and incompetence that threatens the promise of our children's future while saying to ourselves, the problem's just too big, there's nothing we can do about it.

I stand before you today to say - that is not good enough. There is something we can do. Our founders placed the ultimate power in our hands - ours alone. When we take its reins, it is irresistible. If someone tells you there is nothing we can do, you tell them the ghost of generations proves them wrong - there is nothing we cannot do.

It will not be easy, but we are Americans - we never take the easy way out. So hear this - it is a call to your conscience and your heart. A call not for me, but for them. For those who have served. For those who will. For our children, their children, and their children after them.

Let us stand up and give everything we have as all those before us have done.

In their name, let the world know that the fight for a greater America begins today. For universal health care, ending poverty, honoring our veterans, reclaiming our democracy, and ending the war in Iraq. For opportunity, equality, justice, and the idea of America.

This is the moral test of our generation. We can meet it. We will meet it. Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.