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DNC Winter Meeting - Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

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Feb 2, 2007

Washington, D.C.
February 2, 2007

Thank you.

We're all here together – but why are we here?

Why are we here?

We are here because somewhere in America an eight-year old girl goes to sleep hungry, a little girl who ought to be drawing pictures and learning multiplication cries herself to sleep, praying that her father, who has been out of work for two years, will get a job again. It doesn't have to be that way.

We are here because somewhere in America, a hotel housekeeper walks a picket line with her union brothers and sisters fighting for decent health care benefits during the day and works the late-shift at a diner at night so that she and her family can live a decent life and so her boy can go to college and have choices she never had. And somewhere a young man folds a college acceptance letter and puts it in his drawer because even with his part-time job and his mother's second job, he knows he cannot afford to go. It doesn't have to be that way.

We are here because somewhere in America a mother wipes her hand on a dishcloth to go answer a knock on her door ... and opens it to find an army chaplain and an officer standing there with solemn faces and her boy's name – her patriotic son who enlisted after September 11 – on their lips. It doesn't have to be that way.

We are here because somewhere in the world, a 5-year old boy in a refugee camp is bending under the weight of his 2-year old sister. His family massacred, he carries his remaining sister everywhere, and sleeps with his arms wrapped tightly around her, knowing that tomorrow he will have to do the same thing, and again the next day and the day after that because she is all the family he has now. It doesn't have to be that way.

We are here because somewhere in America a father comes home from the second shift and feels a raging fever on the brow of his sleeping daughter as he kisses her goodnight. And now, bone-weary and worried, he cradles that child in his arms at the emergency room, because there is nowhere else for him to go. It doesn't have to be that way.

They are why we are here. Because everywhere in America, people are counting on us to stand up for them.

And so I ask you, will you stand up for that tired father forced into emergency rooms to get health care for his little girl?

Will you stand up for the brave young boy in the refugee camp?

Will you stand up for the working men and women in our labor movement who have to fight for decent working conditions and living wages?

Will you stand up for the young man who knows that education is his way out of the cycle of poverty and yet it seems beyond his grasp?

Will you stand up for that hungry eight-year old girl so she doesn't give up on her life before it's even begun?

Will you stand up for all the American families whose loved ones are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Will you stand up?

HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION

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FROM THE BLOG

New Additions!

Enough is Enough

From the States: In Nevada, Carpenters Cheer Edwards

Watch It!: John Edwards on Real Time with Bill Maher

Maine Congressman Mike Michaud Endorses John Edwards

UPCOMING EVENTS

California Women's Conference
Oct 23, 2007
Long Beach, Calif.

Will you stand up for America?

Because if we don't stand up, who will?

If we don't speak out, who will?

Forty years ago, speaking in protest against the war in Vietnam on the eve of its escalation, the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King said there comes a time when silence is betrayal. Silence is betrayal.

That time has come again. We cannot stand silent.

They have to hear you. Can they hear you?

I believe it is a betrayal not to speak out against the escalation of the war our nation is engaged in today, in Iraq.

It is a betrayal for this President to send more troops into harm's way when we know it will not succeed in bringing stability to the region.

And it is not right by our silence to enable this President to escalate the war in Iraq. And we must not delude ourselves: our silence enables this President to escalate the war.

It is a betrayal not to stop the President's plan when we have the responsibility, the power and the actual tools to prevent it.

Being satisfied with non-binding resolutions we know this President will ignore is a betrayal. And shutting down debate in the Senate on this issue is worse than a betrayal. It's an outright denial of the people's will.

And one more thing, while I'm at it.

You described yourself as "the decider." I have news for you. The American people are the real "deciders," Mr. President. And they are saying, "You have had your chance."

Americans are speaking out. And our leaders must do no less.

You must stand up now against George Bush's escalation of the war in Iraq. George Bush is counting on us not to stand up, not to fight against this escalation with everything we have. George Bush is counting on a Democratic Party that will not press for what we know is right.

Silence is betrayal.

Opposing this escalation with all the vigor and tools we have is a test of our political courage. And you'd better believe that George Bush, Dick Cheney and Karl Rove are betting that we don't have that courage.

They don't think we have it in us. They're counting on their opponents to be weak, and political, and careful.

This is not the time for political calculation. This is the time for political courage. Stand up.

Being honest and changing course in Iraq is the first step in restoring America's ability to provide moral leadership throughout the world. And make no mistake: America must lead. We are the pre-eminent, stabilizing power in the world. If we don't stand up, who will?

This is the time for political courage – not only when it comes to speaking out against Iraq, but also about the challenges we face here at home.

Because, when it comes to 37 million Americans living in poverty, silence is betrayal.

One in every five children – count them, one in every five American children – live in poverty, here on the richest nation on the planet. It doesn't have to be that way.

The causes of poverty are complex, entrenched, and powerful. And our will to address them and restore the promises of equality and social justice must be just as strong. Are you strong enough? Will you stand up to end poverty in America? It means addressing education, jobs, health care, housing, predatory lending, and personal responsibility. The fight will be long and it will not be easy. Are you ready? Will you use your voice against poverty, or will you stand silent? Stand up. Stand up to eradicate poverty in America.

When it comes to 47 million Americans without health care, silence is betrayal.

The 47 million are silent victims of a health care system gone wrong, where policies are driven by profits not patient care. We have to stop letting the health insurance companies and the big pharmaceutical concerns decide our nation's health care policy. We have to give the silent victims, who stand in line at free clinics and use the expired medicines of friends and neighbors, we have to give them the dignity of universal health care.

And while we're at it, we have to stop using words like "access to health care" when we

Education Roundtable

Oct 23, 2007
Merrimack, N.H.

Community Meeting with John Edwards

Oct 24, 2007
Glenwood, Iowa

Community Meeting with John Edwards

Oct 24, 2007
Sidney, Iowa

Community Meeting with John Edwards

Oct 24, 2007
Shenandoah, Iowa

NEWS HEADLINES

Edwards: Latest War Funding Request Continues Failed Iraq Strategy, Congress Must Demand Timeline For Withdrawal

Edwards Campaign Statement on Clinton's Iowa Mailer Defending Iran Vote

Edwards Discusses Plan to Connect Hard-Working Americans to Smart Training for Good-Paying, Union Jobs

At California SEIU Event, Edwards Vows To Elect Super-Majorities In House And Senate

Edwards Warns Against Rewriting Rules That Prevent Excessive Media Consolidation

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know with certainty those words mean something less than universal care. Who are you willing to leave behind without the care he needs? Which family? Which child?

We need a truly universal solution, and we need it now.

Will you stand up for universal health insurance in America?

And it's time we stood up for an energy policy that's not dictated by the profit margins of Big Oil -- and an environmental policy that's not promoted by or regulated by polluters. Today, not tomorrow, or in the next decade or in the next generation. Today, our planet is at risk, and here, again, silence is betrayal.

So, will you speak out? Will you stand up?

These are the great moral imperatives of our time. And by breaking the silence we are not breaking faith with our flag or our forefathers or our brave young men and women in uniform. We are keeping faith with America.

Because we are better than this. We are better than this.

We should be the bright light, the beacon for all the world.

We are not the country of the Superdome in New Orleans after Katrina;

We are not the country of Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo;

We are not the country of secret surveillance and government behind closed doors.

We are Americans, and we're better than that.

And we are Democrats, the party of action -- not reaction. We are Democrats, the party of principle -- not appeasement. The time for half-measures, empty promises, and sweet rhetoric is gone. Now is the time for courage, decisiveness and moral leadership.

It's time to stand up for the promise of America again -- and for the principle that every American matters, no matter where you come from, or what color your skin is, or how much money you have in your pocket.

Let's stand up for the working people whose labor made this country great. America was built by men and women who worked with their hands. And organized labor has fought for and made better the lives of every working man and woman, by giving them a voice -- labor never stands silent where wrongs need to be righted. Will you stand with them? It is time we acknowledged that it is organized labor, which has protected the American worker against mistreatment by corporate America. I am proud to stand beside organized labor? Will you stand with them, too? Will you walk with them and march with them?

We know one thing for sure: it is time to be patriotic about something other than war. It is time to do what you know is right and to speak out against what you know is wrong.

Not tomorrow. Now. Speak out now, take action now.

We don't have to wait to see if someone keeps the promises of a 2008 campaign. In fact, the transformational change this country needs cannot wait until January 2009.

Tomorrow begins today. And our obligation to act starts right here, right now.

Because somewhere in America, because everywhere in America, people are counting on us to stand by them and to fight alongside them for what we know in our hearts is right.

So let's stand up together. We have always been the party of promise who stood with the working man and woman, the party of hope who stood with the needy, the party of compassion who stood with the young and the old and the frail. It is who we are.

In times like these, we don't need to redefine the Democratic Party; we need to reclaim the Democratic Party.

Thank you, God bless you and God bless this great country.

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