



"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 (Sarasota, FL)

Sarasota, FL | October 30, 2008

Florida, I have just two words for you: five days.

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 five days away from change in America.

In five days, 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.

In five days, 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.

In five days, 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.

In five days, 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, and 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 for one day, one minute, or one second in this last week. 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.

And just today, we learned that the GDP, or Gross Domestic Product - a key indicator economists use to measure the health of our economy - has actually fallen for the first time this year. That means we're producing less and selling less - so our economy is actually shrinking. And we saw the largest decline in consumer spending in 28 years as wages failed to keep up with the rising cost of living, and folks have been watching every penny and tightening their belts.

Now, this didn't happen by accident. Our falling GDP is a direct result of eight years of the trickle down, Wall Street first/Main Street last policies that have driven our economy into a ditch.

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And the central question in this election is this: what will our next President do to take us in a different direction?

Well, Florida, if you want to know where Senator McCain will drive this economy, just look in the rearview mirror. Because when it comes to our economic policies, John McCain has stood with President Bush every step of the way. Voting for the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy that he once opposed. Voting for the Bush budgets that sent us into debt. Calling for less regulation twenty-one times just this year. In fact, 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.

And you've got to ask yourself, after nine straight months of job losses and the largest drop in home values on record, with wages lower than they've been in a decade, why would we keep on driving down this dead end street?

Folks who can't pay their medical bills, or send their kids to college, or save for retirement can't afford to take a back seat to CEOs and Wall Street banks for four more years.

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.

Look, the biggest gamble we can take is embracing the same old Bush-McCain policies that have failed us for the last eight years.

It's not change when John McCain wants to give a \$700,000 tax cut to the average Fortune 500 CEO. It's not change when he wants to give \$200 billion to the biggest corporations or \$4 billion to the oil companies or \$300 billion to the same Wall Street banks that got us into this mess. It's not change when he comes up with a tax plan that doesn't give a penny of relief to more than 100 million middle-class Americans. That's not change.

The average working family is \$2,000 dollars poorer now than when George Bush took office. When Bill Clinton was president, the average wages and incomes went up \$7,500 dollars. So I've got an economic plan that is similar to Bill Clinton's and Senator McCain's got an economic plan similar to George Bush's. Look and see what works and what doesn't.

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 he's spending these last weeks calling me every name in the book. Because that's how you play the game in Washington. If you don't have a record to run on, then you paint your opponent as someone people should run away from. You make a big election about small things.

Florida, we are here to say "Not this time. Not this year. Not when so much is at stake." Senator McCain might be worried about losing an election, but I'm worried about Americans who are losing their homes, and their jobs, and their life savings. I can take one more week of John McCain's attacks, but this country can't take four more years of the same old politics and the same failed policies. It's time for something new.

The question in this election is not "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" We know the answer to that. The real question is, "Will this country be better off four years from now?"

I know these are difficult times for America. 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

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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 emerge from this crisis stronger and more prosperous than we were before - as one nation; as one people. We just need a new direction. We need a new politics.

Understand, if we want get through this crisis, 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.

We don't have to choose between letting our financial system run wild, and stifling growth and innovation. As President, I will ensure that the financial rescue plan Congress passed helps stop foreclosures and protects your money instead of enriching CEOs. And I will put in place the common-sense regulations I've been calling for throughout this campaign so that Wall Street can never cause a crisis like this again. That's the change we need.

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. I'll eliminate income taxes for seniors making under \$50,000 and give homeowners and working parents more of a break. 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 allowing every job to disappear overseas. 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 giving tax breaks to corporations that send American jobs overseas and promoting unfair trade agreements. I will end those breaks as President, and I will give American businesses a \$3,000 tax credit for every job they create right here in the United States of America. I'll eliminate capital gains taxes for small businesses and start-up companies that are the engine of job creation in this country. We'll create two million new jobs by rebuilding our crumbling roads, and bridges, and schools, and by laying broadband lines to reach every corner of the country. And I will invest \$15 billion a year in renewable sources of energy to create five million new energy jobs over the next decade - jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced; jobs building solar panels and wind turbines and a new electricity grid; jobs that will help us eliminate the oil we import from the Middle East in ten years and help save the planet in the bargain. That's how America can lead again.

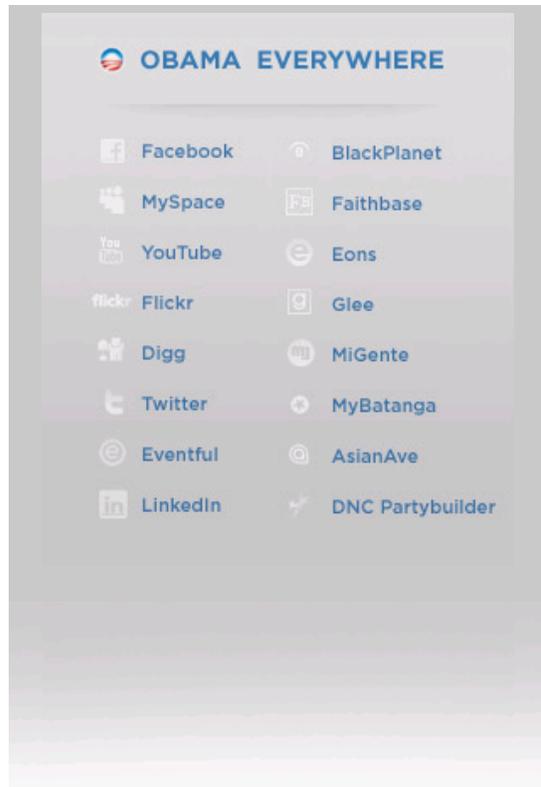
When it comes to health care, we don't have to choose between a government-run health care system and the unaffordable one we have now. If you already have health insurance, the only thing that will change under my plan is that we will lower premiums. If you don't have health insurance you'll be able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

When it comes to giving every child a world-class education so they can compete in this global economy for the jobs of the 21st century, the choice is not between more money and more reform - because our schools need both. As President, I will invest in early childhood education, 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. You invest in America, America will invest in you, and together, we will move this country forward.

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 by asking the Iraqi government to step up, 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. From day one of this campaign, I have made clear that we will increase our ground troops and our investments in the finest fighting force the world has ever known. Watching our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines fight in Iraq and Afghanistan has only deepened my commitment to invest in 21st century technologies so that our men 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.

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 all those months ago, the change we need isn't just



about new programs and policies. It's about a new politics - a politics that calls on our better angels instead of encouraging our worst instincts; one that reminds us of the obligations we have to ourselves and one another.

What we have lost in these last eight years cannot be measured by lost wages or bigger trade deficits alone. What has also been lost is the idea that in this American story, each of us has a role to play. Each of us has a responsibility to work hard and look after ourselves and our families, and each of us has a responsibility to our fellow citizens. And that's what we need to restore right now - our sense of common purpose; of higher purpose.

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. 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. There are patriots who supported this war in Iraq and patriots who opposed it; patriots who believe in Democratic policies and those who believe in Republican policies. 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. A lot of you may be disappointed and even angry with your leaders. 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 lines of voters that stretched around schools and churches; in the young people who cast their ballot for the first time, and those not so young folks who got involved again after a very long time. I've seen it in the workers who would rather cut back their hours than see their friends lose their jobs; in the neighbors who take a stranger in when the floodwaters rise; in the soldiers who re-enlist after losing a limb. 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 thing inside us 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 down inside ourselves when we're tired and come back fighting harder.

Hope! 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 one of her own." It's what led immigrants from distant lands to come to these shores against great odds and carve a new life for their families in America; what led those who couldn't vote to march and organize and stand for freedom; that led them to cry out, "It may look dark tonight, but if I hold on to hope, tomorrow will be brighter."

That's what this election is about. That is the choice we face right now.

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 this last week, because it does.

America, the time for change has come.

In five days, we can choose to invest in health care for our families, and education for our kids, and renewable energy for our future.

In five days, we can choose hope over fear, unity over division, the promise of change over the power of the status quo.

In five days, we can come together as one nation, and one people, and once more choose our better history.

That's what's at stake. That's what we're fighting for - for the small business owner in Denver to keep his doors open; for the hardworking couple in Cincinnati to retire in comfort; for the young student in Sarasota to afford her tuition; for men and women in every city and town across this nation to achieve the American Dream. And if in this last week, 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 - and remember, you can vote early here in Florida. 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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