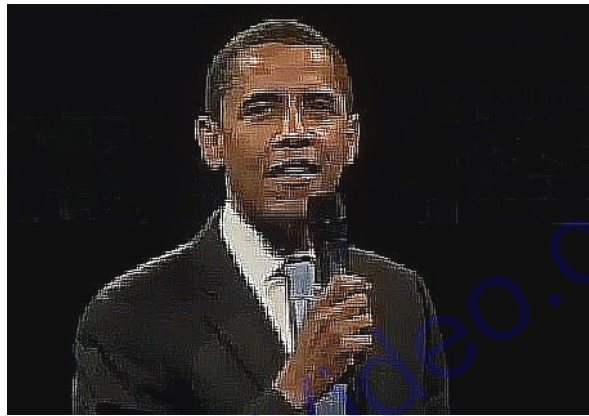


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**Barack Obama**

*Speech at the Jefferson-Jackson Dinner*

delivered 10 November 2007, Veterans Memorial Auditorium, Des Moines, Iowa



Thank you so much. To -- To the great Governor of Iowa and Lieutenant Governor of Iowa; to my dear friend Tom Harkin for the outstanding work that he does; to the congressional delegation of Iowa that is doing outstanding work; and to Nancy Pelosi, Madam Speaker, thank you all for the wonderful welcome and the wonderful hospitality.

I love you back. [to audience]

A little less than one year from today, you will go into the voting booth and you will select the President of the United States of America. Now, here's the good news -- the name George W. Bush will not be on the ballot. The name of my cousin Dick Cheney will not be on the ballot. We've been trying to hide that for a long time. Everybody has a black sheep in the family. The era of Scooter Libby justice, and Brownie incompetence, and Karl Rove politics will finally be over.

But the question you're going to have to ask yourself when you caucus in January and you vote in November is, "What's next for America?" We are in a defining moment in our history. Our nation is at war. The planet is in peril. The dream that so many generations fought for feels as if it's slowly slipping away. We are working harder for less. We've never paid more for health care or for college. It's harder to save and it's harder to retire. And most of all we've lost faith that our leaders can or will do anything about it.

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We were promised compassionate conservatism and all we got was Katrina and wiretaps. We were promised a uniter, and we got a President who could not even lead the half of the country that voted for him. We were promised a more ethical and more efficient government, and instead we have a town called Washington that is more corrupt and more wasteful than it was before. And the only mission that was ever accomplished is to use fear and falsehood to take this country to a war that should have never been authorized and should have never been waged.

It is because of these failures that America is listening, intently, to what we say here today -- not just Democrats, but Republicans and Independents who've lost trust in their government, but want to believe again. And it is because of these failures that we not only have a moment of great challenge, but also a moment of great opportunity. We have a chance to bring the country together in a new majority -- to finally tackle problems that George Bush made far worse, but that had festered long before George Bush ever took office -- problems that we've talked about year after year after year after year.

And that is why the same old Washington textbook campaigns just won't do in this election. That's why not answering questions 'cause we are afraid our answers won't be popular just won't do. That's why telling the American people what we think they want to hear instead of telling the American people what they need to hear just won't do. Triangulating and poll-driven positions because we're worried about what Mitt or Rudy might say about us just won't do. If we are really serious about winning this election Democrats, we can't live in fear of losing it.

This party -- the party of Jefferson and Jackson, of Roosevelt and Kennedy -- has always made the biggest difference in the lives of the American people when we led, not by polls, but by principle; not by calculation, but by conviction; when we summoned the entire nation to a common purpose -- a higher purpose. And I run for the Presidency of the United States of America because that's the party America needs us to be right now.

A party that offers not just a difference in policies, but a difference in leadership.

A party that doesn't just focus on how to win but why we should.

A party that doesn't just offer change as a slogan, but real, meaningful change -- change that America can believe in.

That's why I'm in this race. That's why I am running for the Presidency of the United States of America -- to offer change that we can believe in.

I am in this race to tell the corporate lobbyists that their days of setting the agenda in Washington are over. I have done more than any other candidate in this race to take on lobbyists -- and won. They have not funded my campaign, they will not get a job in my White House, and they will not drown out the voices of the American people when I am President.

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I'm in this race to take those tax breaks away from companies that are moving jobs overseas and put them in the pockets of hard working Americans who deserve it. And I won't raise the minimum wage every ten years -- I will raise it to keep pace so that workers don't fall behind.

That is why I am in it. To protect the American worker. To fight for the American worker.

I'm in this race because I want to stop talking about the outrage of 47 million Americans without health care and start actually doing something about it. I expanded health care in Illinois by bringing Democrats and Republicans together. By taking on the insurance industry. And that is how I will make certain that every single American in this country has health care they can count on and I won't do it twenty years from now, I won't do it ten years from now, I will do it by the end of my first term as President of the United States of America.

I run for president to make sure that every American child has the best education that we have to offer -- from the day they are born to the day they graduate from college. And I won't just talk about how great teachers are -- as President I will reward them for their greatness -- by raising salaries and giving them more support. That's why I'm in this race.

I am running for President because I am sick and tired of democrats thinking that the only way to look tough on national security is by talking, and acting, and voting like George Bush Republicans.

When I am this party's nominee, my opponent will not be able to say that I voted for the war in Iraq; or that I gave George Bush the benefit of the doubt on Iran; or that I supported Bush-Cheney policies of not talking to leaders that we don't like. And he will not be able to say that I wavered on something as fundamental as whether or not it is ok for America to torture -- because it is never ok. That's why I am in it.

As President, I will end the war in Iraq. We will have our troops home in sixteen months. I will close Guantanamo. I will restore habeas corpus. I will finish the fight against Al Qaeda. And I will lead the world to combat the common threats of the 21st century -- nuclear weapons and terrorism; climate change and poverty; genocide and disease. And I will send once more a message to those yearning faces beyond our shores that says, "You matter to us. Your future is our future. And our moment is now."

America, our moment is now. Our moment is now. I don't want to spend the next year or the next four years re-fighting the same fights that we had in the 1990s. I don't want to pit Red America against Blue America, I want to be the President of the United States of America.

And if those Republicans come at me with the same fear-mongering and swift-boating that they usually do, then I will take them head on. Because I believe the American people are tired of fear and tired of distractions and tired of diversions. We can make this election not about fear, but about the future. And that won't just be a Democratic victory; that will be an American victory. And that is a victory America needs right now.

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I am not in this race to fulfill some long-held ambitions or because I believe it's somehow owed to me. I never expected to be here, I always knew this journey was improbable. I've never been on a journey that wasn't. I am running in this race because of what Dr. King called "the fierce urgency of now." Because I believe that there's such a thing as being too late. And that hour is almost upon us.

I don't want to wake up four years from now and find out that millions of Americans still lack health care because we couldn't take on the insurance industry.

I don't want to see that the oceans have risen a few more inches. The planet has reached a point of no return because we couldn't find a way to stop buying oil from dictators.

I don't want to see more American lives put at risk because no one had the judgment or the courage to stand up against a misguided war before we sent our troops into fight.

I don't want to see homeless veterans on the streets. I don't want to send another generation of American children to failing schools. I don't want that future for my daughters. I don't want that future for your sons. I do not want that future for America.

I'm in this race for the same reason that I fought for jobs for the jobless and hope for the hopeless on the streets of Chicago; for the same reason I fought for justice and equality as a civil rights lawyer; for the same reason that I fought for Illinois families for over a decade.

Because I will never forget that the only reason that I'm standing here today is because somebody, somewhere stood up for me when it was risky. Stood up when it was hard. Stood up when it wasn't popular. And because that somebody stood up, a few more stood up. And then a few thousand stood up. And then a few million stood up. And standing up, with courage and clear purpose, they somehow managed to change the world.

That's why I'm running, Iowa -- to give our children and grandchildren the same chances somebody gave me.

That's why I'm running, Democrats -- to keep the American Dream alive for those who still hunger for opportunity, who still thirst for equality.

That's why I'm asking you to stand with me, that's why I'm asking you to caucus for me, that's why I am asking you to stop settling for what the cynics say we have to accept.

In this election -- in this moment -- let us reach for what we know is possible. A nation healed. A world repaired. An America that believes again.

Thank you very much everybody.