

## DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION - JULY 27<sup>TH</sup> 2004

### **Bill Clinton**

Thank you. I am honored to share the podium with my Senator, though I think I should be introducing her. I'm proud of her and so grateful to the people of New York that the best public servant in our family is still on the job and grateful to all of you, especially my friends from Arkansas, for the chance you gave us to serve our country in the White House.

I am also honored to share this night with President Carter, who has inspired the world with his work for peace, democracy, and human rights. And with Al Gore, my friend and partner for eight years, who played such a large role in building the prosperity and progress that brought America into the 21st century, who showed incredible grace and patriotism under pressure, and who is the living embodiment that every vote counts—and must be counted in every state in America.

Tonight I speak as a citizen, returning to the role I have played for most of my life as a foot soldier in the fight for our future, as we nominate a true New England patriot for president. The state that gave us John Adams and John Kennedy has now given us John Kerry, a good man, a great senator, a visionary leader. We are constantly told America is deeply divided. But all Americans value freedom, faith, and family. We all honor the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform in Iraq, Afghanistan and around the world.

We all want good jobs, good schools, health care, safe streets, a clean environment. We all want our children to grow up in a secure America leading the world toward a peaceful future. Our differences are in how we can best achieve these things, in a time of unprecedented change. Therefore, we Democrats will bring the American people a positive campaign, arguing not who's good and who's bad, but what is the best way to build the safe, prosperous world our children deserve.

The 21st century is marked by serious security threats, serious economic challenges, and serious problems like global warming and the AIDS epidemic. But it is also full of enormous opportunities—to create millions of high paying jobs in clean energy, and biotechnology; to restore the manufacturing base and reap the benefits of the global economy through our diversity and our commitment to decent labor and environmental standards everywhere; and to create a world where we can celebrate our religious and racial differences, because our common humanity matters more.

To build that kind of world we must make the right choices; and we must have a president who will lead the way. Democrats and Republicans have very different and honestly held ideas on that choices we should make, rooted in fundamentally different views of how we should meet our common challenges at home and how we should play our role in the world. Democrats want to build an America of shared responsibilities and shared opportunities and more global cooperation, acting alone only when we must.

We think the role of government is to give people the tools and conditions to make the most of their lives. Republicans believe in an America run by the right people, their people, in a world in which we act unilaterally when we can, and cooperate when we have to.

They think the role of government is to concentrate wealth and power in the hands of those who embrace their political, economic, and social views, leaving ordinary citizens to fend for themselves on matters like health care and retirement security. Since most Americans are not that far to the right, they have to portray us Democrats as unacceptable, lacking in strength and values. In other words, they need a divided America. But Americans long to be united. After 9/11, we all wanted to be one nation, strong in the fight against terror. The president had a great opportunity to bring us together under his slogan of compassionate conservatism and to unite the world in common cause against terror.

Instead, he and his congressional allies made a very different choice: to use the moment of unity to push America too far to the right and to walk away from our allies, not only in attacking Iraq before the weapons inspectors finished their jobs, but in withdrawing American support for the Climate Change Treaty, the International Court for war criminals, the ABM treaty, and even the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

Now they are working to develop two new nuclear weapons which they say we might use first. At home, the President and the Republican Congress have made equally fateful choices indeed. For the first time ever when America was on a war footing, there were two huge tax cuts, nearly half of which went to the top one percent. I'm in that group now for the first time in my life.

When I was in office, the Republicans were pretty mean to me. When I left and made money, I became part of the most important group in the world to them. At

first I thought I should send them a thank you note—until I realized they were sending you the bill.

They protected my tax cuts while:

- Withholding promised funding for the Leave No Child Behind Act, leaving over 2 million children behind
- Cutting 140,000 unemployed workers out of job training
- 100,000 working families out of child care assistance
- 300,000 poor children out of after school programs
- Raising out of pocket healthcare costs to veterans
- Weakening or reversing important environmental advances for clean air and the preservation of our forests.

Everyone had to sacrifice except the wealthiest Americans, who wanted to do their part but were asked only to expend the energy necessary to open the envelopes containing our tax cuts. If you agree with these choices, you should vote to return them to the White House and Congress. If not, take a look at John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democrats.

In this year's budget, the White House wants to cut off federal funding for 88,000 uniformed police, including more than 700 on the New York City police force who put their lives on the line on 9/11. As gang violence is rising and we look for terrorists in our midst, Congress and the President are also about to allow the ten-year-old ban on assault weapons to expire. Our crime policy was to put more police on the streets and take assault weapons off the streets. It brought eight years of declining crime and violence. Their policy is the reverse, they're taking police off the streets and putting assault weapons back on the streets. If you agree with their choices, vote to continue them. If not, join John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democrats in making America safer, smarter, and stronger.

On Homeland Security, Democrats tried to double the number of containers at ports and airports checked for Weapons of Mass Destruction. The one billion dollar cost would have been paid for by reducing the tax cut of 200,000 millionaires by five thousand dollars each. Almost all 200,000 of us would have been glad to pay 5,000

dollars to make the nearly 300 million Americans safer—but the measure failed because the White House and the Republican leadership in the House decided my tax cut was more important- If you agree with that choice, re-elect them. If not, give John Kerry and John Edwards a chance.

These policies have turned the projected 5.8 trillion dollar surplus we left—enough to pay for the baby boomers retirement—into a projected debt of nearly 5 trillion dollars, with a 400 plus billion dollar deficit this year and for years to come. How do they pay for it? First by taking the monthly surplus in Social Security payments and endorsing the checks of working people over to me to cover my tax cut. But it's not enough. They are borrowing the rest from foreign governments, mostly Japan and China. Sure, they're competing with us for good jobs but how can we enforce our trade laws against our bankers? If you think it's good policy to pay for my tax cut with the Social Security checks of working men and women, and borrowed money from China, vote for them. If not, John Kerry's your man.

We Americans must choose for President one of two strong men who both love our country, but who have very different worldviews: Democrats favor shared responsibility, shared opportunity, and more global cooperation. Republicans favor concentrated wealth and power, leaving people to fend for themselves and more unilateral action. I think we're right for two reasons: First, America works better when all people have a chance to live their dreams. Second, we live in an interdependent world in which we can't kill, jail, or occupy all our potential adversaries, so we have to both fight terror and build a world with more partners and fewer terrorists. We tried it their way for twelve years, our way for eight, and then their way for four more.

By the only test that matters, whether people were better off when we finished than when we started, our way works better—it produced over 22 million good jobs, rising incomes, and 100 times as many people moving out of poverty into the middle class. It produced more health care, the largest increase in college aid in 50 years, record home ownership, a cleaner environment, three surpluses in a row, a modernized defense force, strong efforts against terror, and an America respected as a world leader for peace, security and prosperity.

More importantly, we have great new champions in John Kerry and John Edwards. Two good men with wonderful wives—Teresa a generous and wise woman who understands the world we are trying to shape. And Elizabeth, a lawyer and mother who understands the lives we are all trying to lift. Here is what I know about John Kerry. During the Vietnam War, many young men—including the current president,

the vice president and me—could have gone to Vietnam but didn't. John Kerry came from a privileged background and could have avoided it too. Instead he said, send me.

When they sent those swift-boats up the river in Vietnam, and told them their job was to draw hostile fire—to show the American flag and bait the enemy to come out and fight—John Kerry said, send me. When it was time to heal the wounds of war and normalize relations with Vietnam—and to demand an accounting of the POWs and MIAs we lost there—John Kerry said, send me.

When we needed someone to push the cause of inner-city kids struggling to avoid a life of crime, or to bring the benefits of high technology to ordinary Americans, or to clean the environment in a way that creates jobs, or to give small businesses a better chance to make it, John Kerry said send me.

Tonight my friends, I ask you to join me for the next 100 days in telling John Kerry's story and promoting his plans. Let every person in this hall and all across America say to him what he has always said to America: Send Me. The bravery that the men who fought by his side saw in battle I've seen in the political arena. When I was President, John Kerry showed courage and conviction on crime, on welfare reform, on balancing the budget at a time when those priorities were not exactly a way to win a popularity contest in our party.

He took tough positions on tough problems. John Kerry knows who he is and where he's going. He has the experience, the character, the ideas and the values to be a great President. In a time of change he has two other important qualities: his insatiable curiosity to understand the forces shaping our lives, and a willingness to hear the views even of those who disagree with him. Therefore his choices will be full of both conviction and common sense.

He proved that when he picked a tremendous partner in John Edwards. Everybody talks about John Edwards' energy, intellect, and charisma. The important thing is how he has used his talents to improve the lives of people who—like John himself—had to work hard for all they've got. He has always championed the cause of people too often left out or left behind. And that's what he'll do as our Vice President.

Their opponents will tell you to be afraid of John Kerry and John Edwards, because they won't stand up to the terrorists—don't you believe it. Strength and wisdom are not conflicting values—they go hand in hand. John Kerry has both. His first priority will be keeping America safe. Remember the scripture: Be Not Afraid.

John Kerry and John Edwards, have good ideas:

- To make this economy work again for middle-class Americans;
- To restore fiscal responsibility;
- To save Social Security; to make healthcare more affordable and college more available;
- To free us from dependence on foreign oil and create new jobs in clean energy;
- To rally the world to win the war on terror and to make more friends and fewer terrorists.

At every turning point in our history we the people have chosen unity over division, heeding our founders' call to America's eternal mission: to form a more perfect union, to widen the circle of opportunity, deepen the reach of freedom, and strengthen the bonds of community.

It happened because we made the right choices. In the early days of the republic, America was at a crossroads much like it is today, deeply divided over whether or not to build a real nation with a national economy, and a national legal system. We chose a more perfect union.

In the Civil War, America was at a crossroads, divided over whether to save the union and end slavery—we chose a more perfect union. In the 1960s, America was at a crossroads, divided again over civil rights and women's rights. Again, we chose a more perfect union. As I said in 1992, we're all in this together; we have an obligation both to work hard and to help our fellow citizens, both to fight terror and to build a world with more cooperation and less terror. Now again, it is time to choose.

Since we're all in the same boat, let us chose as the captain of our ship a brave good man who knows how to steer a vessel through troubled waters to the calm seas and clear skies of our more perfect union. We know our mission. Let us join as one and say in a loud, clear voice: Send John Kerry.