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Mike Huckabee

2008 Republican National Convention Address



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Thank you. Well, let me say that, as much as I appreciate this magnificent opportunity to speak tonight, I've got to be honest with you. I was originally hoping for the slot on Thursday night called the acceptance speech.

But I want you to also know that I am genuinely delighted to be here to speak on behalf of my second choice for the Republican nomination for President, John McCain. John McCain is a man with the character and the stubborn kind of integrity that we need in a President.

But I want to begin by doing something a little unusual. I'd like to thank the elite media for doing something that, quite frankly, I wasn't sure could be done, and that's unifying the Republican Party and all of America in support of Senator McCain and Governor Palin. The reporting of the past few days have proven tackier than a costume change at a Madonna concert.

I grew up at a time and in a place where the civil rights movement was fought. And I witnessed firsthand the shameful evil of racism. I saw how ignorance and prejudice caused people to do the unthinkable to people of color, and it wasn't so many years ago. I want to say with the utmost of sincerity, not as a Republican, but as an American, that I have great respect for Senator Obama's historic achievement to become his party's nominee, not because of his color, but with indifference to it. Party or politics aside, as Americans, we celebrate this milestone because it elevates our country.



But the presidency is not a symbolic job, and I fear that his election would elevate our taxes and our risk in a dangerous world. Now, Obama was right when he said that this election is not about him; it is about you. When gasoline costs 4 dollars a gallon, it makes it tough if you're a single mom trying to get to work each day in a used car that you drive. You want something to change. If you're a flight attendant or a baggage-handler, and you're asked to take the pay cut to keep your job, you want something to change. If you're a young couple losing your house, your credit rating, and your piece of the American dream, you want something to change.

But John McCain offers specific ideas to respond to a need for change. But let me say there are some things we don't want to change: freedom, security, and the opportunity to prosper.

Barack Obama's "excellent adventure" to Europe took his campaign for change to hundreds of thousands of people who don't even vote or pay taxes here. But let me hasten to say that it's not what he took there that concerns me. It's what he brought back: European ideas that give the government the chance to grab even more of our liberty and destroy our hard-earned livelihood. Fact is, my friends, most Americans don't want more government. They want less government. It was, in fact, the founder of our Party, Abraham Lincoln, who reminded us that a government that can do everything for us is the government that can take everything from us.

Now, I get a little tired of hearing how the Democrats care so much for the working guy, as if all Republicans grew up with silk stockings and silver spoons. You see, in my hometown of Hope, Arkansas, the three sacred heroes were Jesus, Elvis, and FDR, not necessarily in that order. My own father, for example, held down two jobs, barely affording the little rented house that I grew up in. My dad was one of those guys, like so many of your dads. He worked hard. He lifted heavy things. He got his hands dirty. In fact, the only soap we ever had in my house was Lava. Let me explain that. I was in college before I found out it isn't supposed to hurt when you take a shower. Let me make something clear tonight: I'm not a Republican because I grew up rich. I'm a Republican because I didn't want to spend the rest of my life poor, waiting for the government to rescue me.

John McCain doesn't want the kind of change that allows the government to reach even deeper into your paycheck and pick your pocket, your doctor, your child's school, or even the kind of car you drive, or tell you how much you have to inflate your tires. And he doesn't want to change the definition of marriage. And unlike the Democratic ticket, Senator McCain and Governor Palin believe that every human life has intrinsic worth and value from the moment of conception.

And speaking of Governor Palin, I am so tired of hearing about her lack of experience. I want to tell you folks something. She got more votes running for mayor of Wasilla, Alaska, than Joe Biden got running for President of the United States.

John McCain is by far the most prepared, the most experienced, and truly the most tested presidential candidate. He is thoroughly tested.



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When John McCain received his country's call to service, he did not hesitate and he did not choose the easy path. He sat alone in the cockpit, taking off from an aircraft carrier, to fly in the unfriendly skies, knowing that there was a good chance he might not make it back. And one day, he didn't make it back. He was shot down and captured, brutally tortured. He could have eased his own pain, even cut short his imprisonment, just by uttering a few simple words renouncing his country. But then, as now, John McCain put his country first. And he knew that to return with honor later was better than to return without it now.

Most of us can lift our arms high in the air so that we can signify when we want something. He can't even lift his arms to his shoulder, which is a constant reminder that his life is marked not by what he's wanting to receive, but rather by what he has already given.

Let me tell you about someone I know who understands this type of sacrifice.

On the first day of school in 2005, Martha Cothren, a teacher at the Joe T. Robinson High School in Little Rock, was determined that her students would not take their education or their privileges as American for granted. And with the principal of her school's permission, she removed all the desks from her classroom on that first day of school in 2005.

Now, the students walked into an empty classroom and they said, "Ms. Cothren, where's our desk?" She said, "You get a desk in my classroom when you tell me how you earn it." Well, some of them said, "Making good grades." She said, "Well, you ought to make good grades in my class, but that won't earn you a desk." Another student said, "I guess we get a desk when we behave." Martha said, "You will behave in my classroom." But that won't get you a desk either. No one in first period guessed right. Same for second period. By lunch, the buzz was all over the campus. Ms. Cothren had flipped out, wouldn't let her students have a desk.

Kids started using their cell phones. They called their parents. And by early afternoon, all four of the local network TV affiliates had camera crews out at the school to report on this teacher who wouldn't let her students have a desk unless they could tell her how to earn it. By the final period, no one had guessed correctly, so the students filed in. Martha said, "Well, I didn't think you would figure it out, so I'm going to tell you."

And with that, she went to the door of her classroom and motioned, and in walked over 20 veterans, some of them still wearing the uniforms from days gone by, every one of them carrying a school desk. And as they carefully and quietly arranged those desks in neat rows, Martha said, "You don't have to earn your desk, because these guys, they already did."

These brave veterans had gone halfway around the world, giving up their education, interrupting their careers and families so that we could have the freedom that we have. Martha told them, "No one charged you for your desk, but it wasn't really free. These guys bought it for you. And I hope you never, ever forget it."



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And I wish, ladies and gentlemen, I wish we would all remember that being American is not just about the freedom we have; it is about those who gave it to us.

And let me remind you of something. John McCain is one of those people who helped buy the freedom and the school desk that we had. John McCain helped me have a school desk.

And I want to tell you: I pledge myself to doing everything I can to help him earn a desk, and I'm thinking the one that's in the Oval Office would fit him very, very well.

Thank you. God bless you folks. Thank you. Thank you.