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Zell Miller

Republican National Convention Address



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Thank you very much.

Since I last stood in this spot, a whole new generation of the Miller Family has been born: Four great grandchildren. Along with all the other members of our close-knit family -- they are my and Shirley's most precious possessions. And I know that's how you feel about your family also. Like you, I think of their future, the promises and the perils they will face. Like you, I believe that the next four years will determine what kind of world they will grow up in. And like you, I ask which leader is it today that has the vision, the willpower, and, yes, the backbone to best protect my family?

The clear answer to that question has placed me in this hall with you tonight. For my family is more important than my Party. There is but one man to whom I am willing to entrust their future and that man's name is George W. Bush.

In the summer of 1940, I was an eight-year-old boy living in a remote little Appalachian valley. Our country was not yet at war, but even we children knew that there were some crazy men across the ocean who would kill us if they could. President Roosevelt, in a speech that summer, told America "all private plans, all private lives, have been in a sense repealed by an overriding public danger."



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In 1940 Wendell Wilkie was the Republican nominee. And there is no better example of someone repealing their "private plans" than this good man. He gave Roosevelt the critical support he needed for a peacetime draft, an unpopular idea at the time. And he made it clear that he would rather lose the election than make national security a partisan campaign issue. Shortly before Wilkie died he told a friend, that if he could write his own epitaph and had to choose between "Here lies a President..." or "Here lies one who contributed to saving freedom", he would prefer the latter.

Where are such statesmen today? Where is the bi-partisanship in this country when we need it most? Today at the same time young Americans are dying in the sands of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan, our nation is being torn apart and made weaker because of the Democrat's manic obsession to bring down our Commander-in-Chief. What has happened to the Party I've spent my life working in? I can remember when Democrats believed it was the duty of America to fight for freedom over tyranny. It was Democratic President Harry Truman who pushed the Red Army out of Iran, who came to the aid of Greece when Communists threatened to overthrow it, who stared down the Soviet blockade of West Berlin by flying in supplies and saving the city.

Time after time in our history, in the face of great danger, Democrats and Republicans worked together to ensure that freedom would not falter. But not today. Motivated more by partisan politics than by national security, today's Democratic leaders see America as an occupier, not a liberator. And nothing makes this Marine madder than someone calling American troops occupiers rather than liberators. Tell that to the one-half of Europe that was freed because Franklin Roosevelt led an army of liberators, not occupiers. Tell that to the lower half of the Korean Peninsula that is free because Dwight Eisenhower commanded an army of liberators, not occupiers. Tell that to the half a billion men, women and children who are free today from Poland to Siberia, because Ronald Reagan rebuilt a military of liberators, not occupiers.

Never in the history of the world has any soldier sacrificed more for the freedom and liberty of total strangers than the American soldier. And, our soldiers don't just give freedom abroad, they preserve it for us here at home. For it has been said so truthfully that it is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us the freedom of the press. It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech. It is the soldier, not the agitator, who has given us the freedom to protest. It is the soldier who salutes the flag, serves beneath the flag, whose coffin is draped by the flag who gives that protester the freedom he abuses to burn that flag. No one should dare to even think about being the Commander in Chief of this country if he doesn't believe with all his heart that our soldiers are liberators abroad and defenders of freedom at home.

But don't waste your breath telling that to the leaders of my Party today. In their warped way of thinking America is the problem, not the solution. They don't believe there's any real danger in the world except that which America brings upon itself through our clumsy and misguided foreign policy. It is not their patriotism -- it is their judgment that has been so sorely lacking. They claimed Carter's pacifism would lead to peace -- they were wrong. They claimed Reagan's defense buildup would lead to war -- they were wrong.



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And no pair has been more wrong, more loudly, more often than the two Senators from Massachusetts, Ted Kennedy and John Kerry. Together, Kennedy/Kerry have opposed the very weapons systems that won the Cold War and that are now winning the war on terror.

Listing all the weapon systems that Senator Kerry tried his best to shut down sounds like an auctioneer selling off our national security. But Americans need to know the facts.

The B-1 bomber, that Senator Kerry opposed, dropped 40% of the bombs in the first six months of [Operation] Enduring Freedom.

The B-2 bomber, that Senator Kerry opposed, delivered air strikes against the Taliban in Afghanistan and Hussein's command post in Iraq.

The F-14A Tomcats, that Senator Kerry opposed, shot down Khadifi's Libyan MIGs over the Gulf of Sidra.

The modernized F-14D, that Senator Kerry opposed, delivered missile strikes against Tora Bora.

The Apache helicopter, that Senator Kerry opposed, took out those Republican Guard tanks in Kuwait in the Gulf War.

The F-15 Eagles, that Senator Kerry opposed, flew cover over our Nation's Capital and this very city after 9/11.

I could go on and on and on: Against the Patriot Missile that shot down Saddam Hussein's scud missiles over Israel; against the Aegis air-defense cruiser; against the Strategic Defense Initiative; against the Trident missile -- against, against, against. This is the man who wants to be the Commander in Chief of our U.S. Armed Forces?! U.S. forces armed with what -- spitballs?!

Twenty years of votes can tell you much more about a man than twenty weeks of campaign rhetoric. Campaign talk tells people who you want them to think you are. How you vote tells people who you really are deep inside. Senator Kerry has made it clear that he would use military force only if approved by the United Nations. Kerry would let Paris decide when America needs defending. I want Bush to decide! John Kerry, who says he doesn't like outsourcing, wants to outsource our national security. That's the most dangerous outsourcing of all. This politician wants to be leader of the free world. Free for how long?

For more than twenty years, on every one of the great issues of freedom and security, John Kerry has been more wrong, more weak, and more wobbly than any other national figure. As a war protestor, Kerry blamed our military. As a Senator, he voted to weaken our military. And nothing shows that more sadly and more clearly than his vote this year to deny protective armor for our troops in harms way, far-away.



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George W. Bush understands that we need new strategies to meet new threats. John Kerry wants to re-fight yesterday's war. President Bush believes we have to fight today's war and be ready for tomorrow's challenges. President Bush is committed to providing the kind of forces it takes to root out terrorist -- no matter what spider hole they may hide in or what rock they crawl under. George W. Bush wants to grab terrorists by the throat and not let them go to get a better grip. From John Kerry, they get a "yes-no-maybe" bowl of mush that can only encourage our enemies and confuse our friends.

I first got to know George W. Bush when we served as governors together. I admire this man. I am moved by the respect he shows the First Lady, his unabashed love for his parents and his daughters, and the fact that he is unashamed of his belief that God is not indifferent to America. I can identify with someone who has lived that line in "Amazing Grace," "...was blind, but now I see," and I like the fact that he's the same man on Saturday night that he is on Sunday morning. He is not a slick talker but he is a straight shooter, and where I come from deeds mean a lot more than words. I have knocked on the door of this man's soul and found someone home, a God-fearing man with a good heart and a spine of tempered steel -- the man I trust to protect my most precious possession: my family.

This election will change forever the course of history, and that's not any history. It's our family's history. The only question is how. The answer lies with each of us. And like many generations before us, we've got some hard choosing to do. Right now the world just cannot afford an indecisive America. Fainthearted, self-indulgence will put at risk all we care about in this world. In this hour of danger our President has had the courage to stand up. And this Democrat is proud to stand up with him.

Thank you.

God bless this country and God bless George W. Bush.