



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #221 — SEPT. 7, 2012**

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The President Draws the Battle Lines

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Sept. 7, 2012)

The moments when President Obama spoke to the American people last night offered as stark a contrast as I have ever witnessed in American politics—literally, the Future versus the Past.

A man who knows how to be the President of all the people versus a man who believes that everything revolves around money and those who happen to have it, preferably lots and lots of it.

In a very real sense, this is a battle of the Truth versus Lies, Adults versus Selfish Babies, though I prefer to think of it in terms of Good versus Unmitigated Evil from Hell. That's how much I hate lies and facile, blatant liars.

The stakes in this titanic end-game could not be higher. The Republican wars against the American people (and the world) will end in victory for the super-rich, or go down to defeat, possibly, forever. Our fate is ours to choose.

I know which candidate I feel safer with! I know which man I want leading our nation for the good of my grandchildren and yours, not for the good of Donald Trump, the Kochs, and stolen American tax dollars taking anonymous vacations in the Caymans.



"Transcript: President Obama's DNC Speech" ABC News

Sept. 6, 2012, (<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/OTUS/transcript-president-obamas-democratic-convention-speech/story?id=17175575#.UEnIMY1ISEq>)

(Below are President Obama's remarks, as prepared for delivery, formally accepting the Democratic presidential nomination at his party's convention Thursday night.)

Michelle, I love you. The other night, I think the entire country saw just how lucky I am. Malia and Sasha, you make me so proud...but don't get any ideas, you're still going to class tomorrow. And Joe Biden, thank you for being the best Vice President I could ever hope for.

Madam Chairwoman, delegates, I accept your nomination for President of the United States.

The first time I addressed this convention in 2004, I was a younger man; a Senate candidate from Illinois who spoke about hope – not blind optimism or wishful thinking, but hope in the face of difficulty; hope in the face of uncertainty; that dogged faith in the future which has pushed this nation forward, even when the odds are great; even when the road is long.

Eight years later, that hope has been tested – by the cost of war; by one of the worst economic crises in history; and by political gridlock that's left us wondering whether it's still possible to tackle the challenges of our time.

I know that campaigns can seem small, and even silly. Trivial things become big distractions. Serious issues become sound bites. And the truth gets buried under an avalanche of money and advertising. If you're sick of hearing me approve this message, believe me – so am I.

But when all is said and done – when you pick up that ballot to vote – you will face the clearest choice of any time in a generation. Over the next few years, big decisions will be made in Washington, on jobs and the economy; taxes and deficits; energy and education; war and peace – decisions that will have a huge impact on our lives and our children's lives for decades to come.

On every issue, the choice you face won't be just between two candidates or two parties.

It will be a choice between two different paths for America.

A choice between two fundamentally different visions for the future.

Ours is a fight to restore the values that built the largest middle class and the strongest economy the world has ever known; the values my grandfather defended as a soldier in Patton's Army; the values that drove my grandmother to work on a bomber assembly line while he was gone.

They knew they were part of something larger – a nation that triumphed over fascism and depression; a nation where the most innovative businesses turned out the world's best products, and everyone shared in the pride and success – from the corner office to the factory floor. My grandparents were given the chance to go to college, buy their first home, and fulfill the basic bargain at the heart of America's story: the promise that hard work will pay off; that responsibility will be rewarded; that everyone gets a fair shot, and everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules – from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington, DC.

I ran for President because I saw that basic bargain slipping away. I began my career helping people in the shadow of a shuttered steel mill, at a time when too many good jobs were starting to move overseas. And by 2008, we had seen nearly a decade in which families struggled with costs that kept rising but paychecks that didn't; racking up more and more debt just to make the mortgage or pay tuition; to put gas in the car or food on the table. And when the house of cards collapsed in the Great Recession, millions of innocent Americans lost their jobs, their homes, and their life savings – a tragedy from which we are still fighting to recover.

Now, our friends at the Republican convention were more than happy to talk about everything they think is wrong with America, but they didn't have much to say about how they'd make it right. They want your vote, but they don't want you to know their plan. And that's because all they have to offer is the same prescription they've had for the last thirty years:

"Have a surplus? Try a tax cut."

"Deficit too high? Try another."

"Feel a cold coming on? Take two tax cuts, roll back some regulations, and call us in the morning!"

Now, I've cut taxes for those who need it – middle-class families and small businesses. But I don't believe that another round of tax breaks for millionaires will bring good jobs to our shores, or pay down our deficit. I don't believe that firing teachers or kicking students off financial aid will grow the economy, or help us compete with the scientists and engineers coming out of China. After all that we've been through, I don't believe that rolling back regulations on Wall Street will help the small businesswoman expand, or the laid-off construction worker keep his home. We've been there, we've tried that, and we're not going back. We're moving forward.

I won't pretend the path I'm offering is quick or easy. I never have. You didn't elect me to tell you what you wanted to hear. You elected me to tell you the truth. And the truth is, it will take more than a few years for us to solve challenges that have built up over decades. It will require common effort, shared responsibility, and the kind of bold, persistent experimentation that Franklin Roosevelt pursued during the only crisis worse than this one. And by the way – those of us who carry on his party's legacy should remember that not every problem can be remedied with another government program or dictate from Washington.

But know this, America: Our problems can be solved. Our challenges can be met. The path we offer may be harder, but it leads to a better place. And I'm asking you to choose that future. I'm asking you to rally around a set of goals for your country – goals in manufacturing, energy, education, national security, and the deficit; a real, achievable plan that will lead to new jobs, more opportunity, and rebuild this economy on a stronger foundation. That's what we can do in the next four years, and that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

We can choose a future where we export more products and outsource fewer jobs. After a decade that was defined by what we bought and borrowed, we're getting back to basics, and doing what America has always done best:

We're making things again.

I've met workers in Detroit and Toledo who feared they'd never build another American car. Today, they can't build them fast enough, because we reinvented a dying auto industry that's back on top of the world.

I've worked with business leaders who are bringing jobs back to America – not because our workers make less pay, but because we make better products. Because we work harder and smarter than anyone else.

I've signed trade agreements that are helping our companies sell more goods to millions of new customers – goods that are stamped with three proud words: Made in America.

After a decade of decline, this country created over half a million manufacturing jobs in the last two and a half years. And now you have a choice: we can give more tax breaks to corporations that ship jobs overseas, or we can start rewarding companies that open new plants and train new workers and create new jobs here, in the United States of America. We can help big factories and small businesses double their exports, and if we choose this path, we can create a million new manufacturing jobs in the next four years. You can make that happen. You can choose that future.

You can choose the path where we control more of our own energy. After thirty years of inaction, we raised fuel standards so that by the middle of the next decade, cars and trucks will go twice as far on a gallon of gas. We've doubled our use of renewable energy, and thousands of Americans have jobs today building wind turbines and long-lasting batteries. In the last year alone, we cut oil imports by one million barrels a day – more than any

administration in recent history. And today, the United States of America is less dependent on foreign oil than at any time in nearly two decades.

Now you have a choice – between a strategy that reverses this progress, or one that builds on it. We've opened millions of new acres for oil and gas exploration in the last three years, and we'll open more. But unlike my opponent, I will not let oil companies write this country's energy plan, or endanger our coastlines, or collect another \$4 billion in corporate welfare from our taxpayers.

We're offering a better path – a future where we keep investing in wind and solar and clean coal; where farmers and scientists harness new biofuels to power our cars and trucks; where construction workers build homes and factories that waste less energy; where we develop a hundred year supply of natural gas that's right beneath our feet. If you choose this path, we can cut our oil imports in half by 2020 and support more than 600,000 new jobs in natural gas alone.

And yes, my plan will continue to reduce the carbon pollution that is heating our planet – because climate change is not a hoax. More droughts and floods and wildfires are not a joke. They're a threat to our children's future. And in this election, you can do something about it.

You can choose a future where more Americans have the chance to gain the skills they need to compete, no matter how old they are or how much money they have. Education was the gateway to opportunity for me. It was the gateway for Michelle. And now more than ever, it is the gateway to a middle-class life.

For the first time in a generation, nearly every state has answered our call to raise their standards for teaching and learning. Some of the worst schools in the country have made real gains in math and reading. Millions of students are paying less for college today because we finally took on a system that wasted billions of taxpayer dollars on banks and lenders.

And now you have a choice – we can gut education, or we can decide that in the United States of America, no child should have her dreams deferred because of a crowded classroom or a crumbling school. No family should have to set aside a college acceptance letter because they don't have the money. No company should have to look for workers in China because they couldn't find any with the right skills here at home.

Government has a role in this. But teachers must inspire; principals must lead; parents must instill a thirst for learning, and students, you've got to do the work. And together, I promise you – we can out-educate and out-compete any country on Earth. Help me recruit 100,000 math and science teachers in the next ten years, and improve early childhood education. Help give two million workers the chance to learn skills at their community college that will lead directly to a job. Help us work with colleges and universities to cut in half the growth of tuition costs over the next ten years. We can meet that goal together. You can choose that future for America.

In a world of new threats and new challenges, you can choose leadership that has been tested and proven. Four years ago, I promised to end the war in Iraq. We did. I promised to refocus on the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11. We have. We've blunted the Taliban's momentum in Afghanistan, and in 2014, our longest war will be over. A new tower rises above the New York skyline, al Qaeda is on the path to defeat, and Osama bin Laden is dead.

Tonight, we pay tribute to the Americans who still serve in harm's way. We are forever in debt to a generation whose sacrifice has made this country safer and more respected. We will never forget you. And so long as I'm Commander-in-Chief, we will sustain the strongest military the world has ever known. When you take off the uniform, we will serve you as well as you've served us – because no one who fights for this country should have to fight for a job, or a roof over their head, or the care that they need when they come home.

Around the world, we've strengthened old alliances and forged new coalitions to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. We've reasserted our power across the Pacific and stood up to China on behalf of our workers. From Burma to Libya to South Sudan, we have advanced the rights and dignity of all human beings – men and women; Christians and Muslims and Jews.

But for all the progress we've made, challenges remain. Terrorist plots must be disrupted. Europe's crisis must be contained. Our commitment to Israel's security must not waver, and neither must our pursuit of peace. The Iranian government must face a world that stays united against its nuclear ambitions. The historic change sweeping across the Arab World must be defined not by the iron fist of a dictator or the hate of extremists, but by the hopes and aspirations of ordinary people who are reaching for the same rights that we celebrate today.

So now we face a choice. My opponent and his running mate are new to foreign policy, but from all that we've seen and heard, they want to take us back to an era of blustering and blundering that cost America so dearly.

After all, you don't call Russia our number one enemy – and not al Qaeda – unless you're still stuck in a Cold War time warp. You might not be ready for diplomacy with Beijing if you can't visit the Olympics without insulting our closest ally. My opponent said it was "tragic" to end the war in Iraq, and he won't tell us how he'll end the war in Afghanistan. I have, and I will. And while my opponent would spend more money on military hardware that our Joint Chiefs don't even want, I'll use the money we're no longer spending on war to pay down our debt and put more people back to work – rebuilding roads and bridges; schools and runways. After two wars that have cost us thousands of lives and over a trillion dollars, it's time to do some nation-building right here at home.

You can choose a future where we reduce our deficit without wrecking our middle class. Independent analysis shows that my plan would cut our deficits by \$4 trillion. Last summer, I worked with Republicans in Congress to cut \$1 trillion in spending – because those of us who believe government can be a force for good should work harder than anyone to reform it, so that it's leaner, more efficient, and more responsive to the American people.

I want to reform the tax code so that it's simple, fair, and asks the wealthiest households to pay higher taxes on incomes over \$250,000 – the same rate we had when Bill Clinton was president; the same rate we had when our economy created nearly 23 million new jobs, the biggest surplus in history, and a lot of millionaires to boot.

Now, I'm still eager to reach an agreement based on the principles of my bipartisan debt commission. No party has a monopoly on wisdom. No democracy works without compromise. But when Governor Romney and his allies in Congress tell us we can somehow lower our deficit by spending trillions more on new tax breaks for the wealthy – well, you do the math. I refuse to go along with that. And as long as I'm President, I never will.

I refuse to ask middle class families to give up their deductions for owning a home or raising their kids just to pay for another millionaire's tax cut. I refuse to ask students to pay more for college; or kick children out of Head Start programs, or eliminate health insurance for millions of Americans who are poor, elderly, or disabled – all so those with the most can pay less.

And I will never turn Medicare into a voucher. No American should ever have to spend their golden years at the mercy of insurance companies. They should retire with the care and dignity they have earned. Yes, we will reform and strengthen Medicare for the long haul, but we'll do it by reducing the cost of health care – not by asking seniors to pay thousands of dollars more. And we will keep the promise of Social Security by taking the responsible steps to strengthen it – not by turning it over to Wall Street.

This is the choice we now face. This is what the election comes down to. Over and over, we have been told by our opponents that bigger tax cuts and fewer regulations are the only way; that since government can't do everything, it should do almost nothing. If you can't afford health insurance, hope that you don't get sick. If a company releases toxic pollution into the air your children breathe, well, that's just the price of progress. If you can't afford to start a business or go to college, take my opponent's advice and "borrow money from your parents."

You know what? That's not who we are. That's not what this country's about. As Americans, we believe we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights – rights that no man or government can take away. We insist on personal responsibility and we celebrate individual initiative. We're not entitled to success. We have to earn it. We honor the strivers, the dreamers, the risk-takers who have always been the driving force behind our free enterprise system – the greatest engine of growth and prosperity the world has ever known.

But we also believe in something called citizenship – a word at the very heart of our founding, at the very essence of our democracy; the idea that this country only works when we accept certain obligations to one another, and to future generations.

We believe that when a CEO pays his autoworkers enough to buy the cars that they build, the whole company does better.

We believe that when a family can no longer be tricked into signing a mortgage they can't afford, that family is protected, but so is the value of other people's homes, and so is the entire economy.

We believe that a little girl who's offered an escape from poverty by a great teacher or a grant for college could become the founder of the next Google, or the scientist who cures cancer, or the President of the United States – and it's in our power to give her that chance.

We know that churches and charities can often make more of a difference than a poverty program alone. We don't want handouts for people who refuse to help themselves, and we don't want bailouts for banks that break the rules. We don't think government can solve all our problems. But we don't think that government is the source of all our problems – any more than are welfare recipients, or corporations, or unions, or immigrants, or gays, or any other group we're told to blame for our troubles.

Because we understand that this democracy is ours.

We, the People, recognize that we have responsibilities as well as rights; that our destinies are bound together; that a freedom which only asks what's in it for me, a freedom without a commitment to others, a freedom without love or charity or duty or patriotism, is unworthy of our founding ideals, and those who died in their defense.

As citizens, we understand that America is not about what can be done for us. It's about what can be done by us, together, through the hard and frustrating but necessary work of self-government.

So you see, the election four years ago wasn't about me. It was about you. My fellow citizens – you were the change.

You're the reason there's a little girl with a heart disorder in Phoenix who'll get the surgery she needs because an insurance company can't limit her coverage. You did that.

You're the reason a young man in Colorado who never thought he'd be able to afford his dream of earning a medical degree is about to get that chance. You made that possible.

You're the reason a young immigrant who grew up here and went to school here and pledged allegiance to our flag will no longer be deported from the only country she's ever called home; why selfless soldiers won't be kicked out of the military because of who they are or who they love; why thousands of families have finally been able to say to the loved ones who served us so bravely: "Welcome home."

If you turn away now – if you buy into the cynicism that the change we fought for isn't possible...well, change will not happen. If you give up on the idea that your voice can make a difference, then other voices will fill the void: lobbyists and special interests; the people with the \$10 million checks who are trying to buy this election and those who are making it harder for you to vote; Washington politicians who want to decide who you can marry, or control health care choices that women should make for themselves.

Only you can make sure that doesn't happen. Only you have the power to move us forward.

I recognize that times have changed since I first spoke to this convention. The times have changed – and so have I.

I'm no longer just a candidate. I'm the President. I know what it means to send young Americans into battle, for I have held in my arms the mothers and fathers of those who didn't return. I've shared the pain of families who've lost their homes, and the frustration of workers who've lost their jobs. If the critics are right that I've made all my

decisions based on polls, then I must not be very good at reading them. And while I'm proud of what we've achieved together, I'm far more mindful of my own failings, knowing exactly what Lincoln meant when he said, "I have been driven to my knees many times by the overwhelming conviction that I had no place else to go."

But as I stand here tonight, I have never been more hopeful about America. Not because I think I have all the answers. Not because I'm naïve about the magnitude of our challenges.

I'm hopeful because of you.

The young woman I met at a science fair who won national recognition for her biology research while living with her family at a homeless shelter – she gives me hope.

The auto worker who won the lottery after his plant almost closed, but kept coming to work every day, and bought flags for his whole town and one of the cars that he built to surprise his wife – he gives me hope.

The family business in Warroad, Minnesota that didn't lay off a single one of their four thousand employees during this recession, even when their competitors shut down dozens of plants, even when it meant the owners gave up some perks and pay – because they understood their biggest asset was the community and the workers who helped build that business – they give me hope.

And I think about the young sailor I met at Walter Reed hospital, still recovering from a grenade attack that would cause him to have his leg amputated above the knee. Six months ago, I would watch him walk into a White House dinner honoring those who served in Iraq, tall and twenty pounds heavier, dashing in his uniform, with a big grin on his face; sturdy on his new leg. And I remember how a few months after that I would watch him on a bicycle, racing with his fellow wounded warriors on a sparkling spring day, inspiring other heroes who had just begun the hard path he had traveled.

He gives me hope.

I don't know what party these men and women belong to. I don't know if they'll vote for me. But I know that their spirit defines us. They remind me, in the words of Scripture, that ours is a "future filled with hope."

And if you share that faith with me – if you share that hope with me – I ask you tonight for your vote.

If you reject the notion that this nation's promise is reserved for the few, your voice must be heard in this election.

If you reject the notion that our government is forever beholden to the highest bidder, you need to stand up in this election.

If you believe that new plants and factories can dot our landscape; that new energy can power our future; that new schools can provide ladders of opportunity to this nation of dreamers; if you believe in a country where everyone gets a fair shot, and everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules, then I need you to vote this November.

America, I never said this journey would be easy, and I won't promise that now. Yes, our path is harder – but it leads to a better place. Yes our road is longer – but we travel it together. We don't turn back. We leave no one behind. We pull each other up. We draw strength from our victories, and we learn from our mistakes, but we keep our eyes fixed on that distant horizon, knowing that Providence is with us, and that we are surely blessed to be citizens of the greatest nation on Earth.

Thank you, God bless you, and may God bless these United States.

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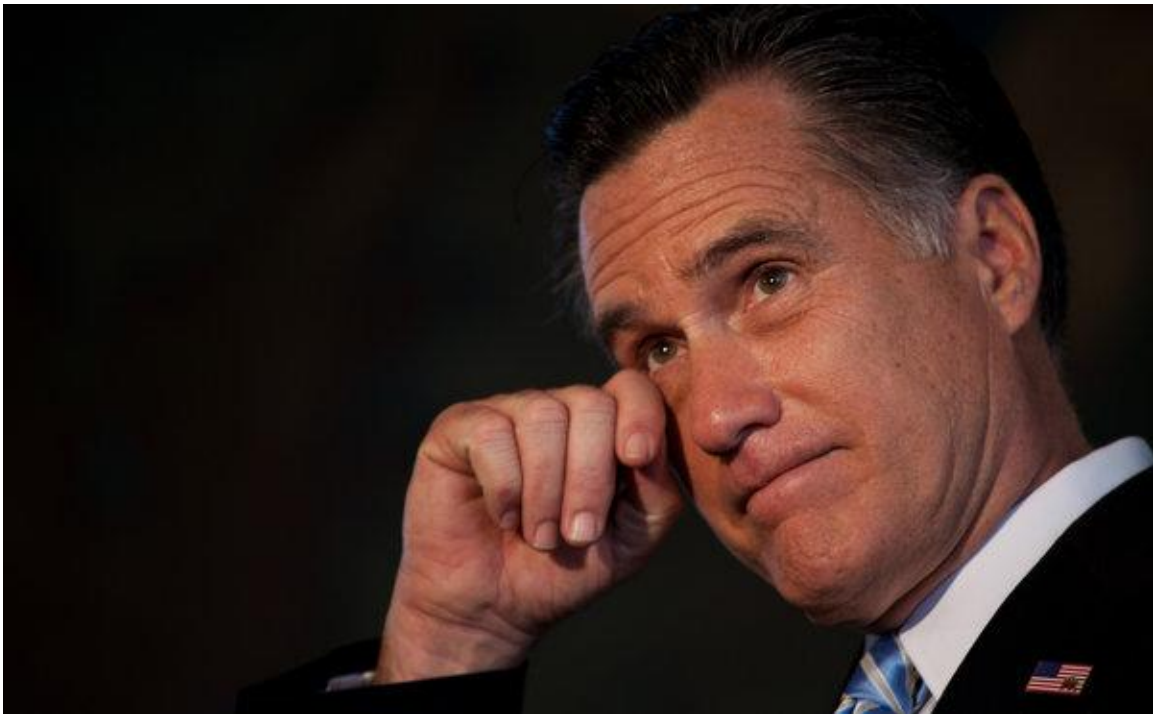
What in the world can poor Mitt do to be liked? Maybe it's not too late for a brain transplant? Or a heart transplant? Maybe he needs both?

"Why Mitt Romney Has the Worst Favorability Ratings in Memory" by Andrew Romano, The Daily Beast

Sept. 6, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/09/06/why-mitt-romney-has-the-worst-favorability-ratings-in-memory.html>)

(Despite a solid convention, Romney's favorability ratings remain historically bad. Andrew Romano on what Mitt has in common with Walter Mondale.)

Mitt Romney is the most unpopular major-party presidential nominee in recent U.S. history.



As far as I can tell, there is simply no precedent for Romney's sustained favorability slump. Back in March, I dove into the polling archives and discovered that the former Massachusetts governor "boast[ed] the worst primary-season favorable-unfavorable split of any major-party nominee of the last 36 years (at least)"—and that candidates who, like Romney, generated net-negative favorable ratings in the spring of an election year (Jimmy Carter in 1980, Walter Mondale in 1984, Bob Dole in 1996) almost always lost in the fall. The only exception was Bill Clinton, the so-called Comeback Kid.

At the time, Republicans were predicting that Romney would follow in Clinton's footsteps (rather than, say, Dole's). Wait until the convention, they argued. Wait until all the Santorumites and Newheads rally around Mitt in Tampa. Wait until the country sees him speak. Romney's underwater ratings will evaporate shortly thereafter, and he'll never look back.

This model certainly worked for Clinton—according to Gallup, he managed to transform what was a 41-49 favorable-unfavorable rating as of July 8, 1992 into a 62-25 split 10 days later, immediately after the Democratic National Convention in New York. In other words, Clinton's popularity shot up 45 percentage points pretty much overnight.

And so, given that least one former nominee had used a convention to dig himself out of a big favorability hole, I figured that now, five days after Tampa, was the right time to check back in and see if Romney's own popularity problem had finally cleared itself up.

Unfortunately for the GOP, it hasn't.

The good (if predictable) news is that Romney's favorables have increased. In March, I wrote that "right now, Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum's supporters are telling pollsters they dislike Romney. But after Mitt clinches the nomination and the party unites around him, many of his former foes will miraculously see the light." At the time, Romney's favorable rating was hovering around 37 percent. Today it's pushing 44 percent. A number of Republicans who were telling pollsters that they didn't like Romney in the heat of primary season are now telling the same pollsters that they like him fine.

The bad news is that Romney is still underwater, meaning that more voters continue to see him unfavorably than favorably. Of the 38 polls released since July 23, 25 have registered a net-negative rating for the Republican nominee, often by as many as 10 percentage points. Only nine have registered a net-positive rating. As of September 5, Romney's average split was 45.4 unfavorable to 44.1 percent favorable.

In short, Romney is the only nominee since at least 1988 who, after three straight days of balloons, banners, and fawning speeches on primetime TV, couldn't manage to convince more voters to like him than dislike him.

Context is important here.

At first glance, Republicans might be tempted to cheer these numbers. After all, Romney's favorable-unfavorable gap is smaller than it was in March, when the candidate was underwater by whopping 10 percentage points. But the reason this gap has shrunk is not because Romney's unfavorables are declining. Again, it's because Republicans have rallied around their nominee, dragging his favorable ratings out of their primary-season doldrums. The truth is that Romney's average unfavorable rating is actually higher right now than it was at any point between April 5 and July 2. Since late July, it has topped 50 percent 15 times. Becoming more unpopular as the race goes on is not the mark of a successful candidate.

Making matters worse is the fact Romney just starred in his very own national political convention. This is usually the point in a presidential campaign when the nominee's popularity reaches its peak. According to Gallup, George H.W. Bush weighed in at 39 percent favorable, 25 percent unfavorable right after the 1988 Republican convention in Houston, and Michael Dukakis generated similar stats shortly after the Democratic shindig in Atlanta (38-19). Four years later, in July 1992, Clinton's post-New York split was, again, 62-25. Al Gore registered a hugely positive rating after Los Angeles (64-30), as did George W. Bush post-Philadelphia (67-28), John Kerry post-Boston (57-37), John McCain post-Minneapolis (63-33), and Barack Obama post-Denver (62-35). Even Bob Dole clawed his way into a positive territory after the 1996 Republican fete in San Diego (32-29).

In short, Romney is the only nominee since at least 1988 who, after three straight days of balloons, banners, and fawning speeches on primetime TV, couldn't manage to convince more voters to like him than dislike him. In this he most closely resembles an earlier challenger, Walter Mondale, whose favorables actually fell after the 1984 Democratic convention in San Francisco.

Popularity isn't everything. But it's something, especially in a presidential election. If Romney's current post-convention-yet-still-underwater favorables represent the high point of his appeal—and if past is prelude, they will—then he's in serious trouble.

Voters may not love President Obama. But nothing that has happened in the last few decades of American politics suggests that they will be eager to replace him, come Election Day, with someone they can't even bring themselves to like.

"Two Conventions Tell the Tale of 2012" by John F. Harris and Jim VandeHei, Politico

Sept. 7, 2012, (http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0912/80894.html?hp=t1_3)

(CHARLOTTE, NC) Republicans last week in Tampa and Democrats this week in Charlotte were not faking it. Partisans on both sides really do regard the other party's nominee with contempt, and both sides look at the other's agenda with genuine incomprehension.

Now that the Democratic and Republican conventions are over, however, the most striking conclusion is how a collision of values produced a convergence of political strategies.

Both sides aggressively framed their conventions around the same question: Which side are you on?

The Republican way of putting it: Are you with us, or those people who disdain free enterprise, resent individual success and yearn for a European-style welfare state?

The Democratic way of putting it: Are you with us, or with those people who all look alike, want to control your sexual and reproductive freedom and don't care about opportunities for anyone who isn't already as successful as they are?

That both parties chose the most argumentative way of framing the case reflects a raucously argumentative age.

It also demands that each party also answer a question: Why would you choose a style of angry, line-drawing politics that is exactly the opposite of the line-blurring style that has made Bill Clinton the politician with the highest approval ratings in the land?

Amid the latest redundant evidence of the radicalization of politics, here are six conclusions in the wake of Charlotte and Tampa:

The election matters

There is one view that holds that 2012 has been so dominated by tactical trench warfare and an endless succession of uproars du jour that there is hardly any substance behind the noise.

Both conventions underscored how deep — and how relevant to pending decisions of governance — the philosophical divide is.

Democratic rhetoric is openly protective of big government in a way it was not during the Clinton years. Republican rhetoric is dismissive of any positive role for government that makes the "compassionate conservative" ideas of George W. Bush seem like a very distant echo.

The Republican instinct to reward individuals for risk-taking, and the Democratic instinct to emphasize collective responsibility, will play out in the near-term over Medicare. If Mitt Romney and the Republicans win, it's clear they genuinely would seek to inject substantial private-sector competition into the Medicare program — a fundamental change. President Barack Obama genuinely does view such an experiment as a violation of the social contract.

Race and the culture wars are back on center stage

There wasn't a single day at either convention that didn't see accusations of racial insensitivity or outright racism fly. It started with MSNBC's Chris Matthews and Democrats accusing Romney of playing to racial fears with his welfare reform ad, escalated with Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer charging that Obama routinely plays to racial fears over immigration and culminated with two Democratic senators hitting Republicans for being a party of out-of-touch whites. Get used to it: American politics is split along racial fault lines, with most whites voting Republican and two-thirds of Hispanics and almost three-thirds of blacks backing Democrats.

With political bases like that, neither side can resist the temptation to use racial politics to stoke turnout. If that feels different than 2008 — when Obama prospered with a celebratory vision of a post-racial nation — it is. And it surely won't end when the conventions are over.

It's not just race. Viewers tuning into the Charlotte convention this week saw the Democratic Party play offense on abortion rights, giving prominent speaking roles to NARAL Pro-Choice America's Nancy Keenan, Planned Parenthood's Cecile Richards and activist Sandra Fluke on behalf of a woman's unfettered right to choose.

This, too, is different from the way Clinton talked about these issues, traditionally backing abortion rights or gay rights by framing these in a low-key, soft-edged way to avoid inflaming people on the other side of these divisive issues.

It is not clear that the overall politics of the issue has changed. Gallup and Pew found support for abortion rights decreasing a bit in recent surveys, with the public still deeply divided. But Democrats clearly made a decision that in an election with few undecided voters, the issue could be useful in mobilizing culturally liberal women.

Republicans have a terrible demographic problem

Every political journalist has written about the GOP's long-term problem attracting younger voters and Hispanics. But the side-by-side conventions underscored this reality in dramatic fashion. Diversity in Tampa was highlighted on the podium, but the whiteness of the party, and its seeming economic and cultural homogeneity, was obvious on the convention floor and the social events around the convention.

Clint Eastwood's bizarre Grandpa Simpson moment in Tampa, meanwhile, threatens to echo damagingly in the same way Pat Buchanan's summons to a culture war did in Houston in 1992. Prominent Democrats in Charlotte couldn't stop mentioning Eastwood's performance. Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), who is 72, said Eastwood was an "an old, angry white man spewing incoherent nonsense."

Down with empathy

Average Americans, get over it: Neither nominee is very much like you. Both are a lot richer, more physically fit and have moved for many years in a world of financial, political and intellectual elites far removed from the daily hassles and setbacks of "ordinary people."

That doesn't mean they can't "understand the problems of people like you," as pollsters put it.

But the effort to establish lifestyle connections with coveted voting blocs, in particular middle-class women, were never more obvious and stagy. "I love you, women!" said Ann Romney, who also described the tuna fish with pasta she and Mitt Romney ate to save money 40 years ago. Michelle Obama said she is the "mom in chief."

These heavy-handed lines flowed from a condescending premise: that people care more about sentimental touchstones than the governmental choices at stake in the election. Notably, perhaps the most effective speech of either convention, Bill Clinton's, put the emphasis entirely on policy.

Don't overstate the importance of the conventions

In past generations, nominees could reliably count on a polling "bounce" after their conventions. Romney barely got one, and it's quite possible Obama won't either. This race has been largely static for months — with neither nominee generating intense enthusiasm among an electorate anxious about the direction of the country — and there's no reason to suppose the conventions will cause the contest to break open.

In any event, convention bounces may be an anachronism in an era of accelerated news cycles and media saturation.

Conventions are increasingly about parties talking to people whose minds are made up. On the Tuesdays of the conventions, nearly 7 million watched Republicans on Fox for the Republican convention and 2.5 million watched

the Democratic convention on Fox. Over at MSNBC, only 1.5 million watched the GOP on opening night, compared with 4 million for the Democrats.

Republicans come out of convention season behind

Romney political operatives acknowledge this privately. For the past two months, they have insisted that by now, Romney would have to put away at least one swing state — they thought it might be Florida — and that he would get a big convention bounce, bigger than thought. They now concede they are not close to putting away any swing state — in fact, they privately concede things are way worse in Ohio than originally hoped — and that they will get no convention bounce, at least not one that bounces up. This means the election will come down to the debates — and a test of whether money can truly tip elections in such a clogged media environment.

This reality helped drive a prevailing background conversation in Tampa. Many GOP activists heard vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan and keynote speaker Marco Rubio, both in their early 40s, and wished the party had decided to make a generational shift this time instead of embracing the 65-year-old Romney as nominee.

[20120906-03](#)

09:38

SteveG

Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Don't Let Shell Extend Its Arctic Drilling Window!

from CREDO Action:

Shortening days and alarmingly fast ice melt aren't the only reasons these are dark times for our Arctic. Last week, President Obama allowed Shell to move two big steps closer to offshore oil drilling in the Arctic this year. The EPA quietly caved and approved Shell's waiver to exceed air pollution limits. And even worse, the Department of Interior has actually allowed Shell to begin drilling its first well in the Chukchi Sea. Drilling could start any day now, if it hasn't started already.

But unlike the Obama administration, time is not on Shell's side. Shell is still awaiting final approval to drill deep enough to hit oil, and drilling that deep takes about three weeks — but Shell has a deadline of September 24 to stop drilling in the Chukchi before the sea ice and winter weather start to return.

Predictably, Shell has already asked the Department of Interior to extend its drilling window to the end of October. If we can stop that from happening, we can prevent the worst damage to the Chukchi Sea, at least for one more year.

Tell Pres. Obama and Sec. Salazar: Say Shell NO! to extending Shell's Arctic drilling window. Click here to sign the petition:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/drilling_deadline/.

The September 24 deadline provides for a five-week window in case of a well blowout, for oil spill workers to drill a relief well before November 1, when weather turns much more severe in the Arctic and the well site will receive only 6 hours of sunlight a day.

Giving Shell extra time by shortening the spill response window, or pushing it into periods of even more extreme Arctic weather, is a recipe for a disaster.

Tell Pres. Obama and Sec. Salazar: Say Shell NO! to extending Shell's Arctic drilling window. Click here to automatically sign the petition.

Of course, it's not just the safety of the Arctic that is at stake. With Arctic sea ice melting far faster than scientists predicted and at its lowest level in recorded history, the time is long past for us to heed the warnings of climate change, not continue heating up our planet with more and more fossil fuels.

Earlier this month, Department of Interior head Secretary Salazar pledged to hold Shell to the existing timeline when he said, "I will hold [Shell's] feet to the fire in terms of making sure that we are doing everything we can to abide by the standards and regulations we have set."

Now is the time to hold Salazar to his word, and make it clear to President Obama that if anything happens in the Arctic, we will hold him fully responsible.

Thank you for defending our Arctic, Elijah Zarlin, Campaign Manager

20120906-13	19:15	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Petition: Clean Energy Needs Your Help!
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Climate change is accelerating, but there's a massive ray of hope: clean energy is booming, producing nearly 20% of the world's electricity! Incredibly, the US and EU are threatening to stifle this breakthrough -- but together we can stop them.

In the last decade the Chinese government has invested billions in solar, sending panel prices plummeting and making clean green tech almost as cheap as dirty fossil fuels. But the US and EU, who give billions in taxpayer subsidies to Big Oil and Coal, are about to drive solar prices back up by putting tariffs on China, and now China is threatening to retaliate. A full on trade war is brewing that could kill the crucial green energy revolution.

The EU and US are deciding right now. Most of the solar industry is against tariffs -- and now massive public support could tip the balance. Sign the urgent petition to save solar -- if we build a 500,000 strong petition, Avaaz will make a formal submission to the US International Trade Commission and EU trade Commissioner calling for talks not tariffs.

China has a poor human rights and environmental record, and its strategy of flooding the global market with subsidised goods could be found to be too aggressive. But the right response to this is not tariffs, it is investment. While China, the EU, and the US all funnel billions into Big Coal and Oil to destroy our planet, China is also providing huge loans and subsidies to the solar industry. And that's exactly what other governments have failed to do.

Following the bankruptcy of a handful of US and EU solar manufacturers, some lobbyists are pushing politicians to blame China, instead of their own insufficient and inappropriate subsidies. Some claim that domestic jobs are threatened by low cost Chinese panels, but the truth is the opposite -- experts predict that tariffs could cost 60,000 jobs in the US alone. The vast majority of jobs in the solar sector outside of China are in installing and servicing panels, not manufacturing them, so cheaper panels now means more work, and more jobs. And less climate change.

The EU trade Commissioner initiated the investigation into tariffs today and the US ITC proceedings are about to kick off. Written statements to both must be submitted in days to be considered. We're in a race against the clock to green our economies and prevent catastrophic climate change, and Chinese success in green tech could be the perfect catalyst for the rest of the world to scale up the technology and sustainably bring down prices. Let's make sure the EU and the US don't kill our ray of hope:

http://www.avaaz.org/en/a_ray_of_hope_on_climate/.

In the world most of us everywhere want, our governments would incentivise clean energy, and not hand out our tax money to polluters making record profits from dirtying our land, air and water and destroying our planet. Today, we can save solar, and take one step closer to that future.

With hope, Iain, Joseph, Alice, David, Julien, Emma, Ricken, and the rest of the Avaaz team

[More information:](#)

BBC -- "China solar panel imports investigated by European Union" <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19498382>.

Forbes – "Solar Trade War Widens To Europe, SolarWorld Called 'Crazed Agent Provocateur'" <http://www.forbes.com/sites/toddwoody/2012/07/24/solar-trade-war-widens-to-europe-solarworld-called-crazed-agent-provocateur/>.

CBS -- "Chinese solar industry faces weak sales, price war" <http://www.cbsatlanta.com/story/19337660/chinese-solar-industry-faces-weak-sales-price-war>.

NYT -- "U.S. Slaps High Tariffs on Chinese Solar Panels" <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/18/business/energy-environment/us-slaps-tariffs-on-chinese-solar-panels.html?pagewanted=all>.

Bloomberg – "U.S. Solar Tariffs On Chinese Cells May Boost Prices" <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-05-17/u-s-solar-tariffs-on-chinese-cells-may-boost-prices.html>.

The Butler Firm -- "Fighting Fair: A legal analysis of SolarWorlds trade dispute with China" <http://www.thebutlerfirm.com/fighting-fair-a-legal-analysis-of-solarworlds-trade-dispute-with-china/>.

20120906-25 23:29 SteveG	Fw: League of Conservation Voters Action: What Do You Think Is the Most Important Way to Address Climate Change?
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from League of Conservation Voters:

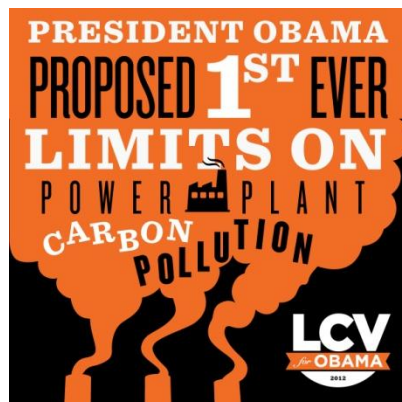
I just got goosebumps. I'm watching President Obama's convention speech and it suddenly hit me. This is it. Sixty days from now, we will either reelect a president who has done more to address global warming than any before him *or* we will spend four years under a leader who will end incentives for clean energy innovation, roll back clean air protections against mercury and carbon pollution, and allow Big Oil and Dirty Coal to exploit our environment and fuel the climate crisis.

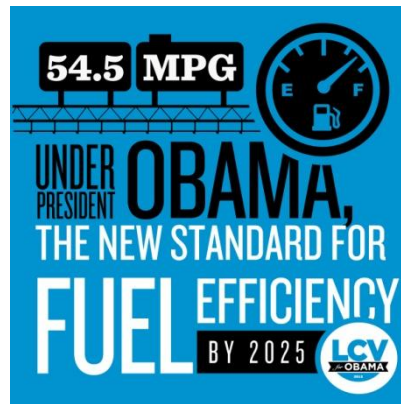
This isn't just an election on the line. It's about the water we swim in, the lands we cherish, the wildlife we love, the air we breathe, and the climate that sustains us.

That's why, during the next two months, we're going to make it our mission to educate everyone in our network about why President Obama is the clear choice in this election if we want to protect our health and our planet. But to get started, we need to hear from you:

What do you think is the most important action President Obama has taken to address the climate crisis and keep our families healthy?

Click on one of the infographics below to vote.





Change is never as easy or as fast as we'd like it to be, but under President Obama's leadership the EPA and other agencies have taken many truly historic steps to address climate change—and they could do a lot more with four more years. We're going to work hard until Election Day to give President Obama, the EPA, and our country that opportunity. As an important LCV member, I hope you'll join us.

Thanks, Vanessa Kritzer, Online Campaigns Manager, League of Conservation Voters

20120906-04	09:51	Pam	Re: "Fact Check: First Lady's False Fairy Tale of Struggle" (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #220) & "Transcript: Michelle Obama's Democratic Convention Speech"
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When I read the account of Michelle Obama's speech and his insistence that the Obamas were, in fact, "privileged" because of their "elite" educations, I had to laugh. The underlying assumptions, obviously, are that getting a good education means 1.--your family is rich, 2.--you couldn't possibly know what financial hardship is.

There is a huge difference between a kid who is sent to the prep school his daddy went to and a kid who went because his single mother knew that the best way for her child to get ahead was to make sure he got a good education. My husband was one of those kids. Mark went to Punahou School, the very same one that Barack Obama did. Punahou is known as "the best school west of the Mississippi," and that is not an idle boast. Mark's mother was divorced when he was six and his brother was five. She moved them from California to Hawaii to give them all a new start, found a job as a secretary for Dole Pineapple, rented an apartment, and enrolled her boys at Punahou. Dorothy was a secretary all her life--at one point she worked for Albert Baez, Joan's father--she never remarried and devoted her life to making sure her sons got the best educations possible. She was a secretary at Stanford Univ., which meant her sons got a tuition waiver to go there. Whatever she did, wherever she went, she made sure her boys were in the best schools. This was a woman who provided a good life for her kids but who always knew about financial struggle. It is commendable that Barack's mother and Michelle's parents made sure their children would be where the opportunities were, so they could take advantage of them. They were not spoiled by their parents; they were shown what was possible if you worked for it.

The reason I had to laugh at this article was because it reminded me of a Monty Python sketch. A bunch of obviously well-off white guys (John Cleese among them) are sitting in a row, comparing their hard beginnings to show how very far they've come. The worse you had it then, the more credit you get now, is the idea. One starts off by talking about being born in a two-bedroom house. The next guy says, "You think that's bad? I was born in a tent." Next man in line, "That's nothing. I was born in a field." Finally John Cleese describes what's got to be the worst circumstances possible: "I was born in a gutter, during a rainstorm, while my big brother fought off the rats that were trying to eat me." That's not what he really said, but something along those lines. What strikes me is that the Romney-ites claim credit for their success, with never a look back over their shoulder to see who might be struggling to catch up, while the Obamas recognize and are grateful for the sacrifices their parents made so that they could be on the path that the Romneys of the world already have the map for. It's so ironic when people who claim to disdain "the elites" are unaware of how some of those elites are actively working to enact policies that will make those same people's lives immeasurably harder.

"Transcript: Michelle Obama's Democratic Convention Speech" ABC News

Sept. 4, 2012, (<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/OTUS/transcript-michelle-obamas-democratic-convention-speech/story?id=17155898>)

(Below is the full transcript, as prepared for delivery, of First Lady Michelle Obama's speech to the Democratic National Convention on Tuesday night.)

Thank you so much, Elaine...we are so grateful for your family's service and sacrifice...and we will always have your back.

Over the past few years as First Lady, I have had the extraordinary privilege of traveling all across this country. And everywhere I've gone, in the people I've met, and the stories I've heard, I have seen the very best of the American spirit.

I have seen it in the incredible kindness and warmth that people have shown me and my family, especially our girls.

I've seen it in teachers in a near-bankrupt school district who vowed to keep teaching without pay.

I've seen it in people who become heroes at a moment's notice, diving into harm's way to save others...flying across the country to put out a fire...driving for hours to bail out a flooded town.

And I've seen it in our men and women in uniform and our proud military families...in wounded warriors who tell me they're not just going to walk again, they're going to run, and they're going to run marathons...in the young man blinded by a bomb in Afghanistan who said, simply, "...I'd give my eyes 100 times again to have the chance to do what I have done and what I can still do."

Every day, the people I meet inspire me...every day, they make me proud...every day they remind me how blessed we are to live in the greatest nation on earth.

Serving as your First Lady is an honor and a privilege...but back when we first came together four years ago, I still had some concerns about this journey we'd begun.

While I believed deeply in my husband's vision for this country...and I was certain he would make an extraordinary President...like any mother, I was worried about what it would mean for our girls if he got that chance.

How would we keep them grounded under the glare of the national spotlight?

How would they feel being uprooted from their school, their friends, and the only home they'd ever known?

Our life before moving to Washington was filled with simple joys...Saturdays at soccer games, Sundays at grandma's house...and a date night for Barack and me was either dinner or a movie, because as an exhausted mom, I couldn't stay awake for both.

And the truth is, I loved the life we had built for our girls...I deeply loved the man I had built that life with...and I didn't want that to change if he became President.

I loved Barack just the way he was.

You see, even though back then Barack was a Senator and a presidential candidate...to me, he was still the guy who'd picked me up for our dates in a car that was so rusted out, I could actually see the pavement going by through a hole in the passenger side door...he was the guy whose proudest possession was a coffee table he'd found in a dumpster, and whose only pair of decent shoes was half a size too small.

But when Barack started telling me about his family – that's when I knew I had found a kindred spirit, someone whose values and upbringing were so much like mine.

You see, Barack and I were both raised by families who didn't have much in the way of money or material possessions but who had given us something far more valuable – their unconditional love, their unflinching sacrifice, and the chance to go places they had never imagined for themselves.

My father was a pump operator at the city water plant, and he was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis when my brother and I were young.

And even as a kid, I knew there were plenty of days when he was in pain...I knew there were plenty of mornings when it was a struggle for him to simply get out of bed.

But every morning, I watched my father wake up with a smile, grab his walker, prop himself up against the bathroom sink, and slowly shave and button his uniform.

And when he returned home after a long day's work, my brother and I would stand at the top of the stairs to our little apartment, patiently waiting to greet him...watching as he reached down to lift one leg, and then the other, to slowly climb his way into our arms.

But despite these challenges, my dad hardly ever missed a day of work...he and my mom were determined to give me and my brother the kind of education they could only dream of.

And when my brother and I finally made it to college, nearly all of our tuition came from student loans and grants. But my dad still had to pay a tiny portion of that tuition himself.

And every semester, he was determined to pay that bill right on time, even taking out loans when he fell short. He was so proud to be sending his kids to college...and he made sure we never missed a registration deadline because his check was late.

You see, for my dad, that's what it meant to be a man.

Like so many of us, that was the measure of his success in life – being able to earn a decent living that allowed him to support his family.

And as I got to know Barack, I realized that even though he'd grown up all the way across the country, he'd been brought up just like me.

Barack was raised by a single mother who struggled to pay the bills, and by grandparents who stepped in when she needed help.

Barack's grandmother started out as a secretary at a community bank...and she moved quickly up the ranks...but like so many women, she hit a glass ceiling.

And for years, men no more qualified than she was – men she had actually trained – were promoted up the ladder ahead of her, earning more and more money while Barack's family continued to scrape by.

But day after day, she kept on waking up at dawn to catch the bus...arriving at work before anyone else...giving her best without complaint or regret.

And she would often tell Barack, "So long as you kids do well, Bar, that's all that really matters."

Like so many American families, our families weren't asking for much.

They didn't begrudge anyone else's success or care that others had much more than they did...in fact, they admired it.

They simply believed in that fundamental American promise that, even if you don't start out with much, if you work hard and do what you're supposed to do, then you should be able to build a decent life for yourself and an even better life for your kids and grandkids.

That's how they raised us...that's what we learned from their example.

We learned about dignity and decency – that how hard you work matters more than how much you make...that helping others means more than just getting ahead yourself.

We learned about honesty and integrity – that the truth matters...that you don't take shortcuts or play by your own set of rules...and success doesn't count unless you earn it fair and square.

We learned about gratitude and humility – that so many people had a hand in our success, from the teachers who inspired us to the janitors who kept our school clean...and we were taught to value everyone's contribution and treat everyone with respect.

Those are the values Barack and I – and so many of you – are trying to pass on to our own children.

That's who we are.

And standing before you four years ago, I knew that I didn't want any of that to change if Barack became President. Well, today, after so many struggles and triumphs and moments that have tested my husband in ways I never could have imagined, I have seen firsthand that being president doesn't change who you are – it reveals who you are.

You see, I've gotten to see up close and personal what being president really looks like.

And I've seen how the issues that come across a President's desk are always the hard ones – the problems where no amount of data or numbers will get you to the right answer...the judgment calls where the stakes are so high, and there is no margin for error.

And as President, you can get all kinds of advice from all kinds of people.

But at the end of the day, when it comes time to make that decision, as President, all you have to guide you are your values, and your vision, and the life experiences that make you who you are.

So when it comes to rebuilding our economy, Barack is thinking about folks like my dad and like his grandmother. He's thinking about the pride that comes from a hard day's work.

That's why he signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act to help women get equal pay for equal work.

That's why he cut taxes for working families and small businesses and fought to get the auto industry back on its feet.

That's how he brought our economy from the brink of collapse to creating jobs again – jobs you can raise a family on, good jobs right here in the United States of America.

When it comes to the health of our families, Barack refused to listen to all those folks who told him to leave health reform for another day, another president.

He didn't care whether it was the easy thing to do politically – that's not how he was raised – he cared that it was the right thing to do.

He did it because he believes that here in America, our grandparents should be able to afford their medicine...our kids should be able to see a doctor when they're sick...and no one in this country should ever go broke because of an accident or illness.

And he believes that women are more than capable of making our own choices about our bodies and our health care...that's what my husband stands for.

When it comes to giving our kids the education they deserve, Barack knows that like me and like so many of you, he never could've attended college without financial aid.

And believe it or not, when we were first married, our combined monthly student loan bills were actually higher than our mortgage.

We were so young, so in love, and so in debt.

That's why Barack has fought so hard to increase student aid and keep interest rates down, because he wants every young person to fulfill their promise and be able to attend college without a mountain of debt.

So in the end, for Barack, these issues aren't political – they're personal.

Because Barack knows what it means when a family struggles.

He knows what it means to want something more for your kids and grandkids.

Barack knows the American Dream because he's lived it...and he wants everyone in this country to have that same opportunity, no matter who we are, or where we're from, or what we look like, or who we love.

And he believes that when you've worked hard, and done well, and walked through that doorway of opportunity...you do not slam it shut behind you...you reach back, and you give other folks the same chances that helped you succeed.

So when people ask me whether being in the White House has changed my husband, I can honestly say that when it comes to his character, and his convictions, and his heart, Barack Obama is still the same man I fell in love with all those years ago.

He's the same man who started his career by turning down high paying jobs and instead working in struggling neighborhoods where a steel plant had shut down, fighting to rebuild those communities and get folks back to work...because for Barack, success isn't about how much money you make, it's about the difference you make in people's lives.

He's the same man who, when our girls were first born, would anxiously check their cribs every few minutes to ensure they were still breathing, proudly showing them off to everyone we knew.

That's the man who sits down with me and our girls for dinner nearly every night, patiently answering their questions about issues in the news, and strategizing about middle school friendships.

That's the man I see in those quiet moments late at night, hunched over his desk, poring over the letters people have sent him.

The letter from the father struggling to pay his bills...from the woman dying of cancer whose insurance company won't cover her care...from the young person with so much promise but so few opportunities.

I see the concern in his eyes...and I hear the determination in his voice as he tells me, "You won't believe what these folks are going through, Michelle...it's not right. We've got to keep working to fix this. We've got so much more to do."

I see how those stories – our collection of struggles and hopes and dreams – I see how that's what drives Barack Obama every single day.

And I didn't think it was possible, but today, I love my husband even more than I did four years ago...even more than I did 23 years ago, when we first met.

I love that he's never forgotten how he started.

I love that we can trust Barack to do what he says he's going to do, even when it's hard – especially when it's hard.

I love that for Barack, there is no such thing as "us" and "them" – he doesn't care whether you're a Democrat, a Republican, or none of the above...he knows that we all love our country...and he's always ready to listen to good ideas...he's always looking for the very best in everyone he meets.

And I love that even in the toughest moments, when we're all sweating it – when we're worried that the bill won't pass, and it seems like all is lost – Barack never lets himself get distracted by the chatter and the noise.

Just like his grandmother, he just keeps getting up and moving forward...with patience and wisdom, and courage and grace.

And he reminds me that we are playing a long game here...and that change is hard, and change is slow, and it never happens all at once.

But eventually we get there, we always do.

We get there because of folks like my Dad...folks like Barack's grandmother...men and women who said to themselves, "I may not have a chance to fulfill my dreams, but maybe my children will...maybe my grandchildren will."

So many of us stand here tonight because of their sacrifice, and longing, and steadfast love...because time and again, they swallowed their fears and doubts and did what was hard.

So today, when the challenges we face start to seem overwhelming – or even impossible – let us never forget that doing the impossible is the history of this nation...it's who we are as Americans...it's how this country was built.

And if our parents and grandparents could toil and struggle for us...if they could raise beams of steel to the sky, send a man to the moon, and connect the world with the touch of a button...then surely we can keep on sacrificing and building for our own kids and grandkids.

And if so many brave men and women could wear our country's uniform and sacrifice their lives for our most fundamental rights...then surely we can do our part as citizens of this great democracy to exercise those rights...surely, we can get to the polls and make our voices heard on Election Day.

If farmers and blacksmiths could win independence from an empire...if immigrants could leave behind everything they knew for a better life on our shores...if women could be dragged to jail for seeking the vote...if a generation could defeat a depression, and define greatness for all time...if a young preacher could lift us to the mountaintop with his righteous dream...and if proud Americans can be who they are and boldly stand at the altar with who they love...then surely, surely we can give everyone in this country a fair chance at that great American Dream.

Because in the end, more than anything else, that is the story of this country – the story of unwavering hope grounded in unyielding struggle.

That is what has made my story, and Barack's story, and so many other American stories possible. And I say all of this tonight not just as First Lady...and not just as a wife.

You see, at the end of the day, my most important title is still "mom-in-chief."

My daughters are still the heart of my heart and the center of my world.

But today, I have none of those worries from four years ago about whether Barack and I were doing what's best for our girls.

Because today, I know from experience that if I truly want to leave a better world for my daughters, and all our sons and daughters...if we want to give all our children a foundation for their dreams and opportunities worthy of their promise...if we want to give them that sense of limitless possibility – that belief that here in America, there is always something better out there if you're willing to work for it...then we must work like never before...and we must once again come together and stand together for the man we can trust to keep moving this great country forward...my husband, our President, President Barack Obama.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.

20120906-05	09:55	Pam	Video: "David after Dentist"
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This is SO funny!

"David after Dentist" (video): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txqiwrbYGrS>.

20120906-06	12:33	SteveB	"Don't Let Wall Street Billionaires Destroy Social Security"
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"Don't Let Wall Street Billionaires Destroy Social Security" by Bernie Sanders, NationofChange

Sept. 6, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/don-t-let-wall-street-billionaires-destroy-social-security-1346946250>)

September 7 is an important date for New Hampshire. On that day, Wall Street billionaire Pete Peterson will kick-off his 2012 national campaign to cut Social Security and other vitally important programs with a "town meeting" with a town meeting at St. Anselm's College in Manchester at 5 p.m.

The American people should not be fooled by the misinformation that will be spread at these "grassroots" gatherings backed by some of the most powerful Wall Street, insurance, and corporate CEOs in the country.

The goal of these "town meetings" is to convince the people of New Hampshire and the rest of America that the only effective way to address the deficit crisis is to balance the budget on the backs of the elderly, the children the sick and the poor.

Don't believe it!

First, let us never forget how we got into our current deficit crisis.

In January of 2001, when Bill Clinton left office, this country was enjoying a very healthy \$236 billion SURPLUS projected to increase in the coming years.

Under President George W. Bush and his fellow "deficit hawks," the United States went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq and "forgot" to pay for the wars which will end up adding some \$3 trillion to our national debt.

Under George W. Bush and his fellow "deficit hawks," the wealthiest people in this country were given huge tax breaks which cost \$1 trillion over a 10-year period. There was no offset for those tax breaks. They were simply added to the deficit.

Under George W. Bush and his fellow "deficit hawks," an overly-expensive Medicare prescription drug program written by the insurance and drug companies was signed into law. This program, which explicitly prevented the government from negotiating lower drug prices with the pharmaceutical industry, was not paid for and will end up adding some \$400 billion to our national debt over a 10-year period.

Now, having run up huge deficits, our born-again "deficit hawks," on behalf of their billionaire allies, want to cut Social Security to save money.

What's wrong with this picture? First, despite Wall Street and right-wing misleading rhetoric, Social Security, which is funded by the payroll tax, has not contributed one nickel to the deficit. Second, the Social Security Trust Fund today, according to the Social Security Administration, has a \$2.7 trillion surplus and can pay 100 percent of all benefits owed to every eligible American for the next 21 years.

Why should we vigorously defend Social Security, prevent any cuts and, in fact, make sure Social Security is solvent for the next 75 years? The answer is obvious. In these highly volatile economic times, when millions of Americans lost their life savings in the 2008 Wall Street crash, Social Security, through good economic times and bad, has paid out every penny owed to every eligible beneficiary. In other words, it is a guaranteed benefit and that promise has always been kept.

In the 77 years since President Franklin Roosevelt signed Social Security into law on August 14, 1935, the retirement and insurance program has been one of the nation's most successful anti-poverty programs. Before Social Security existed, about half of America's senior citizens lived in poverty. Today, less than 10 percent live in poverty. Further, Social Security provides much-needed assistance to people with disabilities as well as widows, widowers and orphans.

Let's be clear. The deficit and national debt are serious issues, but we must not balance the budget on the backs of the elderly, the children, the sick and the poor. This would not only be immoral, it would be bad economic policy.

While our billionaire friends may not like them, there are much fairer ways to reduce the deficit. At a time when the wealthiest people in this country are doing phenomenally well and their effective tax rate is the lowest in decades, the top 1 percent must begin paying their fair share of taxes. At a time when large corporations are enjoying record-breaking profits, we have got to eliminate the huge corporate loopholes which result in a massive loss of federal revenue. At a time when we have tripled military spending since 1997, we must take a hard look at a bloated and wasteful Defense Department.

To keep Social Security's finances sound in the future I have introduced legislation -- identical to a proposal that President Obama advocated in 2008 -- to apply the payroll tax on incomes above \$250,000 a year. Under current law, only earnings up to \$110,100 are taxed. The Center for Economic Policy and Research has estimated that applying the Social Security payroll tax on income above \$250,000 would only impact the wealthiest 1.4 percent of wage earners.

While we often take Social Security for granted, we must not forget that Social Security today is providing dignity and security to tens of millions of Americans at very modest administrative cost. It is a program that is working and working well.

Now is the time to defend Social Security against billionaires, right-wing Republicans, and some Democrats who want to cut this program. Let's send them that message in New Hampshire on September 7.

20120906-07	15:10	SteveM	Fw: (from Rep. Ron Barber) Securing the Border
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One thing that is mostly bi-partisan here in the Southwest...

from Rep. Ron Barber (AZ):

It is an honor to represent Southern Arizona in Congress. The best way for me to do my job is to keep in touch with you. I hope you'll take a minute to read this update on my work in Washington and at home in Southern Arizona on securing the border. Please contact my office if you have any questions about federal legislation or if you need help solving problems with a federal agency.

I believe that Southern Arizonans deserve the same safety and security as other Americans. Arizona's 8th Congressional District includes 110 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border, and people who live near it are particularly affected by criminal activities along the border. Ensuring a secure border is the responsibility of the federal government and all Americans have a right to be safe in their own homes and on their land. As your representative in Congress, I am committed to securing our borders through additional agents on the ground, improvements in communications and surveillance technology, and adequate staffing at our ports of entry.

On August 2, I introduced a bipartisan bill that calls for the U.S. and Mexico to work cooperatively to fight Mexican cartels that threaten the safety of people on both sides of the border. The United States-Mexico Cross-Border Security Act would direct the State Department to create a unified plan across all federal agencies to fight Mexican transnational criminal organizations. The plan would target the criminals by cutting off their money-laundering capabilities and securing the border through additional staffing, infrastructure, technology, and intelligence coordination. This bill would also strengthen Mexican institutions so they can more effectively combat Mexican criminal organizations and drug cartels before they enter the United States.

Additionally, as a member of the House Committee on Homeland Security and the House Border Security Caucus, be assured that I will bring your concerns about the border crisis in Arizona to the attention of Congress and federal officials so that our state is given the tools and resources it needs to secure our border with Mexico and ensure the safety of all Arizonans.

Having lived in Arizona for most of my life, I have made many visits to the border area and know that improvements can be made. Most recently, I visited the border east of Douglas to meet with the Border Patrol and Cochise County ranchers. As one of the few Members of Congress who represents a Congressional District on our southern border, I will continue to work hard to ensure that Southern Arizonans have the same level of safety and security as other Americans.

It is an honor to represent Southern Arizona and keep the people I serve, like you, updated on the work in Congress that has a direct impact on their lives. Please contact me if I can be of service to you or your family. If you are experiencing issues with a federal agency, my office may be able to help you resolve the problem.

Sincerely Yours, Ron Barber, Member of Congress

20120906-09	19:30	Pam	Clinton's DNC Speech
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I can't keep this to myself. I just watched Clinton's speech online and my heart is still pounding. What a great orator he is! HE is the great communicator. Oh, I know he's done some kinky things and cut deals that I might not agree with, but he is smart, passionate, dedicated to improving the nation and the world, and he has the cojones to do it. He gave the speech I've been waiting to hear, with specifics and straight talk. I'm glad I voted for him in the past, and I'd always want him to be on my side when the going got tough. He's a flawed human being, but he's a great politician and has done this country enormous good.

20120906-27	23:44	SteveB	Re: Clinton's DNC Speech (reply to Pam, above) & "Transcript: Bill Clinton's Democratic Convention Speech"
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I agree completely...

But banging Sandra Fluke backstage before he came out was just a little too much for me (and Ann Coulter)!

"Transcript: Bill Clinton's Democratic Convention Speech" ABC News

Sept. 5, 2012 (<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/OTUS/transcript-bill-clintons-democratic-convention-speech/story?id=17164662>)

Former President Bill Clinton's remarks to the Democratic National Convention, as prepared for delivery. Clinton veered from these prepared remarks multiple times throughout his speech.

We're here to nominate a President, and I've got one in mind.

I want to nominate a man whose own life has known its fair share of adversity and uncertainty. A man who ran for President to change the course of an already weak economy and then just six weeks before the election, saw it suffer the biggest collapse since the Great Depression. A man who stopped the slide into depression and put us on the long road to recovery, knowing all the while that no matter how many jobs were created and saved, there were still millions more waiting, trying to feed their children and keep their hopes alive.

I want to nominate a man cool on the outside but burning for America on the inside. A man who believes we can build a new American Dream economy driven by innovation and creativity, education and cooperation. A man who had the good sense to marry Michelle Obama.

I want Barack Obama to be the next President of the United States and I proudly nominate him as the standard bearer of the Democratic Party.

In Tampa, we heard a lot of talk about how the President and the Democrats don't believe in free enterprise and individual initiative, how we want everyone to be dependent on the government, how bad we are for the economy.

The Republican narrative is that all of us who amount to anything are completely self-made. One of our greatest Democratic Chairmen, Bob Strauss, used to say that every politician wants you to believe he was born in a log cabin he built himself, but it ain't so.

We Democrats think the country works better with a strong middle class, real opportunities for poor people to work their way into it and a relentless focus on the future, with business and government working together to promote growth and broadly shared prosperity. We think "we're all in this together" is a better philosophy than "you're on your own."

Who's right? Well since 1961, the Republicans have held the White House 28 years, the Democrats 24. In those 52 years, our economy produced 66 million private sector jobs. What's the jobs score? Republicans 24 million, Democrats 42 million!

It turns out that advancing equal opportunity and economic empowerment is both morally right and good economics, because discrimination, poverty and ignorance restrict growth, while investments in education, infrastructure and scientific and technological research increase it, creating more good jobs and new wealth for all of us.

Though I often disagree with Republicans, I never learned to hate them the way the far right that now controls their party seems to hate President Obama and the Democrats. After all, President Eisenhower sent federal troops to my home state to integrate Little Rock Central High and built the interstate highway system. And as governor, I worked with President Reagan on welfare reform and with President George H.W. Bush on national education goals.

I am grateful to President George W. Bush for PEPFAR, which is saving the lives of millions of people in poor countries and to both Presidents Bush for the work we've done together after the South Asia tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and the Haitian earthquake.

Through my foundation, in America and around the world, I work with Democrats, Republicans and Independents who are focused on solving problems and seizing opportunities, not fighting each other.

When times are tough, constant conflict may be good politics but in the real world, cooperation works better. After all, nobody's right all the time, and a broken clock is right twice a day. All of us are destined to live our lives between those two extremes. Unfortunately, the faction that now dominates the Republican Party doesn't see it that way. They think government is the enemy, and compromise is weakness.

One of the main reasons America should re-elect President Obama is that he is still committed to cooperation. He appointed Republican Secretaries of Defense, the Army and Transportation. He appointed a Vice President who ran against him in 2008, and trusted him to oversee the successful end of the war in Iraq and the implementation of the recovery act. And Joe Biden did a great job with both. He appointed Cabinet members who supported Hillary in the primaries. Heck, he even appointed Hillary! I'm so proud of her and grateful to our entire national security team for all they've done to make us safer and stronger and to build a world with more partners and fewer enemies. I'm also grateful to the young men and women who serve our country in the military and to Michelle Obama and Jill Biden for supporting military families when their loved ones are overseas and for helping our veterans, when they come home bearing the wounds of war, or needing help with education, housing, and jobs.

President Obama's record on national security is a tribute to his strength, and judgment, and to his preference for inclusion and partnership over partisanship.

He also tried to work with Congressional Republicans on Health Care, debt reduction, and jobs, but that didn't work out so well. Probably because, as the Senate Republican leader, in a remarkable moment of candor, said two years before the election, their number one priority was not to put America back to work, but to put President Obama out of work. Senator, I hate to break it to you, but we're going to keep President Obama on the job!

In Tampa, the Republican argument against the President's re-election was pretty simple: we left him a total mess, he hasn't cleaned it up fast enough, so fire him and put us back in.

In order to look like an acceptable alternative to President Obama, they couldn't say much about the ideas they have offered over the last two years. You see they want to go back to the same old policies that got us into trouble in the first place: to cut taxes for high income Americans even more than President Bush did; to get rid of those pesky financial regulations designed to prevent another crash and prohibit future bailouts; to increase defense spending two trillion dollars more than the Pentagon has requested without saying what they'll spend the money on; to make enormous cuts in the rest of the budget, especially programs that help the middle class and poor kids. As another President once said – there they go again.

I like the argument for President Obama's re-election a lot better. He inherited a deeply damaged economy, put a floor under the crash, began the long hard road to recovery, and laid the foundation for a modern, more well-balanced economy that will produce millions of good new jobs, vibrant new businesses, and lots of new wealth for the innovators. Are we where we want to be? No. Is the President satisfied? No. Are we better off than we were when he took office, with an economy in free fall, losing 750,000 jobs a month. The answer is YES.

I understand the challenge we face. I know many Americans are still angry and frustrated with the economy. Though employment is growing, banks are beginning to lend and even housing prices are picking up a bit, too many people don't feel it.

I experienced the same thing in 1994 and early 1995. Our policies were working and the economy was growing but most people didn't feel it yet. By 1996, the economy was roaring, halfway through the longest peacetime expansion in American history.

President Obama started with a much weaker economy than I did. No President – not me or any of my predecessors could have repaired all the damage in just four years. But conditions are improving and if you'll renew the President's contract you will feel it.

I believe that with all my heart.

President Obama's approach embodies the values, the ideas, and the direction America must take to build a 21st century version of the American Dream in a nation of shared opportunities, shared prosperity and shared responsibilities.

So back to the story. In 2010, as the President's recovery program kicked in, the job losses stopped and things began to turn around.

The Recovery Act saved and created millions of jobs and cut taxes for 95% of the American people. In the last 29 months the economy has produced about 4.5 million private sector jobs. But last year, the Republicans blocked the President's jobs plan costing the economy more than a million new jobs. So here's another jobs score: President Obama plus 4.5 million, Congressional Republicans zero.

Over that same period, more than more than 500,000 manufacturing jobs have been created under President Obama – the first time manufacturing jobs have increased since the 1990s.

The auto industry restructuring worked. It saved more than a million jobs, not just at GM, Chrysler and their dealerships, but in auto parts manufacturing all over the country. That's why even auto-makers that weren't part of the deal supported it. They needed to save the suppliers too. Like I said, we're all in this together.

Now there are 250,000 more people working in the auto industry than the day the companies were restructured. Governor Romney opposed the plan to save GM and Chrysler. So here's another jobs score: Obama two hundred and fifty thousand, Romney, zero.

The agreement the administration made with management, labor and environmental groups to double car mileage over the next few years is another good deal: it will cut your gas bill in half, make us more energy independent, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and add another 500,000 good jobs.

President Obama's "all of the above" energy plan is helping too – the boom in oil and gas production combined with greater energy efficiency has driven oil imports to a near 20 year low and natural gas production to an all time high. Renewable energy production has also doubled.

We do need more new jobs, lots of them, but there are already more than three million jobs open and unfilled in America today, mostly because the applicants don't have the required skills. We have to prepare more Americans for the new jobs that are being created in a world fueled by new technology. That's why investments in our people are more important than ever. The President has supported community colleges and employers in working together to train people for open jobs in their communities. And, after a decade in which exploding college costs have increased the drop-out rate so much that we've fallen to 16th in the world in the percentage of our young adults with college degrees, his student loan reform lowers the cost of federal student loans and even more important, gives students the right to repay the loans as a fixed percentage of their incomes for up to 20 years. That means no one will have to drop-out of college for fear they can't repay their debt, and no one will have to turn down a job, as a teacher, a police officer or a small town doctor because it doesn't pay enough to make the debt payments. This will change the future for young Americans.

I know we're better off because President Obama made these decisions.

That brings me to health care.

The Republicans call it Obamacare and say it's a government takeover of health care that they'll repeal. Are they right? Let's look at what's happened so far. Individuals and businesses have secured more than a billion dollars in refunds from their insurance premiums because the new law requires 80% to 85% of your premiums to be spent on health care, not profits or promotion. Other insurance companies have lowered their rates to meet the requirement. More than 3 million young people between 19 and 25 are insured for the first time because their parents can now carry them on family policies. Millions of seniors are receiving preventive care including breast cancer screenings and tests for heart problems. Soon the insurance companies, not the government, will have millions of new customers many of them middle class people with pre-existing conditions. And for the last two years, health care spending has grown under 4%, for the first time in 50 years.

So are we all better off because President Obama fought for it and passed it? You bet we are.

There were two other attacks on the President in Tampa that deserve an answer. Both Governor Romney and Congressman Ryan attacked the President for allegedly robbing Medicare of 716 billion dollars. Here's what really happened. There were no cuts to benefits. None. What the President did was save money by cutting unwarranted subsidies to providers and insurance companies that weren't making people any healthier. He used the saving to close the donut hole in the Medicare drug program, and to add eight years to the life of the Medicare Trust Fund. It's now solvent until 2024. So President Obama and the Democrats didn't weaken Medicare, they strengthened it.

When Congressman Ryan looked into the TV camera and attacked President Obama's "biggest coldest power play" in raiding Medicare, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. You see, that 716 billion dollars is exactly the same amount of Medicare savings Congressman Ryan had in his own budget.

At least on this one, Governor Romney's been consistent. He wants to repeal the savings and give the money back to the insurance companies, re-open the donut hole and force seniors to pay more for drugs, and reduce the life of the Medicare Trust Fund by eight years. So now if he's elected and does what he promised Medicare will go broke by 2016. If that happens, you won't have to wait until their voucher program to begins in 2023 to see the end Medicare as we know it.

But it gets worse. They also want to block grant Medicaid and cut it by a third over the coming decade. Of course, that will hurt poor kids, but that's not all. Almost two-thirds of Medicaid is spent on nursing home care for seniors and on people with disabilities, including kids from middle class families, with special needs like, Downs syndrome or Autism. I don't know how those families are going to deal with it. We can't let it happen.

Now let's look at the Republican charge that President Obama wants to weaken the work requirements in the welfare reform bill I signed that moved millions of people from welfare to work.

Here's what happened. When some Republican governors asked to try new ways to put people on welfare back to work, the Obama Administration said they would only do it if they had a credible plan to increase employment by 20%. You hear that? More work. So the claim that President Obama weakened welfare reform's work requirement is just not true. But they keep running ads on it. As their campaign pollster said "we're not going to let our campaign be dictated by fact checkers." Now that is true. I couldn't have said it better myself – I just hope you remember that every time you see the ad.

Let's talk about the debt. We have to deal with it or it will deal with us. President Obama has offered a plan with 4 trillion dollars in debt reduction over a decade, with two and a half dollars of spending reductions for every one dollar of revenue increases, and tight controls on future spending. It's the kind of balanced approach proposed by the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles commission.

I think the President's plan is better than the Romney plan, because the Romney plan fails the first test of fiscal responsibility: The numbers don't add up.

It's supposed to be a debt reduction plan but it begins with five trillion dollars in tax cuts over a ten-year period. That makes the debt hole bigger before they even start to dig out. They say they'll make it up by eliminating loopholes in the tax code. When you ask "which loopholes and how much?," they say "See me after the election on that." People ask me all the time how we delivered four surplus budgets. What new ideas did we bring? I always give a one-word answer: arithmetic. If they stay with a 5 trillion dollar tax cut in a debt reduction plan – the – arithmetic tells us that one of three things will happen: 1) they'll have to eliminate so many deductions like the ones for home mortgages and charitable giving that middle class families will see their tax bill go up two thousand dollars year while people making over 3 million dollars a year get will still get a 250,000 dollar tax cut; or 2) they'll have to cut so much spending that they'll obliterate the budget for our national parks, for ensuring clean air, clean water, safe food, safe air travel; or they'll cut way back on Pell Grants, college loans, early childhood education and other programs that help middle class families and poor children, not to mention cutting investments in roads, bridges, science, technology and medical research; or 3) they'll do what they've been doing for thirty plus years now – cut taxes more than they cut spending, explode the debt, and weaken the economy. Remember, Republican economic

policies quadrupled the debt before I took office and doubled it after I left. We simply can't afford to double-down on trickle-down.

President Obama's plan cuts the debt, honors our values, and brightens the future for our children, our families and our nation.

My fellow Americans, you have to decide what kind of country you want to live in. If you want a you're on your own, winner take all society you should support the Republican ticket. If you want a country of shared opportunities and shared responsibilities – a "we're all in it together" society, you should vote for Barack Obama and Joe Biden. If you want every American to vote and you think its wrong to change voting procedures just to reduce the turnout of younger, poorer, minority and disabled voters, you should support Barack Obama. If you think the President was right to open the doors of American opportunity to young immigrants brought here as children who want to go to college or serve in the military, you should vote for Barack Obama. If you want a future of shared prosperity, where the middle class is growing and poverty is declining, where the American Dream is alive and well, and where the United States remains the leading force for peace and prosperity in a highly competitive world, you should vote for Barack Obama. I love our country – and I know we're coming back. For more than 200 years, through every crisis, we've always come out stronger than we went in. And we will again as long as we do it together. We champion the cause for which our founders pledged their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor – to form a more perfect union.

If that's what you believe, if that's what you want, we have to re-elect President Barack Obama.

God Bless You – God Bless America.

20120906-08	15:39	SteveB	"Bill Clinton's Stunning Jobs Claim at DNC Actually True"
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What an incredibly clear difference between the Lies of Ryan and R0mney and the Truth!

"Bill Clinton's Stunning Jobs Claim at DNC Actually True" by Bonnie Kavoussi, Huffington Post

Sept. 6, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/06/bill-clinton-job-creation_n_1861071.html?utm_hp_ref=politics&ir=Politics)

Bill Clinton said at the Democratic National Convention on Wednesday that Democratic presidents have overseen the creation of nearly twice as many jobs as Republican presidents. This is true.

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton highlighted a stunning fact during his speech at the Democratic National Convention on Wednesday: Democratic presidents have overseen the creation of nearly twice as many jobs as Republican presidents since 1961.

"What's the job score? Republicans, 24 million; Democrats, 42 [million]," Clinton said to cheers and applause.

Bloomberg Government first reported these figures in May, after analyzing growth in private-sector jobs since 1961.

On Wednesday, Clinton used the figure to justify Democratic policies.

"It turns out that advancing equal opportunity and economic empowerment is both morally right and good economics," Clinton said. "Why? Because poverty, discrimination and ignorance restrict growth. When you stifle human potential, when you don't invest in new ideas, it doesn't just cut off the people who are affected; it hurts us all."

That said, Democratic presidents may not be able to take all the credit for the private-sector jobs created during their tenure. After all, the economy saw a big boost under Clinton in part because of the technology boom and stock market bubble that resulted -- Clinton arguably was just in the right place at the right time.

Presidents' economic policies clearly play some role in the job growth that results while they're in power, however. And on that measure, both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama have performed very poorly. An average of 63,500 jobs were created per month during Bush's tenure, according to Labor Department data. Under Obama, an average 62,500 jobs have been created per month when taking into account job losses at the beginning of his tenure.

Presidents of both parties have implemented policies that may have stifled job growth for future presidents. For example, it was Clinton who repealed the Glass-Steagall Act, which had separated investment banking from consumer banking. Some say the repeal of Glass-Steagall played a major role in the financial crisis, since it helped allow banks to become too big to fail.

The subsequent financial crisis also happened on Bush's watch, and Obama has been saddled with much of the job wreckage that resulted.

20120906-10	18:48	Dennis	Video: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?"
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Tea Party twit...

Nothing like a few minutes on TV to demonstrate that you're dumber than a rock.

This is how America is worse than four years ago!

[Video: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?" by Mansur Gidfar, Upworthy](#)

Sept. 5 2012, (<http://www.upworthy.com/what-happens-when-you-pit-a-tea-partier-with-stale-talking-points-against-actual?c=cp2>)

Tea Party Express chairman Amy Kremer decided to take on CNN. It was a poor decision.

20120906-11	18:54	Art	Re: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?" (reply to Dennis, above)
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This is truly incredible. It marks our continuing descent into stupidity. And this is what we want running the country?

What happens if they win?

20120906-17	20:48	SteveG	Re: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?" (reply to Art, above)
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We go live with Baker and work at the cookie store.

20120906-19	20:54	Pam	Re: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?" (reply to SteveG, above)
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I heard on NPR this evening that Bolivia is the worst offender when it comes to deforestation. You can run, but you can't hide. Remember the folks who wanted to get away to somewhere remote, isolated, and safe? They went to Bikini Atoll, where the first hydrogen bomb was exploded. So much for safe havens. I'd be willing to give Canada another shot, however.

[20120906-28](#) 23:54 SteveB Re: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?" (reply to Pam, above)

Yes, we have struggled hard in Bolivia to finally be #1 at something! Sad that it has to be like this, but you have to start somewhere. The only direction is up!

SteveG, I've got a job for you anytime. You'd make a great vendor, or maybe a baker. Actually, we could just sit around and drink coffee and chit-chat with the customers, because you wouldn't have to work down here, the livin's free and easy (unless you're a tree).

[20120906-18](#) 20:49 Pam Re: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?" (reply to Dennis, above)

Oh, God. What can we say? I can't take much more of this. Plato was right. Most people aren't smart enough to be philosopher-kings, but every idiot thinks she's the bringer of light and truth. I believe in democracy, but I sure do wish our citizens were more intelligent and better informed. It's not the meek who shall inherit the earth, it's the ignorant who think that if America isn't that "shining city on a hill" it's nothing. What arrogance. What solipsism. What narrow-mindedness. It's embarrassing, that's what it is.

[20120906-20](#) 21:58 LarryK Re: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?" (reply to Dennis, above)

Okay, I guess this is amusing to watch, but compared to Joe Biden, this lady looks like an articulate intellectual.

[20120906-24](#) 23:24 Art Re: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?" (reply to LarryK, above)

We are indeed descending into stupidity.

[20120906-21](#) 22:10 SteveB Re: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?" (reply to LarryK, above) & "Transcript: Vice President Joe Biden's DNC Speech"

I missed this speech on TV. Let's see if you're right about Mr. Biden, Larry...

"Transcript: Vice President Joe Biden's DNC Speech" ABC News

Sept. 6, 2012, (<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/OTUS/transcript-vice-president-bidens-democratic-convention-speech/story?id=17178040>)

(Below are the full remarks of Vice President Joe Biden at the Democratic National Convention, as prepared for delivery.)

My fellow Democrats, and my favorite Democrat.

Jilly, I want you to know that Beau, Hunt, Ashley, and I are so proud of you. We admire the way you treat every single student who walks into your classroom. You not only teach them. You give them confidence. And the passion you bring to easing the burden on the families of our warriors. They know you understand what they're going through. It makes a difference. And I'm grateful. So grateful that you said Yes on that fifth try.

And Beau, thank you for placing my name in nomination to be Vice President of the United States. I accept.

My fellow Americans, four years ago, a battered nation turned away from the failed policies of the past—and turned to a leader—who they knew, could lift our nation out of crisis. Our journey isn't finished. We still have more to do. But today, I say to you, my fellow citizens: In the face of the deepest economic crisis in our lifetimes-- this nation proved itself. We're as worthy as any generation that has gone before us. The same grit, the same determination, the same courage, that has always defined what it's meant to be an American—is in you.

We're on a mission to move this nation forward—from doubt and downturn, to promise and prosperity. A mission we will continue and a mission we will complete.

Folks, tonight, I want to tell you about Barack Obama. The Barack Obama I've come to know. I want to show you the character of a leader—who had what it took, when the American people stood at the brink of a new Depression. A leader who has what it takes to lead us over the next four years--to a future as great as our people.

I want to take you inside the White House to see the President, as I see him every day. Because I don't see him in sound bites. I walk down the hall, 30 steps to the Oval Office, and I see him in action.

Four years ago, middle class incomes were already falling. Then the bottom fell out. The financial crisis hit. You remember the headlines: "Markets Plummet Worldwide", "Highest Job Losses in 60 Years", and "Economy on the Brink" From the moment President Obama sat behind the Resolute desk in the Oval Office, he knew he had to restore the confidence not only of the nation-- but the whole world. He knew, that one false move could bring a run on the banks, or a credit collapse, that could throw millions out of work. America and the world needed a strong president with a steady hand, with the judgment and vision to see us through.

Day after day, night after night, I sat beside him, as he made one gutsy decision after another--to stop the slide and reverse it. I watched him stand up to intense pressure and stare down choices of enormous consequence. Most of all, I saw what drove him: His profound concern for the American people.

He knew, that no matter how tough the decisions he had to make in the Oval Office were, families all over America had to make decisions every bit as tough for them—as they sat around their kitchen tables. Barack and I have been through a lot together. And we've learned a lot about each other. I learned of the enormity of his heart. And he learned of the depth of my loyalty. And there was another thing that bound us. We both had a pretty good idea what these families were going through--in part because our own families had gone through similar struggles.

Barack had to sit at the end of his mom's hospital bed and watch her fight cancer and fight her insurance companies at the same time. I was a kid, but I can remember the day that my dad sat at the end of my bed, and said, things are going to be tough for a while. I have to go to Delaware to get a new job. But it's going to be better for us. The rest of my life, my dad never failed to remind me--that a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about dignity. It's about respect. It's about being able to look your children in the eye—and say honey, it's going to be okay, and believe it was going to be okay. When Barack and I were growing up, there was an implicit understanding. If you took responsibility, you'd get a fair shot at a better deal. The values behind that deal--were the values that shaped us both. And today, they are Barack's guiding star.

Folks, I've watched him. He never wavers. He steps up. He asks the same thing over and over again: How is this going to work for ordinary families? Will it help them? And because of the decisions he's made, and the strength the American people have demonstrated every day, America has turned the corner. After the worst job loss since the Great Depression, we've created 4.5 million private sector jobs in the past 29 months.

President Obama and Governor Romney are both loving husbands and devoted fathers. But they bring vastly different values and visions to the job. Tonight I'd like to focus on two crises--that show the character of the leadership each man will bring to the job. The first is the rescue of the automobile industry.

Let me tell you about how Barack saved more than 1 million American jobs. In our first days in office, General Motors and Chrysler were on the verge of liquidation. If the President didn't act immediately, there wouldn't be an industry left to save.

We listened to Senators, Congressmen, outside advisors, even some of our own advisors say--we shouldn't step in, the risks were too high, the outcome too uncertain. The President patiently listened. But he didn't see it their way. He understood something they didn't. He understood that this wasn't just about cars. It was about the Americans who built those cars and the America they built.

In those meetings, I often thought about my dad. My dad was an automobile man. He would have been one of those guys—all the way down the line—not in the factory—not along the supply chain—but one of those guys selling American cars to the American people. I thought about what this crisis would have meant for the mechanics, the secretaries, the sales people who he managed. And I know for certain, that if my dad were here today, he would be fighting for this President, who fought to save all those jobs, his job, and the jobs of all the people he cared about. He would respect Barack Obama for having the guts to stand up for the automobile industry, when others walked away.

When I look back now on the President's decision, I also think of another son of an automobile man--Mitt Romney. Mitt Romney grew up in Detroit. His father ran American Motors. Yet he was willing to let Detroit go bankrupt. It's not that he's a bad guy. I'm sure he grew up loving cars as much as I did. I just don't think he understood—I just don't think he understood what saving the automobile industry meant—to all of America. I think he saw it the Bain way. Balance sheets. Write-offs.

Folks, the Bain way may bring your firm the highest profit. But it's not the way to lead your country from its highest office.

When things hung in the balance, the President understood it was about a lot more than the automobile industry. It was about restoring America's pride. He knew what it would mean to leave 1 million people without hope or work if we didn't act. He knew the message it would have sent to the rest of the world if the United States of America gave up on the industry that helped put America on the map. Conviction. Resolve.

Barack Obama. This President has shown that same resolve, that same steady hand, in his role as Commander in Chief. Which brings me to the second crisis.

In 2008, Barack Obama made a promise to the American people. He said, "If we have Osama bin Laden in our sights, we will take him out. That has to be our biggest national security priority." Barack understood that the search for bin Laden was about a lot more than taking a monstrous leader off the battlefield. It was about righting an unspeakable wrong, healing a nearly unbearable wound in America's heart. He also knew the message we had to send to terrorists around the world—if you attack innocent Americans, we will follow you to the ends of the earth. Most of all, the President had faith in our special forces--the finest warriors the world has ever known.

We sat for days in the Situation Room. He listened to the risks and reservations about the raid. And he asked the tough questions. But when Admiral McRaven looked him in the eye and said-- "Sir, we can get this done," I knew at that moment Barack had made his decision. His response was decisive. He said do it. And justice was done.

But Governor Romney didn't see things that way. When he was asked about bin Laden in 2007, he said, and I quote, "it's not worth moving heaven and earth, and spending billions of dollars, just trying to catch one person."

He was wrong. If you understood that America's heart had to be healed, you would have done exactly what the President did. And you too would have moved heaven and earth--to hunt down bin Laden, and bring him to justice.

Four years ago, when my mom was still with us, sitting in the stadium in Denver, I quoted one of her favorite expressions. She used to say, *Joey*, bravery resides in every heart, and the time will come, when it must be summoned.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm here to tell you, bravery resides in the heart of Barack Obama. And time and time again, I witnessed him summon it. This man has courage in his soul, compassion in his heart, and steel in his spine. And because of all the actions he took, because of the calls he made--and because of the grit and determination of American workers--and the unparalleled bravery of our special forces--we can now proudly say— Osama Bin Laden is dead, and General Motors is alive.

Folks, we know we have more work to do. We know we're not there yet. But not a day has gone by, in the last four years when I haven't been grateful that Barack Obama is our President. Because he has always had the courage to make the tough calls.

Speaking of tough calls, last week at their convention, our opponents pledged that they too had the courage to make tough calls. But in case you didn't notice, they didn't have the courage to tell you what calls they would make. They talked about how much they cared about Medicare. How much they wanted to preserve it. That's what they told you.

But what they didn't tell you, is that their plan would immediately cut benefits to more than 30 million seniors already on Medicare. What they didn't tell you is what they're proposing would cause Medicare to go bankrupt by 2016. And what they really didn't tell you is, they're not for preserving Medicare. They're for a whole new plan. They're for Vouchercare. That's not courage. That's not even truthful.

In Tampa, they talked with great urgency about the national debt. The need to act, to act now. But not once, not once, did they tell you they've rejected every plan put forward by us--by the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles Commission--by other respected outside groups--to reduce our national debt if it contained even one dollar--one cent--in new taxes for millionaires. That's not courage. And that's not fair.

Let's just say it straight: The two men seeking to lead this country over the next four years have fundamentally different visions, and a completely different value set.

Governor Romney believes that in the global economy, it doesn't much matter where American companies put their money or where they create jobs. As a matter of fact, he has a new tax proposal -- the territorial tax -- that experts say will create 800,000 jobs, all of them overseas.

I found it fascinating last week--when Governor Romney said, that as President, he'd take a jobs tour. Well with all his support for outsourcing, it's going to have to be a foreign trip. Look, President Obama knows that creating jobs in America--keeping jobs in America--and bringing jobs back to America--is what being President is all about. That's the President's job.

Governor Romney believes that it's okay to raise taxes on the middle class by \$2,000 in order to pay for over a trillion dollars in tax cuts for the very wealthy. President Obama knows that there is nothing decent or fair about asking more of those with less--and less--of those with more.

Governor Romney believes that kids--the kids we call DREAMers--those immigrant children who were brought to America at a very young age, through no fault of their own--he thinks they're a drag on America.

President Obama believes that even though these DREAMERS--these kids--didn't choose to come to America--they've chosen to do right by America and we should do right by them. Governor Romney looks at the notion of equal pay for equal work in terms of a company's bottom line.

President Obama knows--that making sure our daughters are paid the same as our sons for the same job must be every father's bottom line. But I must tell you--one thing that perplexed me the most at their convention was this idea of a culture of dependency. They seem to think you create a culture of dependency when you provide a bright, qualified child from a working family a loan to get to college, or when you provide job training in a new industry, for a dad who lost his job, because it was outsourced.

Folks, that's not how we look at it. Americans have never looked at it that way. These men and women aren't looking for a handout. They're just looking for a chance to acquire the tools and the skills to provide for their

families—so they can hold their heads high and lead independent lives with dignity. I told you the choice is stark. Two different visions. Two different value sets. And at its core, the difference is, we have incredible faith in the decency, and the hard work of the American people. And we know what has made this country great--its people.

As I mentioned at the outset folks--four years ago, Americans we were hit hard. You saw your retirement accounts drained, the equity in your homes vanish, and your jobs lost or on the line. But you did what Americans have always done. You didn't lose faith. You fought back. You didn't give up. You got up. You're the ones bringing America back. You're the reason why we're still better positioned-- than any country in the world--to lead the 21st century.

You never quit on America. And you deserve a President who will never quit on you. And one more thing that our opponents are dead wrong about: America is NOT in decline.

I've got news for Governor Romney and Congressman Ryan, it has never, never, ever, been a good bet to bet against the American people.

My fellow Americans, America is coming back and we're not going back! And we have no intention of downsizing the American Dream.

In a moment you're going to hear from a man, whose whole life is a testament to the power of that dream. And whose Presidency is the best hope to secure that dream, for our children.

We see a future where everyone rich or poor does their part and has a part.

A future where we depend more on clean energy from home and less on oil from abroad.

A future where we're #1 in the world again in college graduation.

A future where we promote the private sector, not the privileged sector.

And a future where women control their own choices, health, and destiny.

A future where no one—no one—is forced to live in the shadows of intolerance.

We see a future where America leads not only by the example of our power, but by the power of our example. Where we bring our troops home from Afghanistan, just as we brought them home from Iraq.

And a future where we fulfill the only truly, sacred obligation we have as a nation--to equip those we send to war and care for them when they come home from war.

Where we acknowledge the incredible debt we owe to the families of the 6,473 fallen angels and the 49,746 wounded. Thousands, critically wounded.

We must never forget their sacrifice and always keep them in our care and our prayers.

My fellow Americans, we now find ourselves at the hinge of history. And the direction we turn is in your hands. It has been an honor to serve you, and to serve with a President who has always stood up for you.

As I've said, I've seen him tested. I know his strength, his command, his faith.

I also know, the incredible confidence he has in all of you. I know this man. Yes, the work of recovery is not yet complete, but we are on our way.

The journey of hope is not yet finished, but we are on our way. The cause of change is not fully accomplished, but we are on our way. So I say to you tonight, with absolute confidence,

America's best days are ahead of us, and, yes, we are on our way.

In the light of that horizon, for the values that define us, for the ideas that inspire us, there is only one choice. The choice is to move forward, boldly forward. Finish the job we started and re-elect President Barack Obama.

God bless you and may God protect our troops.

[20120906-12](#) 19:11 Marci Fw: Men's Restroom Mural

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

Men's Restroom Mural

Edge Designs is an all-women run company that designs interior office space. They had a recent opportunity to do an office project in NYC. The client allowed the women of this company a free hand in all design aspects. The client was a company that was also run by all women execs.

The result.....well..... We all know that Men never talk, never look at each other....And never laugh much in the restroom....The men's room is a serious and quiet place...

But now...with the addition of one mural on the wall.....let's just say the men's restroom is a place of laughter and smiles. (and maybe a little intimidation)





The teacher gave her fifth grade class an assignment: Get their parents to tell them a story with a moral at the end of it.

The next day, the kids came back and, one by one, began to tell their stories.. There were all the regular types of stuff: spilled milk and pennies saved.. But then the teacher realized, much to her dismay, that only Janie was left.

"Janie, do you have a story to share?"

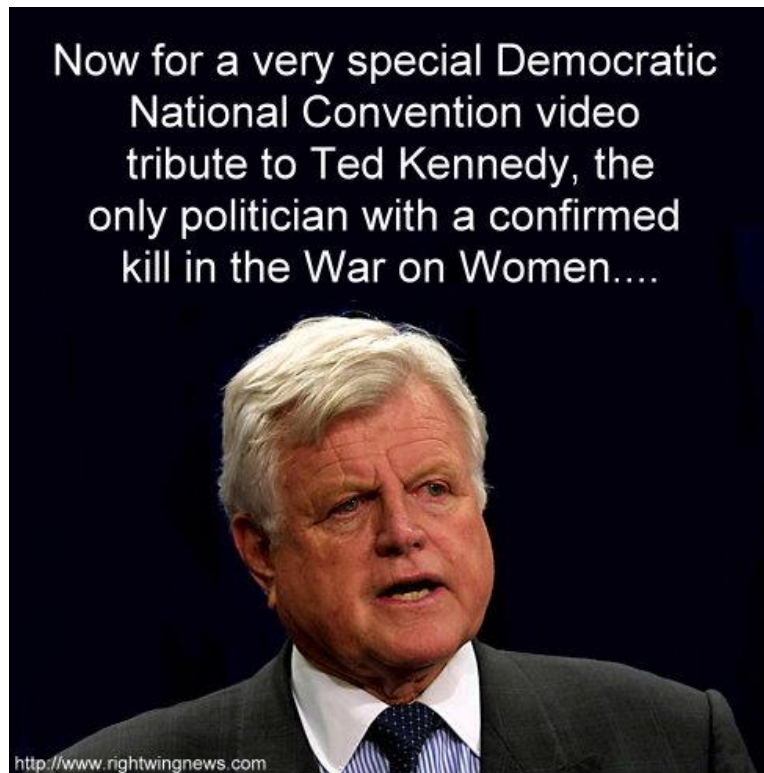
"Yes, ma'am, my daddy told me a story about my Mommy. She was a Marine pilot in Desert Storm, and her plane got hit. She had to bail out over enemy territory, and all she had was a flask of whiskey, a pistol, and a survival knife. She drank the whiskey on the way down so the bottle wouldn't break, and then her parachute landed her right in the middle of 20 Iraqi troops. She shot 15 of them with the pistol, until she ran out of bullets, killed four more with the knife, till the blade broke, and then she killed the last Iraqi with her bare hands."

"Good Heavens," said the horrified teacher. "What did your Daddy tell you was the moral to this horrible story?"

"Stay away from Mommy when she's been drinking."

[20120906-16](#) 20:41 Tom Graphic: DNC's Confirmed Kill in the War on Women

DNC's Confirmed Kill in the War on Women:



[20120906-22](#) 22:05 SteveB Re: DNC's Confirmed Kill in the War on Women (reply to Tom, above)

Tom! I hope you know that Ted is NOT fair game! When he did that...well...it was a long time ago...and there was the alcohol...

He did a hell of a lot to try to redeem himself.

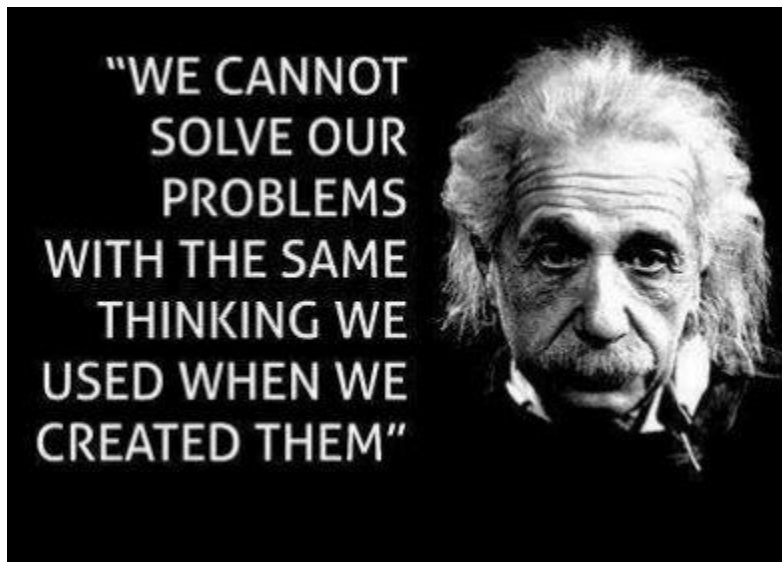
I hope you're going to watch our Prez in a few minutes. I guarantee that, unlike idiot R0mney, he will pay tribute to our troops and talk about Afghanistan and, I think, even Syria, which will take balls. R0mney, in what he did, and Ryan with his speech of lies (as if we're stupid) proved that they are not presidential material.

But I love to hear contrary opinions, especially yours, Tom. Just kidding about Ted being off limits, of course. Nothing should be, right?

Take care. (Ben's really pissing me off with that great looking and cheap food at Apple. I look at what I'm having for lunch and feel a little cheated. ;-)

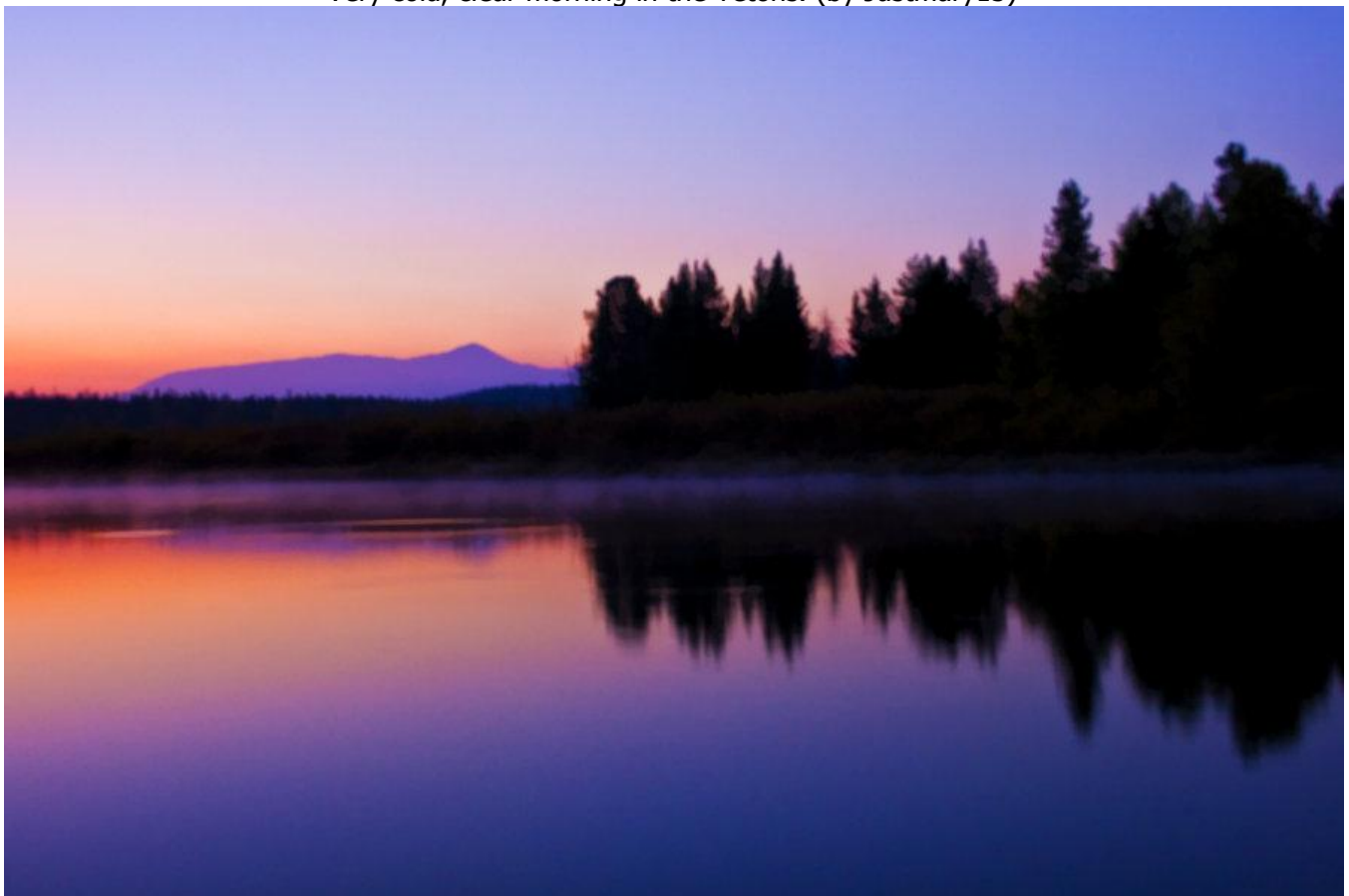
[20120906-23](#) 22:22 Tom Re: DNC's Confirmed Kill in the War on Women (reply to SteveB, above)

The food is 5 stars on a McD budget. Excellent Food!



<http://justmary15.deviantart.com/art/Purple-Mountain-Majesty-184751835>

Very cold, clear morning in the Tetons. (by Justmary15)



Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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