

**CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE**

**TAKE BACK AMERICA 2006**

**MONDAY, JUNE 12, 2006**

**WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**12:30-2:00 P.M. OPENING LUNCH**

**SPEAKER:**

**JEROME RINGO,  
PRESIDENT, APOLLO ALLIANCE**

*Transcript by:  
Federal News Service  
Washington, D.C.*

JEROME RINGO: Now for a message of hope about new energy, about new jobs, and about new independence for America. It has been nearly five years since the attacks on 9/11, nearly five years since President Bush sent our young men and women off to fight in the Middle East – a momentous and yet sobering decision. When asked what the rest of us should do to help out, the president’s response was quite stunning. Go shopping, he said. (Laughter.) Have a tax break. Go out and buy a Hummer. Have another tax break.

In all the swagger, George Bush forgot something very important: Most Americans don’t want an easy life; we want a good life. We want a life filled with purpose, with challenges, with the sense we’re here for something bigger. We want more than just what’s good for ourselves; we want to take responsibility for the common good, for our community, for our country, and for the world we leave to our children. (Applause.)

John F. Kennedy knew this, and it was one of the reasons he seized on a Sputnik moment. He raised the specter of Soviet dominance in space and of the possibility that America might lose its technological advantage. He reminded us that we do want challenges as individuals and as a nation.

Here’s what he said standing on a field at Rice University’s football stadium. “Why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? Why does Rice play Texas? (Laughter.) We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do other things, not because they are easy but because they are hard.” (Applause.)

And our leaders give us an easy way out; well, we’ll take it. I suppose it’s human nature. But if our leaders give us a challenge – a real challenge that serves a common purpose, we’ll take it in a heartbeat. That’s who we are. We’re Americans and we’re up to the challenge. (Applause.)

Today we have our own Sputnik moment: \$3 gas, a war in the Mid-East, hurricanes, ice sheets melting, and more hurricanes. We have our moment, and here is a challenge that I believe Americans can accept and meet within this decade: Our nation will be firmly on the path to energy independence. (Applause.) Senator Harry Reid gets it. We can cut oil use by 40 percent. That’s an impressive start. Moving in this direction won’t be easy but will require new political discipline, unity, and vision.

Consider Apollo, the program I am now privileged to lead. Three years ago some wise leaders, including Leo Gerard of the Steelworkers and our friend Carl Pope at the Sierra Club, chose to focus on the 80 percent of public policies that unite the vast majority of Americans. They crafted a 10-point plan to lead us to energy independence. It’s a plan that can create three million good family-supporting jobs – (applause) – while

building a 21<sup>st</sup> century clean energy economy. Don't talk to me about jobs versus the environment; it's jobs for the environment. (Cheers, applause.)

That's why today it is no surprise that the labor movement has signed up Steelworkers, Autoworkers, SEIU and the AFL-CIO. (Applause.) Environmental groups endorse our plan as well. The National Wildlife Federation, of which I am the chairman – (applause) – NRDC, and others. (Applause.) We have social justice groups and business leaders as well. In our unity, we find new power, new energy, and new hope. Building our new movement will require commitments from our leaders, from our organizations, and from you as individuals.

I think back to John F. Kennedy's speech. He reached us because he was not afraid to challenge any of us with a powerful national vision. George Bush and the rest of the bunch that control Washington will not and cannot do this.

I'm from Louisiana, and as we experienced the catastrophic in category five events of the Gulf Coast, we watched an administration that suffered from category five denials. (Applause.)

But you can – every one of you and a quarter of a million more – all of us can issue the challenge. Today, we are launching a new campaign: The Apollo Challenge. Our goal is to sign up 250,000 volunteers over the next six months to rise up and challenge our nation's leaders to give us a new Apollo program for energy independence and good jobs. (Applause.)

We will use a new website – [apollochallenge.org](http://apollochallenge.org) – to pull together a community of activists across this great nation who will speak up at town halls, ask candidates the tough questions, and volunteer in the fight for clean energy and good jobs for America. (Applause.)

Apollo will connect the volunteer with the partner groups that have on-the-ground field operations, like the Sierra Club, the Steel Workers, Greenpeace and Energy Action, to work on campuses that win change for our nation. And after the elections, we will hold elected officials' feet to the fire to make sure they implement the clean-burning, energy-saving, job-creating Apollo program that our nation needs. (Applause.)

And as I wrap up, I admit that I have been intentionally light on detail because I want to save time for our other speakers, and because we've got two sessions at this conference where we can mold the details. On Tuesday afternoon, an Apollo panel will talk about building good jobs through clean energy at the state, municipal and campus level. We've got some amazing success stories. Come on down and hear more about kick-starting the new energy revolution.

On Wednesday morning, we co-hosting a brainstorming session with MoveOn.org to figure out how best to grow the movement for clean energy, affordable

health care, and democratic self-government. I know you'll want to be there.  
(Applause.)

(End of remarks.)