

CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE

TAKE BACK AMERICA 2007

**REMARKS OF
HOWARD DEAN
CHAIRMAN, DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE**

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MR. : One leader whose name has always been magic at Take Back America is Dr. Howard Dean. (Cheers, applause.) He was with us early on in this conference, when many activists were first learning about this interesting and provocative Vermont governor, and we helped to introduce him to the activists hungry for a new leader and a new kind of truth-telling politics. He was with us in 2003 when he was just launching his political revolution, his citizens' crusade, that truly transformed American politics and democratized campaign finance and began the process of opening up the doors of the Democratic Party so that the ideas and economic interests and political strategies of ordinary Americans had just as much influence as big donors and cautious politicians.

He is with us here today as the elected chairman of the Democratic National Committee. (Applause.) We invited the Republicans, but they weren't interested in coming. (Laughter.) And he is still working on his political revolution. The victorious elections of 2006 vindicated his strategy of taking the fight for change to all the states – (cheering and applause) – and to all Congressional districts. And he is pursuing a plan for long-term Party building, guided by an aggressive outreach, bold ideas for change and the conviction that the vast majority of Americans want a new direction for our country. The Dean political revolution continues. Please welcome, to Take Back America, welcome him back, Howard Dean. (Cheers, applause.)

HOWARD DEAN: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. First, let me thank all of you. I want to thank Roger for his introduction. It was very nice. And then I get up to the podium, and there's this big sign that says, please do not kick or pound on the podium, do not touch the microphones – (laughter) – please and thank you. So I maybe won't be going to South Carolina and Michigan and all that stuff. (Applause.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We love you, Howard.

(Laughter, cheers.)

MR. DEAN: Thank you, thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Don't ever end, Howard.

MR. DEAN: Let me -- let me start by thanking you. Because of what you are doing, not by what you have done but what you are doing now, we really do have a real chance at fundamental change in this country. And let me start with something that is a little sobering but it's incredibly important for us to remember, and those people who are my age will remember, but I just got finished speaking to about 120 young College Democrats. These are folks who are actually on the front lines of the change, using the net and the net roots and so forth, and I particularly remind them, because they don't

know anything about this except from a historical perspective, but I want to remind us, who are at the frontlines of changing this country for the better, in the civil rights revolution in the '60s and '70s.

This is hard work, and it takes a long time. It is not, you know, the 2006 election was great and we ought to feel really good about ourselves. Twenty-two of the 31 seats we ran came from districts where President Bush won in 2004, so we're making real progress, but there are going to be disappointments along the way, even disappointments among our friends along the way. What I often tell young people is, you know, they learn about Dr. King and civil rights, and I say, you know, what you don't learn is, it was 13 years between the Montgomery bus boycott and the signing of the civil rights bill. Thirteen years. Not every one of those days went well for Dr. King and John Lewis and all those folks that did that – (applause) – not every one of those days went well, and so, you know, we're going to make a lot of progress and we've made an enormous amount of progress in the first two years, but there is a long way to go, and I need you to be the troops that will never – to never back down and always stand up for what you believe is right, but also never give up. Never give up. Because that's what the key is – (cheers) – never give up. (Applause.)

We have made real progress, and it's measured in real results. We have the first woman ever to serve at the United States House of Representatives Speaker. (Cheers, applause.) We took control of the Senate because of people like you in the state of Virginia – (cheers, applause) – who found a candidate who nobody knew anything about and then, thanks to YouTube and thanks to some incredibly industrious folks, made sure that everybody in America knew exactly the nature of the person who we were running against, and it gave Jim Webb his Senate seat – (cheers) – and Harry Reid the majority leadership. (Cheers, applause.)

We have spent a lot of time working really hard and we've got done a lot of things – I won't go through all of them – but we basically, thanks to a lot of 25 year olds who I think slept under their desk for the last two years at the DNC, have caught the Republicans in terms of our ability to identify voters using commercial databases. I didn't think that was going to happen until 2012, let alone 2006. We did it – we can predict with 85 percent certainty, without picking up a phone, just by buying commercial data, whether you're going to vote Democratic or not. That is a huge technological leap. (Applause.)

We have a unified voter file of 47 states, all together now, and the goal is to get folks running for office all over the country to use that voter file for – I hope – for free, eventually, and then have us get the data coming back so that we don't have to invent a new voter file every four years – (cheers, applause) – for 20 million dollars because it is time the Democrats understood that we're not going to be in power for very long unless we regard ourselves as a Party and a group and not a group of individuals running for office. This is bigger than any individual Democratic candidate. (Applause.) This is about all of us, and it's about the future of the country.

But that is not enough. The Republicans figured out a long time ago that people vote on their values, not on position papers. There are a lot of people in here supporting all kinds of different candidates for president, and a lot of you who haven't decided yet. I'll bet not one of you – well, maybe one or two, one or two – I'll bet almost none of you have decided which candidate you're going to support based on their 15-page health care paper and how they're going to do their health insurance. I'll bet very few of you have decided which candidate that you're going to support based on which candidate is going to get us out of Iraq because they're all, you know, they're all within the margin. All of our eight want to get us out of Iraq, and all 10 on the Republican side keep insisting on staying in Iraq, some for 50 years, which is what they are endorsing the president's Iraq policy.

So what I'm trying to point out here is, most Americans, even people like you who really pay attention to a lot of stuff about politics – most Americans don't make their choices based on the nuances in these different plans for education and health care, and even the issue that I know most of you care about is Iraq. People make their choices based on values and on core, core – things that are important to them to their core. Core values. I know what the answer to this question is, but I'm going to ask it anyway: how many of you have spent time in the last year and a half or two years with a group of folks who say, oh, gee, you know, I usually vote Democratic, but I can't tell you what the Democratic Party stands for? Yeah. You know, on the face of it, that's a ridiculous statement. Of course you know what we stand for: we want universal health care, we want better education, et cetera, et cetera. The reason people don't remember all that stuff is because it's not distilled into core values. Core values. We can beat the Republicans, but only if people understand what our core values are, and I'm going to make a case for three core values today that will play as well in Alabama as they will in New York as they will in San Francisco.

The first is fairness. Fairness, a fundamental Democratic Party value that encompasses equal rights for all Americans, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans, equal rights. (Cheers, applause.) It encompasses a health care system that works for everybody. It encompasses what Anna Berger was talking about, the ability to work hard and make a living and maybe home that your kid can do better than you do. That's fairness. Fairness. And the advantage of starting with fairness as a core value of the Democratic Party is because we already have an advantage there. People know that we stand for fairness and the Republicans don't. The Republicans are the presidents of 20 percent of Americans – (applause) – and we're willing to stand up for 80 percent.

The next is toughness, strength and toughness. The fact of the matter is that Americans will not vote for a presidential candidate unless they think that that candidate is tough enough and strong enough to defend them against terror and all those other things. But we have an opportunity here. The folks on the far right, on Fox News and all those folks, have spent their time defending us – have spent their time categorizing us as people who are weak on defense, won't defend America, blah blah blah. The fact of the matter is, the American people have learned now, over five bitter year of hardship, that

being tough and strong is not the same thing as sending 130,000 troops to a civil war where they don't belong – (applause) – and treating the soldiers badly when they come home to Walter Reed Hospital. That is not toughness. The American people are ready for some people who are willing to be tough and smart, not just tough at election time and carve a turkey with the troops and then forget all about them when they come home to Walter Reed. (Cheers.) Toughness and strength are not what the Republicans sell. They sell weakness disguised with election-year propaganda, and we will do better than that. (Cheers, applause.)

And the last is fiscal responsibility, not known as a hallmark of those of us who were branded with tax and spend. The fact of the matter is, if you want sustainable programs for universal health care, you've got to have fiscal responsibility because otherwise, what you do is do what the Republicans do: you borrow all the money, do what you want, and then somebody's got to pay the piper, and who gets hurt? All the people with (?) those programs. If you want to do what is right, you've got to do what Bill Clinton did in 1993 without one single Republican vote. The only president to balance the budget in the last 40 years without a single Republican vote was William Jefferson Clinton, and the last time I looked, he was a Democrat. (Applause.)

Now, why is that important? Because, by golly, if we elect a Democratic president, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that we have a universal health care program and that it's going to cover every single American, and somebody has to pay for that, and you can't do it by using Republican fiscal policies, which is to borrow all the money, if you don't want that program to be in trouble the minute we have it, and yes, it will be Medicare for all. (Cheers, applause.)

And you know what, it's a funny thing to say here at a progressive conference of progressives, but you know why it'll be Medicare for all? Because it's not just the progressives that want it – the business community can't survive with the health care system that we have. The steel industry can't survive, the automobile industry can't survive – we cannot continue to spend at three times the rate of inflation on a big of chunk of expenses as this. We can't not just have trouble competing with the developing companies; we can't even compete with the Canadians and the British and the Germans and the French – (applause) – because their health care system covers everybody a lot more cheaply than ours does.

Now, our core values – fairness, being tough and smart, and fiscal responsibility, that plays all over America, and we need a party that runs all over America. I don't expect the candidate in Alabama to be talking the same way as they are in San Francisco, but I do expect to have a core set of values so people in Alabama don't have to pretend that they're not really Democrats and they don't want the Democratic candidate for president of the United States coming to their state. We can win in Alabama, and we did win in Alabama. We won the mayorship in Alabama, in Mobile, Alabama, not just the first Democratic mayor but the first African-American Democratic mayor. (Applause.) Not just a Democratic mayor in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the first woman Democratic mayor in Tulsa, Oklahoma. (Cheers, applause.) Four elections in a row in Mississippi, the score

was DNC and Democrats, four, and Haley Barbour, zero – (cheering and applause) – and as you all know, the one I'm so proud of. I was talking about my Irish-Catholic Democratic cousin who is a triple minority in the state of Utah is now the mayor of Salt Lake County with one million Utahans, a 28 percent performance Democratic district. If you can win in Utah and Oklahoma and Alabama and Mississippi by standing up and saying you are proud to be progressive and you are proud to be a Democrat, we ought to be able to win in any state in the country – (cheers, applause) – if you show up and stand up and be proud of what you believe in.

Let me – let me say thank you to the Internet generation because, starting in 2004, I realized, and I think we were all beginning to realize now, the era of the one-way campaign is over. The impact that those 30-second spots have on television is getting smaller and smaller. We're always going to have some television advertising, but young people, and now, I think, increasingly most Americans demand two-way campaigns. We ought to – first of all, elections are won in the year before that you go to the polls. We ought to, right now, be knocking on every American's door saying I'm a Democrat and I'm here to ask you what you think are the problems in the country and what you think we ought to do about it. If you start to get familiar with people and they get familiar with you, you can ask them for their vote in 2008 without having people feel used or taken for granted, but you can't do it unless you establish a relationship, which means listening to the voters before we talk at them – (applause) – the two-way campaign. That's the future of American politics, and that is, because of what you have done.

Now, if you look at what Congress has done in the last five months, I think it's a pretty good record. I really do. They have finally raised the minimum wage to a significant raise – (applause) – about a 40 percent increase. They have passed a real national security bill, simply calling on the president to actually implement the 9/11 commission. They have cut the interest rate for college loans, undoing one of the most damaging things the Republican Congress did to our kids. (Applause.) And because of Harry Reid – Harry did not have to do this – we are taking on comprehensive immigration reform to the disappointment of the right wing, which intended to scapegoat immigrants once again. You would have thought they would have learned in 2006 that when 70 percent of the Hispanic population of the United States decides to vote Democrat, there's a message in that for the Republicans. They just want to do the same old thing. Those eight or 10 or whatever-it-is people running for president now on the Republican side simply have decided they're going to scapegoat Hispanics and immigrants in order to win the election. It may succeed, but it will hurt America. We need a comprehensive immigration bill – (cheers, applause) – that will be fair.

And if you don't think we need this, how about this for a story? Some of you say this today, probably, in the New York Times. There were three American soldiers who were kidnapped, one was killed, and the other two, their dog tags were just found a few days ago, presumed dead. One of them was a gentleman by the name of Jimenez, who I think was from California. Today, the Bush administration is busy trying to deport the presumed widow of Sergeant Jimenez – (boos) – because she is not a legal immigrant. Where is the fairness in that? A guy who stood up for the United States of America, went

to work as George Bush sent him, and Alberto Gonzales is trying to send his wife home. We can do better than that. (Cheers, applause.) This is the United States of America. We don't treat people like that.

Comprehensive immigration reform is not amnesty. It is simply saying to the 12 million people who came here illegally, if you have shown that you can be a good citizen and worked hard and paid your taxes, you ought to be able to get to the line and earn your citizenship like generations and generations of Italians, Jews, Poles, every kind of person that makes up America. We can do this in America. Immigration has been good for America. We need to control it, we need to bring order to the border, but we need not to give up who we are as Americans, and a fundamental sense of fairness is part of this deal, and by the way, if we're going to let these folks be citizens, they ought to be able to join unions right now. (Cheers, applause.) That's the way of making sure that they don't depress American wages.

We need some thing in America. The first thing we need to do is restore America's moral authority. At no time since the end of World War I has American been in greater disrepute in the rest of the world, and when we get a Democratic president, we will restore American moral authority in the world. (Applause.) We need to make sure all our kids have health insurance, and then to make sure that by lowering the age of eligibility for Medicare progressively that every single American has what every other citizen of a Democratic, industrialized country has, which is a health insurance program that does not rely on the insurance industry to take 30 percent of all the money that goes into the system out of it – (applause) – and under a Democratic president, we can do that. We need a justice department that will protect our rights and not be used to suppress voter rights around America. (Cheers, applause.) We need a stem cell research bill that will help people and not be a sop to the far right. (Applause.) We need a strong environmental bill, not one that takes away the states' ability to do progressive things but one that takes away the tax breaks that George Bush gave to the oil companies over the last eight years so we can have renewable energy in America again – (cheers, applause) – and in order to do these things, we need a Democratic president and we need a Democratic president to get us out of Iraq, where 70 percent of the American people know that we do not belong. (Applause.)

And this is a long-term process. 2006 was not a presidential year. We got a very narrow majority in the Senate and a somewhat bigger but still narrow majority in the House. It is not a surprise that a stubborn president in his last term who never did have high regard for the American people would stop the American people now. It is not a surprise that the Republicans under Mitch McConnell would obstruct the will of the American people and filibuster our attempt to put timelines on those bills. We will try again. We are not done. We did not succeed the first time – there were some tactical errors – we will try again. I'd like to try in July and I'd like to try in September – (applause) – and we will see what happens the second and the third time.

But if we don't succeed, do not give into the disappointment that you have. In 2008, every single candidate of those eight presidents has promised to get us out of Iraq.

There is something Americans can do, and that is elect a Democratic president in 2008. (Applause.) Do not give up hope.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Inaudible)

MR. DEAN: Pardon?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Darfur?

(Laughter.)

MR. DEAN: That's coming.

(Laughter.)

MR. DEAN: We're almost done, but that's coming. Skip that next page and go right to Darfur.

(Laughter.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sorry, I didn't –

MR. DEAN: No, no, no, it's – glad you did. We talked about the 50 states strategy and reaching out to everybody, and one of the fundamental mistakes, many, of the many fundamental mistakes that the president made was early on in his term, he decided he only wanted to be the president of half of the people, not all of us. He basically wrote off everybody that disagreed with him. All the Democrats in the House and the Senate were just shut out of everything. United States Attorneys were fired if they prosecuted Republican corruption – it was okay to prosecute Democratic corruption, at least, alleged Democratic corruption. He just wrote off – as you know, there's court cases now going on in Colorado where his henchmen threw out people who happened to have Kerry bumper stickers on from public meetings.

You know, my philosophy, when I was governor, was that I was the governor for everybody in Vermont. They all paid a little bit of my salary and they all participated in the hiring process, whether they voted for me or not, and I owed it to everybody to answer their questions, including folks that were very conservative, including sometimes folks who did not have my best interests at heart. (Laughter.)

But we are not going to make that mistake. We need to reach out to everybody, and we are, because I think it's a sign of respect to ask people for their vote, even if you know they're not going to give it to, to knock on their door or to approach them and respectfully ask for their vote. It's important because there's been an enormous atmosphere of hate in this country since 1994, when Newt Gingrich took over the House. (Applause.)

And one of the reasons, I believe that one of the reasons people, if you look at the polls and you see these enormous percentages of people who think America is going in the wrong direction, it's not just Iraq and it's not just the lousy economy for the 80 percent of the people that didn't get the president's tax cuts. Even if you win, when your side uses hate, you don't feel good about it. And what the Republicans have done is they always have to scapegoat somebody. It always has to be those people. It's liberals, it's intellectuals, it's Hollywood people, it's Democrats, it's the elite, it's gay people, it's Hispanics, it's immigrants. It's always those people. It's anybody who takes advantages of a, quote, "quota" system. Remember that, the president did early on in his term? It's always those people. And our philosophy has to be, there are no those people. There's only us. (Cheers, applause.)

And so, what does this have to do with Darfur, you might well ask? We've been reaching out to evangelicals because the older generation of evangelicals still insists on beating up on gays and women all the time. We don't – we know there's no common ground there, but there's a whole new younger generation, and they're going to have different views than we will on things like abortion rights and things like gay rights, but they're also interested in a lot of other things. There is a whole new group of evangelicals, for example, as you probably know, Reverend Joel Hunter was offered the chairmanship of the Christian Coalition. He turned it down because he said, I want to broaden our mission. And they said, no, we're no these two issues that raise a lot of money for us on direct mail, and he said, you've got the wrong guy, I'm not doing it.

Rick Warren invited Barack Obama to come to speak to his church in Los Angeles. Thousands and thousands of young people – those young people aren't interested in hearing about how they're all going to go to hell because they know somebody who's gay, because they all know somebody who's gay because they grew up in a generation where people were willing to talk to each other about that – (cheers) – and you know what they care about in that church, in that evangelical church? They care about the environment and global warming, they care about Darfur, they care about poverty, they actually care about things that are in the Bible, and I think we can make common cause – (cheers, applause) – with those folks.

Those are Democratic issues. We can make common cause with folks to get things done around the issues that we have in common. When I go meet with these folks, I don't say, oh, you know, maybe I was wrong about abortion or something like that. I just say, look, we're going to have disagreements on some of these core issues, and we're not going to convince each other, but let's look at the issues that we agree on. Let's look at a better policy in Darfur. Let's look at a policy that is smarter about how to get people to embrace human values and human rights around the globe. Let's look at things like fighting against the cable and telephone companies in terms of net neutrality – (cheers) – so we all have an opportunity to democratize not just the United States but to make sure that Iran and China also have an opportunity to be democratic because their young people want the same thing that our young people do. Let's look at those things. I also know that even if we don't get those votes, and we did actually went up 10 percent in terms of our evangelical vote in the last election, but that's not why I'm doing this. If you work

with somebody on something you care about, and you know this is true from your own experience, it's a lot harder to denounce them from the pulpit on Sunday because you know there's a part of them that agrees with you and that wants to do the right thing.

And I'll close with this story. When Katrina hit, there was a lot of people in the Democratic family that had folks in New Orleans and on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, and so we shut down our fundraising operation – we didn't think it was seemly to be asking people for money for politics while people were dying – and we said to our employees, we will give you three weeks pay, or pay you for up to three weeks, if you want to go down to the Gulf Coast and help. So a bunch of people did, and these two young women from the finance department decided they would go to Mississippi. And they got teamed up with five older ladies from the Southern Baptist Convention. Now, the Southern Baptist Convention, more recently, has been somewhat synonymous with the Republican Party, although even that may be changing given what's going on in the Republican Party.

So there was a dilemma for our two DNC employees, and they said, should we tell them who we work for? (Laughter.) And they finally decided, look, we're going to be here for three weeks, and we might as well just everybody say who they are right up front, so they let them know, and the Southern Baptist Convention ladies were very polite, although they thought they saw the word Satan flash across – (laughter) – their retina for just a moment. And they spent three weeks together passing out food and water to people who didn't have any, who were really in bad trouble, and at the end of the three weeks, one of the ladies from the Southern Baptist Convention said, you know, we really are all the same. Even though you may work for the Democratic Party, which we don't approve of, the truth is we're all here helping people, handing out water to the same people, handing out clothing, handing out food to folks, trying to help them. There is much more that we have in common than that makes us different.

Now, the reason I chose to close on this, because that's the real message of the Democratic Party, is outreach. That is, we're not just about reversing a political course or putting the Democrats back in power. As much as I think the Democratic Party is great, that is not why I took this job. This is a vehicle to take back America, to restore America to its greatness, and what happened with those women working together in Mississippi is this: when those five folks from the Southern Baptist Convention go back to their respective churches, and the next time somebody condemns us from the pulpit, they're going to say, you know, I remember those two young women from the Democratic Party. They're not what the preacher just said. They're people just like us. And our people will do the same thing. This is not about compromising our political principles, but it is about healing a nation, a nation that was captured by a small fringe of ideologues who mean America harm, who have put their own interests above the interests of the nation – (applause) – and the biggest job that the Democratic Party has in front of us is not to restore the Democrats to power. It's to restore America to moral leadership and moral authority – (applause) – around the rest of the world. Thank you very much. (Cheers, applause.) Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

(END)