

**CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE**

**TAKE BACK AMERICA 2006**

**MONDAY, JUNE 12, 2006**

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

**11:00 A.M. -12:15 P.M. OPENING PLENARY**

**SPEAKER:**

**ROBERT BOROSAGE,  
CO-DIRECTOR, CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE**

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

ROBERT BOROSAGE: My name is Bob Borosage; I'm the co-director of the Campaign for America's future – (applause) – and I'm delighted to welcome you to Take Back America. (Applause, cheers.)

Over the course of this week you will represent two thousand in number: organizers, leaders, intellectuals, bloggers, citizens from across the country all coming to Washington to begin to take our country back. So I want to welcome you to this city. Many of you may think of it as occupied territory -- (laughter) -- but you've come at the right time. Tom DeLay left on Friday. (Cheers, applause.) Scooter Libby is in the dock. Ken Lay and Jack Abramoff are headed to prison. And George Bush has gone from swagger to sorry. It's our time. (Applause.)

Now this conference is designed as a banquet, a great feast: many courses, many things to choose from. We purposefully designed it to frustrate you because you can't imbibe them all. (Chuckles.) You can't miss the remarkably training track put together by Progressive Majority. We're providing a platform for those who will lead this country or seek to lead this country over the next years. And it is a sign of your strength and your energy that they agree to come here and to speak and to present themselves to you.

We will put forth here a very clear progressive agenda for the common good. We are going to argue about what we are for. And then we are going to showcase the new leaders, the new organizations, the new capacity, the new energy that is driving the progressive resurgence. And we assume that in all of this the best sessions will take place in the hallway, when you meet with each other and plot and organize and make things happen.

Now this energy is urgent now because this administration is unraveling. This president is already lame and certainly a duck. (Laughter.) We have witnessed the collapse of the right-wing project in America. Iraq, Katrina, Terry Schiavo, Halliburton, Abramoff, gas prices, Enron, the prescription drug rip-off, outsourcing, deficits, Guantanamo – have you had enough? (Some in crowd respond affirmatively.) I can tell Americans have seen enough. In large numbers they are turning against this administration and its signature policies. And this election this fall will inevitably be a referendum on the corruption and the incompetence and the lethal cronyism of this administration and the DeLay Congress.

It is time to clean out the stables, but the purpose of this conference is something different. It isn't enough to change who is in control of Washington; we've got to change the direction of Washington. That will take more than one election, it will take more than Democrats taking over in the Congress. It will take an independent progressive movement, a movement that call for fundamental reforms that is bold at every level of

government, that challenges the ideas and the ideology of the right. We build here, not for this fall alone, but for the long haul.

Now, today at this panel we're going to lay out something that I've been very interested in: with the public rejecting the signature policies of Bush in overwhelming numbers and looking for a new course, have they also turned against the ideology and the philosophy of conservatism, which has really dominated our politics over the last twenty-five years. Have Americans gone from this very bold and aggressive conservative administration and its failures and turned to make a broader set of conclusions?

Stan Greenberg will lay out a survey that we've done that probe that question and provides a snapshot of it. I've asked Katrina Vanden Heuval of The Nation and Biko Baker of the Hip Hop Convention to give very different angles of vision about it, and I want to talk to you a little bit about how I see this question now.

The first step is for us to see clearly where we are. Why has the right failed? Yes, it is corrupt; corruption abounds. But the right has not failed because it is corrupt. In fact, corruption was central to how it consolidated its power and disciplined its forces. Incompetence and cronyism -- lethal cronyism in the case of Katrina -- abound, but the right has not failed because it is incompetent.

In fact, incompetence serves its purpose because its purpose is to discredit the public's faith that we together can do anything through government in common purpose. If you want to starve government and make it so weak you can drown it in a bathtub, as Grover Norquist says, then why not make Michael Brown the head of FIMA, a former horse trainer. Why not fill the regulatory agencies with lobbyists and operatives for the very industries that they're supposed to police? Incompetence is an instrument that serves their purpose.

No, the right has not failed because it's corrupt or because it's incompetent; it has failed because it's wrong. It got the world wrong. (Applause.) Wrong about American in the world, wrong about how to make this country prosper, wrong about how to keep us secure, wrong about how to develop the values of respect and integrity and decency that are vital to a democratic society.

Let me give you an example of that. Consider Tom DeLay's many junkets to the Marianas. He went to the Northern Marianas with Jack Abramoff. He flew first class. He played golf at the sumptuous Lao Lao Bay Golf Resort. He enjoyed the private beaches. He dined with the island's business elite. They contributed \$500,000 to a Republican front, the U.S. Family Network that DeLay helped guide, among other Republican interests. The businessmen in the Northern Marianas were buying protection.

In the Marianas, which is an American protectorate, manufacturers could market textiles with a Made-in-the-U.S.A. label but without adhering to any U.S. labor standards. In the island, forty thousand poor Chinese guest workers, overwhelmingly young women, were imported to work seventy-hour weeks, \$3 an hour, packed into guarded barracks

surrounded by barbed wire. The U.S. Department of Interior found that these concentration camps sweatshops were marked by forced labor, domestic servitude, sexual abuse, unprovoked violence, coerced abortions. The businessmen hired Abramoff to protect their freedom, and Abramoff brought and enlisted DeLay to that purpose.

Fresh from his round of golf, Tom DeLay met with these businessmen and he hailed them for representing, and I quote, “everything that is good about what the Republican Party is trying to do in America,” unquote. (Laughter.) Think about that: Everything that is good about what the Republican party is trying to do in America.

DeLay wasn't alone. A hundred conservative congressional staffers and reporters and scholars took the junket with Abramoff. They celebrated this quote, “laboratory of liberty.” When conservative Republican Senator Frank Murkowski tried to impose minimum wage standards and labor standards on the island, the Heritage Foundation decried the siege of Saipan.

Yes, DeLay was corrupt, but he wasn't lying. Micronesia was, as he described it, the petri dish of capitalism, the capitalism that Republicans want: one without regulation, with owners free to do what they will and workers forced to do what they must, with the government toothless and unions crushed. That is what the good Republicans are trying to do in America.

And we've seen the results with this economy. We have an economy now that works for CEO's but not for most Americans: top-end tax cuts, deregulation, free trade policies, the cult of the CEO. Americans are scrambling, at the time when the economy is growing, simply to make ends meet with insecurity rising, with health care costs and education costs soaring, and with retirement security increasingly out of reach.

And the country is weaker. It's not just that the people are hurting. Record deficits, record trade deficits that are unsustainable, growing forward indebtedness, inequality not seen since the Gilded Age, the worse corporate crime wave ever, and if you haven't heard Bill Lerach lay out the extent and scope of it, catch his presentation on Wednesday. It is staggering -- a staggering public investment deficit in everything from education to alternative energy.

They mortgaged the store, they squandered the money on a party for the connected, and they left our children with the bill, and we will all pay that cost. Are they corrupt? Sure, they're corrupt. But they failed because they got it wrong.

That's true in foreign policy as well. What happened after 9/11? Richard Clark, the point-man on terrorism reports that Donald Rumsfeld came into his office and he said, we've got to bomb Iraq, the day after 9/11. And Clark said to him, no, no, no, no, Al-Qaida is in Afghanistan. And Rumsfeld said, there aren't any good targets in Afghanistan; we've got to bomb Iraq. There are a lot of good targets in Iraq. And now our military is stranded in a bloody occupation in the midst of a civil war, a war that will now cost us an estimated \$1 trillion, already taken over 20,000 U.S. casualties and untold

Iraqi civilians, stretched our military to the breaking point, alienated our allies, fostered hatred throughout the Muslim world, and provided al Qaeda with a recruiting boon, a training ground, and a nationalist rallying cry. And this president is now announcing that those permanent bases that he denied he was building are in fact permanent, that he plans to keep fifty thousand troops in Iraq indefinitely.

The right got it wrong. American can't police the globe alone. We need collective security, allies, the United Nations, law, global cooperation, all the things that the right scorned. We ought to be isolating stateless terrorists, not inflating them. This requires intelligence cooperation, aggressive police work, new efforts to engage the Muslim world. We need to rally global cooperation about the threats that the right can't even see: from global warming to our unbelievable and unsustainable trade deficits.

So, when you think about this moment, understand that while the attention is on their corruption -- and we're going to have trials this summer -- and we see the lethality of their cronyism, the problem is they have failed because they have gotten it wrong. And Americans are now looking for a very different direction.

The question is, what is that direction? There is no guarantee they then turn to a progressive direction. Conservatives have been very good at discrediting, as Stan will show, the very notion of government as something that can be on your side.

But we can make this our time. This is our opportunity. This is the time to put forth a bold, new direction of politics that reasserts the sense that we're all in this together, a new common purpose to building a more perfect union. This conference will help lay out the vision, the elements of that agenda, and you will express the energy, the confidence, and the passion for the reforms that can make this country better. We'll highlight fundamental initiatives. Together with Move On, the campaign will announce that it is planning to do major initiatives on new energy for America, on health care, and on cleaning up and reclaiming our democracy. We're going to have planning meetings on Wednesday morning that will be announced repeatedly. We want to encourage you to come and help brainstorm with us about how to go forward on those initiatives, in addition, obviously to the work that Move On and others are doing on getting us out of the Iraq war.

None of this is going to be easy. All of it meets with great, entrenched resistance. Conservatives are in power in part because they are aligned with very strong forces. You can't do national healthcare and not take on the insurance companies and the drug companies. You can't get to energy independence and renewable energy without taking on big oil. You can't have a sensible trade policy without taking on Wall Street and the global corporations that now control our course. And that takes reclaiming our democracy: getting big money out, mobilizing citizens to counter the power of mobilized corporate interests, reviving a sense of integrity for public service, rescuing the Constitution from an imperial president, and that's why this fall's election is so important.

So, that's where we are. The right had their way, largely, over the last years. They got it wrong. They have failed. They are everywhere in power and remarkably bankrupt. It is our time.

But there is no guarantee about what comes next. We have to build it. You have the power. You have to free your own imagination from the shackles that conservatism has put on what is possible. We have to liberate ourselves of the scorn for common purpose that is fashionable in this day. This is all possible.

You know, at the turn of the last century, when the robber barons controlled the industrial economy, populist and progressive movements began, middle class reformers, angry farmers, poor workers, and they went after the most powerful, most corrupt regime this country has seen. Politicians were easily rented in those days. They were cheaper then than they are now. (Scattered laughter.) But they led the revolt that pushed reform at every level. They invented new institutions, revived democracy, the minimum wage, workplace health and safety, the forty-hour week – they gave us the weekend – they created the conditions for the broad middle class that is America's triumph.

And now that legacy is what we should use to inspire us. In a world that has grown much smaller, we have the same challenge and the same forbidding obstacles and the same opportunity.

You have the power. Together we can get it done, but we have to act. We've got to rouse ourselves; we've got to rouse our neighbors. We have to think in new ways. We have to aim a lot higher and have a lot more confidence. We have the power, we have the opportunity; now we have to show we have the will. Thank you. (Applause.)

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