

REMARKS BY HOWARD DEAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE, TO THE CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE TOPICS INCLUDE: SOCIAL SECURITY LOCATION: THE WASHINGTON HILTON, WASHINGTON, D.C. DATE: THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2005

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(Cheers, applause.)

DR. DEAN: Thank you. (Cheers, applause continue.) Thank you. Thank you. My goodness! Thank you!

Well, thank you. I hardly recognized myself in the introduction. Thank you very much. I appreciate it very much. We are bringing Tom DeLay out here to campaign. (Laughter.)

(Chuckles.) I better not go there. (Laughter.) This is on C- SPAN, after all.

Let me thank you all so much. There are a lot of you out here who worked in the campaign, and I really just want to thank you for all the energy you put in. It was a disappointing campaign in the end, but as it turned out, it was an extraordinary thing, because there are so many people who got into politics for the first time and then stayed in politics. This is how we win elections, is that -- get ordinary people involved in politics. (Applause.)

We are in the process of making some fairly significant changes in the Democratic Party, and it's really -- it's -- (cheers, applause) -- thank you for your help.

First of all, the first change is, you have seen the last 18- state campaign for the president. We're going to be in all 50 states. (Cheers, applause.) As we raise money, we are investing that in state parties. The -- and the Democratic Party is going to be the grass roots party. We're going to have Democrats in every single precinct, including those in Kansas, western Nebraska and Mississippi. (Applause.)

There is nothing the matter with Kansas that Democrats can't fix -- (applause) -- because the real truth is, there's no such thing as a red state or a blue state; they're all purple. Some are more

purple than others, and our job is to get them all deep purple and then blue. And we can do that. (Scattered applause.)

We are going to make some other changes. We need a four-year campaign, not a seven-month campaign, for the presidency. (Applause.)

And we need -- we really need to be everywhere. We need to get out our message. We need to talk to people about why it's important to be Democrats.

And we need to have a positive agenda. We can't just say -- talk about the all things -- (scattered applause) -- we can't just talk about all the things that are wrong with George Bush's presidency, although I happen to have a list of them right here in front of me. (Laughter.) We really have got to talk about what we're going to do differently.

And this morning we're going to talk about a number of things, but I want to start by talking about pensions -- pensions and Social Security. When the president -- you know, the president rules by polls. He doesn't really care that much about issues. He looks at the polls, and he drives the agenda based on the polls. And the polls told him that he could get away with privatizing Social Security if he told older people -- I'm now in that category, having passed 55 -- but if he told older folks that we're going to be okay, then the 20- and 30-year-olds would sign right up.

They made a fundamental mistake by assuming 20- and 30-year-olds were dumb. They thought that 20- and 30-year-olds wouldn't notice that the bill for this was \$4.5 trillion added on to a deficit, and they were going to sacrifice their own kids' environmental protection and ability to attend college if that's what they did. (Cheers, applause.)

And it wasn't enough for the president to try to wreck the public pension system that we had. It wasn't enough for him to try to turn over Social Security to the same people who brought us Enron -- his good friends and political contributors -- that wasn't enough. Now we find out that under this president's watch, private pension plans have been grossly underfunded. What does this president want? Don't Americans deserve, after a long life of work, don't they deserve a retirement with dignity and security? I think that they do. (Cheers, applause.)

This week the Labor Department estimated that in 2004 underfunding of pension plans grew to \$450 billion. Sixty percent of companies take advantage of outdated accounting rules to avoid making annual contributions. The president wants to take away our Social Security, and then he's going to take away the private pension plans too? What does he think ordinary Americans live on after they get to be 65 years old? We need a president who understands working people in this country, and we will have one after 2008. (Cheers, applause.)

However, I said that we were not simply going to criticize the president. We were going to make some positive suggestions as well. Here's what I think Democrats need to stand up for. We need to have pension portability so that pensions, as we move from job to job to job, the pensions follow us, they don't stay in the company. (Cheers, applause.) That great Democrat Jim Jeffords has been introducing this for 15 years. (Laughter.) George Bush has had his chance to fix the

pension programs in this country. He has failed to do it. We need a new president and a new Congress who will fix the private pension plans. (Cheers, applause).

We ought not to allow people like Ken Lay to loot the pension plans of America while their companies are going down. Pension plans ought not to be controlled by companies. They ought to be controlled by the people who those pensions belong to, that's the working people of America. (Cheers, applause). Enron began around the time the president took office. Forty thousand Americans lost their pensions; another tens of thousands, just last week when the courts took away the United Airlines workers' pensions. This is a serious problem. The president has had his time; he has done nothing. Let the Democrats try to fix the pension program. We have a positive plan with portability and independent control outside these corporations who abuse the money. This is stealing to let pension plans go down. That money does not belong -- (cheers, applause) -- that money does not belong to these companies who are bailing themselves out of bankruptcies; it belongs to the people who they promised it to in their contract.

It has been set aside. We want these pensions in America to be independently run so that they are not looted in the throes of bankruptcy while CEOs make \$30 million and \$40 million a year. That is wrong. (Applause.) They have had their chance.

And speaking about stealing, they talk about the culture of life, what about the culture of corruption in Washington? (Applause.) What about the culture of corruption? We have the leader of the Republican Party who the president has just endorsed as doing a fine job -- the chairman of the Republican Party is just endorsed by doing a fine job. I actually think that's true. The Republican definition of a "fine job" is to be reprimanded three successive times in a row for ethics violations and have a fourth one. The Republican definition of a "fine job" appears to be that if your leader is under investigation and three of his cronies have just been indicted and found that they took \$600,000 of corporate money and illegally put it into Texas campaigns, that's how the Republicans do business. They think it's fine. Americans don't think it's fine.

We need to get rid of the culture of corruption and abuse of power in Washington. (Cheers, applause.) And we will do that. We need to be the party of reform, campaign finance and election reform. (Cheers, applause.) Real campaign finance reform.

I used to say during the campaign that if you want campaign finance reform, don't wait till politicians do it, just go out and do it yourselves. Send us 25 bucks on the Internet. We need to train Americans to do that. If middle class and working Americans are worried about loss of control because the Republican Party controls everything now -- the courts, presidency, the House and the Senate -- you can fix that. It costs you 25 bucks once in a while. Contribute to a candidate that you like over the Internet. We'll take back America -- we'll buy back America from the corporate interests \$25 at a time because there are a lot more of us than there are of them. (Cheers, applause.)

We need to be the party of election reform. We ought to do everything we can to make it easier for more Americans to vote. The Republicans are all about suppressing votes; two voting machines if you live in a black district, 10 voting machines if you live in a white district. I think every single American ought to be able to vote! (Cheers, applause.) I used to say in the campaign

-- I meant this sincerely -- I would rather have you go out and vote, even if you vote Republican, than stay home. I really would.

If we're going to have a democracy -- and Lord knows this administration is beginning to erode the core of our democracy -- the great genius of American democracy -- there are a lot of democracies in the world. The great genius of American democracy is that if 48 percent of you vote one way, you still have some say about the government. Now they're trying to eliminate that. The protection of the minority is an important principle in America. For those 48 percent that didn't vote for President Bush -- (applause) -- the Constitution says we still have some say. Well, they don't think so. Dr. Frist, of videotape diagnosis fame, doesn't seem to think -- (laughter, applause) -- Dr. Frist doesn't seem to think that the minority of us have any say. We don't have any say in the House. We certainly don't have any say in the White House. We don't have much left in the courts -- although the courts are still too liberal for Tom DeLay. He wants to impeach them because they didn't agree with him a hundred percent. I always thought an independent judiciary was important for a strong democracy. And you know what? When the Democrats take over, it will be important again. It will be important again. (Applause.)

But if you want a democracy that works, you've got to get people to vote. And that means we need some substantial changes.

I think we ought to have instant runoff voting. I think that -- I think people -- (applause) -- I think that brings people in to the polls. If there's a third party, fine. They get a choice. We finally get -- we get majorities that win, and it brings more people in.

I think, frankly, we ought to have voting on -- either make the Tuesday a holiday or else move it to another day where people don't -- (cheers, applause) -- can get out and vote.

You -- (applause continues) -- you know, the idea that you have to wait on line for eight hours to cast your ballot in Florida -- there's something the matter with that. You think people can work all day and then pick up their kids at child care or wherever, and get home and then have a -- still manage to sandwich in an eight-hour vote? Well, Republicans, I guess, can do that, because a lot of them have never made an honest living in their lives. (Light applause.) But for ordinary working people, who have to work eight hours a day, they have kids, they got to get home to those kids, the idea of making them stand for eight hours to cast their ballot for democracy is wrong. We ought to make voting easier to do. Mail -- Oregon has got it right. (Applause.)

And we ought to have a law, like Oregon, that says you may not use a voting machine unless it can be recounted by hand. (Cheers, extended applause.)

So let me just say just a couple more things, and I'll use up my allotted five minutes. First of all, I want to thank Roger again for his kind introduction. I really did hardly notice myself. And I appreciate it. There are obviously some people in Congress he didn't ask about whether I should campaign with them or not.

But we need to be the party of change. We need -- this is an extraordinary opportunity for Democrats. We've suffered a couple of serious defeats, but we're energized because we know that

our vision for America is much better than the dark, difficult and dishonest vision that the Republican Party offers America. (Applause.)

We -- we're in a war because the people that got us there weren't truthful with the American people. (Applause.) We're -- our children are being poisoned by mercury. You know, there's an extraordinary evangelical group that is -- now understands the real dangers of mercury poisoning. We -- you know, there are a lot more friends than we think we have in the progressive Democratic community in this country, and we ought to reach out to evangelical Christians, because you know something? I got a call from an evangelical Christian shortly after I took this office. He said, "I'd like to come and talk to you."

And I said, "Well, I'm happy to talk to you, but you know, there's probably some things we may disagree on."

And he said, "You know, we're tired of being taken advantage of every four years by the Republicans, who will talk to us about two issues that they think are going to get us organized. What about the other injunctions to take care of people who don't have as much as you do, to reach in and bring everybody into the tent, to be good stewards of the Lord's environment?" They never -- the Republicans never talk about that kind of stuff. Those things are important to evangelicals. There are votes to be had for Democrats among the evangelical Christian community, and we ought not to shy away from that. (Applause.)

The leadership -- some of the leadership of that community may be obsessed by gay rights and abortion, but most of evangelicals, just like every other American -- we want to do the right thing for our children, and we ought to not be ashamed or reluctant to reach out and get votes everywhere.

We stand for all that is right with America. We stand for honest government that is transparent. We will insist that the money that working people have earned be set aside so that they someday will get it, and it won't be used in a leveraged buyout or a bankruptcy.

We will insist that -- we will have a strong defense, but a strong defense is not just a strong military. It is also a balanced budget. And you can trust Democrats with your taxpayers' money. You can't trust the Republicans -- borrow and spend, borrow and spend; the largest deficits in the history of America. Democrats will do better than that. (Applause.)

We will change election laws so they work for the American people and not the professional politician class. (Applause.)

The only other thing that I just want to briefly say -- and then I'm out of here -- (laughter) -- is thank you. We have a lot of work to do, and not once did anybody I know quit after November 2nd of 2004. It was depressing, it was discouraging. We didn't win. We had four more years of the most ineffective presidency that this country has seen in my lifetime, but not once did the people in this room give up. Not once.

We're in this for the long haul. This is not about politics. This is about an extraordinary invention. It's about America. America is an extraordinary invention, and we haven't always been perfect over our 200-and-some-odd years of history. But we have always believed in the best of human beings. It's an extraordinary invention, because even though we didn't always do the right thing, we knew what the right thing to do was, and we tried to do it.

The greatest blow to America that we have suffered in the last four-and-a-half years is the descent of cynicism and the belief that propaganda and manipulation will actually succeed in America. I think it will not. (Applause.)

I think it will not. And I think that the values of this country are what we're fighting for. This is not about politics; this is about reclaiming America as the great beacon of optimism and hope. And we will do that not simply by saying what's wrong with Republicans, although Lordy, the list is so long, I could speak for an hour and a half -- (laughter).

What we will do is offer optimism and hope. Real optimism, real hope for real problems. Is there a problem with Social Security? Yes. Their solution is to privatize it; our solution is to leave it the way it is, with some minor adjustments.

Is there a problem with the budget? Yes. Our -- their solution is to be disingenuous about it and to let the next generation pay the bill; our solution will be to do the tough, difficult things -- both on the cutting side and the revenue side that need -- that we need to do to fix it.

Is there a problem with the defense posture when we pick on dictators who are irrelevant to the United States and then leave nuclear powers like North Korea and Iran alone? Yes. We will look in the long term. We will look in the long term for the defense of the United States of America. And in the tradition of Harry Truman and Jack Kennedy and Franklin Roosevelt, we will fight the enemies that need to be fought, and we will use diplomacy with those who are not a threat to the United States of America. (Applause.)

Is there a -- (applause, cheering) -- is there a problem with the environment? Yes, there is. And we will not pretend there is not. We will address it in a way that's both sensitive to jobs and sensitive to the needs of Americans to live without a rising rate of asthma in the inner cities; the needs of Americans to have national park systems that work, and the needs of Americans to cooperate with other nations around the globe to reduce greenhouse gases -- which, in fact, are a real, scientific phenomenon. (Applause.)

We will offer real solutions to real problems. The Democrats will not hide the problems. We will say what they are. We will say what the tough solutions are because we believe, in the end, that the American people will not believe propaganda.

What the American people want is real solutions for real problems. And what they want is honesty in government and to be told what the situation is and then suggest a remedy.

One of the things that I have discovered -- and I'll close with this story -- is that organization is important, money is important, motivation is important, but there's one other thing you have to have. And some of you have heard this story; I'm going to tell it anyway.

When I was running, there was a woman who did a great deal for us, and she did many fundraisers for us. And she was doing yet another fundraiser in New Jersey, and she had a lot of the most erudite people there who are really, really smart people. They had come and they -- we were having dinner. And her daughter was there, who is a 30-year-old school teacher from Texas. And we were talking about separation of church and state after dinner, and everybody was agreeing that the Republicans kind of erred on that and went too far, and so forth, and so on. We ought to have separation of church and state in this incredibly diverse country that we have. And the young lady piped up and said, "Now, Governor, just a second. I'm an Evangelical Christian and we don't think there ought to be separation of church and state. We think this is a Christian nation." And you could have heard a pin drop. And the former ambassadors in the crowd kind of used all their diplomatic language, and we got through it and shimmied around it and changed the subject and all that.

And after dinner I was thanking everybody for coming and contributing and everything. And I went up to her and I said, "How is it that you manage to support me as an Evangelical Christian? There are some things that you can't possibly agree with me on, such as civil rights for all Americans and the right of a woman to make up her own mind about what kind of health care she has." (Cheers, applause.) And she said -- she looked at me and she said, "You know, I deeply disagree with you on some of the issues that you believe in. But we support you for two reasons. The first is that our child has polycystic kidney disease, and in Texas that means that not only can we get no health insurance for our child, but we can't get health insurance for anybody in our family, and we think everybody in America ought to have health insurance." (Applause.) "But the real reason that we support you is because Evangelicals are people of deep conviction, and you're a person of deep conviction. And what we want to know, like most Americans, is if something happens to our family or something happens to our community or if something happens to our country, that the people who are going to be making the decisions to keep us strong and to support us in these difficult times, we want somebody who's going to be making those decisions not from polls or out of politics or out of propaganda; we want somebody making those decisions out of deep conviction."

The one thing that we have to do as a Democratic Party is not be afraid to be different than the Republicans. Stand up for what we believe! (Cheers, applause.) Stand up for what we believe! (Continued cheers, applause.) And if you stand up for what you believe, vote by vote, precinct by precinct, election by election, year by year, we will take this country back for the people who built it.

Thank you very much. Thank you. (Cheers, applause.) Thank you very much. Thank you.

END.