

Every declared Presidential candidate was invited to deliver a speech on public policy issues and policy alternatives at the Take Back America conference. The Campaign for America's Future and the Institute for America's Future do not endorse candidates.

## **RICHARD GEPHARDT**

### **Presidential Candidate**

### **Take Back America Conference**

#### **Campaign for America's Future / Institute for America's Future**

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**Washington, DC**

I want to thank Bob Borosage and Roger Hickey for all your great work with the Campaign for America's Future. I'm sorry I can't be with you today, but I really am happy to have this opportunity to talk to you about what I'm trying to do in this campaign.

I have a background that is like most people in America. My father was a teamster and a milk truck driver in St. Louis, Missouri. My mother was a secretary. Neither of them got through high school, but they worked hard and gave me every opportunity a young person can ever hope to have. When I was in the sixth grade, my principal called my parents up to school and asked them if they had saved any money because she said I should go to college. My mother came home, she was all excited. They didn't have any money, but she said, "We're going to try and save five or ten dollars a week", which they did. I got a church scholarship, I got government loans, I got partial scholarships. I had three jobs. I got a great education. I'm really the example of the American dream. And every day in the House of Representatives, I listen to everybody. But in the end, I've tried to represent people like my parents. The hardworking people of this country that have made America great.

I think Americans are ready, again, for a President who's had the life experience of most Americans and will decide every issue, every day, not on what some highly-paid lobbyist wants, but what the American people, the hardworking American people, who don't have a spokesman, really need and want. I'm going to try to bring bold, innovative solutions to America's problems. My belief is if people want to vote for George Bush, and we don't have a candidate with clear alternatives, they're going to vote for George Bush. I'm not going to be Bush-lite, I'm going to be talking about things that really solve our toughest problems. In my first week as President I will go to Congress and I will ask Congress to rescind the Bush tax cuts. They haven't worked, they haven't created any jobs, and they haven't gotten this economy moving.

I was on the floor in 1993 trying to pass Bill Clinton's first budget. It was a tough budget. It got rid of the deficit. We passed it by one vote in the House, one vote in the Senate. We didn't get a Republican vote in either body. It created the platform on which the American people created the best economy in 50 years. Twenty-two million new jobs were created. And now President Bush has come with two tax cuts. There are going to be more. They have created new deficits. And most of the benefits of those tax cuts

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have gone to the very wealthiest Americans who haven't even, in most cases, asked for a tax cut.

It's mindless, it's wrong, and it's destroying our economy. So, if I'm President, in the first week I will ask the Congress to rescind all of those tax cuts and I will use most of the revenue to make sure that everybody in this country has guaranteed health insurance that can never be taken away. My plan is a bold plan, a big plan. It would require every employer to offer plans to their employees for health insurance. It would give every employer a tax credit equal to 60 percent of the cost of those plans. It would cover part-time, as well as full-time, employees, retirees as well as active employees, and I would give an equal subsidy to state and local governments and not-for-profit organizations for their employees. This is national health insurance through the present system.

The reason I feel so strongly about this is that when my son Matt was two, he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Doctors said he wouldn't survive six weeks. We prayed all night, the first night we got that diagnosis, that he could live. The next day the doctor said there were some experimental therapies, they didn't think they'd work, but our insurance would cover them. Well, after three years of chemo and radiation and ten operations, Matt is 32 years old, lives in Atlanta, Georgia and is married. He's a gift of God.

We met a lot of parents when he was sick who had kids with cancer, but many of them didn't have insurance. This is a moral issue. No one should live in terror in this rich and powerful country that they don't have insurance or the money to take care of a sick loved one. When I'm President we're going to solve this problem once and for all.

I have a lot of other bold ideas. I want to have a teacher core that says that any student that wants to be a teacher, and will train to be a teacher, and will teach where we need them for 5 years we'll pay their college loans. I'm going to have an Apollo 2 program to get us past the age of oil and on to the age of hydrogen and renewables, like wind and solar power. We can solve the major problems this country faces. And I'm sick of the red map and the blue map, I want a new map! I will work to create a new majority in America of Democrats, Independents, even some Republicans, to solve the major problems this country faces.

In the end, my philosophy is really different than George Bush's. I think we're all tied together, whether you like it or not. Somebody who doesn't have health insurance, we all wind up paying those bills. Somebody's child doesn't get a good education, winds up in prison, on welfare, all the rest of us wind up paying the bills. Martin Luther King said, "We're all tied into a single garment of destiny. What affects one directly, affects all the rest of us indirectly." He also said, "I can't be what I ought to be, until you can be what you ought to be." That's what I really believe, and as President I will work hard everyday to make everybody in this country have a chance to succeed so that we can all succeed and create an even better America. Thank you very much for letting me talk to you today.