

CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE

TAKE BACK AMERICA 2007

**REMARKS OF
GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON (D-NM)**

TUESDAY, JUNE 19, 2007

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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RICK VILLANEOS (ph): We're honored here to be here tonight. My name is Rick Villaneos, and I have the distinction of being a member of a family that had four brothers serve in Vietnam at the same time. Three of us actually served in combat together, and we were cited for our patriotism by the late President Lyndon Baines Johnson.

(Applause.)

MR. VILLANEOS: Thank you. If you're wondering why four brothers would serve their nation, it's because my dad inculcated in us a fervent passion, the deep love for this, the greatest nation on the face of this earth. He inculcated in us a deep sense of patriotism. One day my dad called us together in the kitchen and said, my sons, if we don't fight Communism in Vietnam, we'll have to fight it on the shores of our nation here. One of you has to go and represent our family in this war. So please don't hold it against him, but my brother, Louie (sp), joined the Navy.

(Laughter, applause.)

MR. VILLANEOS: Volunteered for Vietnam and answered our country's call. My brother Ben joined the Marine Corps.

(Applause.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Semper fi!

MR. VILLANEOS: Volunteered for Vietnam, and he also answered our country's call. My brother Bill joined the Green Berets, volunteered for Vietnam; he couldn't be here today, but he also answered our country's call –

(Applause.)

MR. VILLANEOS: – and I joined the United States Army, and together, we were the only family in the United States that had four brothers serving our nation. And we're very, very proud of it.

(Applause.)

MR. VILLANEOS: Thank you. When we met Governor Richardson, we came to the realization that when we talked to him, we were talking to my dad because he has the same fervor, the same passion and the same love for this United States of America. And we're really, really proud to be here tonight because we know that when you use the

term, support our troops, there are certain conceptual precepts that you can't ignore, and one of those is that you can't use it as mere diatribe and rhetoric –

(Applause.)

MR. VILLANEOS: – for support the war. Governor Richardson knows this extremely well, and as a matter of fact, he's always supported our troops. When he found out that the death benefits for the widow and the children of the – fallen patriot's widows was only 10,000 dollars, he raised it to almost 400,000 dollars in the state of New Mexico.

(Cheers, applause.)

MR. VILLANEOS: And he called it – he called it a reprehensible moral travesty that we're not supporting our troops, but more than that, that we're not supporting our families or their families after the transition, not because you can put a price on a patriot's life, but because you have to have that compassion and that love for not only your nation but those citizens that give up their lives for it.

(Applause.)

MR. VILLANEOS: So my brothers and I, today, stand here humbled, we stand here honored, and we stand here extremely proud of being able to present to you the next president of the United States, Governor Bill Richardson.

(Cheers, applause.)

(Music plays.)

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for standing; I thought you were leaving.

(Cheers.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: Let's hear it for three American heroes.

(Applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: I appreciate the opportunity to speak here today. I think that this conference is one of the most important events that all of us candidates will attend this year, and I'd like to tell you why it's important to me, personally. I first got involved with public service after meeting Hubert Humphrey in 1971, while I was in grad school, and despite his narrow defeat in the 1968 presidential election, he hadn't lost his idealism. He challenged me and the other students that we had to try and make a difference in our lives, to look at the world around us and seek out the inequalities that

sometimes are plain to see but other times are hidden from view, and to give our best effort to heal our nation.

This is a hauntingly similar tune. Like 1968, we're in a nation – we are a nation deep into an unwanted war, the president has lost the country, there is hurt and sorrow among our people, and there is a sense that no matter who is elected, we have a long road in front of us. But there is great risk in taking only this view. When you listened to some who are running for president, you can hear it in their voices. There is weight to their words. But they're in danger of being weighed down by it all.

I'm optimistic about our country. I'm optimistic about the Democratic Party. We have the majority in Congress. The American people agree with us on the issues. We have the best field of candidates for president, and we're going to put a Democrat in the White House.

(Cheers, applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: And yes, there is too much that is wrong with America, but we can also celebrate what's finally going right. The first step was taking back the Congress. The next step is taking back the White House. And that's how we take back America. And I am, today, going to focus my remarks on repairing the damage from the two worst mistakes of the Bush administration. One: failing to address climate change –

(Applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: – and secondly, failing to change our policies in Iraq.

(Applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: You know, some people poke fun at how I like to talk about what I've done as governor, but I'm proud of New Mexico. I'm proud of making New Mexico the clean energy state. In fact, we're doing more to clean up the environment and fight global warming, and I challenge you, than any other state in the country. You know, Mark Twain said, quote, "Everybody complains about the weather, but nobody ever does anything about it."

(Laughter.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: Well, we're doing something about global warming in New Mexico. We're requiring utility companies to produce energy from renewable sources. We've invested directly in energy efficiency. We're promoting renewable energy with tax credits for wind, solar and biofuels. We've eliminated taxes on hybrid cars. And I set tough standards to reduce greenhouse emissions. Maybe the country and President Bush don't follow the Kyoto treaty, but my state does.

(Cheers, applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: And, of course, in his typical fashion, after six and a half years of refusing to admit that global warming exists, the president has started lecturing developing nations and telling them to clean up their act.

(Laughter.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: Now, I'm not sure what's more insulting to the rest of the world: telling them they're wrong for six and a half years, or changing your mind and telling them that they're still wrong.

(Laughter.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: Now, Mr. President, we don't need half-hearted measures like the European agreement that just came out of the G-8 summit. The Kyoto treaty has been sitting on your desk for six and a half years. You might as well sign it now because in a year and a half, if you haven't, I will.

(Cheers, applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: And I'm proud – now I'm going to do a little boasting here. I'm proud to have the most aggressive plan of anyone running for president on global climate change.

(Applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: Within twelve years, my plan would reduce global warming pollution by 20 percent, lower demand for oil by 50 percent, and push fuel economy standards for 50 miles per gallon –

(Cheers, applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: – not the 35 that the Congress wants to do. That is weak. And by the year 2040, my plan would require that 50 percent of our electricity be generated from renewable sources and would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent.

(Applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: Now, you can read this plan at my campaign website, or you can listen to the League of Conservation voters. They rated it the most aggressive plan with the highest goals of any other candidate. These aren't pie in the sky proposals, but they are ambitious. If we can spend billions waging war in a country that never had weapons of mass destruction, then we can certainly find the will to stop the mass destruction of our planet.

(Cheers, applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: And it's time – and it's time that we, as a nation, choose a collective good over the desire to collect goods, and frankly, buying carbon offsets isn't enough. Just like paying somebody else to go to church doesn't make you religious.

(Laughter.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: Paying somebody else to conserve doesn't make you a conservationist. My wife Barbara and I both use a hybrid and flex-fuel vehicle. We've made New Mexico's governor's mansion a lot more energy efficient, including compact fluorescent lighting, low water use irrigation and ceiling fans to cut down on air conditioning. Let me tell you, on a 95-degree day in New Mexico, that is a sacrifice.

(Laughter.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: But I know we can do more, and I'll bet that a lot of you could too. We all, when we have an Apollo program to reduce our dependence on imported oil, we have to sacrifice for the common good. We have to get rid of that dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

Now let me talk about Iraq. And here, I'm just going to point out differences among candidates, because you should know. Some will tell you that we only have two options: we either stay in Iraq and try to referee a civil war, or leave and watch the Middle East collapse into a regional war. When a president decides that he or she only has two bad options, guess what happens: something bad.

(Laughter.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: I have a different view, a more optimistic view grounded in what I call a new realism for foreign policy. I applaud my fellow Democratic candidates for taking on President Bush in the Congress. But there is a fundamental difference in this campaign, and this is the fundamental difference, and that's how many troops each of us would leave behind. Other than the customary Marine contingent at the embassy, here's my position: I would leave zero troops behind.

(Cheers, applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: Not a single one. Not a single one. And if the embassy and our embassy personnel aren't safe, then they're all coming home too.

(Cheers, applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: So here is Bill Richardson's position: no air bases, no troops in the green zone, no embedded soldiers training Iraqi forces, because we all know what that means. It means that our troops would still be out on patrol with targets on

their back. A regional crisis is worthy of military intervention. A true threat to our country's security is worthy of war. But a struggle between a country's warring factions, where both sides hate the United States, is not worthy of one more lost American life.

(Cheers, applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: And with all due respect, with all due respect to my outstanding Democratic colleagues, Senators Clinton, Obama, Dodd, and Biden, they all voted for timeline legislation that had loopholes. Those loopholes allow this president or any president to leave an undetermined number of troops in Iraq in definitely, and this is the same legislation that former Senator Edwards says we should send back and back to the president, over and over again, until he signs it.

The language in the legislation was clear: it would allow the president to leave American troops behind for, quote, and read the bill, "training and equipping members of the Iraqi security forces" and to protect, among other things, other U.S. forces. Troops protecting troops? Potentially thousands of troops? How many, 20,000, 30,000? I don't know about other folks running, but troops protecting troops, training other troops, doesn't sound any different to me.

Clearly my colleagues in this campaign think it's responsible to have an ongoing military role in Iraq. I respect that. They voted not once, but twice to leave troops behind. Senator Clinton has told her military advisor that if she were elected, there might still be troops in Iraq at the end of her second term, and Senator Obama's written plan calls for leaving non-combat troops in Iraq. And Senator Edwards, as I said, says he's withdrawing all troops except those at the embassy. But that's not what the bill says that he wants to pass again and again. I'm just pointing out differences.

The responsible thing to do is to look at the problem from another perspective. At the rate that we are losing American lives, over 1000 American troops will be killed this year alone. The surge has led to nothing but a surge in Americans dying. Over 70 percent of Iraqis want us out of their country. And listen to this statistic: over 60 percent think it's okay to kill Americans. Think about that for a second. Over 60 percent were willing to tell a pollster that they're never met before that it's okay to kill Americans, which means that percentage is probably even higher. That's not the case in Japan and Germany and South Korea or anywhere else American troops are stationed.

I have great respect for all our Democratic candidates, but for those who think we should leave a residual force, how long does that force need to be in place before we can leave? One year, two years, five, ten? There is not a single sign that Iraq is improving. To the contrary, every indication is that it's getting worse, and a smaller force will do nothing to change that. How many Americans must die before we leave an Iraq that will be no better off than it is today? And in a war where American troops are the number one target, who are the poor souls you're going to leave behind? We need to bring them all home.

(Cheers, applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: And you can sign – and you can sign our petition, you can sign our petition at notroopsleftbehind.com. The way we help heal Iraq is to bring all our troops home within six months, and only then can the hard diplomatic work really begin. That's how we avoid a regional war. I would leave troops in neighboring countries that want us, like Kuwait, to help keep the peace. But we need to hand over security of Iraq to an all-Muslim peacekeeping force. We would then have a moral responsibility to do everything we can to bring the different factions together in a national reconciliation conference. We also have a strategic interest in organizing a regional conference with all of Iraq's neighbors, including Syria and Iran, to help stabilize Iraq.

(Applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: You know, no one – no one in this region – and I was your ambassador at the U.N. – I know these leaders; I know this region. No one in the region, including Iran, wants an Iraqi civil war, and no one in the region wants a stream of thousands and thousands of Iraqi refugees. Some will tell you that once we leave Iraq, the country will become a hotbed of al Qaeda activity. That's just not the case. There's an old Arab proverb: the enemy of my friend – the enemy of my enemy is my friend. And up until now, al Qaeda was tolerated in Iraq because they were killing Americans. But once we're gone, the Iraqis will have no further use for al Qaeda, and they will drive them out. We're already seeing the beginnings of this already in Sunni attacks on al Qaeda. But the process will accelerate once we're gone. Too many Iraqis have died at the hands of al Qaeda, and retaliation will be at hand. Two months ago in North Korea, I was proud to help show how talking to your enemies can produce results.

(Applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: We need to bring back diplomacy in our foreign policy.

(Cheers, applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: We need to remember what the great Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said. He said, you don't make peace with your friends; you make peace with your enemies. And with North Korea –

(Applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: – we were able to push the North Koreans, possibly, to start reducing their nuclear threat, but we did bring home the remains of six American servicemen from the Korean War.

(Applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: And the situation is similar to the Middle East. This president broke Iraq. The next president needs to know how to use diplomacy to fix it.

(Applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: I will tell you this: my world view is different from my colleagues. In my career, I've been able to get results not with harsh words but hard work. You talk to your adversaries. You listen. You get to know them well if you want them to hear what you're saying. And with understanding comes resolve. And with clarity comes cooperation. It's how I have approached foreign policy. It's how I have approached governing. And it's how I'll serve, hopefully, as your president.

(Cheers, applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: More than anything else – more than anything else, we have a moral obligation to those American soldiers and citizens who have laid down their lives overseas. Some say we can't let their sacrifice be in vain, but you will never convince me that those slain patriots would have wanted a single additional life to be lost just to validate their own sacrifice, and instead, the moral obligation is to honor their service by bringing their mission to a close.

(Applause.)

GOV. RICHARDSON: They've done a magnificent job, and by ending the bloodshed and finally letting the Iraqi people and the American people to set a new course. Those would be the principles of my presidency, and those would be the ideals that I'd see. Thank you. God bless you. Thank you for taking back America. Thank you.

(Cheers, applause.)

(End of remarks.)