

**CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE**

**TAKE BACK AMERICA 2007**

**THE NEW POPULIST ENERGY**

**DISCUSSION WITH  
SENATOR SHERROD BROWN (D-NY)  
SENATOR AMY KLOBUCHAR (D-MN)  
SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS (I-VT)**

**MODERATOR:  
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MR. : All right, now we have a real treat. We have the opportunity to have a real conversation with several of the most exciting new leaders in the U.S. Senate. We all here made history in the 2006 elections, and the American people voted for a new group of candidates, pledged to go to Washington and end the Iraq war. And all of the new senators elected last year were Democrats – (cheers).

But they were an exciting new brand of Democrats: populists who campaigned against the forces of corporate corruption that are standing in the way of good jobs, healthcare for all and energy independence for America. Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Jim Webb of Virginia, Claire McCaskill of Missouri, John Tester of Montana. (Applause.) That's a pretty impressive new crop of senators, and you helped to put them there.

Back then – back in the old days, we had a similar group: Phil Hart, John Culver, Fred Harris, Birch Bayh, Frank Church, Bobby Kennedy, Eugene McCarthy, Ralph Yarborough. But back then, we didn't have the decades and decades of conservative rule that gave away the store to the corporate interest. So we need these new populist senators even more than ever.

And now to conduct a conversation with three of them is Katrina vanden Heuvel who has been editor-in-chief of The Nation magazine since 1995. And it just so happens that since 1995, The Nation has become the country's largest circulation political magazine in this country. (Cheers.) Now Katrina not only produces this essential magazine, she puts out a regular blog called Editor's Cut, and she does TV really, really well. She is one of the few Progressives who has broken into the mostly conservative, mostly male circle of pontificators on the Sunday morning talk shows. And we appreciate her being there. She regularly presents opinions on MSNBC and CNN and PBS, too. I couldn't think of a better Progressive journalist to conduct a conversation with some of the most exciting political leaders to emerge from this or any political year. Brothers and sisters, please welcome Katrina vanden Heuvel and Sherrod Brown, and Amy Klobuchar and Bernie Sanders to our kitchen table. (Cheers.)

KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL: The premise of this evening is that there is new populist energy in this city, and that is very exciting. All of you know this fight is going to be tough, but with carriers of the people's agenda like the three senators here, there is a chance to take back this country. And you – I just wanted to speak for a moment – Roger spoke of the '06 election. At The Nation, we called it the deliverance election. There's still delivering to be done, but you know, there was, as you recall – so much of the establishment media talked about this as a victory for centrists. There wasn't any real shift. Well, the reality is what you see tonight. Scores of candidates led by Amy Klobuchar, Sherrod Brown, Bernie Sanders, campaigned aggressively and passionately

on issues of vital concern to Americans: trade, declining wages, the deterioration of the middle class, corporate greed, and of course, against this war which is undermining our security and looting our Treasury.

So tonight, we want to talk a little bit with these new progressive champions – people who are in the best tradition of the late, great Senator Paul Wellstone who – (applause) – who for many was the essence of progressive champion – gutsy on the tough issues and, as I said before, worked so closely with people like you involved in the social movements of our time. We’re going to begin with five minutes from each of the Senators, and then we’re going to take advantage of this wonderful setting and have a real kitchen table conversation. I’d like to just – before we begin – just as Roger said, this is perhaps the first time in a generation – a long, long time – that we’ve seen such an influx of populist progressives in the Senate. And to make that a vivid image, we were just talking before we came on – for several months, I believe, these senators and Jim Webb, who is not here tonight – (applause) – lived in a trailer inside part of the Russell Senate Office Building.

Now Bernie Sanders – good populist as he is – pointed out that many Americans would like to live in that trailer. It wasn’t a tough trailer. They had a possum they named Russell – (laughter) – they had a cat, and so you have maybe good trailer-park Democrats here – (laughter) – but I say that in the best sense of that word because that is where some of the best Americans are working, living and trying to make do in this economy which isn’t working for working people.

So I will begin with Amy from the great state of Minnesota – (cheering) – and then Bernie and then Sherrod.

SEN. AMY KLOBUCHAR (D-MINN): Well, thank you so much, and thank you to all my good friends here from Minnesota. It’s great to be here. We ran a strong grassroots campaign in Minnesota, and Paul Wellstone was a very good friend of mine. He taught me how to campaign on city busses, and I can tell you what he taught me to do. We would get on the bus and we would go down about eight city blocks, we’d shake hands with everyone on the bus, we’d say oh now we’re at our stop, bye! And then we’d get on a bus going the other way and we would go around and around and around. And how much we miss him and we miss his energy. And I think about him every day in the United States Senate because it’s not a day that go by that someone who’s maybe working those underground trams in the Capitol or one of the security guards outside who brings up Paul to me because he treated everyone with the dignity that they deserved.

My race, as I said, was grassroots, and I wouldn’t be here today if it wasn’t for all of you and the kind of support that we had not only in Minnesota but across the country. We did a lot with the Internet. I came into this without a lot of money. I had a number of primary opponents and opponents in the caucus system. I think at any one time I had eight or nine of them, and so a lot relied on Minnesota and what we could do over the Internet. And my husband always reminds me that I would tell people – which was true –

that I even at some point was so desperate I raised \$15,000 from ex-boyfriends. (Laughter.) (Applause.) Which he pointed out was not an expanding base. (Laughter.)

So anyway, we worked so hard, and what happened was eventually – and ours was the most targeted race in the country for a potential takeover from a Republican seat, because it was Mark Dayton's so it was an open seat. And we worked hard, and we got to the point where in July we were something like 20 points ahead. And I remember Schumer – I was on a tarmac with him and I went to his wife and said I just got a call from his mark (?) campaign manager, I'm 20 points ahead. She said don't tell Schumer, he'll cut you off, he'll cut you off. (Laughter.) And you know what, that's what happened, but because I knew the people that were getting the money, it was fine by me, because I knew that that national money was going to help John Tester in Montana and it was going to help Claire McCaskill in Missouri and it was going to elect Jim Webb in Virginia – (cheering, applause) – so that's what we did.

But now we have another challenge. And that's changing course for this country. This is taking back America. And I'm proud of some of the work we've done – getting the minimum wage increased. That had to be done. We're going to be coming up on the Employee Free Choice Act now. We got that stem cell research bill passed and we're only one vote short of overriding the president's veto on stem cell research. We are pushing on the war and we'll continue to push. I know we'll probably have a lot of discussion about that, so I want to focus my few minutes here today on the energy bill, something that I care deeply about. And we want to see some strong, strong amendments get passed this coming week, and we need your help to call people and send out – (inaudible) – and everything you do.

One, we want to see that renewable energy standard on the energy bill. My state's got a 25 percent standard, so I think we could at least do 15 percent. The increase in gas mileage – you know, it's been – we've got to go back to the Reagan era to when we saw an increase in gas mileage. And I actually have a carbon registry bill. Now it sounds a little boring, but it's the beginning of change and doing something about climate change. And it's been somewhat astounding to me – I've got three Republican authors on it along with Barbara Boxer and Bingaman and others. It's the idea of having a national registry so we can actually get the information we need and have accurate information so we can go on to the next step. And I thought, this is going well. Bernie's voting for it, I've got these Republican authors, we're reaching out. I was so excited about it and got it introduced, gave a good speech, listed all these companies that want to see it because we now have 31 states demanding a national registry. And all of a sudden on Thursday it was going so well the Chamber of Commerce came out against it.

Here I am – my first big bill – this is nothing new for Sherrod, but for me. So then, I took to the floor today and listed the 25 companies – I would like to see them now come and help me with this – but we really want to push this, because if we don't start moving on climate change – to me, and in my state, it's not just about scientists anymore. It's about kids wearing penguin buttons. It's about hunters in Hibbing that see the changes to the wetlands. It's about city councils in this tiny town of Lanesboro who

voted to change all their light bulbs out. It's about couples that ice fish that's seeing that it's taking a month to put their fish house out. This is the moral issue of our time. And so as we talk tonight, I know there's going to be so many good economic issues and other things that we talk about in this – the challenge of the war and pushing this administration – but I don't want us to forget that this energy bill is important and that we need to make it as progressive as possible. Thank you very much.

(Cheers.)

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: Senator Sanders.

SEN. BERNIE SANDERS (I-VT): Thank you. Let me begin by thanking many of you for the support that you've given me, not only in this election, but in past elections for the House of Representatives. I was the first Independent elected in 40 years in 1990, and the first real Independent ever elected to the United States Senate, and I could not have done that without your support. (Applause.)

And in our campaign – I can't remember exactly, but we probably had 40 or 50 thousand individual contributions, many of them from people in this room, which takes me to a very, very important issue, and that is if we are going to end the stranglehold of big money over the legislative process, we need public funding of elections. (Cheers.) And as we fight our way to public funding, what we've also got to do is shift our approach. Yes, we are very grateful for all of those people who have the money who have made generous contributions to all of us, but we also have got to reach out to millions and millions of Americans who maybe can afford 10 bucks or 30 bucks and gratefully involve them in the political process, because their money is quite as important as anyone else's money. (Applause.)

Let me give you a brief perspective of my view of where we are politically today. The good news, and it is very good news, is that because of the efforts of grassroots America we have gone a long way to putting an end to right-wing extremism. (Applause.) And this is, in fact, a very, very big deal, because you have people in the White House and leaders – formal leaders of Congress – who everyday were attacking the basic constitutional rights of the American people while giving tax breaks to billionaires while they took away from hungry children. We're doing everything – if you like – ass-backwards. Their sense of priorities was terribly wrong, and we have stopped that, and that is significant. (Applause.)

But – and the very big but is – I don't believe that we have yet rallied the American people around a progressive agenda, and that, in fact, is what our task is. (Applause.) And while we work day and night together to end the war in Iraq and bring our troops home as soon as possible, while, as Amy indicated, we understand that global warming is a threat not only to this country but to billions of people around the world, and why we have to pass strong legislation which cuts greenhouse gas emissions – while we focus on those issues, we cannot for one moment forget about the reality facing the economic lives of tens of millions of Americans, and sometimes we do that.

The reality right now in this country is despite Bush's assertions every day about how great our economy is doing – and you hear him every day, it's a – I don't know where they came up with this word – robust. But we have a presumably robust economy. The reality is that despite a huge increase in worker productivity, despite that, the middle class is shrinking. People are working longer hours for lower wages. In my state and all over this country, you have many, many people who are working not just two jobs but three jobs trying to pay the bills. Since Bush has been president, six million more Americans have lost their health insurance, and we continue to remain the only nation in the industrialized world that does not guarantee healthcare to all of our people.

Now it seems to me, if we are going to be successful politically, we need a simple, straightforward, progressive agenda. (Applause.) And that, among other things, we tell the wealthiest people in this country that their ideology of greed is no longer acceptable. (Cheers.) The idea that Bush and his friends have given hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks to the wealthiest one percent, while at the same time we have the highest rate of childhood poverty by far in the industrialized world, is morally repugnant. (Applause.) And I believe that not only from a moral perspective, not only from a public policy perspective, but from a political perspective – the American people want Congress to stand up and to tell them what they understand in their hearts – that government belongs to all of the people and not just the wealthy and the powerful. (Applause.)

So among many other things, what we should be focusing on is rescinding Bush's tax breaks for the rich and using that money to protect the middle class and working families of this country. (Applause.) I believe that we can have success organizing Americans around a national healthcare program that guarantees healthcare to all of our people. I believe that as we rebuild our infrastructure and make the point that intelligently and aggressively addressing global warming and greenhouse gas emissions can, in fact, create millions of good-paying jobs in energy efficiency, solar energy, wind energy and other sustainable energies. (Applause.)

So I would hope that we can all work together to tighten the contact between grassroots America and Washington in an agenda that makes sense to the vast majority of the people of our country who know, in their hearts and in their souls, that something is profoundly wrong in our country. And I hope that together we can utilize the idealism of our young people and of all of our people to create the kind of nation that you and I know we have the potential to create. Thank you very much.

(Cheers.)

SEN. SHERROD BROWN (D-OH): It's great to be here with my old friend Katrina and with Senator Klobuchar and with Senator Sanders. Bernie and I spent a lot of time sitting on the House floor in 2005 talking about going to the United States Senate and helping to change the country. November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006, to my mind, was the official end of the conservative era. (Cheers.) Now as progressives it's our turn, if we do right. And

I'm optimistic – in a historical sense, I'm very optimistic about the next two, three, four, five, six years in this country for a couple of reasons, and let me kind of outline that.

In the last century – in the nineteen teens – kind of everything came together. Earlier before the teens, there was a period of corporate overreach, of greed that led into the progressive era of those days where women got the vote, where a progressive income tax was passed, where food safety legislation was passed, where federal workers' compensation came to the floor and was passed. Twenty years later in the 1930s with Franklin Roosevelt – another progressive era. Social security, minimum wage, right to organize and bargain collectively came out of that era. Thirty years later in the 1960s with President Kennedy and particularly with President Johnson, we saw Medicare and Medicaid, voting rights, we saw the Civil Rights Act. So much came out of that progressive era. Today, beginning with the election of 2006, continuing because our margin is narrow in the Senate, a bit less narrow but still relatively narrow in the House – with the progressive movement, with the progressive energy in this company embodied by Take Back America, by Campaign America's Future, that progressive energy is more and more palpable.

From the 2006 election to winning four or five more seats in 2008 in electing a progressive democratic candidate for president – I think we're going to see this progressive era continue to gain energy and continue to build. That means all the kinds of things that Bernie and Amy talked about. It means alternative energy and the job creation, and weaning ourselves off of foreign oil, and stabilization of energy prices, and good environmental policy and all that that comes out of alternative energy. It means stopping the privatization of Medicare, of student loans, of the prison system, of public education and of the privatization of the military. It means stopping that – (applause) – and returning that to a different look. It means rewarding work in this country – something that the right loves to talk about that it doesn't do. That means continuing to increase the minimum wage. It means to continuing to increase the Earned Income Tax Credit. It means a tax system that rewards those who work rather than giving a better tax rate to this who clip coupons. It means an increase in food stamps, rewarding, again those people that work. It means those who are working should get significantly better healthcare than so many of them get. It means all of that.

And let me close with a story that I think kind of encapsulates why and how things have begun to change in this country. In February – Amy and I sit together on the Agriculture Committee – and there was a young woman that testified, in her early thirties – someone I didn't know, but she came from my state, from Middletown, Ohio. She came with her 10-year old – I believe 10-year old – son. Her name was Rhonda Steward (ph). She works full-time, makes about nine dollars an hour. She's president of the local PTA at her son's school, she volunteers in the Cub Scouts for her son, she teaches Sunday School, and she's a food stamp beneficiary. Before, people in this country believed that food stamps are worth way more than they are. Just so you know – most of you know, this is progressives – food stamps benefit is about one dollar per person per meal. So Rhonda and her son get six dollars a day food stamps. She's playing by the

rules, she's working hard, she's involved in the community, full-time job, no health care, barely making it on food stamps.

But the story she told – early in the month every month, a couple of times she makes pork chops for her son. A couple of times in the first couple of weeks she takes him out to a fast-food restaurant. But she said almost invariably, at the end of every month, she sits at the kitchen table – she and her son – and he eats dinner and sits and watches him. And he says mom what's wrong? And she said I'm just not feeling well today. And that happens the last two or three or four days of the month because she simply runs out of money.

An hour later I went to the Banking Committee, another committee I sit on, and listened to Secretary Paulson, the Secretary of the Treasury. And Secretary Paulson – I told him the story of Rhonda Stewart and he said, Senator, you don't understand. We had two and a half percent economic growth in this country the last quarter – (laughter).

SEN. KLOBUCHAR: Did he say it was robust?

SEN. BROWN: And could he – he just couldn't understand the disconnect between those who clip coupons, those whose economic worth is in numbers that most of us can't even envision, those who are at the top, corporate profits, corporate salaries, and much of the rest of my state and much of the rest of this country. And I think it's up to us as progressives as we build this historical moment – and I think we're going to see as progressives get elected to the House and Senate in 2008 to state legislatures all over the country – we win Ohio for the progressive candidate in 2008 and I think we're going to see – (applause) – that's worth clapping for. I think the energy you bring when you think about Rhonda Stewart and you think about Secretary Paulson and the very different worlds they represent – it's time that progressives helped to teach the country that there are way more Rhonda Stewarts and they need our help, and we need to be on their side as we take back America. (Applause.)

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: These are senators who understand the disconnect, and I don't think you hear too many senators talking about the ideology of greed is no longer acceptable. We need to. You're also people who understand that the Congress is the people's house, not the house of Eli Lilly, not the house of Wal-Mart, not the house of Goldman Sachs. I want to drill down, though, a little because I think that even while progressives are now in the ascendancy – and I agree that this is a moment, an extraordinary moment. We see it at this conference when the conservative moment is intellectually and morally bankrupt.

Sherrod, you're an expert on trade. Your win was partly about trade and what it meant to hundreds of your – thousands of your voters. If democratic leaders go ahead with this grand compromise and push these fast-track trade agreements, you know, with only symbolic gestures towards labor and environmental rights, what will your push back be? What will your strategy be? Do you think you as senators will caucus so that you don't need to go back to your voters and try and explain what's going down in DC?

SEN. BROWN: Good question. What happened in the Central American Free Trade Agreement in 2005 tells me everything I need to know about trade. What happened in 2005 was Congress – the House of Representatives we got within one vote of beating CAFTA, then – if Bernie remembers, it was the middle of the night, they twisted arms, they more or less bribed members of the Senate floor coming from the White House, all of that. But what was so important about 2005 is the energy that came from people of all stripes all over this country and all over the world. Religious leaders in Central America enlisted their counterparts in the United States to lobby the House and Senate against CAFTA. Certainly, labor was very, very effective. Environmental groups were very, very effective. Human rights organizations were very, very effective. And we've seen that energy that we will capture again in the trade debate.

The agreement between a handful of Democrat leaders in the House with the administration was a narrow agreement on a couple of issues. I don't like what they did, but it's a narrow agreement on a couple of issues. At least the Bush administration actually entertains the thought of labor and environmental standards. They aren't solid, they aren't particularly enforceable, they probably won't be in the middle and inside the core of the agreement, and we've seen this before. We saw it NAFTA, we saw it with Jordan. So there will be a fight on all of these trade agreements. I don't know about Peru and Panama – what will happen. I am almost certain that we will defeat Colombia if it comes up, we will defeat South Korea if it comes up, and we will defeat fast-track trade promotion authority if it comes up – (applause) – because the energy's on our side, the numbers are on our side, and the public's on our side.

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: Senator Klobuchar or Sanders, did you want to –

SEN. SANDERS: I agree with Sherrod. When we look at what I consider to be one of the profound questions facing America in that why is it with all of the new technology out there so that every one of you is a more productive worker than somebody who had your job twenty years ago – why is it that the middle class is shrinking and poverty is increasing? Why is that?

Well, there are a lot of reasons for that, but I think, perhaps, at the top of the list is that way back when a group of large multinational corporations said look, we are sick and tired of paying workers in Vermont or Ohio or Minnesota the equivalent of 20 to 25 dollars an hour. We're tired of dealing with unions. We're tired of having to obey environmental regulations and provide healthcare. Why do we have to do that? We don't. Let's pass this international trade – unfettered free trade – so that we can throw American workers out on the street, move to China, pay people there 50 cents an hour, have them arrested if they stand up for a union, and that's what we want. And you know what, that is exactly what they have accomplished.

In my small state of Vermont – we're not a major manufacturing state – in the last six years, we have lost 25 percent of our manufacturing jobs. Can you believe that? Nationally it's not that high, but it's outrageously high. Three million good-paying jobs.

So I think the idea that American workers are being forced to quote-on-quote “compete” against desperate people who are forced to work sometimes under authoritarian governments for pennies an hour is an absolute outrage. So I think the time is long overdue for us, not only to defeat the trade agreements that Sherrod listed, to defeat fast-track, but to really fundamentally rethink our trade policies.

Think what it would mean for America if the large corporations in this country started reinvesting in our states rather than in China. (Applause.) It could have a profound impact on our economy. So I think we’ve got to rally the American people in opposition to unfettered free trade, fight for fair trade agreements, and stand up for American workers in this process. (Applause.)

SEN. KLOBUCHAR: In my state, the CAFTA issue was a very important issue to this part of the state that I’m sure many of you, who if you’re not from Minnesota, ever visited – it’s along the Red River Valley, the sugar beet area where all these families and farmers have united and started their own coops. And these are mostly Republicans, and that area voted Democratic. And it voted Democratic – when you go out to these small towns in this areas, you think maybe ten people would be there, and maybe 100 would show up. And I thought, what’s going on?

Part of it was trade, part of it was that their healthcare premiums had gone up 60 percent in six years, the college tuition at the University of Minnesota had gone up 100 percent in 10 years – that it was their kids in rural America, their kids, that were going over to Iraq, and their neighbors and their cousins. So when you’ve got a longer way to drive to work and the gas goes up to three bucks a gallon, you feel it first in your pocketbook. And when you’ve got kids and you can hardly afford to send them to college, you feel it first. And when the government’s passing trade agreements that hurt your livelihood, you feel it first. And when it’s your kid that’s going to war, you feel it first in your heart. So I think there was a revolution in rural America and small-town America that we hadn’t seen before, and it was about values. It was about our values.

And so, I think that as we head into 2008 and you look at what we’re going to talk about, we cannot let this economic issue go because these people are getting squeezed and squeezed and squeezed, and the economy’s pretty good in Minnesota. But it hasn’t been that great for the middle class, and what Bernie was talking about – I ran on rolling back the tax cuts on the top one percent in Minnesota. We had this big ad – roll back, show the amount of salary going up and up and up, and it worked because people know it’s unfair. So I think that what you’ve elected is a group of Democrats that aren’t afraid to talk about taxes. That aren’t afraid to talk about, for these wealthiest Americans – you look at what we figured out the top one percent – 56 billion dollars a year – where that could go.

So as I look at this trade issue, I look at the trade agreements itself, but I also look at the overall economic unfairness here and the safety net that we’re going to need. It’s going to be very hard if people lose their jobs for them to get a new one if they can’t afford to go to college and if they can’t afford to get healthcare. So as we go into

2008, we have to continue this economic fight and not let them beat us down.  
(Applause.)

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: Amy, I just want to ask two more questions and go to the audience, as we should on a populist panel about populist economics and populist senators, but picking up on the taxes, picking up on the investment deficit in this country. Democrats, for political reasons, are now talking about closing the budget deficits, about PAYGO rules. I may get this wrong, but the budget deficit is only about one percent of GDP, and there is an investment deficit in this country, I don't need to tell you at this table, from early childhood education to the infrastructure of this country. Yes, taxes on the most affluent, but where do we get the rest of the funding we're going to need to really invest in this country?

SEN. KLOBUCHAR: Now, first of all, I don't view this fiscal responsibility as a political issue. I view it as a real issue for middle class people and poor people in this country. One out of 12 of the federal tax dollars we pay have been going to pay interest on this debt, and it's because of mismanagement on the part of this administration. They took a 200 billion dollar Clinton budget surplus and turned it into a 300 billion dollar Bush budget deficit. So I believe that by putting pay-as-you-go back into law, we did the right thing. (Applause.)

When you look at how we get the money to pay for these things and the investment that we need to do, 56 billion dollars, as we discussed, from rolling back the tax cuts on the top one percent; close down a post-capital gains, there's a good idea, because so many people owe capital gains. I can tell you, it's not middle class people in Alexandria, Minnesota. That brings in an estimated 17 billion dollars right there. Require the prescription drug companies to negotiate, which was just outrageous in Medicare Part D. (Applause.)

That's 90 – 90 billion dollars a year in Christmas presents those guys got. Some of it would go to the consumer; some of it would go to the government. Close down the tax loopholes on the Cayman Islands. I could give you dozens of ideas, and I believe that you just have to be smart. It doesn't necessarily mean – I don't, I personally don't think we should be raising taxes on the middle class, but I think on the top one percent, we should roll back those Bush tax cuts. I think there are many ways, when you look at the loopholes, and my job as a former prosecutor, we'd always say, follow the money and you find the bad guy. Well, you follow the money in Washington – two lobbyists for the drug companies on every member of Congress. You follow the money: it goes to Exxon making 29 billion dollars last year and the top five oil companies making 120 billion dollars, all those tax giveaways, and we, the freshmen, are supporting a bill to roll back those tax giveaways to oil companies. We will find that money to invest in the rest of the people of this country, which is, as far as I'm concerned, is the 99 percent of the people that have been overlooked. (Applause.)

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: Did you want to –

SEN. SANDERS: Sure. Let me agree. I think Amy made the point exactly right, but I also think, in addition to addressing the issue of income inequality in America and the huge giveaways in tax breaks for the wealthy and large corporations, I think it is appropriate now, given the nature of what we're fighting around the world, to take a hard look at the military budget as well. (Applause.)

What is not talked about terribly much with regard to how we're fighting terrorism around the world is nuclear weapons are not going to win that war. Submarines are not going to win that war. Weapons systems and aircraft that were designed to fight the Soviet Union are not going to win that war. I think, in fact, that we can make cuts in military spending by getting rid of weapons systems that are no longer relevant to the struggles – military struggles – that we have right now, and in addition to that, to understand that the fight against terrorism, which I think is a very serious problem – don't want to undermine that for one second – but I don't think it's going to be won with bombs and tanks and guns alone.

I think we're going to have to, in a very serious way, win the hearts and minds of people all over this country, all over this world, who are desperate, who turn to demagogues and horrendous people like Osama bin Laden because they don't see any other alternatives, and that means, just think for a moment: if America was perceived all over the world, including the Muslim world, as a champion in fighting against hunger for children and disease for children and education for all people, we could undermine Osama bin Laden in a very big way. (Applause.)

So I think it's not just cutting military, but I think it's rethinking how we use our military, given the world that we're living in right now.

SEN. BROWN: I would add one point to both Amy's and Bernie's comments about where does this money come from? I talked in my opening comments just for a moment about privatization, that this crowd in control of Washington worships at this altar of the free enterprise system, the private sector always does it better, always does it more efficiently, always does it more fairly, and we know, provably, that's not true. And I look at the money we spend because we don't do – we don't do even a majority of student loans, direct loans. So in other words, we part privatized the student loans system.

We've privatized Medicare in part. Amy talked about – it's about a 60 billion dollar a year direct payment to the insurance companies to incentivize them, to get into, to write this prescription drug coverage, not to mention the 180 billion dollar drug profits over the next five years. It's "for profit," quote-unquote, public school that Leave No Child – No Child Left Behind suggest at some point it could happen in that whole scheme, and the Department of Defense, with cost-plus that Haliburton gets to prepare meals to employ soldiers and to do a whole lot of things in between, functions that the military always did internally, more efficiently and a lower cost, and I think, a big part to me and (?) the progressive movement is, what do we do about this privatization? We stop and we begin to turn it around. That's tens of billions of dollars and better public

service and less feeding the political machine of the political party in power.  
(Applause.)

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: Let me ask one last question before we go to the audience. The opposition to the war played an important role in all of your races, and there's an important populist – economic populist – side to this. I mean, Sherrod, in Ohio, the war, since it began, has cost Ohio, not just in lives, which are priceless, but 16 billion dollars, which would have provided, I believe 5.4 million people with health care. I don't need to tell you there's been a good deal of disappointment with the Democrats in the House and Senate for not doing more to end the war, but walk us through your thinking, all of you, if you would, on where things stand now. What can and should be done? Amy, might you take that on?

SEN. KLOBUCHAR: Sure. You know, one of the things I've learned in the past month is when you tell people, well, this is how the Senate works, you know, we need 60 votes to break a filibuster and we only have 49 votes on the war because we don't – Lieberman votes with the Republicans on this, we don't have Tim Johnson – it really doesn't help people when people are dying over there. And while all those things that I just told you are true, I've finally decided that what we need to do is keep pushing these votes and keep having – (applause) – more votes because one of the things that I have found, and I mean, at first I thought, well what do these votes do?

We don't – well, we seem to pick up Republicans, and sometimes we pick up Hagel and Gordon Smith, sometimes we pick up Coleman and Collins and Snow, and sometimes we pick up Warner. One of these days, we're going to have enough votes, and the other thing it does is it keeps the issue on the front burner with the public, and that's where it needs to be. (Applause.)

One of the things that I would like to see, as we look at what the votes we could have even before this July recess is another vote on Russ Feingold's. I support that; I believe that's the – (applause) – the best way to do this, I voted for it before. 120 days from now, start bringing the combat troops home with the deadline of March of next year with the understanding that some troops may remain behind to do the – train the police and to guard the embassy, special forces. There is another proposal out there that I think is worth looking at that Senator Byrd has been talking about, about requiring the president to go back for authorization before it ends on October 11. Jim Webb has a proposal for troop readiness that would say, basically – it's very important in my state; 3000 of the troops involved in the 22,000 troops involved in the surge are from Minnesota, and the idea is to say, well, as much as they're there, they have to be back home because they have been pushed and pushed to the max.

And the thing I'll end with, and why this is so important to me – it has been from the beginning; I opposed the war from the beginning – not all these votes have been easy when you've got these veterans in your state that don't have mental health care, but the thing that I most remember from my trip to Iraq this March – I was not like that Congressman from Indiana who said that reminded him of a farmer's market in Indiana.

What I remember is standing on the tarmac in the Baghdad airport when nine Duluth firefighters called me over to stand with them. I didn't know what was happening, and they saluted as six caskets were loaded on a plane, each draped in the American flag. And those Duluth firefighters, when they talked to me afterwards, they didn't complain about the heat. They shed a few tears when they were saluting. They just asked me to do one thing; they said, when you get home, will you call our wives and will you call our moms and tell them that we're okay?

Well, when I called their moms and I talked to their wives, I heard some different stories, that they'd been back there, that we'd heard it from all the troops, parents and families when I came home, and it is time to change course. And I can pledge to you, and I know I feel this frustration in this room, and I feel this frustration in my state, but I can tell you that the three of us up here and so many of those other senators that you've sent (?) will not let this go, and we are going to keep pushing until we bring those troops home.

(Applause.)

SEN. SANDERS: It's sometimes, if you get beyond politics, it is, in fact, very difficult to talk about this war because it has been such a horror and will take so many years and perhaps decades to undo the damage that Bush has done. When I was in the House, I was one of those people who did everything that we could to try to prevent the president from getting the authority, like Sherrod and Amy have been active in trying to bring our troops home as soon as possible.

But when you look at what is happening in Iraq right now, it's not just that we have lost 3500 of our own, and I come from a very small state. We have the highest per capita death rate in Iraq of any state in the country, and I have gone to more funerals that I ever thought that I would go to. When you look at what these people have done in taking us into a war, misleading us into a war, and then being totally unprepared for what to expect. You all remember their assertions that the Iraqi people are going to have (?) flowers at us, and our troops will be home in a few months, and meanwhile, our troops could not have the equipment, did not have the armor they need, and do not have that armor today.

I was on the phone a couple of days ago with the secretary of the Army because people from Vermont were telling me, these guys are the people sweeping the IEDs so that other people don't get killed when they go over these things, and today, this week, they do not have the type of protected vehicles that they need, protected vehicles that they need. They don't have enough of them there. And when I spoke to the secretary of the Army and I said, well, how come? And this gets to a point that Sherrod and others have made for many years. This takes us right to manufacturing in America. Do you know where the best vehicles to protect our soldiers from IED explosions are manufactured? Do you think they're manufactured in Detroit? They are manufactured, not to some people here, in South Africa. We cannot produce that product in the United States today.

We don't have the capability. They are now saying that they're going to try to bring some production into this country.

So to my mind, our task is obviously, as Amy indicated, to stand up day after day. If the president wants to veto what we do, let him veto it. Let the American people understand what's going on. And this is what I also think. I think you've got a whole lot of nervous Republicans sitting there, and I think we've got to make them even more nervous. (Applause.)

And I was very pleased, very pleased to read the other day that there is going to be an anti-war effort against a number of members of the House and against a number of members of the Senate. I think that is exactly the right thing to do because I think some of these guys, some of these guys are close to bringing forth the day when a dozen Republicans are going to walk into the White House and say, Mr. President, for our political future and for the sake of the Republican Party, we can't support you any more, and when that day happens, the war in Iraq is over. (Applause.)

SEN. BROWN: I had trouble – I had trouble really understanding Bush's intransigence and their inability to listen to any advice or entertain any sort of contrary evidence. I mean, I was in the House for six years when Bush – Bush's first six years with Bernie, and we both voted against the war, and we saw a lot of, always pushed (?) back on anything we cared about from the White House, but the intransigence of this crowd was really brought home, to me, in a meeting we had I believe in January with Condoleeza Rice. She asked the freshmen, the 10 of us, nine Democrats and one Republican, to come to her office for breakfast and just to talk about whatever we wanted to talk about, and it was, of course, mostly Iraq.

She told us a story at the beginning of this breakfast. She said, you know, she said, right outside my office, I have a picture of a painting of Dean Acheson, one of my favorite secretaries of State, and even though he was – and she kind of laughed – he was a Democrat, but she said, you know, even though he was unpopular in his day and was criticized, history proved him right.

And as I thought about that meeting, as we talked about it afterwards, it became so clear to me that no matter what the evidence, no matter what the public opinion, no matter what people are telling Bush and Cheney and – not Rumsfeld anymore or Wolfowitz anymore, but this whole crowd, Rice and all of them, no matter what they hear, they believe 25 years from now, history will prove them right. And they're the only people that believe that, but that's what they believe, and they are so dug in. That's why Amy and Bernie are right, that we need to have as many votes as we can have, when timetables force the veto, continue to pick off one Republican after another.

My colleague, the other senator from Ohio, is a Republican who has begun to say some of the right things about the war, but he's not voting that way yet, and we need people to, as Bernie said, the kind of – we need to peel off one at a time, and it's frustrating for everybody, it's unconscionable what they're doing, but the Republican

Party is a very corporate, sort of hierarchical party where they listen to their CEO and they have trouble breaking off from their CEO and that's why the public needs to push and push and push and push until one of two things happens.

As Bernie said, either a number of prominent Republicans go to the White House and say, Mr. President, you're wrong, we've got to leave Iraq, or we get enough votes to override a veto in both Houses, and it's really up to us, from the inside, and you from the outside to continue to push those Republicans that we might be able to peel off. And there are a lot of them, as Amy said from the beginning. She mentioned six or seven of them. There are growing to be 10 to 12 to 15, partly because of political reasons, partly because they are sickened by this when they think about it, partly because they reached deep down and see for moral reasons, this war needs to end.

(Applause.)

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: Thank you. We have mikes if you have questions, so your time. Sir.

Q: Yes.

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: Maybe your first name or whole name and where you're from.

Q: I'm from San Francisco. I've worn out six pairs of shoes marching in protest march, anti-war marches, and I can tell – I'm going to tell you what the people of my community want, and they want it yesterday, and I haven't heard that word spoken in any of the symposiums today, any of the addresses by any of the speakers, and that is impeachment.

(Applause.)

Q: It seems to me and to a lot of people –

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: Sir, can you pose a question about impeachment to one of the senators?

Q: Pardon me?

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: Because impeachment, I think all of us in this room know, I mean, unless you're talking about a different impeachment, Gonzales –

Q: Impeachment of the whole gang of thieves that are running this country.

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: But is there a question for the senators who do have a constitutional –

SEN. BROWN: I'll answer that.

Q: Yeah, well, I'd like to know why the Senate, the House of Representatives have abrogated their duty to defend the Constitution. I mean, we've got these guys on the crosshairs six different ways, and you guys aren't doing anything about it.

SEN. BROWN: Two answers, and I empathize with your philosophy and where you stand on this. First of all, we wouldn't succeed, but that's not even the point. The second point, the more important point, is if we were to do impeachment of Cheney, as my colleague from Ohio, Dennis Kucinich, has suggested or proposed, or of Bush, the whole debate, the whole political debate, then, in the United States government, because the media can only really cover one big issue at a time, would be about – except for the Nation, which can –

SEN. SANDERS: No, they can cover Paris Hilton as well.

SEN. BROWN: – cover all kinds of things.

(Cross talk.)

SEN. BROWN: But it's that the debate would all be about impeachment and not about how to end the war, and it would become more partisan, and I think it would cause us to get off course where we need to get to focus on the war, to focus on economic justice, and while you can certainly make the argument that Bush and Cheney deserve it, the country deserves to have these problems solved, and that's where our focus needs to be.

(Applause.)

SEN. SANDERS: Let me, Katrina, if I could respond to that.

Q: I'm Rob Kall.

SEN. SANDERS: Let me just respond, and we'll give you the mike in a second here. I agree with Sherrod. George Bush will go down in history certainly as the worst president in our lifetime and maybe the worst president in American history.

(Scattered applause.)

SEN. SANDERS: Okay? That's true. He has been a disaster in every area that you can think of. My political guess would be that the one person in the world who would like us to move forward on impeachment more than any other would be Karl Rove, and the reason for that is that what Rove would say, and I can see the ads (?) and I can see the emails going all over America, you gave the Democrats a few vote majority. Are they addressing the economy? Are they even addressing the war? Are they addressing health care? Are they addressing the environment? No, they are using their

little bit of a power to try to take the government that you helped elect – and I know that many of you don't like George Bush, but you're not going to allow those Democrats to overreach and do that. Elect a Republican for president.

So I happen to think that what we have got to do is expose Bush for all his outrageous behavior and for his horrendous decisions. I think we have got to work day and night to represent the working families of this country. But to go forward in a process which would not succeed, which would end up turning millions of Americans against us, frankly, to my mind, does not make a lot of sense.

(Applause.)

Q: I'm Rob Kall. I publish opednews.com. I think – I agree with you 100 percent, Bernie, that impeachment as described – (inaudible) – impeachment is not going to work. What you're doing is working, which is investigating criminals, and the walk that you talked about, there have been a number of them recently where the Republicans have already gone to the White House and they're saying, back off. And there was a walk in the early '70s where they went to the White House and they said to Nixon, time to go. I think that the way that that walk, the walk, is going to happen, is by you investigating the crimes that they're committing. It's not just bad ideology; they're criminals. And I want to know where you're going. The one I really see is the war profiteering that the energy companies are engaging in, and I'd like to hear where that's going.

(Applause.)

SEN. KLOBUCHAR: You know, our colleague, Claire McCaskill, just came back from Iraq or is coming back this evening, and the purpose of her trip was a little different than some of the other trips. She went to look at some of this contracting and some of the abuses in this contracting. You know, when you look at what's been going on here, where you have the police agency that was built with millions and billions of dollars and it turns out that it doesn't even work because the plumbing is bad. You look at these endless contracts. You look at Blackwater and all of these private people that have been sent there that aren't even, like, are off the books. This is just outrageous, and it's not what our country has stood for.

So I think that this investigation and continuing these hearings are part of this, an incredibly important part of this, and I guess I'd extend it to, just as a former prosecutor, for a minute into what's going on in the investigation of the Justice Department because I've got to tell you this, we had a prosecutor, a Republican, moderate Republican, that was the same U.S. attorney who was under Bush One and Bush Two. A pretty good guy, I trusted him, I was the prosecutor for the biggest county in Minnesota at the same time. We worked together all the time, and it turned out – he left of his own accord because his wife was retiring, but it turned out a few months ago that he was on that list to be fired, and Monica Goodling took the stand and said the reason that he was on the list to be fired had something to do with Indian rights, and she wouldn't really say Indian, working with

the American Indian community. And we thought, well, what would this be? Is it that he helped when there was this tragedy, a murder at a school? Was that what it was, on a reservation? I really doubt that's what it was.

Well, it turns out, L.A. Times front page story, that he had, in fact, came out when our Republican secretary of State tried to make it very difficult for American Indians to vote. He came out and said that was wrong, and he pushed the Justice Department on that. So, so far, that's the only thing we found out that he did. We haven't gotten to the bottom of it yet, but it just shows this connection between their decisions, whether it's about the war, their decisions and the outcomes in trying to help their friends and try to get elected again. And I can tell you, as a prosecutor, you're supposed to do your job without fear or favor, and these guys have turned that upside down, and this guy, Gonzales, has got to resign.

(Applause.)

Q: Hi, I'm Terrie Albano from PWW.org, and I'm a union member, and I know you all are union supporters, and the union movement has been called one of the best poverty prevention and pay equity ways in this country. So my question is, what's the vote going to be on the Employee Free Choice Act, and are you going to garner enough for a veto-proof vote?

(Scattered applause.)

SEN. BROWN: Thank you for that. The Employee Free Choice Act is coming up this week, as you know. There is a rally tomorrow at the – it's across the street from the Russell Building. My daughter is an organizer, was in Brooklyn organizing the Service Employees International Union. She organizes home care workers. (Applause.)

And she is absolutely doing God's work. And I know that if we are serious in this country about linking productivity and pay, if we're serious about rewarding work, if we're serious about building the middle class, that, you know, is just the first really major step. They're going to try, they will try to cut the – they will threaten to filibuster. I think we may be short of the 60 votes. I do think, though, that we keep at it and we just keep trying. We bring it up – if we lose, we bring it up again.

This is part of electing another three or four or five progressive senators next year. That may not get us to 60 Democrats, but it'll get us to 60 votes on the Employee Free Choice Act. We have a new president. We will see a very different day. And this is the most fundamental change in union law, in organizing law, in the last 50 years, and it is so crucial to our country, and I urge all of you, as important as the Iraq war, ending the war is, this is – this may be a close second in pushing your members of the House and the Senate to vote for this. (Applause.)

Q: Peter Rush from the Progressive Democrats of America in Virginia. I'd like – my question concerns what I think is the linkage between what you, Mr. Brown, talked

about, this whole question of privatizing everything possible. The free trade question and the immigration issue, and it's this – free trade, as far as I can see, is a lose-lose proposition for the populations on both sides of the equation, and it only benefits the companies doing that, which are these huge multinational corporations which are the same ones who have been used to privatize the prisons, education, the military and so on down the line, and I think that we're looking at what I call a corporate world dictatorship. That's what they're trying to do, and I believe that that's the aim of everything that's being done in this whole domain, and I'm hoping that that can be identified in that fashion, and the key to immigration is, the foreign – the trade bill dumps U.S. agricultural products throughout the Third World, destroying the peasant agriculture. They say in Mexico, that causes most of the immigration problems that we have. Can we come out against – it's not just a question of fair trade and environmental and labor stuff. We have to stop dumping U.S. agricultural products abroad, so can we come out and unify these three issues and go after the overall corporate behemoth, which is the enemy of all of us, Third World and our population?

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: Thank you.

SEN. BROWN: I would answer that with one sentence. The agriculture bill, the immigration bill and the dramatic, radical change of NAFTA and other trade agreements all work together in a very different world so that only when the poorest workers in the poorest countries can buy the products they make, not just make them for us, will we see a trade policy that really works.

(Applause.)

Q: Senator Brown, I'm from Ohio. I live in Heath. I work for the United Food –

SEN. BROWN: You live where?

Q: I live in Heath, Ohio.

SEN. BROWN: Heath.

Q: Near Columbus.

SEN. KLOBUCHAR (?): I thought maybe you stumped him.

(Laughter.)

SEN. BROWN: Actually –

Q: And I work for the United –

SEN. BROWN: Actually, Heath is near Newark, instead of Columbus.

Q: It's very near Newark, right, and I work for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union.

SEN. BROWN: Good.

Q: My question to you is, in 2006, when you were still a member of the House of Representatives, you voted for the Military Commissions Act, which had as one of its elements the suspension of habeas corpus. Given your recent efforts to restore habeas corpus, would you still cast that same vote today?

SEN. BROWN: No, I was wrong.

(Applause.)

Q: Thank you.

SEN. KLOBUCHAR: You also should know that the Senate Judiciary Committee recently passed through changes to that to bring it back, and we got it through, I think, with one Republican vote. So it's moving.

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: We're going to take one more.

Q: Hi, my name is Harold Simon. I'm with the National Housing Institute and Shelter Force magazine. First, thank you for being on this panel, but more important, thank you for being in the Senate.

(Applause.)

Q: Katrina mentioned trailer park Democrats earlier, and I don't know how many of them are Democrats, but I do know that about three and a half million trailer park households are having a really hard time paying their housing costs, and they are part of 40 million households in America, or nearly 40 million, that are also having a really hard time with their housing costs. It's a third of all the households. Senator Sanders mentioned the ideology of greed. Well, I don't think there's anything that exemplifies that better than the wave, the tsunami of foreclosures that are facing Senator Brown's state of Ohio, and I don't think there's any state in the union that has a more progressive housing policy than Vermont. Your state is innovative: community land trusts and other forms of shared-equity home ownership. So if housing is such a big problem and we have housing policies, progressive ones that are ready to go to scale, how do we get it on the national agenda?

SEN. SANDERS: Well, let me – that's a very good question, and that's an example of an issue that we don't hear enough discussion about. It's not just that we have women and children who sleep out on the streets of America, including not very far away from where we are right now, but you have tens of millions of Americans who are paying 40, 50, 60 percent of their limited incomes in order to pay the rent, not leaving a

whole lot of money leftover to do other things. Thank you for mentioning Vermont. When I was mayor of Burlington, we were the first city in America to start the community land trust concept, which has now spread in many parts of the country.

But I think the answer is, and last couple of years on the House, we introduce the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and this was a program with tremendous grassroots support all over this country. We had well over 200 co-sponsors in the House, but obviously, the adamant opposition of the Bush administration. So here is an example, in terms of affordable housing, where we can solve a major social crisis in America, that is the high cost of housing and homelessness, and at the same time, put large numbers of people to work in good-paying jobs building affordable housing. So we're going to work as hard as we can for a concept called the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

(Applause.)

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: I want to thank Senator Sanders, Senator Klobuchar and Senator Brown for being – for being in the Senate and for being politicians elected who know the difference between a weathervane and a compass.

(Laughter.)

MS. VANDEN HEUVEL: That's a very important thing in these times. Thank you.

(Applause.)

SEN. BROWN: Thank you, all.

SEN. SANDERS: Thank you, everybody.

(End of panel.)