Print this article

Published Tuesday
July 27, 2004

Text of Al Gore's convention speech

Text of former Vice President Al Gore's speech via satellite feed from Canton, Ohio, at the Democratic National Convention in Boston on Monday:

Friends, fellow Democrats, fellow Americans, I'll be candid with you. I had hoped to be back here this week under different circumstances, running for re-election.

But you know the old saying: You win some, you lose some. And then there's that little-known third category.

I didn't come here tonight to talk about the past. After all, I don't want you to think I lie awake at night counting and recounting sheep.

I prefer to focus on the future because I know from my own experience that America is a land of opportunity, where every little boy and girl has a chance to grow up and win the popular vote.

In all seriousness, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity you have given me to serve America. I want to to thank you as Democrats for the honor of being your nominee for president four years ago. And I want to thank the American people for the privilege of serving as vice president.

And most of all, I want to thank my family with all my heart my children and grandchildren, and especially my beloved partner in life, Tipper.

I love this country deeply, and even though I always look to the future with optimism and hope I do think it is worth pausing for just a moment as we begin this year's convention, to take note of two very important lessons from four years ago.

The first lesson is this: Take it from me _ every vote counts.

In our democracy, every vote has power. And never forget: that power is yours. Don't let anyone take it away or talk you into throwing it away.

And let's make sure that this time every vote is counted. Let's make sure not only that the Supreme Court does not pick the next president, but also that this president is not the one who picks the next Supreme Court.

The second lesson from 2000 is this: What happens in a presidential election matters. A lot.

The outcome profoundly affects the lives of all 293 million Americans and people in the rest of the world too. The choice of who is president affects your life and your family's future.

And never has this been more true than in 2004, because _ let's face it _ our country faces deep challenges.

These challenges we now confront are not Democratic or Republican challenges; they are American challenges _ that we all must overcome together.

It is in that spirit, that I sincerely ask those watching at home who supported President Bush four years ago: did you really get what you expected from the candidate you voted for?

Is our country more united today?

Or more divided?

Has the promise of compassionate conservatism been fulfilled?

Or do those words now ring hollow?

For that matter, are the economic policies really conservative at all?

Did you expect, for example, the largest deficits in history? One after another? And the loss of more than a million jobs?

By the way, I know about the bad economy. I was the first one laid off. And while it's true that new jobs are being created, they're just not as good as the jobs people have lost. And incidentally, that's been true for me too.

Unfortunately, this is no joke for millions of Americans. And the real solutions require us to transcend partisanship.

So that's one reason why, even though we meet here as Democrats, we believe this is a time to reach beyond our party lines to Republicans as well.

I also ask tonight for the help of those who supported a third party candidate in 2000. I urge you to ask yourselves this question: Do you still believe that there was no difference between the candidates?

Are you troubled by the erosion of some of America's most basic civil liberties?

Are you worried that our environmental laws are being weakened and dismantled to allow vast increases in pollution that are contributing to a global climate crisis?

No matter how you voted in the last election, these are profound problems that all voters must take into account this November 2.

And of course, no challenge is more critical than the situation we confront in Iraq. Regardless of your opinion at the beginning of this war, isn't it now obvious that the way the war has been managed by the Administration has gotten us into very serious trouble?

Wouldn't we be better off with a new president who hasn't burned his bridges to our allies, and who could rebuild respect for America in the world?

Isn't cooperation with other nations crucial to solving our dilemma in Iraq? Isn't it also critical to defeating the terrorists?

We have to be crystal clear about the threat we face from terrorism. It is deadly. It is real. It is imminent.

But in order to protect our people, shouldn't we focus on the real source of this threat: The group that attacked us and is trying to attack us again - al-Qaida, headed by Osama Bin Laden?

Wouldn't we be safer with a president who didn't insist on confusing al-Qaida with Iraq? Doesn't that divert too much of our attention away from the principal danger?

I want to say to all Americans this evening that whether it is the threat to the global environment or the erosion of America's leadership in the world, whether it is the challenge to our economy from new competitors or the challenge to our security from new enemies, I believe that we need new leadership that is both strong and wise.

And we can have new leadership, because one of our greatest strengths as a democracy is that when we are headed in the wrong direction, we can correct our course.

When policies are clearly not working, we can change them. If our leaders make mistakes, we can hold them accountable even if they never admit their mistakes.

I firmly believe America needs new leadership that will make us stronger at home and respected in the world.

We are here this week to present to the nation the man who should be our new president: John Kerry.

John and I were elected to the US Senate on the same day 20 years ago and I have worked closely with him for all that time. So I want to say a personal word about John Kerry the man.

He is a friend who will stand by you. His word is his bond. He has a deep patriotism that goes far beyond words. He has devoted his life to making America a better place for all of us.

He showed uncommon heroism on the battlefield in Vietnam. I watched him show that same courage on the Senate floor. He had the best record of protecting the environment against polluters of any of my colleagues bar none.

He never shied away from a fight, no matter how powerful the foe. He was never afraid to take on difficult and thankless issues that few others wanted to touch - like exposing the threat of narcoterrorism and tracing the sources of terrorist financing.

He was one of the very first in our party to take on the issue of drastic deficit reduction. He has developed a tough and thoughtful plan to restore our economic strength and fiscal discipline.

To put it simply, those of us who have worked with John know that he has the courage, integrity and leadership to be a truly great President of the United States.

And he showed wisdom in his very first decision as the leader of our party when he picked as his running mate an inspiring fighter for middle class families and families struggling to reach the middle class: John Edwards.

John Kerry and John Edwards are fighting for us and for all Americans, so after we nominate them here in Boston and return to our home states across this land, we have to fight for them.

Talk to your friends and neighbors, go to "JohnKerry.com", raise money, register voters and get them to the polls, volunteer your time, and above all: Make your vote count.

To those of you who felt disappointed or angry with the outcome in 2000, I want you to remember all of those feelings. But then I want you to do with them what I have done: focus them fully and completely on putting John Kerry and John Edwards in the White House.

Fellow Democrats, when I look out and see so many friends who have meant so much to me in my own public service, my heart is full tonight. I thank you for all the love you’ve shown Tipper and me. You will forever be in our hearts.

There’s someone else I’d like to thank, and that’s the man who asked me to join him on the ticket at our convention 12 years ago, my friend - and my partner for eight years - President Bill Clinton.

I’ll never forget that convention or that campaign the way we barnstormed the country, carrying a message of hope and change, believing with our whole hearts that America could be made new again.

And so it was. And with your help, and with the leadership of John Kerry and John Edwards, so it shall be again.

Thank you God bless you and your families and may God bless the United States of America.