



Remarks As Prepared for Delivery: Gov. Mike Huckabee

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As much as I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight, I really was originally hoping for the slot on Thursday called the acceptance speech. But I am delighted to speak on behalf of my 2nd choice for the Republican nomination for President, John McCain -- a man with the character and stubborn kind of integrity that I want in a President.

I grew up at a time and in a place where the civil rights movement was fought. I witnessed first hand the shameful evil of racism. I saw how ignorance and prejudice caused people to do the unthinkable to people of color not so many years ago.

So, I say with sincerity that I have great respect for Senator Obama's historic achievement to become his party's nominee -- not because of his color, but with indifference to it. Party or politics aside, we celebrate this milestone because it elevates our country.

But the Presidency is not a symbolic job, and I don't believe his preparation or his plans will lift America up.

Obama was right when he said this election is not about him, it's about YOU.

When gasoline costs \$4 a gallon, it makes it tough if you're a single mom to get to your job each day in the used car you drive. You want something to change.

If you're a flight attendant or baggage handler and you're asked to take a pay cut to keep your job, you want something to change.

If you're a young couple losing your house, your credit rating, and your American dream, you want something to change.

John McCain offers specific ideas to respond to this need for change. But there are some things we never want to change -- freedom, security, and the opportunity to prosper.

Barack Obama's excellent adventure to Europe took his campaign for change to hundreds of thousands of people who don't even vote or pay taxes here.

It's not what he took there that concerns me. It's what he brought back. Lots of ideas from Europe he'd like to see imported here.

Centralized governments may care for you from cradle to grave, but they also control you. Most Americans don't want MORE government -- they want a lot less.

Abraham Lincoln reminded us that a government that can do everything FOR us can also take everything FROM us.

I really tire of hearing how the Democrats care about the working guy as if all Republicans grew up with silk stockings and silver spoons. In my little hometown of Hope, Arkansas, the 3 sacred heroes were Jesus, Elvis, and FDR, not necessarily in that order.

My own father held down two jobs, barely affording the little rented house I grew up in. My Dad worked hard, lifted heavy things, and got his hands dirty. The only soap we had at my house was Lava.

Heck, I was in college before I found out it wasn't supposed to hurt to take a shower.

I'm not a Republican because I grew up rich, but because I didn't want to spend the rest of my life poor, waiting for the government to rescue me.

John McCain doesn't want the kind of change that allows the government to reach deeper into your paycheck and pick your doctor, your child's school, or even the kind of car you drive or how much you inflate the tires.

He doesn't want to change the very definition of marriage from what it has always meant throughout recorded human history. It is not above John McCain's pay grade to grasp the simple fact that human life begins at conception, and he is committed to protecting it.

Maybe the most dangerous threat of an Obama presidency is that he would continue to give madmen the benefit of the doubt. If he's wrong just once, we will pay a heavy price.

John McCain will follow the fanatics to their caves in Pakistan or to the gates of hell.

What Obama wants to do is give them a place setting at the table.

John McCain is by far the most prepared, experienced, and tested Presidential candidate. Thoroughly tested.

When John McCain received his country's call to service, he didn't hesitate, and he didn't choose the easy path. He sat alone in the cockpit, taking off from an aircraft carrier to fly in unfriendly skies, knowing he might not make it back.

And one day, he didn't make it back. He was shot down and captured. He was brutally tortured.

He could have eased his own pain and even cut short his imprisonment by uttering a few simple words renouncing his country. But he loved his country and knew that to return with honor later was better than to return without it now.

Most of us can lift our arms high in the air to signify that we want something. His arms can't even lift to shoulder level, a constant reminder that his life is marked not by what he wants to receive, but by what he's already given.

Allow me to tell you about someone who understands this type of sacrifice better than anyone.

On the first day of school in 2005, Martha Cothren, a teacher at Joe T. Robinson High School in Little Rock, was determined that her students would not take their education or their privilege as

Americans for granted. With the principal's permission, she removed all the desks from her classroom. The students entered the empty room and asked, "Mrs. Cothren, where are our desks?" "You get a desk when you tell me how you earn it," she replied.

"Making good grades?" asked one student.

"You ought to make good grades, but that won't get you a desk," Martha responded.

"I guess we have to behave," offered another.

"You WILL behave in my class," Mrs. Cothren retorted, "but that won't get you a desk either."

No one in first period guessed right. Same for second period.

By lunch, the buzz was all over campus... Mrs. Cothren had flipped outwouldn't let her students have a desk. Kids had used their cell phones and called their parents.

By early afternoon, all 4 of the local network TV affiliates had camera crews at the school to report on the teacher who wouldn't let her students have a desk unless they could tell her how they earned it. By the final period, no one had guessed correctly.

As the students filed in, Martha Cothren said, "Well, I didn't think you would figure it out, so I'll have to tell you."

Martha opened the door of her classroom. In walked 27 veterans, some wearing uniforms from years gone by, but each one carrying a school desk.

As they carefully and quietly arranged the desks in neat rows, Martha said, "You don't have to earn your desks...these guys already did.

They went halfway around the world, giving up their education and interrupting their careers and families so you could have the freedom you have.

No one charged you for your desk. But it wasn't really free. These guys bought it for you. And I hope you never forget it. "

I wish we all would remember that being American is not just about the freedom we have. It's about those who gave it to us.

Ladies and Gentlemen, John McCain is one of those people who helped buy the freedom that we enjoy and the school desks we had.

It's my honor to do what I can to help him have a desk that he has earned one in the Oval Office.

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