

Governor Romney's Address to the Conservative Political Action Committee – February 7, 2008

I want to begin by saying thank you. It's great to be with you again. And I look forward to joining with you many more times in the future.

Last year, CPAC gave me the sendoff I needed. I was in single digits in the polls and I was facing household Republican names. As of today, more than 4 million people have given me their vote for president, less than Senator McCain's 4.7 million, but quite a statement nonetheless. 11 states have given me their nod, compared to his 13. Of course, because size does matter, he's doing quite a bit better with his number of delegates.

To all of you, thank you for caring enough about the future of America to show up, stand up and speak up for conservative principles.

As I said to you last year, conservative principles are needed now more than ever. We face a new generation of challenges, challenges which threaten our prosperity, our security and our future. I am convinced that unless America changes course, we will become the France of the 21st century – still a great nation, but no longer the leader of the world, no longer the superpower. And to me, that is unthinkable. Simon Peres, in a visit to Boston, was asked what he thought about the war in Iraq. "First," he said, "I must put something in context. America is unique in the history of the world. In the history of the world, whenever there has been conflict, the nation that wins takes land from the nation that loses. One nation in history, and this during the last century, laid down hundreds of thousands of lives and took no land. No land from Germany, no land from Japan, no land from Korea. America is unique in the sacrifice it has made for liberty, for itself and for freedom loving people around the world." The best ally peace has ever known, and will ever know, is a strong America!

And that is why we must rise to the occasion, as we have always done before, to confront the challenges ahead. Perhaps the most fundamental of these is the attack on the American culture.

Over the years, my business has taken me to many countries. I have been struck by the enormous differences in the wealth and well-being of people of different nations. I have read a number of scholarly explanations for the disparities. I found the most convincing was that written by David Landes, a professor emeritus from Harvard University. I presume he's a liberal--I guess that's redundant. His work traces the coming and going of great civilizations throughout history. After hundreds of pages of analysis, he concludes with this:

If we learn anything from the history of economic development, it is that culture makes all the difference. Culture makes all the difference.

What is it about American culture that has led us to become the most powerful nation in the history of the world? We believe in hard work and education. We love opportunity: almost all of us are immigrants or descendants of immigrants who came here for opportunity – opportunity is in our DNA. Americans love God, and those who don't have faith, typically believe in something greater than themselves – a "Purpose Driven Life." And we sacrifice everything we have, even our lives, for our families, our freedoms and our country. The values and beliefs of the free American people are the source of our nation's strength and they always will be!

The threat to our culture comes from within. The 1960's welfare programs created a culture of poverty. Some think we won that battle when we reformed welfare, but the liberals haven't given up. At every turn, they try to substitute government largesse for individual responsibility. They fight to strip work requirements from welfare, to put more people on Medicaid, and to remove more and more people from having to pay any income tax whatsoever. Dependency is death to initiative, risk-taking and opportunity. Dependency is a culture-killing drug – we have got to fight it like the poison it is!

The attack on faith and religion is no less relentless. And tolerance for pornography – even celebration of it – and sexual promiscuity, combined with the twisted incentives of government welfare programs have led to today's grim realities: 68% of African American children are born out-of-wedlock, 45% of Hispanic children, and 25% of White children. How much harder it is for these children to succeed in school – and in life. A nation built on the principles of the founding fathers cannot long stand when its children are raised without fathers in the home.

The development of a child is enhanced by having a mother and father. Such a family is the ideal for the future of the child and for the strength of a nation. I wonder how it is that unelected judges, like some in my state of Massachusetts, are so unaware of this reality, so oblivious to the millennia of recorded history. It is time for the people of America to fortify marriage through constitutional amendment, so that liberal judges cannot continue to attack it!

Europe is facing a demographic disaster. That is the inevitable product of weakened faith in the Creator, failed families, disrespect for the sanctity of human life and eroded morality. Some reason that culture is merely an accessory to America's vitality; we know that it is the source of our strength. And we are not dissuaded by the snickers and knowing glances when we stand up for family

values, and morality, and culture. We will always be honored to stand on principle and to stand for principle.

The attack on our culture is not our sole challenge. We face economic competition unlike anything we have ever known before. China and Asia are emerging from centuries of poverty. Their people are plentiful, innovative, and ambitious. If we do not change course, Asia or China will pass us by as the economic superpower, just as we passed England and France during the last century. The prosperity and security of our children and grandchildren depend on us.

Our prosperity and security also depend on finally acting to become energy secure. Oil producing states like Russia and Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and Iran are siphoning over \$400 billion per year from our economy – that's almost what we spend annually for defense. It is past time for us to invest in energy technology, nuclear power, clean coal, liquid coal, renewable sources and energy efficiency. America must never be held hostage by the likes of Putin, Chavez, and Ahmendinejad.

And our economy is also burdened by the inexorable ramping of government spending. Don't focus on the pork alone – even though it is indeed irritating and shameful. Look at the entitlements. They make up 60% of federal spending today. By the end of the next President's second term, they will total 70%. Any conservative plan for the future has to include entitlement reform that solves the problem, not just acknowledges it.

Most politicians don't seem to understand the connection between our ability to compete and our national wealth, and the wealth of our families. They act as if money just happens--that it's just there. But every dollar represents a good or service produced in the private sector. Depress the private sector and you depress the well-being of Americans.

That's exactly what happens with high taxes, over-regulation, tort windfalls, mandates, and overfed, over-spending government. Did you see that today, government workers make more money than people who work in the private sector. Can you imagine what happens to an economy where the best opportunities are for bureaucrats?

It's high time to lower taxes, including corporate taxes, to take a weed-whacker to government regulations, to reform entitlements, and to stand up to the increasingly voracious appetite of the unions in our government!

And finally, let's consider the greatest challenge facing America — and facing the entire civilized world: the threat of violent, radical Jihad. In one wing of the world of Islam, there is a conviction that all governments should be destroyed and replaced by a religious caliphate. These Jihadists will battle any form of democracy — to them, democracy is blasphemous for it says that citizens, not God shape the law. They find the idea of human equality to be offensive. They hate everything we believe about freedom just as we hate everything they believe about radical Jihad.

To battle this threat, we have sent the most courageous and brave soldiers in the world. But their numbers have been depleted by the Clinton years when troops were reduced by 500,000, when 80 ships were retired from the Navy, and when our human intelligence was slashed by 25%. We were told that we were getting a peace dividend. We got the dividend, but we didn't get the peace. In the face of evil in radical Jihad and given the inevitable military ambitions of China, we must act to rebuild our military might. Raise military spending to 4% of our GDP, purchase the most modern armament, re-shape our fighting forces for the asymmetric demands we now face, and give the veterans the care they deserve!

Soon, the face of liberalism in America will have a new name. Whether it is Barack or Hillary, the result would be the same if they were to win the Presidency. The opponents of American culture would push the throttle, devising new justifications for judges to depart from the constitution. Economic neophytes would layer heavier and heavier burdens on employers and families, slowing our economy and opening the way for foreign competition to further erode our lead.

Even though we face an uphill fight, I know that many in this room are fully behind my campaign." You are with me all the way to the convention. Fight on, just like Ronald Reagan did in 1976. But there is an important difference from 1976: today... we are a nation at war.

And Barack and Hillary have made their intentions clear regarding Iraq and the war on terror. They would retreat and declare defeat. And the consequence of that would be devastating. It would mean attacks on America, launched from safe havens that make Afghanistan under the Taliban look like child's play. About this, I have no doubt.

I disagree with Senator McCain on a number of issues, as you know. But I agree with him on doing whatever it takes to be successful in Iraq, on finding and executing Osama bin Laden, and on eliminating Al Qaeda and terror. If I fight on in my campaign, all the way to the convention, I would forestall the launch of a national campaign and make it more likely that Senator Clinton or Obama would

win. And in this time of war, I simply cannot let my campaign, be a part of aiding a surrender to terror.

This is not an easy decision for me. I hate to lose. My family, my friends and our supporters... many of you right here in this room... have given a great deal to get me where I have a shot at becoming President. If this were only about me, I would go on. But I entered this race because I love America, and because I love America, I feel I must now stand aside, for our party and for our country.

I will continue to stand for conservative principles; I will fight alongside you for all the things we believe in. And one of those things is that we cannot allow the next President of the United States to retreat in the face evil extremism!!

It is the common task of each generation – and the burden of liberty – to preserve this country, expand its freedoms and renew its spirit so that its noble past is prologue to its glorious future.

To this task... accepting this burden... we are all dedicated, and I firmly believe, by the providence of the Almighty, that we will succeed beyond our fondest hope. America must remain, as it has always been, the hope of the earth.

Thank you, and God bless America.