



Sarah Palin

Inaugural Tea Party Convention Keynote Address



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I am so proud to be an American! Thank you so much for being here tonight!

Do you love your freedom?! If you love your freedom, think of that.

Any of you here serving in uniform, past or present, raise your hand. We're going to thank you for our freedom. God bless you guys! We salute you! We honor you. Thank you.

I am so proud to be American. Thank you. Gosh, thank you.

Happy birthday, Ronald Reagan!

Well, a special hello to the C-SPAN viewers. You may not be welcome in those health care negotiations, but you have an invitation to the Tea Party.

Very good to be here in Tennessee, the Volunteer State. It's the home of good country music and good southern barbecue and -- great to be at the Tea Party convention. I guess down here that's some Southern Sweet Tea. And you know up in Alaska, we have a smaller version of Tea Party up there. We call it "iced tea." And I am a big supporter of this movement. I believe in this movement. Got lots of friends and family in the lower 48 who attend these events and across the country just knowing that this is the movement and America is ready for another revolution -- and you are a part of this.

I look forward to attending more Tea Party events in the near future. It is just so inspiring to see real people -- not politicians, not inside-the-Beltway professionals -- come out and stand up and speak out for common-sense conservative principles.



And today, I want to start off with a special shout-out to American's newest Senator, thanks to you, Scott Brown. Now in many ways Scott Brown represents what this beautiful movement is all about. You know, he was just a guy with a truck and a passion to serve our country. He looked around and he saw that things weren't quite right in Washington. So, he stood up and he decided that he was going to do his part to put our government back on the side of the people. And it took guts. And it took a lot of hard work. But with grassroots support, Scott Brown carried the day.

And it has been so interesting now to watch the aftermath of the Massachusetts Chowder Revolution. The White House blames the candidate -- their candidate. And Nancy Pelosi, she blamed the Senate Democrats. And Rahm Emanuel, he criticized a pollster. And yet again, President Obama found some way to make this all about George Bush. You know, considering the recent conservative election sweep, it's time that they stop blaming everyone else. When you're 0-for-3, you'd better stop lecturing and start listening.

The only place that the Left hasn't placed the blame is on their agenda. So, some advice for our friends on that side of the aisle: That's where you got to look because that's what got you into this mess -- the Obama-Pelosi-Reid agenda. It's going to leave us less secure, more in debt, and more under the thumb of big government. And that is out of touch, and it's out of date. And if Scott Brown is any indication, it's running out of time.

Because from Virginia to New Jersey to Massachusetts, voters are sending a message up and down the East Coast and in good places like Nevada and Connecticut and Colorado, Michigan, North Dakota, they've got the Liberal Left -- that establishment -- running scared. The bottom line is this: It's been a year now. They own this now and voters are going to hold them accountable. Because out here in the cities and in the towns across this great country, we know that we've got some big problems to solve. We've gotten tired now of -- of looking backward. We want to look forward. And from here, my friends, the -- the future -- it looks really good. It looks really good because if there's hope in Massachusetts, there's hope everywhere.

Brown's victory -- it's exciting, and it's a sign of more good things to come. A lot of great common sense conservative candidates, they're going to put it all on the line in 2010. This year, there are going to be some tough primaries. And I think that's good. Competition in these primaries is good. Competition makes us work harder and be more efficient and produce more. And I hope you'll get out there and work hard for the candidates who reflect your values, your priorities -- because despite what the pundits want you to think, contested primaries aren't civil war. They're democracy at work, and that's beautiful.

I was the product of a competitive primary where, running for governor, I faced five guys in the party, and we put our ideas and our experience out there on the table for a debate, and then we allowed, of course, the voters to decide. And that is a healthy process, and it gives Americans the kind of leadership that they want and deserve. And so in 2010, I tip my hat to anyone with the courage to throw theirs in the ring, and may the best ideas and candidates win.



But while I hope that you're going to give these candidates that you choose your best effort, please understand that they're human. There's no perfect candidate, and they're going to disappoint occasionally. And when they do, let them know, but don't get discouraged and sit it out, because the stakes are too high. The stakes are too high right now, and your voice is too important. So work hard for these candidates, but put your faith in ideas.

And in that spirit, I caution against allowing this movement to be defined by any one leader or politician. The Tea Party movement is not a top-down operation. It's a ground-up call to action that is forcing both parties to change the way that they're doing business, and that's beautiful. This is about the people. This is about the people, and it's bigger than any king or queen of a Tea Party. And it's a lot bigger than any charismatic guy with a teleprompter.

The soul of this movement is the people -- everyday Americans who grow our food and run our small businesses, teach our kids, and fight our wars. They're folks in small towns and cities across this great nation who saw what was happening -- and they saw and were concerned, and they got involved. Like you, they go to town hall meetings, and they write op-eds. They run for local office. You all have the courage to stand up and speak out. You have a vision for the future, one that values conservative principles and common sense solutions. And if that sounds like you, then you probably too are feeling a bit discouraged by what you see in Washington D.C.

Now in recent weeks, many of us have grown even more uneasy about our Administration's approach to national security, the most important role ascribed to our federal government. Let me say, too, it's not politicizing our security to discuss our concerns, because Americans deserve to know the truth about the threats that we face and what the Administration is or isn't doing about them. So let's talk about them.

New terms used like "overseas contingency operation" instead of the word "war." That reflects a worldview that is out of touch with the enemy that we face. We can't spin our way out of this threat. It's one thing to call a pay raise a job created or saved. It's quite another to call the devastation that a homicide bomber can inflict a "manmade disaster." And I just say, come on, Washington. If nowhere else, national security -- that's one place where you got to call it like it is.

And in that we spirit -- in that spirit we should acknowledge that on Christmas Day, the system did not work. Abdul Mutallab passed through airport security with a bomb, and he boarded a flight hell-bent on killing innocent passengers. This terrorist trained in Yemen with Al Qaida, his American visa was not revoked until after he tried to kill hundreds of passengers. On Christmas Day, the only thing that stopped this terrorist was blind luck and brave passengers. Really, it was a Christmas miracle, and that is not the way that the system is supposed to work.

What followed was equally disturbing. After he was captured, he was questioned for only 50 minutes. We had a choice in how to do this. The choice was, only question him for 50 minutes and then read his Miranda Rights. The Administration says then, there are no downsides or upsides to treating terrorists like civilian criminal defendants.¹



But a lot of us would beg to differ. For example, there are questions we would have liked this foreign terrorist to answer before he lawyered up and invoked our U.S. Constitutional right to remain silent. *Our* U.S. Constitutional rights. Our rights that you, sir [to male veteran in audience] fought and were willing to die for to protect in our Constitution. The rights that my son, as an infantryman in the United States Army is willing to die for. The protections provided -- thanks to you, sir -- we're going to bestow them on a terrorist who hates our Constitution and tries to destroy our Constitution and our country? This makes no sense because we have a choice in how we're going to deal with the terrorists. We don't have to go down that road.

There are questions that we would have like answered before he lawyered up like: "Where exactly were you trained and by whom? You -- You're bragging about all these other terrorists just like you. Who are they? When and where will they try to strike next? The events surrounding the Christmas Day plot reflect the kind of thinking that led to September 11th. That threat, then, as the USS Cole was attacked, our Embassies were attacked -- it was treated like an international crime spree, not like an act of war. We're seeing that mindset again settle into Washington. That scares me for my children and for your children. Treating this like a mere law enforcement matter places our country at grave risk. Because that's not how radical Islamic extremists are looking at this. They know we're at war. And to win that war, we need a Commander-in-Chief, not a professor of law standing at the lectern.

It's that same kind of misguided thinking that is seen throughout the Administration's foreign policy decisions. Our President spent a year reaching out to hostile regimes, writing personal letters to dangerous dictators, and apologizing for America. And what do we have to show for that? Here's what we have to show. North Korea tested nuclear weapons and longer range ballistic missiles. Israel, a friend and a critical ally, now questions the strength of our supports. Plans for a missile defense system in Europe? They've been scrapped. Relations with China and Russia are no better. And relations with Japan -- that key Asian ally -- they're in the worse shape in years.

And around the world, people who are seeking freedom from oppressive regimes, wonder if Alaska² is still that beacon of hope for their cause. The Administration cut support for democracy programs, and where the President has not been clear, I ask, where is his clear and where is his strong voice of support for the Iranians who are risking all in their opposition to Ahmadinejad?

Just that short list. And you know, it's no wonder that our President only spent about nine percent of his State of the Union Address discussing national security and foreign policy, because there aren't a whole lot of victories that he could talk about that night. And that's just a short list.

There are so many challenges in front of us, and it can seem overwhelming. But despite these challenges, we have hope that we can move things in the right direction. But it's going to require the Administration to change course. We need a foreign policy that distinguishes America's friends from her enemies and recognizes the true nature of the threats that we face.



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We need a strong national defense. I think you would agree with me, as -- as Reagan used to talk about that "peace through strength." And in that respect, I applaud the President for following at least a part of the recommendations made by our commanders on the ground to send in some more reinforcements to Afghanistan. Now, though he, we must spend less time courting our adversaries, spending more time working with our allies. And we must build effective coalitions capable of confronting dangerous regimes like Iran and North Korea. It's time for more than just tough talk. Just like you -- probably just so tired of hearing the talk, talk, talk. Tired of hearing the talk.

It's time for some tough actions, like sanctions on Iran. And in places in the world where people are struggling and oppressed and they're fighting for freedom, America must stand with them. We need a clear foreign policy that stands with the people and for democracy -- one that reflects both our values and our interests, and it is in our best interests, because democracies -- they don't go to war with each other. They can settle their differences peacefully.

The lesson of the last year is this: Foreign policy can't be managed through the politics of personality. And our President would do well to take note of an observation John F. Kennedy had made once he was in office: that all the world's problems aren't his predecessor's fault. The problems that we face in the real world require real solutions. And we'd better get to it, because the risks that they pose are great and they're grave. However, as Barry Goldwater said: "We can be conquered by bombs...but we can also be conquered by neglect by ignoring our constitution and disregarding the principles of limited government."

And in the past year, his words rang true. Washington has now replaced private irresponsibility with public irresponsibility. The list of companies and industries that the government is crowding out and bailing out and taking over, it continues to grow. First it was the banks, mortgage companies, financial institutions, then automakers. Soon, if they had their way, health care, student loans.

Today, in the words of Congressman Paul Ryan, The 700 billion dollar "TARP has morphed into crony capitalism at its worse." And it's becoming a "slush fund" for the Treasury Department's favorite big players, just as we had been warned about.³ And while people on Main Street look for jobs, people on Wall Street -- they're collecting billions and billions in your bailout bonuses. Among the top 17 companies that received your bailout money, 92 percent of the senior officers and directors -- they still have their good jobs.

And everyday Americans are wondering: Where are the consequences? They helped to get us into this worst economic situation since the Great Depression. Where are the consequences?

When Washington passed a 787 billion dollar "stimulus bill," we were nervous because they just spent 700 billion dollars to bailout Wall Street. And on the state level, as a governor, we knew that a lot of that money came with fat strings attached. The federal government was going to have more control over our states. They were going to disrespect the 10th Amendment of our Constitution by essentially bribing us with, "Take this federal money" (and then we're going to be able to mandate a few more things on you though.)



I joined with other conservative governors around the nation in rejecting some of those dollars. Legislators -- Turned out to be, though, nothing for applause because -- nothing to applaud because -- legislators then were threatening lawsuits if governors didn't take the money. And I vetoed some of the funds that -- I knew we couldn't maintain the programs, that we were going to pay for it with these -- these borrowed, printed up, invented dollars out of nowhere. But lawsuits were threat -- even in Alaska, in a Republican controlled legislature, my veto was overridden and the money poured into those states. And I believe we will see this play out in our states: The federal government will have taken more control over the people who live in our states.

Now I understand wanting to believe that this is all free money. And for some I guess it's tough to tell people no in tough times. Plus, remember our Administration promised that it would be good stewards of tax payer dollars. Remember? Remember Vice President Biden. He was put in charge of a tough, unprecedented oversight effort. That's how it was introduced. You know why? Because nobody messes with Joe.

Now, this was all part of that hope and change and transparency. And now a year later I've got to ask those supporters of all that: How's that hopey-changey stuff working out for you? See, I tried to look into that transparency thing, but Joe's meetings with the transparency and accountability board -- it was closed to the public. Yeah, they held the transparency meeting behind closed doors. So, not sure if anybody's messing with Joe, but here is what I do know: A lot of that stimulus cash -- it ended up in some pretty odd places, including districts that didn't even exist; and programs that really don't have a whole lot to do with stimulating the economy.

Nearly six million dollars was given to a democrat pollster who had already made millions during the Democrats' presidential primary. Nearly 10 million was spent to update the stimulus web site. And one state even spent a million bucks to put up signs that advertised that they were spending the federal stimulus projects. Or as someone put it: This was a million dollar effort using your money to tell you it's spending your money. And it didn't create a single job.

These uses of stimulus funds don't sound targeted and they don't sound timely, as we were promised. They just sound wasteful. And in the case of those signs, kind of ridiculous. All of that -- I don't know about you, but seeing those checks written for some of these pet projects of congressmen and those in the White House -- did you feel very stimulated?

And then it turns out that Washington got the price tag wrong. All of these projects and programs, they cost tens and tens of billions of dollars more than we were told. It's now closer to 860 billion dollars. Add this to the fact that the White House can't even tell us how many jobs were actually created. Depending on who you ask, it's anywhere from thousands to two million.

But one number we are sure of is the unemployment number. And that's at 9.7, which is well above the 8 percent mark that we were promised our stimulus package would go to avoid. And unemployment now is -- underemployment now is 16.5 percent. You've got all these



people who have just kind of given up right now, and they're not even enrolling in some of these programs. Tough to count them.

Folks, I won't go into all of it tonight, but the list of broken promises is long. Candidate Obama pledged to end closed-door, sweetheart deals and no-bid contracts once and for all, But just last month his Administration awarded a 25 million dollar no-bid contract to a Democrat donor. Is that hope? Nope. It's not hope.

That's the same old, same old in Washington, D.C. And instead of changing the way Washington does business, we got the "Cornhusker Kickback" and the "Louisiana Purchase" and millions of tax breaks for union bosses' desires. The promised ban on lobbyists in this new Administration, he handed out waivers left and right, and there are more than 40 former lobbyists who now work at the top levels in this Administration. And these days most members of Congress, they don't get to read the bill before they have to vote on it, much less the pledge that a bill wouldn't be signed into law until we all had five days to review it online.

So see, it's easy to understand why Americans are shaking their heads when Washington has broken trust with the people that these politicians are to be serving. We're drowning in national debt and many of us have had enough.

Now the foundational principles in all of this, it's easy to understand. It really is -- even I though I think D.C. would just love for us to believe that this is all way over our heads. Somebody in Tennessee, somebody up there in Alaska, she'll never understand what we're talking about here in D.C. No, this is all pretty simple stuff. When our families, when our small businesses, we start running our finances into the red, what do we do? We tighten our belts and we cut back budgets. Isn't that what we teach our children -- to live within our means? It's what Todd and I do when we have to make payroll, buy new equipment for our commercial fishing business. We have to plan for the future, meet a budget.

But in Washington, why is it just the opposite of that? This week, they unveiled a record-busting, mindboggling 3.8 trillion dollar federal budget. And they keep borrowing, and they keep printing these dollars, and they keep making us more and more beholden to foreign countries, and they keep making us take these steps towards insolvency. Now what they're doing in proposing these big new programs with giant price tags, they're sticking our kids with the bill. And that's immoral. That's generational theft. We're stealing the opportunities from our children.

And freedom lovers around this country need to be aware that all of this makes us more beholden to other countries. It makes us less secure. It makes us less free. And that should tick us off. So folks, with all these serious challenges ahead, we've got private-sector job creation that has got to take place and got these economic woes and -- and health care, the war on terror.

But as the saying goes, if you can't ride two horses at once, you shouldn't be in the circus. So here's some advice for those in D.C. who want to shine in the greatest show on earth. Too often when big government and big business get together and cronyism sets in, well, it benefits insiders, not everyday Americans. The Administration and Congress should do what



we did up there in Alaska when the good old boys started making back room deals that were benefiting big oil and not the citizens of the state. And the citizens of the state then, Alaskans, we got together and we put government back on the side of the people. And a lot of the big wigs, they started getting in trouble and some of the big wigs ended up going to jail over their back room deals.

Our government needs to adopt a pro-market agenda that doesn't pick winners and losers, but it invites competition and it levels the playing field for everyone. Washington has got to across the board, lower taxes for small businesses so that our mom and pops can reinvest and hire people so that our businesses can thrive. They should support competition, support innovation, reward hard work.

And they should do all that they can to make sure that the game is fair without that undo corrupt influence. And then they need to get government out of the way. If they would do this -- If they would do this, our economy, it would roar back to life and for instance on health care, we need bipartisan solutions to help families, not increase taxes. Remember that red reset button that America through Secretary Clinton, she gave to Putin. Remember that? I think we should ask for that back and hand it instead to Congress. And say, no, start all over on this health care scheme and pass meaningful, market-based reforms that incorporate some simple steps that have broad support, the -- the best ideas, not back room deals but things like insurance purchases across state lines and the tort reform that we've talked about.

Those things that are common sense steps towards reform that the White House and -- and leaders on -- on the Democrats' side of -- of the aisle in Congress, they don't want to consider. So it makes you wonder, what truly is their motivation? What is their intention if they won't consider even these common sense, broad-based support ideas that would work? And to create jobs. Washington should jump start energy projects. I said it during the campaign and I'll say it now: We need an "all of the above" approach to energy policy. That means proven conventional resource development and support for nuclear power. And I was thankful that the President at least mentioned nuclear power in the State of the Union.

But, again, we need more than words. We need a plan to turn that goal into a reality and that way we can pave the way for projects that will create jobs. Those are real job creators and deliver carbon free energy. And while we're at it, let's expedite the regulatory and permitting and legal processes for on and offshore drilling. Instead of paying billions of dollars, hundreds of billions of dollars that now are being sent to foreign regimes, we should be drilling here and drilling now instead of relying on them to develop their resources for us. So what we've got to do is axe that plan for cap-and-tax, that policy that's going to kill jobs and is going to pass the burden of paying for it onto our working families.

And finally, if we're going to get serious about fiscal restraint, then we've got to make Washington start walking the walk. After putting us on a track to quadruple the deficit, the proposed spending freeze, maybe it's a start, but it's certainly not enough. As Senator John Thune said, it's like putting a Band-Aid on a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

We need to go further. Cut spending. Don't just simply slow down a spending spree. And we've got to axe the plans for a second stimulus when the first hasn't even been measured for



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any success yet. Kill the plans for the second stimulus and be aware that now that second stimulus is being referred to as a "jobs bill." Now these aren't the only ways to rein in spending, and alone, they're not going to be enough, not enough to tackle the insane debt and the deficits that we face. But they are a good way to start and to show that we're serious about getting our financial house in order.

Now like a lot of you, perhaps, I have spent the last year thinking about how -- how to best serve. How -- How can I help our country? How can I make sure that I, that you, that we're in a position of nobody being able to succeed? When they try to tell us to sit down and shut up, how can we best serve? In 2008, I had the honor -- really of a lifetime -- the honor of a lifetime, running alongside John McCain. I...look at him as an American hero. And nearly 60 million Americans voted for us. They cast their ballot for the things that we are talking about tonight: lower taxes, smaller government, transparency, energy independence and strong national security.

And while no, our votes did not carry the day, it was still a call to serve our country. Those voters wanted us to keep on fighting and take the gloves off. And they wanted common sense conservative solutions. And they wanted us to keep on debating. And each of us who is here today, we're living proof that you don't need an office or a title to make a difference. And you don't need a proclaimed leader, as if we're all just a bunch of sheep and we're looking for a leader to progress this movement.

That is what we're fighting for. It is what we are fighting about. It is what we believe in and that's what this movement is all about. When people are willing and to meet halfway and stand up for common sense solutions and values, then we want to work with them. And in that spirit, I applaud Independents and Democrats like Bart Stupak who stood up to tough partisan pressure and he wanted to protect the sanctity of life and the rights of the soon to be born. I applaud him for that.

When we can work together, we will. But when the work of Washington violates our -- our conscience and when the work and efforts in Washington, D.C., violate our Constitution, then we will stand up and we will be counted -- because we are the loyal opposition. And we have a vision for the future of our country, too, and it is a vision anchored in time tested-truths: that the government that governs least, governs best. And that the Constitution -- the Constitution provides the best road map towards a more perfect union. And that only a limited government can expand prosperity and opportunity for all. And that freedom is a God-given right and it is worth fighting for. God bless you. And that America's finest, our men and women in uniform, are a force for good throughout the world -- and that is nothing to apologize for.

These are enduring truths and these enduring truths have been passed down from Washington to Lincoln to Reagan and now to you. But while this movement, our roots there, in our spirit, too, they are historic. The current form of this movement is fresh and it's young and it's fragile. We are now the keepers of an honorable tradition of conservative values and good works. And we must never forget that it is a sacred trust to carry these ideas forward. It demands civility and it requires decent, constructive, issue-oriented debate.

Opponents of this message, they're seeking to marginalize this movement. They want to paint us as ideologically extreme and the counterpoint to liberal intolerance and outrageous



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conspiracy theorists aimed at our own government and unethical shameless tactics like considering a candidate's children fair game.

But unlike the elitists who denounce this movement -- they just don't want to hear the message -- I've traveled across this great country and I've talked to the patriotic men and women who make up the Tea Party movement. And they are good and kind and selfless and they are deeply concerned about our country. And today I ask only this: Let's make this movement a tribute to their good example and make it worthy of their hard work and their support.

Do not let us have our heads turned from the important work before us and do not give others an excuse to be able to turn their eyes from this. Let us not get bogged down in the small squabbles. Let us get caught up in the big ideas.

To do so would be a fitting tribute to Ronald Reagan, especially tonight, as he would have turned 99. No longer with us, his spirit lives on and his American dream endures. He knew the best of our country is not all gathered in Washington, D.C. It is here in our communities where families live, and children learn, and children with special needs are welcomed in this world and embraced. And thank you for that.

The best of America can be found in places where patriots are brave enough and free enough to be able to stand up and speak up; and where small businesses grow our economy one job at a time; and folks like Reagan, we know that America is still that "shining city on a hill." I do believe that God "shed his grace on thee." We know that our best days are yet to come. Tea Party nation, we know that there is nothing wrong with America that together we can't fix as Americans.

So from the bottom of my heart and speaking on behalf of millions and millions and millions of Americans who want to encourage this movement, this movement is about the people. Who can argue a movement that is about the people and for the people? Remember, all political power is inherent in the people, and government is supposed to be working for the people. That is what this movement is about.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for being part of the solution. God bless you, Tea Partiers and God bless the USA.

Thank you. God bless you guys.