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SEN. TED KENNEDY - S. FUNDRAISER

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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY AT
FUNDRAISER FOR SENATOR TED KENNEDY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you. (Applause) Thank you. Well, let's just vote right now. Well, if you're not fired up now, if you don't appreciate what's at stake in this election, then just play the tape again, because I'm here to support your senator, who not only has brought that level of commitment and passion and caring and intelligence to the problems of the State of Massachusetts but also to the problems of our country, and I cannot -- (Applause) I cannot overstate how important Senator Kennedy is to the workings of the United States Senate, to making sure that every single member never forgets the people back home, because he won't let them.

Sometimes they try to, but he is always there to say, "What about the children of working families who can't get health insurance? What about the jobs that are moved out of state and out of country? What about the environmental problems that get overlooked and untended? What about health care, education," all of the issues he's fought for over a lifetime of service. With Ted Kennedy there, no other senator can ever, ever forget what is really at stake in their United States Senate deliberations. (Applause)

And I want to thank Vicky for not only her kind words and her introduction but for adding a little Louisiana spice to the Massachusetts political scene and for being a constant voice about what is important. If you had the opportunity to spend time with them together, you know their lives really revolve around their children, their family, but again, she never lets anyone forget how lucky they are, and therefore what an obligation they have to make sure other people have the same opportunities, and she is a great asset not just to Senator Kennedy but to the State of Massachusetts as well. (Applause)

Those of you who are here tonight to support

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Senator Kennedy, you know that he is the number one target of the far right wing of the Republican party. You know that the forces opposing him are the same ones that are trying to block the progress that needs to be made in solving problems. Senator Kennedy was right to quote (inaudible), because too often in politics today it is the quick, easy answer, the sound bite, the shrug of the shoulders, the deflection of responsibility that stands in the way of actually talking through and solving the problems that face America. Ted Kennedy doesn't engage in that kind of behavior. He stands up and calls it like he sees it. (Applause)

That is why the forces arrayed against him I consider badges of honor, because if he had not stood up to them repeatedly, they would not be working so hard to distort his record and to defeat him in this election, and it is absolutely critical that those of you who have worked with him, who have been his colleagues and his allies, who have been his constituents do not let the political climate of the moment obscure and undermine the record of one of the greatest senators who have ever served in the United States Senate. (Applause)

You know, I don't want to preach to the choir, but I think it's important that we remind ourselves what is at stake in this election and what Senator Kennedy has fought for over the years of his service, because once you see what he's fought for, you can understand why he is being fought against. He has repeatedly stood up to what he says is the job of government, "to do more than provide comfort for the comfortable but instead to provide opportunity for every American, particularly to give the capacity and the power over their own lives to working people so they could make the best decisions for themselves and their families."

He believes and his record demonstrates that government doesn't need to be on your back. Government doesn't need to be off your back. Government needs to be by your side and together in a partnership working to get things done for people. (Applause)

And his service over the years has left an imprint on the lives of every American. I wouldn't have the time to go through the entire record, but I hope you remember the times that he's intervened in the lives of your families, your neighbors, your friends.

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Whether it's something like getting help on a Social Security issue or straightening out a Medicare problem, he was there; whether it's passing a piece of legislation like the Family and Medical Leave Act after trying and failing because he didn't have a President who would sign it for years (applause) whether it's fighting for years to make sure every child has the right to have immunizations to protect against childhood diseases or working so hard for the Americans with Disabilities Act or authoring all of the acts that make it possible for education to be within the reach of working families and their children, but don't just recite these accomplishments. Think of the people behind them.

Think of the lives that have been changed, because Ted Kennedy's service in government is not some kind of abstract lesson in history. It is taking the work of history and making it possible for it to be alive and helping the lives of people here and around the country. He fought for National Service, and as a result thousands of young people will have a chance to serve their country and earn money toward going to college. (Applause)

He fought for Meals on Wheels for the elderly, for research into health problems and particularly women's and children's health, and if it had not been for Ted Kennedy, much of the research breakthroughs that has resulted from the work at the National Institutes of Health would not have occurred. It all went through his committee, and he doggedly shepherded it through. (Applause)

It is Ted Kennedy who has expanded Head Start for children so that they can get a chance to be ready for school to compete, but it is also Ted Kennedy who has understood the way government can help business, and particularly here in Massachusetts there are many businesses that are thriving because of either legislation or intervention that Senator Kennedy did on their behalf.

Don't let anybody say to you that Ted Kennedy doesn't understand business. What he doesn't understand is putting profits before people. He thinks they should go hand in hand for the betterment of our communities. (Applause)

Tell the people of Pittsfield and Springfield and across the state whose jobs he helped save that he doesn't understand what it takes to create jobs. Tell the people in

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Worcester and Southbridge and other communities right here in and around Boston who have had thousands of new jobs created because of his intervention, his advocacy and legislation that paved the way that he doesn't understand how to create jobs.

Talk to the people about what it takes for a productive economy to generate jobs in a complex, global economic environment. It is not a simple proposition, but I think the facts prove here very clearly that Senator Kennedy understands what it takes.

He also understands what it takes to do something about the violence that too often stalks our neighbors, rendering us all less secure. It was Ted Kennedy, not these Johnny-come-latelys to crime and violence and gun control who sponsored the original gun control act in this country (applause).

It was Ted Kennedy, not somebody with an R. after his name who wrote the bill that abolished parole for federal crimes, who wrote the bill that allows judges to consider how dangerous a defendant is when setting bail, and it was Ted Kennedy, often in a very lonely role for years, who was a lead co-sponsor of the Brady Bill. (Applause)

And it was Ted Kennedy who helped turn that bill into a law and then to take it a step further by fighting and winning on the ban on assault weapons, which will have a major impact on making our streets safer and making our police officers safer in the face of such wanton violence. (Applause)

You know, it's difficult to remember all of the things Senator Kennedy has accomplished, especially when the campaign season is on and the barrage of negative advertising begins, and I would just say a word about negative advertising. Nobody likes it. Nobody wants it. Everybody wishes it would go away, but isn't it interesting how it comes back campaign after campaign.

After weeks of letting his opponent run with negative ads, hoping that maybe reason or good sense or decency would begin to turn the tide against such ads, Ted Kennedy is going to return fire for fire. You will not see a unilateral disarmament in the war over what is important for the people of Massachusetts to hear. (Applause)

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I wish we could abolish them. I wish that we could have instead the kind of debate that we all want. Unfortunately, in today's political climate it is the negative advertising that people remember. Most people in Massachusetts will not be able to recite to you the litany of the way that Ted Kennedy's legislation has helped them in their lives, but they'll remember the 30-second ad. That is an unfortunate fact of modern political life.

All I can tell you is it is absolutely imperative that Senator Kennedy's supporters understand that he's always been on the positive side of the political ledger, but we who support him and who need him in the United States Senate will not stand by while the negative machinery of the Republican party tries to have its way with him. That cannot be allowed.

Now, if I were here merely to recite his accomplishments that I had admired from afar for a long time, I would feel good about that, because I support what he's tried to do on behalf of the people here and around the country, but I have firsthand experience.

I've told some of you about working with Senator Kennedy on education issues even before my husband was elected President, and how he constantly understood, and he referred to it in his remarks tonight, that we must continue to press forward on the education and skills front so that our people will be well prepared for the jobs of the future.

But I got a firsthand look when I worked on health care in the last year and a half, an issue that once again Ted Kennedy was way out front on. He was there sponsoring bills in 1970. He was there constantly talking about the need for health care reform, and he is amazing, because he understands this issue like he understands others.

I told a group of you one of my favorite experiences in going to a meeting with a group of senators after a very long document had been circulated raising a lot of issues about health care reform, and we were sitting around a big table filled with senators, and they were asking lots of questions, and Senator Kennedy was -- if any of you have ever been in a meeting with him like that -- leaning back on the back two legs of his chair, twirling his reading glasses, kind of looking very unconcerned because the conversation was just bouncing around; it wasn't going

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anywhere.

He had no papers in front of him, and all of a sudden a senator asked really the same question that had already been asked, which I thought I had answered. Senator Kennedy brought his chair down and said, "If you would read page 49, you would know the answer to that question." It was a classic example of the preparation, the analysis that Ted Kennedy brings to tough issues.

Not long ago, based on this reputation in the Senate of being literally the hardest working senator there, a senior senator in Congress said this about Ted Kennedy: "Whether you agree with him or not, he has become one of the all time great senators." (Applause)

Guess who said that? It wasn't a friend. It wasn't a neighboring colleague. It was Orrin Hatch, the Republican from the State of Utah. But that's another important strength that Senator Kennedy brings to the Senate. The partisanship that has infected that body is very troubling. There are games being played just for the sake of partisan advantage, and oftentimes the public interest just gets shelved.

Ted Kennedy is more effective at working with Republicans than any other Democrat. He brings them together. He gets them to agree. He puts together coalitions, and for no other reason, that skill, that caring is so essential to the functioning of the Senate. The last thing we need is another clone of Phil Gramm or Bob Dole in the United States Senate. We need Ted Kennedy back. (Applause)

You know, if I had been here two years ago, September 1992, and I had stood before you and said, "I'm here asking you to support my husband for President because if you do here's what will happen:

We will finally get a responsible budget that cuts the deficit, that brings the deficit down for three years in a row, which hasn't happened since Harry Truman, which sparks an economic recovery, which gives tax advantages to working people and to small businesses, which helps create more than 4 million new jobs, and which, in conjunction with the other policies the President is taking, recreates the entrepreneurial drive that really makes this country great," and if I'd gone on to say, "Furthermore, the new President,

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with the help of Senator Kennedy again will put forward the most extensive education legislation that has been passed in a generation, setting goals for our students, giving children the chance to really make it on their own because they will be supported, and their teachers and schools will be supported for a change, giving youngsters who don't go on to college the opportunities for training and work and apprenticeships and taking the middlemen out of the student loan programs so that we can directly loan to students, creating many more billions of dollars so many more youngsters can go on to college," you might say, "Well. That sounds good. Hard to believe, but it sounds good."

If I'd gone on to say, "Not only that, we will finally have the kinds of bills passed that have been bottled up by a Republican President that would not let it go forward, whether it be the Motor Vote Bill, Family and Medical Leave, the Brady Bill or crime bill that has been languishing for six years," by about then I could just, sort of, see you all. You'd be kind of turning around saying, this is sounds too good to be true. She's promising pie in the sky.

Then, if I'd gone on and I had said, "And we're going to do a lot to put health care reform on the agenda and produce results. Not only will be provide vaccinations for children, but we will really begin the national debate about what kind of health care system we need, and welfare reform will be introduced and, in the meantime, we're going to be a peace accord between Israel and the PLO, between Israel and Jordan, and for the first time in 800 years we have the possibility of peace in Northern Ireland, and we're going to stop proliferation of nuclear weapons." (Applause)

"We're going to make sure that the weapons that used to be pointed at us in the former Soviet Union are destroyed, and we're going to take a new policy toward trying to preserve democracy and human rights in our own hemisphere," by this time I could just hear it. You'd be looking at each other and saying, "What is she smoking, and did she inhale?" (Laughter)

Who would have believed that this would have happened? But it did happen, and it happened because Massachusetts has always voted for a senator who believes in making things happen and voted for a President who could be his partner to get things done for this country. (Applause)

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But in addition to all of those reasons, let me just add one more. Every election is not just between two people; it's between competing visions of where each candidate wants to take us, between competing ideas about the kind of people we are and what our beliefs are and our values are.

This is such an election because, in addition to being a race between Senator Kennedy and his opponent, this is a classic race between hope and optimism and fear and negativism. Now, it may be dressed up differently. It may have a much better looking face than you find in other parts of the country, but it is the same message.

It's a message about negativism. It's a message about cynicism. It's a message about playing on people's insecurities and anxieties. Is it any wonder that there are many Americans who are insecure? Of course not. We are at the end of an era. The Cold War is over. The world is not so easily ordered as it once was.

The economic order is changing. People who thought they would have the same job for 30 years find themselves out on the streets. They aren't secure about health care. They don't know if they can walk to the park at night. They don't know if they can let their child go safely to school. There are a lot of reasons why Americans are uneasy. You have, then, a contest between hope and fear, between positive change and negative change.

So, in addition to the reasons why you're supporting Senator Kennedy because of his record, because of his proven commitment to hope, to making it possible for people to have better lives together, for taking the privileges he was born with and plowing them back into the hard work of extending opportunities to others.

This is also about what kind of people and what kind of state this will be. Will it be a state that turns its back on positive progress, finding solutions to tough issues, or will it go forward? I learned today about one of the superfund sites in Massachusetts at Woburn -- some of you pay be from near there -- a site that was identified in 1978, I believe, because of all of the cancer that was clustered there, a site that caused enormous pain and dislocation to many people.

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That was a long time ago that it was first identified. Because of a long-term commitment to the people of that area, that site got cleaned up. Senator Kennedy never wavered, never gave up, just kept plugging away until it got done. It wasn't a glamorous thing. I bet those of you who live in Boston didn't even know that it got cleaned up and is now a new place that can be used for other purposes.

It didn't make headlines. It's not sensational. It doesn't grab you, but it made a real difference, and it could only have been made because there was somebody who was willing to stay after it year after year. Real change, whether in your life or in a country, is not easy. It's hard. You've got to face up to tough problems and be realistic about what's possible, but we are on the right track. (Applause)

We are finally willing to be mature enough as a country to face up to all of the issues that for too long have been denied, and the spirit of optimism and hopefulness that this senator and this President bring to our problems is married to a strong, steely commitment that stands the test of time to solve them.

Both Ted Kennedy and Bill Clinton could be enormously popular politicians in every walk of life if they gave speeches like you heard Ted give or that some of you have heard my husband give that said all of the right things but then never tried to do anything. It is in the doing that the controversy erupts, but it is in the doing that we define ourselves.

And be absolutely clear about this: Those who talk the talk but don't walk the walk don't deserve the vote, and if you take that message -- (Applause) -- if you take that message in the next six and a half weeks to everyone you know, if you ask them point blank what they've heard about Senator Kennedy and you set them straight and you talk about the future, then I know that you will have a great victory not only for Senator Kennedy but for the future of the people of this state, and that's what's really at stake. Thank you all very much.

(End of tape.)

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