

2700

Announcement Speech

Hillary's Announcement Speech
Purchase College (SUNY)

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Thank you. Thank you and thank you, Senator Moynihan for that very generous introduction and for all the support that you and Liz have given to me. You know New York and America are greatly indebted to Senator Moynihan for your years of courageous and visionary leadership. No one has done more to remind us that families are the bedrock of our society.

I want to thank Chuck Schumer, Charlie Rangle and Nita Lowe for their friendship, for their kind words and for all that each of them does for New York. And I want to thank all the members of the congressional delegation who are here today. Thank you, all, for coming. And I want to thank Comptroller Carl McCall, Speaker Shelley Silver and all of the state elected officials who are with us.

And I am so pleased to be here at Purchase College State University of New York. I know that Purchase was recently named one of the finest regional public liberal arts colleges in the entire country. And it is part of the greatest state university system in this country. I thank all of the young singers and entertainers, and I especially want to thank Amity Weiss from Ithaca for representing young New Yorkers and all of their possibilities. Thank you, Amity.

And I thank all my fellow New Yorkers for coming out on this wintry Sunday afternoon to be with me, my longtime friends, my new supporters, elected officials, all of you, I appreciate your being with me and I know that there are about a thousand more in the overflow room and I'm very glad you could be here as well. I'm so grateful to Bill and Chelsea, my mother and my brothers and all of our families, those who could be with us and those who could not today. And I'm pleased that I have with me also some old friends from my childhood in Chicago, my college days and law school years in New England, my wonderful years in Arkansas and as First Lady. Thank you all for a lifetime's worth of love and encouragement.

You know, the first time I spoke to a group this large was at my college commencement in 1969. I'm a little older now, a little blonder, a lot humbler. I've gone to work, I've raised a

child and I've spent 30 years trying to better the lives of children and families. But I often return to one thing I said way back then: that politics is the art of making possible what appears to be impossible. I still believe that today. We can do what seems impossible if we have the vision, the passion and the will to do it together. We've seen what's possible and the progress we've made over the last seven years and I am proud and grateful to have been a part of it.

And I am convinced we can move on from here to meet the challenges that lie ahead. We can strengthen our families. We can protect our children. We can improve our schools. We can provide health care to all our citizens and we can bring good jobs to every corner of New York.

Because I believe we can meet these challenges together, I am honored today to announce my candidacy for the United States Senate from New York.

Thank you.

Now, I know some people are asking why I'm doing this here and now, and that's a fair question. Here's my answer and why I hope you'll put me to work for you. I may be new to the neighborhood, but I'm not new to your concerns.

When I ate lunch with teachers at a school in Queens, I heard how hard it is to teach and learn when 2,000 kids are crammed into a building designed for half that number. And I thought. I thought about the work I've done for 20 years to improve our public schools. Now I want to make sure that every child in New York has the best possible public education, with well-trained teachers in modern classrooms, connected to the Internet. That's why I want to be your senator.

When I visited businesses from Jamestown to Great Neck, I thought about my father, who ran a small business and worked hard every day. I thought of all the work I did, first in Arkansas and then as First Lady, throughout America and in developing countries, to improve training for workers and provide credit for entrepreneurs and bring jobs to areas with high unemployment. Now I want to bring the prosperity of this new economy to all New Yorkers, from upstate towns and farms to inner-city neighborhoods. That's why I want to be your senator.

When I spoke with breast-cancer survivors at Adelphi University, I thought about Bill's mother and the courageous battle she fought until her last day. Over the past seven years, I've worked to include annual mammograms under Medicare and to increase funding for research, detection and treatment of breast cancer. Now I want finally to pin down the environmental connections to cancer on Long Island or elsewhere. And I want to provide the research funds to prevent and cure cancer, AIDS and other diseases. That's why I want to be your senator.

You know, when I sat on porches and in backyards from Elmira to New Rochelle, I heard parents' concerns about the media's influence on their children. And I thought about all the conversations Bill and I had with our friends when Chelsea was growing up about how to protect our children from the influences of a popular culture that glorifies guns and violence. That's why I've advocated for better programming for children, the V chip and zero tolerance for guns in school. Now, I want the challenge the entertainment industry to establish a voluntary uniform rating systems for movies, TV programs and video games that parents can actually use to protect their children. That's why I want to be your senator.

When I listen to young people from Buffalo to Brooklyn talk about how a caring adult or an after-school program turned their lives around, I thought about all the children I had tutored and represented over the years who were very poor or victims of child abuse or caught up in the foster care system. I'm more committed than ever to helping these children, to giving them the child care and the preschool, the summer school, after-school and mentoring programs they need. After all, they're all our children. And that's why I want to be your senator.

For over 30 years in many different ways I've seen first hand the kinds of challenges New Yorkers face today. I care about the same issues you do. I understand them and I know I can make progress on them. That's why, my friends, I want to be your senator.

My life's work has been motivated by fundamental beliefs that are at the heart of my decision to run. I believe every child counts and every child should have a chance. I believe raising children is every parent's most important job. I believe all

parents, all parents, must be responsible and be able to succeed at home and at work and that no child should grow up in poverty in America in the 21st century.

I believe the solutions to our public problems ought to be based on core American values: community and opportunity, responsibility and enterprise. That means I support a balanced budget and more investments in education; welfare reform and better child care for working parents; tougher child support enforcement and second-chance homes for unwed mothers; more police on the beat and fewer guns on the street; better protection for the environment and steady economic progress.

I'm a new Democrat. I don't believe government is the source of all our problems or the solution to them. But I do believe that when people live up to their responsibilities, we ought to live up to ours to help them build better lives. That's the basic bargain we owe one another in America today.

To fulfill that basic bargain for New York I'll have to fight. Well, I've had some experience with that, too. When I pushed for teacher testing and higher standards in the 1980's in the face of protests and boycotts, when I went to Beijing to speak out for women's rights as human rights in the face of strong opposition to my trip, both here and there, when I tried to get affordable quality health care for all Americans against all the odds and the special interest groups, I won the first two battles and, as you may recall, I lost the last one. But instead of giving up, I learned to take a different approach. That's why I fought for the children's health insurance program, which already has insured two million children with funding for three million more. That's why -- that's why I fought to make sure new mothers could at least stay overnight in the hospital and to protect workers from losing their insurance if they change jobs. That's why I'm still fighting for a real patient's bill of rights and why I'll keep fighting until every American has access to health care. If you'll put me to work for you, I'll take these values to the United States Senate and I'll fight my heart out for you every single day. I'll be on your side in the fight for higher standards, smaller classes and well-trained teachers in modern classrooms so that our kids can learn what I call the six R's: not just reading, writing and 'rithmetic, but also responsibility, respect and results.

I'll be on your side in the fight for a fiscal plan that pays down

the national debt, strengthens social security for at least 50 years and modernizes Medicare with new prescription drug coverage.

I'll be on your side in the fight for targeted tax cuts to middle-income families to help with some of our biggest worries, deductions for college tuition, easing the marriage penalty, and a tax credit for the care of aging or disabled family members. I'll be on your side in the fight for a real increase in the minimum wage, an expanded earned-income tax credit for working families and equal pay for every woman in every job.

I'll be on your side in the fight for tough measures to prosecute hate crimes that tear at our social fabric. And to end discrimination against people simply because of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion.

I'll be on your side in the fight to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and away from children, for closing the gun-show loophole, requiring child-safety locks and licensing all new hand-gun owners.

I'll be on your side in the fight to expand family and medical leave, which has already given 20 million Americans time off from work for a new baby or a sick parent.

I'll be on your side in the fight to protect the privacy of our medical, financial and personal records.

I'll be on your side in the fight to find smart new ways to help the least fortunate among us, including the homeless. It may be a hard thing to do, but it's the right thing to do.

I'll be on your side in the fight to bring prosperity to upstate New York and to still-distressed urban areas with new incentives to create jobs, start businesses, reduce airfare and lower utility costs.

I'll be on your side in the fight for a safer world, to pass the comprehensive test-ban treaty, to strengthen our defenses against biological, chemical and cyber terrorism, to provide debt relief to the poorest countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. And to work for peace from Northern Ireland to Bosnia and Kosovo, to Greece and Turkey, to India and Pakistan, and to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East

which finally guarantees Israel's security.

And I'll be on your side in the fight for a fair share for New York. It is just wrong that today New York sends \$15 billion more in taxes each year to Washington than New York gets back. That's a big reason that local property taxes are so high. We can change that working together.

Now, there are also things you can be sure I'll fight against. I'll be on your side in the fight against school vouchers that drain taxpayer dollars from our public schools.

I'll be on your side in the fight against Republican efforts to undermine family planning or take away a woman's right to choose. I'll be on your side in the fight against any tax cut so big it would take us back to the bad old days of exploding deficits and deep recessions, making it impossible for us to save Social Security and Medicare, fund our educational needs and pay down our national debt.

And there's one other thing I'll fight against: the divisive politics of revenge and retribution. If you put me to work for you, I'll work to lift people up, not push them down.

You know, public service has been my life. It hasn't, as yet, included public office. Over the next nine months, all of you will decide whether I've earned the privilege of serving you. I want to thank those of you who have taken the time to visit with me during the last seven months as I've gone from county to county to hear what's on your minds. I want to thank all of you who have written me or e-mailed me or visited my campaign Web site at hillary2000.org. I want to thank the nearly 600 families across New York who are hosting house parties this afternoon to help launch my campaign. And I especially want to thank the nearly 25,000 New Yorkers who are attending those house parties this afternoon. I want to thank the thousands of men and women already working as volunteers on my behalf.

I want this to be a people's campaign, a grass-roots campaign. Now, I know it's not always going to be an easy campaign, but, hey, this is New York.

In the summer of 1998, I went on a bus trip as part of our White House millennial effort to honor the past and imagine the future. I remember warm July afternoons when we drove

through the beautiful New York countryside, from George Washington's Revolutionary War headquarters in Newburgh to Harriet Tubman's home in Auburn, the site of the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls.

As I visited these places that captured the greatness of New York's past, I heard in the voices of parents and saw in the eyes of children their dreams for New York's future. New York has always been more than just a great state. To people all over the world it represents the best of America. It is the golden door, the gateway to opportunity. New York deserves a future worthy of that past. New York defined what was possible in the 20th century and New York can make what seems impossible today possible in the 21st century. And that's why I want to be your senator from New York. Thank you all very much.