

U.S.SENATOR

Debbie STABENOW

2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 26, 2006

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Sen. Stabenow Addresses the Michigan Democratic Convention *Remarks as Delivered*

Detroit—US Senator Debbie Stabenow today addressed the Michigan Democratic Party at their annual state convention. Her remarks, as given, follow below:

“You know I love Michigan. Who I am as a person and the work I do every day is rooted in the lessons I have learned here. I was born in Gladwin, and raised in Clare. My dad sold Oldsmobiles and my Mom was a Nurse. I had two brothers so I took a few knocks, but I gave a few back. It was great training for politics.

“I’ve raised my own family here, and Tom and I intend to retire here. I have talked to a lot of people from all over the world, and I tell all of them that nothing beats the wonderful state of Michigan.

“And what has Michigan taught me? Always tell the truth, be there for your family, look out for your neighbors, find the best in every situation--and never, ever let anybody push you around.

“Times may be tough in Michigan, but so are we.

“You’ve heard me say it before--we are in a fight for our way of life in Michigan and all across America. We have a choice for our future--do we want a race to the bottom where we try to stay competitive by making folks work for less and losing their benefits.

“No--we want a race to the top. We know that America has always done best in a race to the top. We want to make other countries try and keep up with us on technology, education and good jobs. A race to the top where our businesses are the economic engine of the world and stay that way. We want a race to the top where we inspire everyone around the world.

“The Republicans have made their choice.

“Outsourcing our jobs overseas---putting our pensions at risk---gutting the education budget---turning their backs on manufacturing--stripping away any real investment in our future.

“These things didn’t just happen on their own. They are all choices. In our lives everything that we do is about values and choices—in our own families, and its true in the federal government as well. The Bush administration and the Republican leadership have made choices that have set us on a course straight down.

“Democrats have made a different choice. We are going to turn it around in November and make it a race to the top.

“My strategy is very simple—this is what we believe:

“We start with a level playing field on trade—China, Japan, stop taking our ideas and dumping your counterfeit products and manipulating your currency—stop cheating and taking our jobs. Every other country stands up for their businesses and their workers, except this administration.

”I’m proud to be leading a bipartisan effort to create a US Trade Prosecutor in America that will fight for American workers and American businesses. That is what we need.

“And we all know we need to change the way we fund healthcare in this country. We are the only industrialized country that puts the healthcare costs on the back of business—we pay twice as much of our GDP as any other healthcare—46 million people without health insurance—there is a better way, and Democrats are committed to a better way.

”It’s really very simple--health care is a right in the United States of America, not a privilege.

“And when it comes to pensions, you know I’ve talked a lot about pensions as I’ve traveled around the state, talked to too many people who are worried about losing their pensions or finding themselves in a situation where they are not getting full value. And I think, “What country am I in? This is the United States of America. We don’t break promises on pensions.” We as Democrats understand that you pay into your pension—you get your pension. Bankruptcy—It doesn’t matter, the promise is kept, you get your pension.

“We all get that the economy is changing—we know that. And we also know that means you invest more in education. More in innovation. That’s where we go, that’s where we go to make it a race to the top.

“We already work harder than anyone else in the world—we need to make sure that we are working smarter, and we know how to do that. Invest in education. Invest in innovation.

“So what does the President do? He cuts twelve billion dollars in student loans right before Christmas. Then he follows it with the largest cut proposal for education in the history of the country.

“We can do better than that.

“We don’t need another Senator who supports those kinds of policies.

“Education policy is economic policy, and we understand that. Creating opportunity for everybody to work hard and make it is what America is all about.

“Real opportunity also includes affirmative action, so that everybody has the chance to succeed.

“And that means voting no on the anti-affirmative action proposal on the ballot.

“A race to the top is the only choice that we have in America if we want to keep our way of life. I get it, you get it, Democrats nationally get it—the Republicans just don’t get it.

“If we want a real change—and you know folks want a change, I want a change, we want a change—we need to remind folks that the Republicans have the White House, the Us House, the US Senate. If you want a change vote Democratic so we can turn things around.

“And our great Governor and our great Lt. Governor are surrounded by a sea of Republicans. If you want a change in Michigan vote Democrat for the State House and State Senate, all up and down the ticket.

“We want change.

“We want to fight for our way and keep our way of life.

“We are standing up for the middle class.

“You know the Democratic Party has always, always embraced a race to the top. We gave America Social Security. We gave America Medicare. We gave America good jobs and good benefits. We are the Party that stood in the picket lines for workers rights, and we are the party that sat at the lunch counters for civil rights.

“We support America together.

“The truth is, without the Democratic Party there wouldn't be a middle class in this country. And we understand that. And that's why we care so deeply about what's happening to middle class families who are feeling the squeeze on all sides. Maybe lost a job, health care costs going up, pension payment going away, outrageous gas prices, the cost of tuition—we get it. We're fighting for folks who are working harder than ever trying to make it. And we understand that we are never going to turn our back on those people who built this country.

“And we also should never back down when someone attacks our integrity, our patriotism or what we have accomplished.

“I'm proud to be your Senator—I've worked hard and accomplished many things in spite of how tough it has been to work between parties in Washington.

“I authored a \$2 billion dollar tax cuts that now goes to companies that say 'no' to outsourcing and keep jobs here in America.

“Working with our great Democratic delegation we brought home the best transportation bill we've ever had, and its going to create over 60,000 new jobs in the next five years—good paying jobs, construction jobs, jobs you can feed your family with.

“I'm proud to have offered the first ban on oil and gas drilling in the Great Lakes—keep your hands off the Great Lakes.

“I'm proud to have led the successful effort to stop this President from trying to raise prescription drug costs on our Veterans. They tried to double the co-pays of the cost of medicine for Veterans and their families. I lead that effort, and we stopped it.

“And if you can believe it, they are actually trying to do the same thing now to our troops and their families. Well I lead an effort in the Senate to stop it, and we hope that the Republican House will step up and do the right thing. Because we should not be doing anything that adds to the costs for our troops and their families, we should be honoring them, and saluting them, and doing everything we can to help them.

“I'm very proud to have lead efforts to bring in new resources for police departments and fire departments all across Michigan to keep us safe

“And I'm very proud to have led an effort to stop Canadian trash. I'm not going to stop until the trash stops. We started over three years ago with 170,000 people signing a petition to the Bush administration. We started there because the Bush administration, through the EPA, has the authority today to stop the trash, and they have refused.

“So after pushing and pushing we tried legislative remedies, and the one thing that has gotten the attention of the Canadians is a fee proposal that I was successful in passing through the Senate a few weeks ago, based on a Homeland Security report, that says, “You know, these trucks would take four people up to four hours to inspect, each one of them.” And I said, “Fine, let’s make them do it. Let’s make them pay for it.” We passed a \$420 fee on every truck crossing the border.

“You know this election isn’t about rhetoric, it really is about results. It’s not about slogans, it’s about values and priorities. And it isn’t about scaring people, it’s about getting the job done. It’s about fighting for the right people.

“This election really is about us—it’s about the people of Michigan, its about all of us who are worried about our families and our jobs and our way of life.

“It is about the Flint autoworker who lost his job and is worried about his pension.

“It’s about the manufacturer I talked to in Grand Rapids who’s having a hard time competing because the Chinese keep taking his ideas.

“It’s about the Mom working two jobs who still doesn’t have health care and goes to bed every night and prays that her children don’t get sick.

“Its about the corn farmer in Caro who wants to make fuel out of his crops and doesn’t understand why the oil companies won’t put an ethanol pump on the premises so they can get some real competition.

“And it really is about the autoworkers in Lansing and Detroit and all over this state who are working harder, and faster, and more productive, and smarter than anybody else in the world and they still see their plants close.

“It’s about the family in Detroit, or anywhere in the state, who are worried about whether or they are going to be able to send their kids to college because the costs are going up.

“That’s who we’re fighting for.

“That’s who we work to deliver for every single day.

“That’s who we stand up for, and we are here today to say “enough is enough” to the Republican values and priorities. We can do better—we want a race to the top.

“This fall we have a choice—we can go the right way, or the wrong way—we can continue a race to the bottom based on devaluing people or we can do what we know how to do best and make it a race to the top.

“In his 1944 State of the Union address, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt—a President in war at that time and in a very difficult economic situation—said we really can’t be free from fear unless we have economic security.

“So he laid out an “Economic Bill of Rights.” It’s as true today as it was then. It was grounded in the values that have made this Party, this State, and this Nation so strong.

“He laid out a vision of America where decent wages, good health care, and adequate housing were the rights of everybody, not a privilege. An America where a quality education and a retirement free of economic fear were guarantees, not empty promises. An America where every business and farmer was given a fair fight, a fight where their success was based on how hard they worked, not who they knew.

“The same is true today. That is the same set of values that grounds us, that brings us out on a Saturday when we could be a lot of other places, to come in and say, “We understand, we get it, we know what this is about, we know what our families need.”

“That’s the vision I’m fighting for every day. Living in Michigan my whole life has given me the values I need, and I know the values you need. It has given us a work ethic, it’s given us strength. We are tough, we are ready, and we’re working hard because we know this is a fight we have to win!

“Are you ready to win?

“Are you ready to go out and fight for our way of life?

“Are you ready to reach out to friends and neighbors and say, “We need a change in this country. We need a new direction in this country.”

“That’s what I’m fighting for every day and I’m so honored to be your Senator, and with your help I’m going to have the chance to just keep on fighting for you!

“God bless you!”

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Paid for by Stabenow for Senate