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# Mitt Romney Delivers Speech on Freedom at NRA

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## Location

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Mitt Romney today delivered remarks to the NRA National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri. The following remarks were prepared for delivery:

Chris Cox, thank you for that kind introduction.

And thanks to all of you for that warm welcome.

It's great to be with so many friends from the National Rifle Association.

This fine organization is sometimes called a single-issue group.

That's high praise when the single issue is freedom.

All of you can be proud of your long and unwavering defense of our constitutional rights and liberties.

In 207 days, we'll do something that is really quite amazing:

Americans will choose not only a President but an entire House of Representatives and a third of the US Senate.

The entire world will be watching us.

And by around midnight on November 6th, maybe a little earlier or later, we'll know the results of millions of Americans exercising their right to vote.

In doing so, Americans will make a profound choice, a decision that is much more important than the candidates or the political parties.

We will not just select the President who will guide us; we will also choose between two distinct paths and destinies for our nation.

So many of the big issues in this campaign turn on our understanding of the Constitution and how it was meant to guide the life of our nation.

It was one of Missouri's greatest sons, Harry Truman, who expressed a guiding conviction that you and I share.

In a ceremony that placed the Constitution and Declaration in the permanent care of the National Archives, President Truman offered a word of caution.

Liberty, he said, "can be lost, and it will be, if the time ever comes when these documents are regarded not as the supreme expression of our profound belief, but merely as curiosities in glass cases."

Truman believed, as we do, that the principles of our Constitution are enduring and universal...that they were not designed to bend to the will of presidents and justices who come and go.

The belief that we are all created equal, that we are endowed by our Creator with unalienable rights – these are not relics from another time, they reflect truths that are valid in every era.

The framework of law created by the Declaration and the Constitution is the source of our greatness.

It has generated unparalleled opportunity and prosperity.

Our Founders understood this, which is why they created a system of government that is limited.

This President is moving us away from our Founders' vision.

Instead of limited government, he is leading us toward limited freedom and limited opportunity.

This November, we face a defining decision.

I am offering a real choice and a new beginning.

I am running for President because I have the experience and the vision to lead us in a different direction.

We know what Barack Obama's vision of America is – we've all lived it the last three years.

Mine is very different.

My course restores and protects our freedoms.

As President, the Constitution would be my guide, and the Declaration of Independence my compass.

Today, I want to talk about this administration's assault on our freedoms – our economic freedom, our religious freedom, and our personal freedom.

And I want to share my plans to return America to the first principles of our founding.

The American economy is fueled by freedom. Free people and their free enterprises are what drive our economic vitality.

The Obama administration's assault on our economic freedom is the principal reason why the recovery has been so tepid – why it couldn't meet their projections, let alone our expectations.

The President's assault on economic freedom begins with his tax hikes.

By their very nature, taxes reduce our freedom. Their only role in a free economy should be to fund services that are absolutely essential, such as national security, education, and the care of those who cannot care for themselves.

And, yet, President Obama has proposed raising the marginal tax rate from 35% to 40%. The Vice President has proposed a new global business tax. Medical device companies are soon to be subject to a new tax on revenues. And the President is now touring the country, touting a new tax on investment and the wealthy. Congress does not need more money to spend; Congress needs to learn to spend less!

Dodd-Frank is another example of the President's attack on economic freedom. It's an 848-page behemoth that will be followed by thousands and thousands of pages of new regulations. Regulations are necessary. But burdensome regulations serve only to restrict freedom and imperil enterprise. The victims of those regulations are not nameless, faceless banks. They're the employees, the business owners, and the customers who rely on financial institutions that lose out.

Under President Obama, bureaucrats are insinuating themselves into every corner of our economy, undermining economic freedom. They prevent drilling rigs from going to work in the Gulf. They keep coal from being mined. They impede the reliable supply of natural gas. They tell farmers what their children can and can't do to help on the farm.

Will Rogers famously said that he worried whenever Congress was in session. Today, our freedom is never safe – because unelected, unaccountable regulators are always on the prowl. And under President Obama, they are multiplying. The number of federal employees has grown by almost 150,000 under this president.

For centuries, the American Dream has meant the opportunity to build something new. Some of America's greatest success stories are of people who started out with nothing but a good idea and a corner in their garage. Today, Americans look at what it takes to start a business and they don't see promise and opportunity. They see government standing in their way.

The real cost isn't just the taxes paid and money spent complying with the rules. It's the businesses that are never started, the ideas that are never pursued, the dreams that are never realized.

We once built the interstate highway system and the Hoover Dam. Today, we can't even build a pipeline.

We once led the world in manufacturing, exports, and infrastructure investment. Today, we lead the world in lawsuits.

We once led the world in educating our kids. Today, half the kids in our fifty largest cities won't even graduate from high school.

If we continue along this path, we'll spend our lives filling out forms, complying with excessive regulations and pleading with political appointees for waivers, subsidies and permission. That path erodes freedom. It deadens the entrepreneurial spirit. And it hurts the very people it's supposed to help.

Freedom is the victim of unbounded government appetite – and so is economic growth, job growth, and wage growth. As government takes more and more, there is less and less incentive to take risk, to invest, to innovate, and to hire.

This administration thinks our economy is struggling because the stimulus was too small. The truth is we're struggling because our government is too big.

I am running for President because I have the experience and vision to get us out of this mess. My agenda takes America in the right direction. It preserves freedom. It encourages risk taking and innovation. It fosters competition. It promotes opportunity.

Instead of expanding the government, I will shrink it.

Instead of raising taxes, I will cut them.

Instead of adding regulations, I will scale them back.

The answer for a weak economy is not more government. It is more freedom!

Economic freedom has not been the Obama administration's only target. Our first freedom – our religious freedom – has also been under attack.

Recently, in a labor regulation case, the government claimed that a church should not be free to determine who qualifies as a minister under the law.

It claimed that the government instead could interfere with that decision. The government! The Constitution came to the rescue: the Supreme Court rejected the Obama administration's attack, in a 9-0 unanimous decision.

Now, the Obama administration has decided that it has the power to mandate what Catholic charities, schools, and hospitals must cover in their insurance plans. It's easy to forget how often President Obama assured us that under Obamacare, nothing in our insurance plans would have to change. Remember that one? Well, here we are, just getting started with Obamacare, and the federal government is already dictating to religious groups on matters of doctrine and conscience.

In all of America, there is no larger private provider of healthcare for women and their babies than the Catholic Church. But that's not enough for the Obamacare bureaucrats. No, they want Catholics to fall in line and violate the tenets of their faith.

As President, I will follow a very different path than President Obama. I will be a staunch defender of religious freedom. The Obamacare regulation is not a threat and insult to only one religious group – it is a threat and insult to every religious group. As President, I will abolish it.

Like economic and religious freedom, our personal freedoms have been under attack.

Few things are more important to us than our health, and our healthcare. The 10th amendment preserves the right to choose our own healthcare, and all rights not specifically granted to the federal government by the Constitution, to the states, and to the people. Obamacare violates the Constitution. I'm counting on the Supreme Court to say exactly that.

But it's not just health care. Mike and Chantell Sackett have seen firsthand how the Obama government interferes with personal freedom. They run a small business in Idaho. They saved enough money to buy a piece of property and build a home. But days after they broke ground, an EPA regulator told them to stop digging. The EPA said they were building on a wetland. But the Sackett's property isn't on the wetlands register. It sits in a residential area. Nevertheless, the EPA wouldn't even let them appeal the decision. Fortunately, the Constitution confronted the Obama administration: the Supreme Court ruled unanimously for the Sacketts and against the Obama EPA.

This administration's attack on freedom extends even to rights explicitly guaranteed by our Constitution. The right to bear arms is so plainly stated, so unambiguous, that liberals have a hard time challenging it directly. Instead, they've been employing every imaginable ploy to restrict it.

I applaud true conservationists like Rob Keck who work to preserve lands, herds and flocks for hunting. I applaud Ambassador Bolton for opposing international efforts to erode our rights. I applaud Congressman Issa and Senator Grassley for their work in exposing the "Fast and Furious" scandal. And I applaud NRA leadership for being among the first and most vocal in calling upon Attorney General Holder to resign.

We need a President who will enforce current laws, not create new ones that only serve to burden lawful gun owners.

President Obama has not; I will.

We need a President who will stand up for the rights of hunters, sportsmen, and those seeking to protect their homes and their families. President Obama has not; I will.

And if we are going to safeguard our Second Amendment, it is time to elect a president who will defend the rights President Obama ignores or minimizes. I will.

We've seen enough of President Obama over the last three years to know that we don't need another four.

In a second term, he would be unrestrained by the demands of re-election. As he told the Russian president last month when he thought no one else was listening, after his re-election he'll have a lot more, quote, "flexibility" to do what he wants. I'm not exactly sure what he meant by that, but looking at his first three years, I have a very good idea.

Consider the courts. President Obama has an unusual view of the Supreme Court and its responsibilities, as he reminded us just the other day. He said, quote, "I'm confident that the Supreme Court will not take what would be an unprecedented, extraordinary step of overturning a law that was passed by a strong majority of a democratically elected Congress."

Of course, what President Obama calls "extraordinary" and "unprecedented," the rest of us recognize as "judicial review." That concept has been a centerpiece of our constitutional system since 1803.

Judicial review requires that the Supreme Court strike down any law that violates the Constitution – the founding document that is the bulwark of our freedoms. But President Obama seems to believe that Court decisions are only legitimate when they rule in his favor, and illegitimate if they don't. He thinks our nation's highest court is to be revered and respected – as long as it remains faithful to the original intent of Barack Obama.

That's the problem with those who view the Constitution as living and evolving, not timeless and defining. They never explain just who will decide what the Constitution means and in which way it will "evolve."

In his first term, we've seen the president try to browbeat the Supreme Court. In a second term, he would remake it. Our freedoms would be in the hands of an Obama Court, not just for four years, but for the next 40. That must not happen.

As President, I will uphold the rule of law – and put America back on the path toward the Founders' vision. I don't want to transform America; I want to return America to the principles that made this nation great.

Our Founders began this great American Experiment. They created a nation conceived in liberty and they entrusted us with the duty to preserve it and defend it.

In the generations since, more than a million Americans have made the ultimate sacrifice.

One day toward the end of my term, my office got a call telling us that a soldier had been killed in Iraq. His casket was on a U.S. Airways flight, but his family had not been notified in time to get to the airport and receive his body. I was asked if I could go to the airport in their stead. I said, of course.

We drove over to the airport and on to the tarmac. The jet came in and the people disembarked. The luggage came down the conveyor, and then, after a little while, the casket appeared.

The State Troopers who were there with me all saluted. I put my hand on my heart. And then I glanced up at the terminal. There's a big wall of glass at the U.S. Airways terminal in Boston right where the plane had come in. The people coming off the plane had seen the police cars, so they'd stopped to see what was going on. And then the people walking down the hall saw the people leaning up against the glass, so they pulled up behind them. A huge crowd had formed up there.

Every single person had their hand on their heart.

When I think of our country, scenes like this come to mind. Should I have the honor of serving as president, that's how I will seek to lead – not by pitting one group against another, but by bringing us together.

Americans want a leader who will tell them the truth, who will live with integrity, and who will preserve this great nation – and protect our Constitution.

We have a sacred duty to restore the promise of America. And we will do it. We will do it because we believe in America.

We'll stop the days of apologizing for success at home and never again apologize for America abroad.

There was a time – not so long ago – when each of us could walk a little taller and stand a little straighter because we had a gift that no one else in the world shared. We were Americans. That meant something different to each of us but it meant something special to all of us. We knew it without question. And so did the world.

Those days are coming back. That's our destiny.

We believe in America. We believe in ourselves. Our greatest days are still ahead. We are, after all, Americans!

Join me in this great cause.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

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