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NEWT GINGRICH

2012 Presidential Candidate: Former House Speaker

Remarks Following the Iowa Caucuses

January 3, 2012

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Well, thank you, Linda. And I want to thank Linda Upmeyer is the majority leader in the house, and Greg Ganske, my former colleague in the Congress, who really all summer held this together, when really it could have fallen apart.

I want to thank everybody who worked all fall, particularly during the avalanche of negative ads. Calista and I want to thank the people of Iowa. All through being drowned in negativity, everywhere we went, people were positive, they were receptive, they were willing to ask questions, and they would listen. And they really wanted to get to the truth rather than the latest 30-second distortion. And it really gave us a feeling that this process does work.

I am delighted to be here tonight, and I think that we are at the beginning of an extraordinarily important campaign.

The ultimate goal of this campaign has to be to replace Barack Obama and get America back on the right track. But let's be clear, one of the things that became obvious in the last few weeks in Iowa is that there will be a great debate in the Republican Party before we are prepared to have a great debate with Barack Obama. And I think it's very important to understand that.

And I want to take just a minute and congratulate a good friend of ours, somebody who we admire and whose family we admire, and that's Rick Santorum. He waged a great, positive campaign. I served with Rick. We've had a great relationship over the years, and I admire the courage, the discipline, the way he focused. And I also admire how positive he was. I wish I could say that for all the candidates.

But here's the key thing to ask. It's not just about beating Obama, as important as that is. It's about what do we need to do as a country to get back on the right track. And that's a lot bigger than just replacing one person in the White House.

That's fixing the Congress, fixing the bureaucracy, fixing the courts, resetting the culture, getting the judges to understand that they operate within the constitution, not above it. There are tremendous steps we have to take. And we have to re-establish the work ethic and recognize we want to reward work, not redistribution; that we want to reward paychecks, not food stamps. And this is going to be a very important national conversation.

But it's not just about here at home. We also have to understand, and this will be a major debate with Congressman Paul, who's had a very good night, and I congratulate him on having done very well. But the fact is, his views on foreign policy, I think, are stunningly dangerous for the survival of the United States.

And I think it's a very simple question, which I would be glad at the next debate to ask Congressman Paul. If you have a terrorist who is prepared to put on a bomb and wear it as a vest and walk into a grocery store or a mall or a bus and blow themselves up, as long as they can kill you, why would you think that if they could get access to a nuclear weapon they wouldn't use it? An Iranian nuclear weapon is one of the most frightening things we have to confront for the future of every young person up here and every young person out there. If they are going to live in safety, they have to live in a world in which there is no Iranian nuclear weapon, period.

So, on that front we'll have a very important debate. Is the world dangerous and do we need to be strong enough to protect ourselves or is the world really safe and is it just the Americans who are confused?

I have no doubt about 9/11. It was bad people trying to kill us. It wasn't Americans. I have no doubt about the Iranians, and I have no doubt about the importance of the survival of Israel as a moral cause, which we have to recognize as central to our future.

So we'll have a great debate with Congressman Paul. And it's important for setting a new stable foreign policy for the 21st century.

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We'll have one other great debate. And that is whether this party wants a Reagan Conservative who helped change Washington in the 1980s with Ronald Reagan and helped change Washington in the 1990s as Speaker of the House. Somebody who is into changing Washington, or do we want a Massachusetts moderate who, in fact, will be pretty good at managing the decay, but has given no evidence in his years in Massachusetts of any ability to change the culture or change the political structure or change the government.

Let me be clear and I think it's important given all the things that were done in this state over the last few weeks. We are not going to go out and run nasty ads. We're not going to go out and run 30-second gut shots. We're not — but I do reserve the right to tell the truth. And if the truth seems negative, that may be more a comment on his record than it is on politics.

So this is going to be a debate that begins tomorrow morning in New Hampshire, and will go on for a few months. And I'm convinced that the Republican Party will pick an heir of Reagan, a committed conservative, and somebody with a track record of changing Washington.

I want to say two last things. And I think Calista will join me in both of these. The first is — and here I think you'll find Rick Santorum saying the same thing — my dad was a career soldier for 27 years. I would not have survived in this campaign against millions and millions of dollars of negative advertising if it weren't for the thousands of volunteers who showed up and who helped us in every town and in every precinct. People went out because they cared.

There's someone up here who actually drove in from Indianapolis around Thanksgiving and said, "I'm staying." And someone else who brought three children and drove up from Texas and said, "I'm staying." We had people who wanted to get America back on the right track. They weren't millionaires, they weren't from Wall Street, they didn't have a super PAC, but they had courage, they had work, they were smart, and together we survived, I think, the biggest onslaught in the history of the Iowa primary and we set the stage.

Now I want to say one last thing. We were over earlier tonight in Waterloo, which had the largest single site for caucusing, and a very distant relative, like 190 years, named Craig Gingrich, who came from Pennsylvania where his great-great-great-grandfather came from, spoke for me. And he was very kind, he's gotten to know our younger daughter, Jacqui, and he sent to her what he was going to say.

And part of what he said to his caucus was about his two sons, who had just come back from serving in the Middle East. And it reminded me. And I would like to close with this because I think it's so important. It's why the Iowa experience and the New Hampshire experience, the places where you actually have to see people, you can't just buy TV ads or use robo calls, but in the end it's people.

This process is what they risk their lives to preserve. This process of people coming together, sharing values, sharing fears and dreams, finding a way to come and get it to work, unlike the current total mess in Washington, which I believe, frankly, is a bipartisan mess.

Unlike the current mess in Washington, the American system over time works when the American people roll up their sleeves to make it work. And every one of us need to remember — it's part of what made these negative ads so shameful — every one of us should remember this process survives because young men and women risk their lives to allow us to do this. We should act worthy of them.

Thank you. Good luck and God bless you. On to New Hampshire.

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