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Santorum Values Voter Summit Transcript



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Remarks by Former Senator Rick Santorum

RICK SANTORUM: Thank you very much, friends – and I really do mean friends. It's great to be back here at the Value Voters Summit. I'm here every year because I'm a value voter. (Laughter.) And I believe – I believe in the things that you believe in. And I – again, it's an honor to be here.

I'm here with the family today. You get a chance to meet them in a minute. But I wanted to mention my wife, Karen. My – we have seven children that we are raising and – (cheers, applause). Thank you.

And I just want to share a little – a little insight with you. One of the things I always tell people, when you're looking at someone to determine whether they're going to be the right person for public office, look at who they lay down with at night and what they believe. Who is the person at their side who has – the closest counselor to that person. And if you want to find out whether that person who you're going to be voting for is going to stand tall and stand tough, find out where the spouse of that person is.

Well, I will tell you – (applause) – there is no one who is more strongly committed to the values of the people in this room and who has a track record, having written books about it, and having been a lecturer across this country on the issues of life and marriage and the family, than my wife, Karen Santorum.

And I am honored that she is going to be here with you today and she's – actually, we're going to spend the whole weekend with you, because we want – we want you to know that we're part of the

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family. This is something that those of you who were here know: We've been here. We've worked together. We've gotten things done together in this city where, well, let's just say most politicians, when it comes to these issues, tend to put them on the backburner. Well, you know that I have never put social issues and values issues on the backburner. I have been out there fighting and leading the charge here in Washington, D.C. (Cheers, applause.)

We fought together and we changed the country. We forget about that sometimes. I know the frustration that people have about these issues, but let's go back to the late 1990s and the issue of partial-birth abortion. That issue, as much as we fought it and failed – we kept failing. You know, Clinton would veto and we'd fail.

But guess what was happening? Year after year after year on the front page of The New York Times, the Washington Post, on television shows, we were talking about the issue of life. And for the first time, the issue of life and the issue of partial-birth abortion brought to the reality that the choice was a little baby, because in a partial-birth abortion you couldn't miss the baby. It was in the doctor's hands. It was alive. It would be otherwise born alive.

And guess what happened? Thanks be to God, attitudes on abortion for the first time in this country changed. You look at why young people in this country are more pro-life than previous generations, it's because for the first time we worked together and brought forth an issue that put a human face on the issue of abortion.

And it actually changed people's attitudes in Congress. I'll share a story with you. This was in the 1998 debate. And we had been debating this issue for four years, and I'm managing the bill, and opposite me is Barbara Boxer. We're going at epic battles, and some of you may be aware of those battles.

And in walks Patrick Leahy from Vermont. And he walks up to me and says: I want 20 minutes of your time. I said: You want 20 minutes of my time? He's voted against this bill, spoken against this bill. He says: I want 20 minutes of your time. I said: You're sure you don't want 20 minutes of her time? (Laughter.) And in typical Leahy fashion he said: Either give me 20 minutes or I'm turning around, I'm going to vote against you. I said: Take 25. (Laughter.)

And he went up, and after four years of arguing this bill, of laying out my heart and soul on the floor of the Senate, Pat Leahy stood there, and in a pained fashion finally admitted that the arguments I was making, that we were making on the floor about this bill and about this horrific procedure, were just too overwhelming to resist, and he voted with us. (Cheers, applause.)

People are saying: Where is the leadership in Washington? Why can't we get together? You bring truth, you bring honesty, if you bring authenticity to this office, and people will see it. They may not always agree, but you'll bring people, because you're not trying to castigate people and split and divide the country.

Karen and I home-school our children. (Cheers, applause.) I'm a teacher. Yeah, I'm a leader, but I'm a teacher, and the best way to bring people together is to find that common foundation of knowledge from which you can pull people together. And we've done that. We did it.

On DOMA, we passed DOMA, the Defense of Marriage Act, not a net – not a negative vote. We passed it. And it was put into place. And now – now look at what's going on with DOMA.

We've – were able to together on welfare reform, another bill. Think about this. We ended a federal entitlement to welfare. We ended income payments. We block granted it to the states. We put time limits on welfare. We put work requirements on welfare. And in spite of Bill Clinton vetoing it twice, he eventually signed it. Why? Because we made the compelling arguments to the American public, and he was afraid, right prior to his election, he'd lose the election if he didn't do what the people wanted, what we had been communicating.

Did we sacrifice our principles? No. We motivated the public behind our principles. If you want a leader who can do that, look at the track record that we've been able to put together – WE have been able to put together, as value voters who recognize, with the poor, that poverty is not a disability but is a temporary condition, and that we believe in the value and integrity of every human life, that they can achieve and succeed in America if given the opportunity. That's what America's all about. That's what we're able to do when work together.

And on national security, believe it or not, the two major pieces of legislation that

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The King and the Texas Topper

were just described dealing with the state of Israel that I was authoring, one dealing with their arch nemesis, Syria, which continues to be, and one dealing with Iran – both were opposed by President Bush. Both were eventually signed by President Bush. And I was able to get Democratic sponsors, not the – not initially. In fact I couldn't get Democratic sponsors or Republicans on either of these bills. But I kept working, and they passed overwhelmingly. Why? Because we continued to go out and teach and lead. That's what we need in this – in this time in this country, someone who can have principles and yet lead this country.

And now look where we are. The Defense of Marriage Act. The president of the United States won't even defend the law in court. An abomination. And worse than that, just recently, he has instructed his military chaplains to marry people, in direct contravention – marry gays and lesbians in direct contravention to the Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage in federal law as between a man and a woman. So not only did the president not defend the law, he has now instructed people in the military to break the law.

We need someone who can go out and lead and educate America and lead America at this very vital time.

Look at welfare. Food stamps are at the highest level ever. By the way, in 1996, when we passed welfare reform, welfare was at the highest level ever. We were able to change that. Why? Remember: Believing in people.

And of course the state of Israel. This president has done more to destroy the bonds between Israel and the United States than any president in our history. He has isolated Israel. He has brought contempt for Israel, to the point where he even encouraged a year ago that the Palestinian Authority should bring a resolution to the United Nations and had to feebly veto it to stop them for something he instigated in the first place by suggesting it and then doing those things over the course of that year to isolate Israel.

Ladies and gentlemen, we're at a critical time, morally, economically and from a national security point of view, and we need a leader with experience who can get the job done, who can motivate people, who can lead in a very clear and authentic direction, who has a track record of standing up and fighting for those battles and winning those battles.

Together we can reignite this economy. I have – I know there's a plan out there that's the 9-9-9 plan. (Laughter.) I got a better plan.

It's the "zero, zero, zero" plan. (Laughter, cheers, applause.) One of the great problems in our economy, if you look at it – and the Democrats hit on this, and it's a populist theme, but there's truth in it – that the middle of America has started to disappear – middle-income America. Why? Because of manufacturing jobs, folks.

Twenty-one percent of the people working in this country when I was growing up were involved in manufacturing. Now it's 9 (percent). We need to get those jobs back. How? Zero corporate income tax on any manufacturer or processor in this country. (Cheers, applause.)

Because those manufacturing jobs left this country, there's \$1.2 trillion in corporate profits sitting all over the world that won't come back because of taxes. Zero corporate tax on all of that money brought back – if invested in plant and equipment in this country, we will create a huge boom with \$1.2 trillion of investment in building plants and purchasing equipment in this country. And zero – we will zero out and repeal every single regulation the Obama administration has put in place that is \$100 million to business and more. (Applause.)

We need a president who believes in free people and free markets. That's the basis of our society. It's the basis of our economy. It's a moral enterprise that is America. Our Declaration of Independence, which is they why of America, says we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal and endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights. Our rights come from God – not any god, but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – that God. (Cheers, applause.)

And – that's right. And – and God didn't give us those rights. Our Founders didn't recognize the rights from God and say, well, you get those rights and do whatever you want to do. No. No, there are laws. There are laws that we have to live by. We have responsibility when – with – comes with those rights. And our Founders laid it out when they said life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Look up the definition of "happiness" at the time of our founders, and here's what you'll find: To use liberty to pursue – according to the definition of "happiness" – the morally right thing. Why? Because our Founders understood that true happiness can only be found in

doing what God's will is in our lives, right? That's true happiness.

America at its foundation was a country that said we will believe in people who are nurtured by family and faith to live lives freely in conformity with God's law to help ourselves, our family, our community and our country, and we will build the greatest country in the history of the world. And guess what? It worked. We changed – we changed not just America, we changed the world.

That is what we have to get back to. That is the foundation of – people talk about economic plans, and I just did. But we cannot have a strong economy unless we have strong families and strong faith in this country. (Cheers, applause.) People talk – people talk about, well, the moral issues have taken a backseat. That's because people don't understand how moral issues are absolutely essential for the economic success of this country.

Look at this statistic. What percentage of families that have two parents heading that family are in poverty in America? Answer: 5 percent. What percentage of single-head-of-household families are in poverty in America? Thirty percent. You want to have a successful economy, the single thing you can do is to nurture and support the institution of marriage and fathers taking responsibility for their children, building that solid foundation upon which society rests. (Cheers, applause.)

And that means standing up and defending the institution of marriage as between one man and one woman – not backing away from it, standing up for it. (Cheers, applause.) And there's one candidate in this race who has gone to state after state and helped fight those battles not just for the federal marriage amendment, but understanding that the – the – what the left is trying to accomplish in marriage is what they did with abortion: pick off a few states, get the courts to say, ah, we can't have different laws on the issue such – fundamental as marriage, and then have the courts decide it.

We must fight in every state to make sure that marriage remains between one man and one woman. And as president, I will do that. (Cheers, applause.)

The final issue is national security. National security is a – is an issue that I know a lot about. Again, we've seen, with this president, experience matters. (Laughter.) When that phone call comes at 3:00 in the morning, ladies and gentlemen, I will be up and waiting for the call because I will know what's going on in the world around us. They won't have to get me out of bed. (Applause.)

We have experience. Experience is eight years on the Armed Services Committee, transforming the military. You saw in the debates, I get all the moral/cultural questions. I get the questions on abortion and "don't ask, don't tell," on marriage. You know what? Bring it on. (Cheers, applause.) Don't you want a president that's comfortable in their shoes and talking about these issues?

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. SANTORUM: Don't you want a president who, by virtue of the fact of who they are – see, that's the difference here.

I want to bring out Karen and the kids just for a minute. I want to share a story with you. Because being president – come on, Karen. (Laughter, applause, cheers.) Thank you. Thank you.

Being president is not just about passing laws, folks. It's about leading. One of the things I learned when I was a United States senator is, one of the greatest things you have is – in power is the power to convene, the power to talk about something and have people have to listen because, well, you're in a position where people write about it.

How many conversations have we had over the past couple of weeks talking about class warfare, talking about millionaires and billionaires and pitting one group against another at your kitchen table. Why? Because the president is talking about it. You see, the president, by talking about it, can really lead.

We have seven children in our family. We have a little girl who's not here with us, who's 3 years old, who is a miracle to be alive. The world would look at her as a special-needs child, a disabled child. But she is the most abled of all my children, because she is pure love. She is a little girl who shouldn't be here. All the textbooks say she should have been gone from us years ago. But we loved her. She's the center of our home. We care for her and she is, in fact, the joy of our lives.

Imagine the example of this, quote, "disabled" child being that light for people to see the value of every child of God in our world. It's by example that you lead.

We have the opportunity to have a debate about things just by talking about the family, talking about life. That's how we changed with partial birth, because we've talked about it. If you want to know whether I'm going to stand there and be tough on the issues that we all care about, let me just share a story with you.

Some of you may remember the debate in 1996 on partial-birth abortion. It was a debate where we were going back and forth on this issue of, you know, having this procedure available late in pregnancy when the pregnancy would have gone awry. That doesn't mean the health of the mother was in jeopardy; no, it was the health of the baby, that mothers decided late in pregnancy that that baby that they were expecting was not anymore what – the baby they wanted, because of a disability.

I'll never forget Dianne Feinstein getting up and talking about how this procedure had to be available because children might be born with no eyes or ears or legs, and as a result, they should be killed. And I got up and said: You know, Karen is pregnant with our fourth child, and I have a sonogram – we have a sonogram in a week. Imagine, what are you saying to me, that if I would go in there and find out that maybe something was wrong, what would I think that my reaction should be; to terminate the pregnancy, to kill our child because he's a – he has or she has a disability?

Well, we continued to fight that battle, and a week later we had that sonogram. And the doctor looked over at Karen and me and said: Your son has a fatal defect and is going to die. We were stunned, we were angry, but mostly we just cried.

But we didn't give up. We didn't end his life. We gave him a name that very day: Gabriel Michael. And we fought for his life. Karen – we even had surgery done to save his life, and it worked. But then Karen got an infection and went into labor and delivered our son, Gabriel Michael. He lived for two hours in our arms. I say that he had a very short life, but he had a life that knew only love.

At the end of that, Karen went on and continued to write. She always kept a diary of all of our children. And she wrote about Gabriel through this difficult time and afterwards. Her mother encouraged her to publish those letters called "Letters to Gabriel." That little book sold 25,000 copies – more, I might add, than the book I published, by the way. (Laughter.) Karen wrote a second book that also sold more than my book. (Laughter.) You can tell who the better one in the family is, but you got me, sorry about that. (Laughter.)

But – and so we had this book. But even today people come up to me and say: Thank you. Thank Karen for sharing her story. It saved the life of our child. We didn't have an abortion, or it helped us heal.

But I want to share with you a little miracle, because one of the things we struggled with when we lost Gabriel is that, how could we be unfaithful? Because it was the first year – 1996 – that I had ever spoken a word on the issue of abortion on the floor of the Senate. I was afraid. I represented a state, a tough state. I had represented overwhelmingly Democratic districts. The last thing I needed to do was to go out and talk about abortion. But I felt compelled to do it. I felt called to do it. And here my answer was that God would take my child right after that.

And something happened during that debate which I reflected upon – in fact, Karen did at the end of her book. And I'll read it to you and share it to you as a conclusion so you understand how deeply rooted these issues are in our life.

And this is from her book "Letters to Gabriel": During the partial-birth abortion debate, a senator was thanking women who had had partial-birth abortions for coming forward with their story. That senator was Barbara Boxer. And there was a group of women outside the House/Senate elevators who would intercept members and try to lobby them to defeat this bill. Boxer said, they're crying. They're crying because they don't understand how senators could take away an option. They're crying because they do not believe that these senators truly understand what this meant for their families.

Karen continues: Daddy, these are letters to our son. Daddy said in response, quote: "The senator says she hears the cries of the women outside this chamber. We would be deafened by the cries of the children who are not here to cry because of this procedure."

The Washington Post described what happened next, quote: "Republican Senator

Rick Santorum turned to face the opposition, and in a high pleading voice cried out: Where do we draw the line? Some have likened this procedure to an appendectomy. That is not an appendix, he shouted, pointing to the drawing of a fetus next to him. That's not a blob of tissue; it's a baby. It's a baby."

The Post continued: "And then impossibly, in an already hushed gallery, in one of those moments when the floor of the Senate looks like a stage set, with the small wooden desks somehow too small for the matters at hand, the cry of a baby pierced the room, echoing across the chamber from the outside hallway. No one mentioned the cry, but for a few seconds, no one spoke at all."

"A coincidence?" – Karen continues – "perhaps. A visitor's baby was crying just as the door to the Senate was opened and then closed. Or maybe it was the cry from the son whose voice we never heard but whose life has changed ours forever."

Ladies and gentlemen, I am committed – we are committed – to the cause of life and family and American exceptionalism.

Please join me in that fight.

Thank you, and God bless you. (Cheers, applause.)

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