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TC

Friends,

I wanted to flag Rick Perry's announcement speech. Admittedly, he reminds us throughout the speech that he is extremely conservative. However, I was struck by his talk on the economy. Similar messages & themes.

Thank you. I was born five years after the end of a global war that killed more than 60 million people.

I am the son of a veteran of that war, who flew 35 missions over war-torn Europe as a tail gunner on a B-17.

When dad returned home, he married mom, and they started a life together.

They were tenant farmers.

They were raised during a time of great hardship, and had little expectation beyond living in peace, putting a roof over our heads and putting food on our table.

Home was a place called Paint Creek. Too small to be called a town, but it was the center of my universe.

For years we had an outhouse, and mom bathed us in a number two washtub on the back porch. She also hand-sewed my clothes until I went off to college.

I attended Paint Creek Rural School, grades one through 12. I played 6-man football. I was a member of Boy Scout Troop 48, became an Eagle Scout, and went off to Texas A&M where I was a member of the Corps of Cadets and an animal science major.

I was proud to wear the uniform of our country as an Air Force officer and aircraft commander.

After serving, I returned home to the rolling plains and big skies of West Texas, and I returned to farming.

There is no person on earth more optimistic than a dryland cotton farmer. We always know a good rain is just around the corner, no matter how long we'd been waiting.

The values learned on my family's cotton farm are timeless: the dignity of work, the integrity of your word, responsibility to community, the unbreakable bonds of family, and duty to country.

These are enduring values. Not the product of some idyllic past, but a touchstone of American life in our small towns, our largest cities, our booming suburbs.

I have seen American life from the red dirt of a West Texas cotton field, from a campus in College Station, from the elevated view of a C-130 cockpit, and from the Governor's office of the Texas Capitol.

I served a small rural community in the Texas Legislature, and I led the world's 12th largest economy.

I know that America has experienced great change, but what it means to be an American has never changed: we are the only nation in the world founded on the power of an idea that all "are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Our rights come from God, not from government, and our people are not the subjects of government, but instead government is subject to the people.

It has always been the case that there has been a social compact between one generation of Americans and the next: to pass along an inheritance of a stronger country full of greater promise and possibility.

And that social compact has been protected at great sacrifice. This was never more clear to me than when I took my father to the American cemetery that overlooks the bluffs at Omaha beach.

On that peaceful, wind-swept setting, there lie 9,000 graves, including 45 pairs of brothers, 33 of whom are buried side by side, a father and a son, two sons of a president. They all traded their future for ours in a final act of loving sacrifice.

In that American Cemetery, it is no accident each headstone faces west: west over the Atlantic, towards the nation they defended, the nation they loved, the nation they would never come home to.

It struck me as I stood in the midst of those heroes that they look upon us in silent judgment. And that we must ask ourselves: are we worthy of their sacrifice?

The truth is we are at the end of an era of failed leadership.

We have been led by a divider who has sliced and diced the electorate, pitting American against American for political purposes.

Six years into the so-called recovery, and our economy is barely growing. This winter, it actually got smaller.

Our economic slowdown is not inevitable, it is the direct result of bad economic policy.

The president's tax and regulatory policies have slammed shut the door of opportunity for the average American trying to climb the economic ladder, resigning the middle class to stagnant wages, personal debt, and deferred dreams.

Weakness at home has led to weakness abroad.

The world has descended into a chaos of this president's own making, while his White House loyalists construct an alternative universe where ISIS is contained and Ramadi is merely a "setback" – where the nature of the enemy can't be acknowledged for fear of causing offense, where the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, the Islamic Republic of Iran, can be trusted to live up to a nuclear agreement.

No decision has done more harm than the president's withdrawal of American troops from Iraq.

Let no one be mistaken, leaders of both parties have made grave mistakes in Iraq. But in January, 2009 – when Barack Obama became Commander-in-Chief – Iraq had been largely pacified.

America had won the war. But our president failed to secure the peace.

How callous it seems now as cities once secured with American blood are now being taken by America's enemies, all because of a campaign slogan.

I saw during Vietnam a war where politicians didn't keep faith with the sacrifices and courage of America's fighting men and women, where men were ordered into combat without the full support of their civilian commanders.

To see it happen again, 40 years later, because of political gamesmanship and dishonesty, is a national disgrace.

But my friends, we are a resilient country. We have been through a Civil War, we've been through two world wars, we've made it through a Great Depression – we even made it through Jimmy Carter. We will make it through the Obama years.

**The fundamental nature of this country is our people never stay knocked down. We get back up, we dust ourselves off, and we move forward. And we will again.**

I want to share some important truths with my fellow Americans, starting with this truth: we don't have to settle for a world in chaos or an America that shrinks from its responsibilities.

We don't have to apologize for American exceptionalism, or western values.

We don't have to accept slow growth that leaves behind the middle class, and leaves millions of Americans out of work.

We don't have to settle for crumbling bureaucracies that target taxpayers and harm our veterans.

And we don't have to resign ourselves to debt, decay and slow growth.

We have the power to make things new again. To project American strength again, to get our economy going again.

And that is why today I am running for the presidency of the United States of America.

**It is time to create real jobs, to raise wages, to create opportunity for all. To give every citizen a stake in this country. To restore hope, real hope to forgotten Americans, millions of middle class families who have given up hope of getting ahead, millions of workers who have given up hope of finding a job.**

Yes, it's time for a reset, time to reset the relationship between government and citizen.

Think of the arrogance of Washington, DC, representing itself as some beacon of wisdom, with policies smothering this vast land with no regard for what makes each state and community unique. That's just wrong.

We need to return power to the states, and freedom to the individual.

**Today our citizens and entrepreneurs are burdened by over-regulation and unspeakable debt.**

**Debt is not just a fiscal nightmare, it is a moral failure. Let me speak to the millennial generation: massive debt, passed on from our generation to yours, is a breaking of the social compact.**

You deserve better. I am going to offer a responsible plan to fix the entitlement system, and to stop this theft from your generation.

To those forgotten Americans drowning in personal debt, working harder for wages that don't keep up with the rising cost of living, I come here today to say your voice is heard.

I know you face rising health care costs, rising child care costs, skyrocketing tuition costs, and mounting student loan debt. I hear you, and I am going to do something about it.

To the one in five children in families on food stamps, to the one in seven Americans living in poverty, to the one in ten workers who are unemployed, under-employed or given up hope of finding a job: I hear you, you are not forgotten.

I am running to be your president.

For small businesses on Main Street struggling to just get by, smothered by regulations, targeted by Dodd-Frank: I hear you, you're not forgotten. Your time is coming.

The American People see a rigged game, where insiders get rich, and the middle class pays the tab.

There is something wrong when the Dow is near record highs, and businesses on Main Street can't even get a loan.

Since when did capitalism involve the elimination of risk for the biggest banks while regulations strangle our community banks?

Capitalism is not corporatism. It is not a guarantee of reward without risk. It is not about Wall Street at the expense of Main Street.

The reason I am running for president is I know for certain our country's best days lie ahead. There is nothing wrong in America today that cannot be fixed with new leadership.

We are just a few good decisions away from unleashing economic growth, and reviving the American Dream.

We need to fix a tax code riddled with loopholes that sends jobs overseas and punishes success.

We have the highest corporate tax rate in the western world. It is time to reduce the rate, bring jobs home and lift wages for working families.

By the time this Administration has finished with its experiment in big government, they will have added more than 600,000 pages of new regulations to the Federal Register.

On my first day in office, I will issue an immediate freeze on all pending regulations from the Obama administration. That same day, I will send to Congress a comprehensive reform and rollback of job-killing mandates created by Obamacare, Dodd-Frank and other Obama-era policies.

Agencies will have to live under strict regulatory budgets. And health insurers will have to earn the right to your money, instead of lobbying Washington to force you to hand it over.

On day one, I will also sign an executive order approving the construction of the Keystone Pipeline.

Energy is vital to our economy, and to our national security. On day one, I will sign an executive order authorizing the export of American natural gas and oil, freeing our European allies from dependence on Russia's energy supplies.

Vladimir Putin uses energy to hold our allies hostage. If energy is going to be used as a weapon, I say America must have the largest arsenal.

We will unleash an era of economic growth, and limitless opportunity. We will rebuild American industry. And we will lift wages for American workers.

It can be done because it has been done in Texas.

During my 14 years as governor, Texas companies created almost one-third of all new American jobs.

In the last seven years of my tenure, Texas created 1.5 million new jobs. Without Texas, America would have lost 400,000 jobs.

We were the engine of growth because we had a simple formula: control taxes and spending, implement smart regulations, invest in an educated workforce, and stop frivolous lawsuits.

Texas now has the second highest high school graduation rate in the country and the highest graduation rates for African-American and Hispanic students.

We led the nation in exports, including high-tech exports. We passed historic tax relief, and I was proud to sign balanced budgets for 14 years.

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When there was a crisis at our border last year and the president refused my invitation to see the challenge that we faced, I told him, "Mr. President, if you won't secure the border, Texas will."

Because of the threat posed by drug cartels and trans-national gangs, I deployed the Texas National Guard.

The policy worked. Apprehensions declined by 74 percent. If you elect me your president, I will secure this border.

Homeland security begins with border security. The most basic compact between a president and the people is to keep the country safe.

The great lesson of history is strength and resolve bring peace and order, and weakness and vacillation invite chaos and conflict.

My very first act as president will be to rescind any agreement with Iran that legitimizes their quest to get a nuclear weapon.

Now is the time for clear-sighted, proven leadership. We have seen what happens when we elect a president based on media acclaim rather than a record of accomplishment.

This will be a "show-me, don't tell me" election, where voters look past the rhetoric to the real record.

The question of every candidate will be this one: when have you led? Leadership is not a speech on the senate floor, it's not what you say, it's what you do.

And we will not find the kind of leadership needed to revitalize the country by looking to the political class in Washington.

I have been tested. I have led the most successful state in America. I have dealt with crisis after crisis – from the disintegration of a space shuttle, to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Ike, to the crisis at the border, and the first diagnosis of Ebola in America.

I have brought together first responders, charities and people of faith to house and heal vulnerable citizens dealing with tragedy.

The spirit of compassion demonstrated by Texans is alive all across America today. While we have experienced a deficit in leadership, among the American People there is a surplus of spirit.

And among our great people, there is a spirit of selflessness – that we live to make the world better for our children, and not just ourselves.

It was said that when King George the Third asked what General Washington would do upon winning the war, he was told he would return to his farm and relinquish power. To that, the monarch replied, if he did that, he would be the greatest man of his age.

George Washington lived in the service of a cause greater than self.

If anyone is wondering if America still possesses the character of selfless heroes, I am here to say, "Yes, I am surrounded by such heroes."

They are of different generations, but they are woven together by the same thread of selfless sacrifice.

They are heroes like Medal of Honor Recipient Mike Thornton, who survived an ambush by enemy forces in Vietnam, and made it back to the safety of a water rescue, only to find out a fellow team member had been left behind, presumed dead.

He didn't leave though, he returned through enemy fire and retrieved Lieutenant Norris who was still alive – and then swam for two hours keeping his wounded teammate afloat until they were rescued.

Heroes like Marcus Luttrell, who survived a savage attack on the side of a mountain in Afghanistan, losing his three teammates and 16 fellow warriors shot down trying to rescue him.

He is not just the lone survivor, to Anita and me he is a second son.

And Taya Kyle, who suffered the deep loss of her husband Chris, an American hero. When I think of Taya Kyle, I think of a brave woman who carries not just the lofty burden of Chris' legacy, but the grief of every family who has lost a loved one to the great tragedy of war, or its difficult aftermath. Anita and I want to thank her for her tremendous courage.

America is an extraordinary country. Our greatness lies not in our government, but in our people.

Each day Americans demonstrate tremendous courage. But many of those Americans have been knocked down and are looking for a second chance.

Let's give them that chance. Let's give them real leadership. Let's give them a future greater than the greatest days

of our past.

Let's give them a president who leads us in the direction of our highest hopes, our best dreams and our greatest promise.

Thank you, and God bless you.

