

I CAN'T VOTE FOR BARACK OBAMA

I understand much of America's attraction to Barack Obama. He's likeable, very well spoken, and he pledges to lead a very generous federal government. But would an Obama presidency be good for America?

I have thought long and hard about this upcoming presidential election. I've spent many hours the past few weeks studying Barack Obama's beliefs and convictions, analyzing his own words and actions. There is no question that Senator Obama is a better communicator than John McCain and quite convincing in his speeches and debates, so I decided to look deeper into these words of his. Although I have some concerns about both candidates, I have come to one crystal clear conclusion: there is no way I can vote for Barack Obama. I'd like to tell you why.

HIS ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY & HIS TAX PLAN

There is so much confusing rhetoric floating around about who will lower taxes more and whose plan is best. But all the confusion faded into clarity last week with Senator Obama's answer to the now-famous JOE THE PLUMBER. Joe has done America a great favor—he's brought out the real Barack Obama in his own words: "It's not that I want to punish your success, I just want to make sure that everyone who is behind you, that they've got a chance for success too.... I think when you spread the wealth around, it's good for everybody." That comment is so offensive in a free market society and so revealing about Senator Obama's understanding of our economic system. It screams of socialism, a system in which the government basically decides who makes too much money then takes some of that hard-earned income and gives it to others who make less—redistribution of wealth, plain and simple.

Senator Obama provided further insight into his philosophy with his scrambling the next few days to undermine what Joe the Plumber had revealed. I was appalled by the sarcasm in Obama's voice as he stated, "How many plumbers you know making a quarter of a million dollars a year?" How can he hope to be an effective president when he mocks those trying to succeed? I don't want a president who drips with seeming disdain at the thought of a blue collar worker climbing the ladder of success that so many of us aspire to climb. I want a president who, shown by his words and actions when things aren't scripted, believes that anyone can make it big—blue collar, white collar, plumber, painter, computer tech, whoever. I wish for a leader who inspires us to great things, not one who says he is for the American Dream then essentially punishes me when my dream gets too big by taking more of the money I worked for and doing with it what **he** thinks is best. Please don't tell me that Barack Obama will be a president for the working class. Please don't tell me that Barack Obama understands and supports this American Dream. To hear what he said about Joe would lead one to think that his view of the Dream is to work hard, climb that ladder, and when you move up a few rungs, Uncle Sam will be standing there with his hand out to take some of your dream and give it to those below—to those whom Uncle Sam deems worthy to receive it.

Here are Senator Obama's own words during a Primary debate: "There's no doubt that the tax system has been skewed. And the Bush tax cuts--people didn't need them, and they weren't even asking for them, and that's why they need to be less, so that we can pay for universal health care and other initiatives...are we willing to make the investments in genuine equal opportunity in this country?...making sure that those of us who are fortunate enough to have the money actually make a contribution." It's as if we have stepped back to 1917 Russia. And I have very little doubt that, when the bill for all he wants to give away (see below) comes due, the definition of "rich" will be greatly redefined.

The whole concept that increasing taxes and tax rates on the wealthy is good for the lower and middle class, and for the economy as a whole, is simply illogical and plain wrong. Historically, it has never worked to bring about economic growth (just ask those who lived during the Jimmy Carter presidency). The Reagan tax cuts in the 80's and the Bush tax cuts in 2001 and 2003 greatly fueled the economy. Given our current difficult economic situation, many economists warn that raising taxes during an economic downturn would only make the situation worse. And philosophically, what sense does it make? The wealthy in this country are the ones who create jobs. They are the ones who invest large sums of money in the market. They are the ones who run the big companies in which the middle class invest their portfolios. They pump a great deal of money into the economy by buying

the items that the lower and middle class workers make. America needs to build this troubled economy by lowering taxes for all and providing incentives to invest, buy, build businesses, etc. *

Senator Obama's plan will remove much of the incentive to invest. And, considering that the top 5 percent of taxpayers (in terms of income—the rich, according to Obama) pay approximately 60% of all the taxes in this country, what sense does it make to hit them with even higher taxes?

Please carefully read these words from his website: "Obama will ask the wealthiest 2% of families to give back a portion of the tax cuts they have received over the past eight years to ensure we are restoring fairness and returning to fiscal responsibility." That statement should send socialistic shivers down your spine. This is not what America is!

Senator Obama claims that only those making over \$200,000 (\$250,000 if you are married) will receive a tax increase. Can this really be true? I've discovered that numbers and figures can be manipulated all over the place, but here are a few basic facts:

- Even though Obama claims that only the top two tax brackets will be increased, he voted in March of this year in favor of a budget resolution that would let most of the Bush tax cuts, including the 25% bracket, to expire at the end of 2010. That means that the 25% tax bracket will increase to 28%. That bracket starts for those making about \$31,850 (\$63,700 for married couples). His vote doesn't seem to line up with his claims. I realize that he may say that his \$500/\$1000 tax credit will cover this increase but the numbers are suspect. The 28, 33, and 35 percent brackets will also increase according to the resolution.
- Approximately 35-40% of American workers pay no federal income tax. So, this \$500/\$1000 tax credit will basically be a "free" gift from the government. But it's not free—someone has to pay for it and I'm offended by the fact that the someone will most likely include me. Obama wants to take from the hard-working rich and give it away to those who have less. It's so important to realize that the poor do not grow their wealth through handouts from the government—they grow their wealth more effectively when the government gets out of the way, lowers taxes across the board, and allows the economy to thrive.
- He plans to raise the capital gains and dividend tax rates (the tax on profits in investments) for anyone in the top two tax brackets. Again, why this desire to essentially penalize the wealthy for making wise investments of their money—something that helps the entire economy, poor to rich?
- Obama also claims that only a small percentage of small businesses make over \$250,000 a year, so most of them would get a tax cut under his plan. According to the US Small Business Administration, a great many businesses defined as "Small" have receipts in excess of \$10 million. But whether it's a small business or a big business that gets hit with these tax increases, where will the money for that increase come from? Many of these businesses are going to have to get that money by cutting jobs, raising prices, cutting wages on the middle and lower class workers. Once again, tax increases across the board are a bad idea. Lowering tax rates across the board is what motivates Americans to invest in new business, expand existing business, hire more employees (resulting in lower unemployment), buy goods. Barack Obama's plan works against all of these things.
- Here's a small portion of the list of things, from Obama's own website and speeches, that he wants the government to provide Americans, at taxpayers' expense:
 - He will double funding for after-school programs.
 - He will invest \$10 billion per year to expand early childhood education. There's nothing wrong with improving education, but why is the federal government paying for it? His plan "places key emphasis at early care and education for **infants**, which is essential for children to be ready to enter Kindergarten." What!? Is the tax-funded state now my child's caregiver? I thought parents held this role.
 - The government will invest \$1 billion in job and career programs.

- He will double funding for federal public transportation.
- He wants a \$4000 per year tax credit for those who pay for college in exchange for 100 hours of community service. That sounds good at first—I have two kids going to college next year—but who is going to pay for this? And again, why is the **federal** government getting involved in paying for **local** community service?
- He will increase the social security tax on those making more than \$250,000 to help keep the Social Security system more secure. In other words, he wants to get rich people to pay for what the government has completely destroyed the past 50 years.
- His plan will match 50 percent of the first \$1,000 of savings for families that earn less than \$75,000. Sounds great, but once again, who's going to pay for this gift?
- He wants the government to give money to families whose absent fathers return home to care for their children. We all want fathers to take responsibility for their families. But the government rewarding men for doing what they should be doing all along—and rewarding them with other people's money? Where does it stop?
- HEALTH CARE: His plan will increase federal spending on health care by \$50-\$65 billion dollars (his own numbers). His plan will give “every uninsured American the same kind of coverage that members of Congress give themselves.” Yes, there is a health care coverage problem in our country, but the government is not the answer. This plan will include the government putting their (our) money and regulations into one of the largest businesses in America. Why do Americans think the government will do a good job at this? How well has the federal government managed other programs like Social Security, FEMA, etc.? I can't believe it would be any different with health care.

As I read this list a few days ago, one thought rose to the surface: Barack Obama wants to turn Uncle Sam into Santa Clause. Is there anything he **doesn't** want to do for us? I'm insulted by his plan because he seems to think that Americans can't figure life out for themselves—we need big daddy government to take care of us. It's almost as if he looks around at the problems in America and decides that individuals, with the power of our free market behind us, can't figure out the solutions, so Uncle Sam, at our expense, has to jump in and save the day.

Most of the things in the list above represent real needs in America. But they are not needs that the federal government should be fixing. Abraham Lincoln understood the problem with this when he stated, “You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves.” I'm also absolutely convinced there is no way he can pay for all of these presents in the long run with only the tax increases he's talking about now. Eventually, this government is going to get so big it will drive our economy into the ground.

But even apart from the economic strain his plan will cause, there's the issue of the CONSTITUTION to consider. I read this amazing document again a while back and it's incredibly clear that our federal government is designed to remain very limited in its scope and power. Washington already does far more, and spends far more, than ever intended. Barack Obama wants to increase this significantly. It's a disaster just begging to erupt.

In addition to the amount of money he needs to raise for the government to care for all of us, Barack Obama has a great desire to increase the requirements the federal government will heap on private business. For example, in the HEALTH CARE arena, he plans to require insurance companies to cover things that will only be able to be covered by raising rates; regulate what companies can charge for health care (this may sound good, but at what cost to the economy?); require some businesses to pay for health care for employees (again, if the business can't afford this, where is the money going to come from?); impose strict regulations on businesses regarding the amount of leave they must provide their employees; etc., etc., etc.

Senator Obama also wants to increase the MINIMUM WAGE to a “living wage.” I realize this is a controversial topic, but let me say here that to continue to raise the minimum wage until it is a living wage would strap a huge burden on so many businesses and would very likely lead to increases in both the unemployment rate and the costs of goods sold by these businesses.

HIS ENERGY PLAN

I appreciate that Barack Obama has a desire to increase the research and use of alternative energy sources. We need this. However, it seems to be very shortsighted and unwise to not take advantage of the huge oil resources we have available within our borders to bridge the gap between our use of oil now and the time when alternative sources are readily available. As oil and gasoline prices skyrocketed and tore at our economy, Obama stood firm in his stance to not touch much of the massive supply available to us. Technology has come so far in the development of safe methods for drilling and transporting oil. To not drill offshore and in the ANWR Province in Alaska for the sake of a rare possibility that we could damage a small portion of the environment is to irresponsibly shackle every citizen with an unnecessary financial burden. Much research has shown that we have enough reserves in our own country that we could essentially break from our dependence on foreign oil. It's time to drill offshore and in ANWR now—Senator Obama doesn't support this.

And, no surprise, one of Obama's answers to the oil/energy crisis is to impose a WINDFALL PROFITS TAX on "excessive" oil company profits. Who defines what is excessive? It is a bad idea for the federal government to make those kinds of decisions in America. Simple logic has to ask, what sense does it make to try to ease the burden of the consumers of a commodity by imposing a higher tax on the very companies that are providing the commodity? Will increasing the tax on their profits lower the price of gas or reduce our dependence on foreign oil? And one thing that is not heard much in the media, or at all by the Obama camp, is that so many of us in the middle class have investment portfolios that include big companies like oil. A large portion of their profits go to shareholders' dividends. When they do well, I do well, so why would we want them to be penalized for doing well? And one final point: the government already makes more on a gallon of gas (in existing taxes) than the oil companies make in profits—and the government doesn't do a thing to get that oil from the ground to my car.

HIS EXTREME ABORTION STANCE

Not only does Barack Obama support maintaining the right of a woman to end the life of her pre-born child, but his voting record on issues such as PARTIAL BIRTH ABORTION and the BORN ALIVE INFANTS bill, and his comments on the issue, greatly concern me.

- He openly stated his disagreement with the Supreme Court's ruling upholding a ban on partial birth abortion, a violent procedure in which a baby is partially delivered then its skull is punctured so as to suction its brain out (I'm not making this up). Obama's opposition was, in part, because he felt that women should "have the right to make these profoundly difficult decisions."
- In 2003, as a state senator, Obama voted against the Born Alive Infant Protection Act, a bill that would have required doctors to give life-sustaining treatment to babies who survived an abortion attempt. Obama's explanation for opposing this bill was that it could have undermined existing abortion law. That seems to be saying it is more important to protect *Roe v. Wade* than to protect an infant born alive.
- He has consistently voted against laws requiring parental notification for an abortion.
- He stated a few months ago that if one of his daughters made a mistake, he didn't want them "punished with a baby." That comment shed a great deal of light on the value he places on pre-born life. I can't support a man with those kinds of values.

HIS NUMEROUS QUESTIONABLE ASSOCIATIONS

There is a consistent theme in Barack Obama's life that he associates with many people who either hold anti-American sentiments or are downright unethical. This tendency is so prevalent in his history that it can't be ignored. I've learned that a person can say anything about himself and be quite convincing, but it's his actions and, in large part, the people he associates with, that say more about his character, beliefs, and the true nature of his heart.

- He claims that WILLIAM AYERS is just some guy who lives in his neighborhood. But records show so many more close connections between the two men. So, why is this a problem? William Ayers is a proven domestic terrorist who played a part in bombing the Pentagon and US Capitol in the 70's. He has yet to admit this was wrong. Obama claims that he was only eight years old when this happened, so

what's the big deal? The big deal is that, knowing his reputation, he still associated very closely with the man, serving on the board of the Woods Fund of Chicago together from 1999-2002 and serving together on the Chicago Annenberg Challenge (CAC) from 1995-2001. Ayers also donated money to Obama's Senate campaign and hosted a get-together at his house for Obama during his state senate campaign. All of this is of concern, not only because Obama's honesty and integrity come into question about his relationship with Ayers, but also because Ayers' views about education and America as a whole, expressed openly during the time the two men served together in Chicago, are laced with radical socialistic and revolutionary tones.

- Obama has been associated with, and supported, ACORN (the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) for years, going back to his CAC days when he conducted leadership training seminars with them. This group has spent decades undermining capitalism and self-reliance and has been implicated in numerous voter fraud schemes through the years.
- Obama distanced himself from JEREMIAH WRIGHT, his pastor of 20 years, only after it proved politically expedient to do so. Pastor Wright's statements about America include such sentiments as "(America) has supported state terrorism against the Palestinians...", "Racism is how this country...is still run!", and "We cannot see how what we are doing is the same thing Al Qaeda is doing..." Obama had plenty of time to recognize the anti-American sentiment in his pastor's words but chose instead to sit under his teaching and take it all in. Also, the CAC gave \$230,000 to Wright's ministry while Obama was working for them. Does this represent simply poor judgment on his part or could it be that he truly does ascribe to many of these sentiments? Given his other associations through the years, I have to wonder.

AMERICA'S SAFETY AND OUR ROLE IN THE WORLD

Senator Obama has made many comments that lead me to believe he has little understanding of the reasoning for our presence in Iraq.

- In the debates, he stated that "there was no al Qaeda (in Iraq) before we went in." Actually, there is a great deal of evidence that al Qaeda was alive and well in Iraq before 2001. *
- He stated that "al Qaeda is...stronger now than at any time since 2001." Where does he get this idea? Our presence in Iraq has contributed greatly to our safety and to the squelching of hostile activity from al Qaeda against America. Obama wants to pull our troops out of Iraq on a timetable rather than when the work there is finished. This would have potential devastating consequences for the security of both that region of the world and for America.
- I was listening to an interview with Obama a few months ago. The host asked him where he would cut spending in the government. The only area he mentioned was to cut some military programs. With all of the waste in our government, the one area that came to his mind was the military. In my gut, I am very concerned that there is a great void in Barack Obama's understanding of how to build, maintain, and deploy a strong military—the most important role the president must fulfill. I am very confident that John McCain has a much greater understanding of what America needs to do to remain secure.

On a related issue, I am very concerned that Barack Obama does not fully understand what Patriotism is all about and that he has a distorted view of AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE WORLD. Much of this is more my gut talking than fact, but let me provide an example of why I say this:

In a speech he gave regarding the oil situation, he said "(We) can't drive SUV's, keep the thermostat at 72 degrees and expect the rest of the world to be OK with that." Why is he concerned about what the world thinks of us? America is beautifully compassionate in our giving to the rest of the world. We continually come to the aid of country after country and help this world in so many ways—we don't need to look for their approval of our actions. Obama complains that we use "25% of the world's resources (but have only) 3% of the world's population." I'm not sure of the accuracy of his numbers, but even if they are correct, one of the main reasons for this is that we utilize many of those resources to produce a great deal of wealth and goods, much of which we share with the world. I am so tired of

Obama, and many of his fellow politicians, painting America as the problem in the world. America is an amazing bright light shining in this world, bringing hope, peace, help, and security to millions around the globe. I want a president who recognizes this and who proclaims it every chance he gets.

FINALLY

In wrapping this up, here are a few final concerns I have with Barack Obama:

- I take issue with both Obama and McCain when they imply that the economic difficulties we face today are a result of the failed policies of the current administration. A close look at the last 8 years reveals that the economy was actually in very good shape (even surviving and growing after the hit we took after 9/11) until just recently. Many factors led to the economic problems we are seeing today, but President Bush had little to do with it. His policies of lowering taxes are what we need more of, not Senator Obama's tax-tax-tax then spend-spend-spend plan.
- With his radical views on America's economy, abortion, immigration, education, etc., what kind of judges would he nominate to fill the Appellate and Supreme Court positions that will undoubtedly be vacated in the next four years?
- I find it very interesting that Joe Biden stated during the Primaries that Barack Obama was "not ready" to be president. I wonder what changed. And Joe Biden dropped out of the presidential race in the Primaries after receiving only about 1% of the vote. I don't believe the two of them together make a very good leadership team that America can have confidence in.

With all the problems I have with Barack Obama, it might be asked if I have any issues with John McCain. Yes, I have some problems with Senator McCain's policies. But they pale in comparison to what Obama would bring to the presidency. John McCain far better understands the value of lower taxes; he understands the role America plays in this world; I believe he would make far better judge nominations. And for so many reasons, I believe Barack Obama is the wrong choice to occupy the office of the leader of the free world.

* NOTE: I address many of these issues in great detail in my book, "Just 2 Simple Guys – Rediscovering Common Sense in America" (www.just2simpleguys.com).