



# U.S. Congressman Mike Pence

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### STATE OF THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT 2004 CPAC CONVENTION KEYNOTE ADDRESS

*As Prepared for Delivery*

Picture, if you will, a ship at sea. A proud captain steps into the sunlit deck of a tall ship plying the open seas of a simpler time. Its sails full and straining in the wind, its crew are tried and true, its hull, mast and keel are strong but beneath the waves, almost imperceptibly, the rudder has veered off course and, in time, the captain and crew will face unexpected peril.

The conservative movement today is like that tall ship with its proud captain, strong, accomplished but veering off course into the dangerous and uncharted waters of big government republicanism.

I'm Mike Pence and I'm From Indiana.

And I can't tell you what an honor it is for me and my family to be with you today.

I feel I should ask the question of Admiral Stockdale, the question many of you must be asking "who am I and why am I here!"

All I can say is that I am a Christian a Conservative and a Republican in that order and that I am deeply humbled to address the most important gathering of conservatives in America!

I am especially honored to address the state of the movement before so many who have done so much for the cause of conservative values.

As we reflect this morning on battles past and future, the words of David before Goliath come to mind when he asked his countrymen, "is there not a cause?"

Conservatives like you gathered here never suffer that question.

Conservatives know the cause: to "establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity."

And by the standards of these fundamental objects of the republic, American conservatives can take considerable pride in the past three years, that the ship of conservative Republican government in Washington is strong.

And our movement *is* strong.

In promoting national security, economic prosperity and the sanctity of human life, conservatives made measurable gains in 2003.

Under the leadership of President George W. Bush and a Republican Congress, we have provided for the common defense –which the Federalist reminds us is the first and most fundamental object of all.

Ours was a nation under attack as I stood on the east lawn of the Capitol on September 11, 2001, I stood beneath a sky filled with mud brown smoke, people running in every direction...F-16's going supersonic at treetop level to intercept an inbound menace over Pennsylvania...and in the midst of the chaos of that time, stood George W. Bush, his arm draped over the shoulder of a bone-weary fireman, speaking courage through a bullhorn to a listening nation.

And we saw those words matched by deeds of equal valor.

These are the deeds that ousted the Taliban in Afghanistan, and have now defeated and captured the butcher of Baghdad.

These are the deeds that have yielded a safer America and a safer world, visible to all but an angry, frustrated few who remain stubbornly and willfully blind.

Through it all, Republicans in Congress and conservatives throughout the land have stood steadfastly behind our president whose personal courage and bold leadership has made our families measurably safer.

To provide for the common defense at home.

And to project power in the national interest abroad.

Because of conservatism, America is defending freedom at home and abroad.

And since conservatives were the margin in the disputed election of 2000, conservatives can take credit that America has this man as our president “for such a time as this.”

At the same time, we have promoted the general welfare with the only means that ever works - the means that unleashes the enterprise and initiative of the American taxpayer. Under the leadership of President Bush and the Republican Congress, two successive tax cuts have provided the largest tax relief since the days of Ronald Reagan. Just as they began to do in 1983, the positive results are now pouring in with each day's economic news. Americans are going back to work. Businesses are expanding and this president's determination to act on his conservative Republican principles is the reason for our returning prosperity.

And on this, the 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we can finally progress in securing the unalienable right to life for millions of unborn Americans.

Thanks to the unselfish, unflagging efforts of conservatives who have devoted themselves to being the voice for the voiceless, we can now point to the first major legislative victory since the legalization of abortion in 1973.

A Republican Congress passed a ban of “partial birth abortion” and this Republican president signed it

into law.

Republican governance, in these respects, has been conservative governance.

And if any of you believe George W. Bush is not the right man for our country, and not the right man for conservatives to support, you need look no further than these victories in national security, economic policy and the sanctity of life to know that George W. Bush is the right man for America, equal to the times and worthy of our trust.

But despite these enormous conservative achievements, there are troubling signs that the ship of conservative governance is off course.

While Ronald Reagan said famously, "government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem" many Republicans-even many who call themselves conservatives-see government increasingly as the solution to every social ill and-let us be clear on this point- this is a historic departure from the limited government traditions of our party and millions of its most ardent supporters.

And this shift to faith in government is especially clear to me.

Not because I am a congressman, but because not long ago, as I watched the children's animated movie "Ice Age" with my kids I realized...I am the frozen man.

You remember the frozen man...born in a simpler time, slips into the snow and thaws out years later in a more sophisticated age.

Well, I first ran for Congress in 1988. An entrenched Democratic majority controlled Congress, frustrating President Reagan at every turn.

A band of heroic House conservatives were challenging Speaker Jim Wright and welfare state politics; a balanced federal budget was as much a fantasy as a Republican majority in Congress...but some of us believed. We believed we could reduce the size and scope of government and halt the slow march to socialism embodied in the welfare state politics of the left.

I lost my bid in 1988 and again in 1990.

There's a saying in politics: "When you're out, you're out!"

Well, I was out for 10 years.

And when I was finally elected to Congress in 2000, I was like the frozen man...frozen before the revolution, thawed after it was over...a minuteman who showed up 10 years late!

A decade ago, when I first ran for Congress, Republicans dreamed of eliminating the federal Department of Education and returning control of our schools to parents, communities and states.

Ten years later, I am thawed out, take my oath of office in the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress and join the revolution and they hand me a copy of H.R. 1...One...as in our Republican Congress' number one priority.

The "No Child Left Behind Act." The largest expansion of the federal Department of Education since it was created by President Jimmy Carter.

In the end, myself and about 30 House conservatives fought against the bill and were soundly defeated

by our own colleagues.

Our Reaganite beliefs that education was a local function were labeled "far right" by Republicans and the President signed the bill into law with a smiling Ted Kennedy at his side.

Conservatives were told to bear up...that this was the exception, not the rule.

And so, relieved to have that experience behind me, I anxiously awaited a new H.R. 1 for a new Congress...an H.R. 1 I could be proud of. And so at the onset of the 108<sup>th</sup>, I was handed H.R. 1...the number one priority...the Medicare Prescription Drug Bill.

The largest new entitlement since 1965!

To the frozen man it was obvious.

Another Congress.

Another H.R.1.

And another example of the ship of our movement veering off course.

Actually this bill started out promising. The president asked Congress for a very limited program...extending existing welfare benefits to seniors just above the poverty level where most of the one in four seniors without prescription drug coverage reside.

Many conservatives, me included, were prepared to support this limited benefit. I told the president we shouldn't make seniors choose between food, rent and prescription drugs...we were a better country than that.

But instead of giving the president what he requested, the Congress...the land of the \$400 hammer...set sail to create the largest new entitlement since 1965...a massive one-size-fits-all entitlement that would place trillions in obligations on our children and grandchildren without giving any thought to how we were going to pay for it.

Conservatives in the House were faced with a difficult choice...oppose the president we love...or support the expansion of the big government we hate.

Twenty-five rebels decided to make a stand for the principle of limited government.

When all the votes were counted, we were one rebel short.

In the end the bill passed.

The welfare state expanded.

And the ship of conservative government veered off course.

But I will always believe that the stand we took mattered. Even in defeat.

Sometimes a small group of people can take a stand, be defeated and still make a difference.

Like in 1836 when less than 200 men fought against thousands of Mexican forces to defend an ancient Christian mission on the plains of Texas.

Though they died to the last man, the Texas volunteers within those missionary walls exacted such a horrific toll on the Army of Santa Anna, that his aid, Col. Juan Almonte privately noted, "One more such glorious victory and we are finished."

And so they were.

The inspiration of the men who made their stand at the Alamo fueled the victory that Sam Houston would lead just six weeks later.

"One more such glorious victory and we are finished."

One more big government education bill.

One more new government entitlement.

One more compromise of who we are as limited government Republicans, and our majority could be finished.

So then, the state of the movement:

Strong, on the advance, but veering off course from our commitment to limited government.

The time has come for conservatives to retake the helm of this movement and renew our commitment to fiscal discipline and to what we know to be true about the nature of government:

Conservatives know that government that governs least governs best.

Conservatives know as government expands, freedom contracts.

Conservatives know that government should never do for a man what he can and should do for himself.

And conservatives know that we never expand the welfare state but that we don't reduce the freedom of its recipients and all those condemned to pay its price in confiscated taxes.

And conservatives know that if you reject these principles of limited government and urge others to reject them you can be my ally, you can be my friend but you cannot call yourself a conservative.

As I close I think about the year ahead.

The unforeseeable challenges our nation may face.

And I think of the heroes we will likely bid farewell.

And I think of Ronald Wilson Reagan.

I met President Reagan in the summer of 1988.

I was a 29 year-old candidate for Congress and he was winding down a presidency that changed the world.

It was a candidate photo-op in the Blue Room of the White House.

I was determined to say something of meaning to the great man.

After we exchanged pleasantries, I told him I was grateful for everything he had done for the country

and everything he had done to inspire my generation of Americans to believe in high ideals.

He seemed surprised, his cheeks appeared to redden with embarrassment and he said, “Well, Mike, that’s a very nice thing of you to say.”

Moments later in the ballroom he took a minute to respond to my and others’ accolades with characteristic humility and optimism saying:

“Many of you have thanked me for what I did for America but I want you to know I don’t think I did anything for this country-the American people decided *it was time to right the ship* and I was just the captain they put on the bridge when they did it.”

It’s time for conservative Americans to do what Reagan did.

It’s time for conservative Americans to right the ship again.

To celebrate our great Republican President and Congress that are leading our nation’s progress in national security, economic prosperity and value of human life.

But also to see her listing to port...in the direction of big government and set her right again.

And to know that this is not a sign of disloyalty but of true loyalty to principle.

When a ship is approaching a rocky coast, the life of the ship and its crew depends on the navigator with his sextant to counsel the captain and crew to steer clear of the shoals and if need be to forcefully oppose the captain when the fate of the ship hangs in the balance.

This is our cause.

To stand with our captain as he leads us well.

And to right the ship in that where she is adrift.

And this cause will prevail.

For the cause of freedom is not ours but His – “the author and finisher of our faith.”

And I believe with all my heart that He who set this miracle of democracy on this these wilderness shores will see our cause through tomorrow as surely as He has seen it through every yesterday.

Thank you for all you do to keep the cause of conservative values alive in this shining city on the hill, this last best hope of earth, these United States of America.

God bless you and God bless the USA.

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