

Hello,

I am an independent voter, with high expectations for our politicians, with the desire to make America a happier, safer, cleaner, healthier, more equitable nation, and with raised hopes for America to resume a role in the world as a leader for peace, fair trade, innovation and good health for humans and the environment. This is a snapshot of what I believe, and why I fully support Barack Obama for President.

For me, this decision boils down to a few key points:

**Barack Obama changes the conversations we have as a nation.** I am tired of flippant, shoot-from-the-hip politics. I thought American politics had reached an all time low for brazen, unsubstantiated, and petty brabble during John McCain's Republican National Convention. I didn't expect this from McCain, who I had respected for years, but his campaign has further degraded since then. America needs a leader that is capable of hearing multiple points of view and determining a path forward based on the best available information. Sometimes changing one's mind is not flip-flopping, but rather a result of learning. Barack Obama has demonstrated his ability to listen, analyze and develop informed opinions. Barack Obama also has a great ability to respectfully communicate those opinions along with the rationale supporting his stance.

**Barack Obama redefines homeland security.** Why is America so unpopular around the world? Resentment continues to rise, and not just among fundamentalists trying to maintain their own oppressive sects. People don't hate us for our freedom (that's a classic Bushism: like a 14-year-old claiming her classmates all hate her because she's beautiful!). They resent our exploitations. They resent George W. Bush's gun-waving, adolescent approach to foreign policy. They resent our consumption of a fantastically disproportionate amount of the world's resources. In the long run, I believe there will be more security in an equitable, fair trade, democratic world. In the short term, we have to restore trust and guard ourselves from the hornets nest stirred up over the last 7 years. Barack Obama is prepared to keep America secure in the short term, while building for the long term. In my opinion, Sarah Palin's lack of domestic and foreign policy experience, immutable fundamentalist beliefs, and unabashed distortions of truth constitute an extreme risk to national security.

**Barack Obama will support our troops by bringing them home responsibly.** This was the wrong war, in the wrong place, for the wrong reasons, but it is the reality that the next President will have to deal with. We have done much to stabilize the fledgling democracy in Iraq. Now it is time to let the Iraqis rebuild in their own way, with their own \$80B surplus. The burden of responsibility motivates.

But Iraq is only part of a broader foreign policy misconception that cannot be overlooked. America's foreign policy must be defined by more than our guns and monetary giveaways. John McCain's military experience, while laudable, is also his hindrance. His 20<sup>th</sup> century approach to conflict resolution does not work in this 21<sup>st</sup> century world. What America needs is a leader who can apply pressure with diplomacy and common values that I believe all decent people share around the world. Barack Obama understands that

**there are better ways** than war. Barack Obama understands that communication is the cornerstone of understanding.

**Barack Obama will take America on a new route to economic recovery and sustainability.** Why do we find ourselves in this terrible economic situation? Lots of mistakes have been made. Yes, greed and lack of oversight for Wall Street and the mortgage industry were compounded by a naive investing and home-buying population. And yes, the Iraq War has been extremely costly, wasting funds (not to mention destroying many futures, lives and families in the US and in Iraq) that could have been put to use in more productive ways. And there should be no doubt that American morale plays a role...we as Americans do not have a positive self-image or certainty in our future. But we have also *fundamentally* missed the point on economic development over the past 8 years. Just two points to add to everything else we are all learning about the economy right now:

a) **Having friends is good for the economy.** The xenophobia that characterizes the current Administration's foreign policy is bad for business. Too many people harbor resentment for the United States and this inherently reduces our competitiveness.

b) **We need to start investing in the *right* energy technologies.** Alternative energies have much to gain from modest investments. America *must* situate itself to become a leader in this industry. Generating a sufficient amount of sustainable, non-polluting energy is the defining technological challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We need a President that will make the right investments in clean energy now.

We are all in this together. Let's start making good decisions for the future. Whatever your opinion, make sure you get out to vote. Clearly, we need to be more engaged in the direction of our nation.

Sincerely,  
Patrick Belmont