

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY ACTION™

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DEDICATED TO THE DEFENSE OF
MORAL VALUES AND THE FAMILY

October 2008

Dear Friends,

Can you feel the tension in the air? The nation—and indeed, the world—is holding its collective breath as the final days of the presidential campaign wind down and the candidates engage in one last round of electioneering and debating. By this time next month, we'll know whether Senator John McCain or Senator Barack Obama will be inaugurated in January as the 44th President of the United States.

Considering the stark differences between the two presidential candidates and the critical issues that are hanging in the balance, it's not difficult to understand why Campaign 2008 has been such a spirited affair. I'd like to take a few moments to consider what is at stake in this year's election, particularly for those of us who embrace a biblical worldview. Please understand that I will share these thoughts under the umbrella of Focus on the Family Action™, which has supported the preparation and distribution of this letter. Focus Action is, in turn, supported by contributions from those who do not receive tax deductible receipts for them. Thanks so much to you who made it possible.

Let's start with the need to elect a pro-family, pro-life President. The importance of this objective cannot be overstated. Between 2009 and 2012, there will likely be two or more opportunities for the President to nominate new justices to the Supreme Court. Some court watchers say there could be as many as four resignations. That alone should give us serious pause as we consider for whom to cast our votes. In the months ahead, the Supreme Court will likely hand down rulings that will impact America for generations to come. We need a President who will nominate conservative, strict-constructionist judges to the Court. If that doesn't happen, the highest court in the land could become stacked—even more than it already is—with justices who will endeavor to legislate from the bench and impose a liberal agenda on the nation. It will likely affect the definition of marriage, religious freedom, and the protection (or lack thereof) of life in the womb.

It's probably obvious which of the two major party candidates' views are most palatable to those of us who embrace a pro-life, pro-family worldview. While I will not endorse either candidate this year, I can say that I am now supportive of Senator John McCain and his bid for the presidency. This is not because I am beholden to the Senator from Arizona or to the Republican Party. Anyone who has even a passing familiarity with my views knows that I have agonized at times during this election process, and have been strongly critical of Senator McCain and the Republican Party on numerous occasions. My concern is for the biblical and moral values

that I and millions of Americans hold dear. I will gladly support politicians of any stripe who are willing to defend the sanctity of human life, support the institution of traditional marriage, protect the country from terrorism and advance the cause of religious liberty. While certainly not perfect, the 2008 Republican platform comes closest to embracing those ideals by a wide margin.

In recent weeks, I have received some measure of criticism from those who feel that my “change of heart” toward John McCain is unwarranted. I understand those views and concede that the Senator continues to embrace positions that concern me. I don’t apologize, however, for reevaluating our options in this election year. John Maynard Keynes, whose views I have disagreed with strongly, said this about reversing course: “When the facts change, I change my opinion. What do you do, sir?”¹ In this instance, Keynes’ perspective is correct. Every thinking person will eventually have reason to change his or her mind as circumstances evolve, as they have done during this long political ordeal.

There are four primary—and I believe compelling—reasons why I now view the McCain presidential candidacy favorably:

1. During the “Saddleback Forum” on Aug. 16, Sens. Obama and McCain fielded questions from the Saddleback Church pastor Rick Warren. Senator McCain gave very solid and encouraging answers to questions about the sanctity of life and the institution of marriage, whereas Senator Obama came down at the other end of the argument.

You will recall the following interchange during the forum:

Pastor Rick Warren: “At what point does a baby get human rights, in your view?”

Senator Obama: “. . . Answering that question with specificity, you know, is, uh, is, above my pay grade.”²

With all due respect, Senator, if this question is above your pay grade, then so is the job attached to it.

2. The Republican Party’s 2008 national platform is a remarkably conservative document.³ Indeed, it is the strongest pro-life platform in the history of the party, surpassing even the pro-life advances of the Reagan years. It was approved and sanctioned by the McCain campaign.
3. Senator McCain selected an astonishingly strong pro-life, pro-family running mate in Governor Sarah Palin. Although he could have embraced a liberal Vice Presidential nominee, such as Senator Joe Lieberman or Tom Ridge, he made the bold decision to join forces with a VP pick whose views reflect those of the party’s conservative base. I’ll discuss Governor Palin’s candidacy in greater detail in a moment.
4. The longer the campaign continues, the more concerned I have become with Barack Obama’s liberal views. Certainly, he is an attractive and very charismatic candidate who has embarked on a campaign of historical proportions. However, the majority of his policies represent the antithesis of principles I hold dear. Senator Obama’s record is more

liberal than that of any other Democrat in the Senate⁴—and that’s saying something! For example, when he was a state senator in Illinois, he voted four times in three years against legislation that would have saved the lives of babies that managed to survive the abortion process.⁵ The U.S. Senate subsequently passed similar legislation called The Born-Alive Infant Protection Act by unanimous consent.⁶ (Obama was not a U.S. Senator at the time.) State Senator Obama was chairman of the committee that opposed this protection of babies, and in 2001 and 2002 was the only legislator who rose to argue against the Illinois Born Alive Act.⁷ That is an undeniable fact!

My good friend, former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum published a scathing analysis of Senator Obama’s pro-abortion record earlier this year. Here is an excerpt of what he wrote:

In March 2001, [Senator] Obama was the sole speaker in opposition to the bill on the floor of the Illinois Senate. He said: “We’re saying they are persons entitled to the kinds of protections provided to a child, a 9-month child delivered to term. I mean, it would essentially bar abortions, because the equal protection clause does not allow somebody to kill a child.”⁸ So according to [Senator] Obama, “they”, (babies who survive abortions or any other preterm newborns,) should be permitted to be killed because giving legal protection to preterm newborns would have the effect of banning all abortions.⁹

To further underscore Senator Obama’s radical devotion to abortion rights, he has promised that “the first thing I’d do as president” would be to sign the Freedom of Choice Act.¹⁰ The FOCA is a devastating piece of legislation that would overturn nearly every local, state, and federal anti-abortion law passed in the last 40 years.¹¹ In fact, it’s so broadly written that legal analysts suggest the bill may prevent institutions and physicians from refusing to provide abortion services by invoking the conscience clause.

Earlier this year, while talking about sex education and abortion, the Senator said the following: “I’ve got two daughters, 9 years old and 6 years old. I am going to teach them first of all about values and morals. But if they make a mistake, I don’t want them punished with a baby.”¹² In other words, a pre-born baby is viewed as a form of punishment, and can therefore be murdered in the name of convenience.

It is a matter of historic significance that Barack Obama has become the first African-American to capture the nomination of a major political party for the office of President of the United States. I applaud that remarkable accomplishment. Nevertheless, I cannot support his candidacy because the positions he holds on moral, social and family issues place him at the extreme left of the political spectrum. What the Senator believes and the policies he would seek to implement are on a collision course with the biblical principles and beliefs I have fought to defend for more than 35 years.

Turning the corner, the significance of Governor Palin to the 2008 presidential race is also worthy of further consideration. Here is a woman who is a deeply committed Christian, and who is pro-life not only with regard to her policies, but in her personal life. She and her husband welcomed their latest child, Trig, into the world even though he was diagnosed

with Down syndrome while still in the womb. Approximately 90 percent of babies with Down syndrome are aborted,¹³ but Governor Palin carried her precious child to term and now loves and cares for him despite the challenges associated with a special needs child. Similarly, her teenage daughter, Bristol, who became pregnant out of wedlock, could have bowed to cultural pressure to seek an abortion. Instead, she and the father plan to get married and raise their child together. Governor Palin has been married for 20 years, and by all accounts, she is a portrait of Christian motherhood and womanhood.

As for Governor Palin's qualifications to be Vice President of the United States and to assume the mantle of President, should that ever become necessary, she is much better suited for the job than the talking heads on the liberal Left would have you believe. She came out of nowhere to win the Alaskan gubernatorial race against a powerful incumbent. While in office, she bravely fought widespread corruption—including that within her own party—in the face of great opposition. Governor Palin's critics suggest that her experience as mayor of a "small town" is somehow a liability, but it is an asset. In fact, her time as Mayor of Wasilla and then as Governor of Alaska gives her a greater degree of executive experience than Senator Barack Obama can claim. Her qualifications to be Vice President, I would submit, exceed those of Senator Barack Obama, who spent only 143 working days in the U.S. Senate prior to announcing his run for President.¹⁴ He authored no significant legislation during that time.

I'm sure you have heard the shrill voices from the political Left decrying Mrs. Palin for any and every reason under the sun. They gloat over the pregnancy of her daughter Bristol and claim it as "evidence" that abstinence education, which Sarah Palin strongly supports, is somehow a sham. They criticize Governor Palin for daring to hold political office and run for Vice President while having a baby at home, even though the Left has for decades supported a woman's right to do just that. The attacks on Governor Palin and her family in recent weeks have been astonishingly unfair and mean-spirited. If she were a liberal Democrat, she would be praised and lauded for making the same decisions for which she is now being criticized. The double standard is obvious.

Governor Palin's decision to run for Vice President while raising a baby with special needs has given pause to some conservative voices as well. Some have even questioned my enthusiasm over Governor Palin's candidacy in light of these circumstances. It's important to note that although I have often said stay-at-home moms are vitally important to raising the next generation, I have never suggested that it is wrong for mothers to work outside the home. Indeed, Focus on the Family[®] has hired thousands of mothers over the years. I *have* said, however, that if a mother is going to enter the workplace, she and her husband must first find a way to meet the needs of their children. Sarah Palin appears to have done that. Todd, her husband, is actively involved in the raising of their children, and it seems obvious that Sarah will continue to be a positive force in her children's lives even as she carries out her duties in the political arena. Regardless of your political views, may I suggest that the Palins need our prayers, not our disdain, at this critical moment in our nation's history.

Senator Obama's selection of fellow liberal Democrat Joseph Biden (Del.) is also extremely revealing. While the *National Journal* ranked Obama the most liberal Senator last year, Senator

Biden was ranked 3rd on their list—just ahead of Vermont’s Bernie Sanders, a self-avowed socialist.¹⁵ While the Senator of 36 years from Delaware stands in blatant opposition to the pro-family movement, many of you will remember him from his vociferous opposition to several of our finer Supreme Court justices, namely, Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Alito and Thomas.

Returning to our theme, America’s future seems to hang in the balance at this time. Our next President will have a dramatic impact on countless legislative issues. Since being relegated to minority status in 2006, Senate Republicans have skillfully used the rules of parliamentary procedure to frustrate many of the Democrats’ attempts to pass bad legislation. To this point, that effort has almost always been backed by a President who is willing to use the veto pen when necessary. The threat of President Bush’s veto on hate crimes legislation and issues regarding the sanctity of life have kept a Democrat-controlled Congress from implementing its liberal agenda. Will our next President stand up to Congress in the same manner, or will he side with them, thereby giving the Democrats free reign to impose their liberal values on America?

It is likely, say the pundits, that both the House and the Senate in the 111th Congress will still be controlled by Democrats. If that party also takes the White House, a wave of anti-family, pro-homosexual legislation is almost guaranteed to pass in 2009. The bills put forward and advanced this year by Democrats reveal where they want to take the country. For example, they inserted hate crimes language into the 2008 Defense Authorization Bill, but were forced to remove it in conference, again under the threat of veto.¹⁶ While in the Illinois Senate, Senator Obama voted for a bill authorizing “comprehensive” sex education beginning in kindergarten. Defenders have attempted to downplay its significance, citing the fact that it called for the content to be “age appropriate” and “medically accurate”—dubious and subjective qualifiers given the sensitive nature of the topic and innocence of the audience!¹⁷ (When criticized for supporting this legislation, the Senator was dismissive and said proudly, I quote, “It’s the right thing to do.”¹⁸)

Large portions of the agenda promoted by homosexual activists will also be enacted. The implications for a federal hate crimes law are clear. People speaking against homosexuality have already been prosecuted under hate crimes laws both in the United States and abroad. If a federal hate crimes law passes, there will be little to prevent the government from endeavoring to control and curtail religious speech, especially from the pulpit. It is entirely possible that a pastor could be charged with inducing a federal hate crime simply by preaching from one of the many biblical passages that address homosexuality.

Congressional Democrats will also seek to pass the Employment Nondiscrimination Act, meaning businesses will be forced to accept and condone homosexuality—and possibly transgenderism—in making employment decisions. Further, business owners, including religious businesses, will not be able to make hiring and firing decisions based on their religious convictions. Earlier this year, Senator Barack Obama said, “I will place the weight of my administration behind the enactment of the Matthew Shepherd Act to outlaw hate crimes and a fully inclusive Employment Nondiscrimination Act.”¹⁹

Finally, I am deeply concerned about the tax and spend policies Senator Obama will impose on the American people if he is elected, especially in light of the current financial crisis. This is not the time to be taking money out of the economy, yet, he has proposed enormous new federal programs and entitlements that will cost multiple billions of dollars. These initiatives cannot be effected without huge increases in taxation on businesses, which will be passed on to the public and to individual families. This will almost certainly require a return of the odious marriage penalty tax that plagued families for 32 years!

The races for the White House and the Congress are hardly the only matters worthy of concern in this election cycle. At the state and local levels, numerous policies and pieces of legislation are being put to a vote, and many of them are directly related to family and moral issues. For example, the definition of marriage is on the ballot in Arizona (Proposition 102), California (Proposition 8) and Florida (Amendment 2). Voters in Colorado will be given the opportunity to expand the definition of "personhood" to include all human beings from the moment of fertilization (Amendment 48). In South Dakota, voters will be asked to ban all abortions except those involving cases of rape and incest, or when the pregnancy seriously jeopardizes the life or physical health of the mother (Measure 11). Michigan is considering whether to legalize embryonic stem cell research, which would result in the killing of tiny human beings. In California, voters will also get the chance to decide whether minor girls should be required to give 48 hours' notice to a parent or adult relative before having an abortion (Proposition 4). Arkansas voters will decide whether to prevent couples living together out of wedlock—heterosexual or homosexual—from adopting children or serving as foster parents.

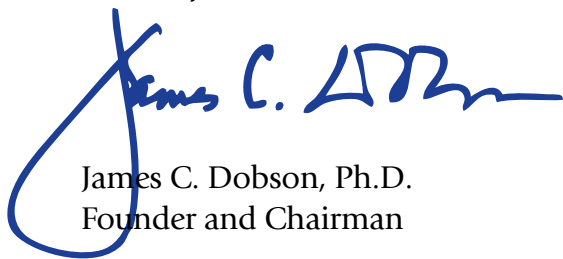
These are just a few of the important issues that, depending on which state you live in, will be on the ballot next month. I implore you to spend the few days remaining before the election researching the various amendments, ballot measures, and local and national candidates. Then, exercise your responsibility before God to vote on or before Nov 4. Please, let your voices be heard. For more information, visit Focus on the Family Action's Web site at focusaction.org

Regardless of your political views, I want to urge Christians everywhere to be in prayer about this election. There are many scriptural references wherein King David "inquired of God" when he was faced by troubling circumstances (1 Samuel 23:2,4; 30:8; 2 Samuel 2:1; 5:19,23). It is time for Christians everywhere to turn to Him for guidance and wisdom. Find some time to be still and listen to what He wants to tell you. The National Day of Prayer Task Force, led by my wonderful wife, Shirley, has embarked on a national campaign entitled "Pray for Election Day." All around the country, individuals and groups are being encouraged to gather every Thursday leading up to Nov. 4 between 12 noon and 12:30 p.m. Spend time with the Lord, asking Him to guide and direct those privileged to cast a ballot. If you are able, I would also encourage you to fast and pray immediately before the election. After all, it was the Reverend Billy Graham who once said that "To get nations back on their feet, we must first get down on our knees."²⁰ Amen, Dr. Graham.

This election is about the future of the nation, but it will also go a long way toward determining the culture your children and grandchildren will come to know. I know you will vote with your children and your children's children in mind. That certainly puts the election in a different light, doesn't it?

You know my heart on these issues, and I hope you understand that I am less concerned with politicians and political parties than I am with the timeless biblical principles that those parties have the power to either strengthen or damage. No candidate is perfect, whether in this election or any other. Please don't make your decisions lightly. There is simply too much at stake. May God grant each of us wisdom as Nov. 4 approaches.

Sincerely,



James C. Dobson, Ph.D.
Founder and Chairman

P.S. Since I began researching and writing this letter, the economic meltdown on Wall Street and congressional reaction to it has occurred. These are, indeed, difficult times for American families and businesses. Thank you for continuing to support this ministry, even though in many cases it has required sacrificial giving. You are helping to keep us afloat during this financial crisis, and we appreciate your contribution and prayers more than I can tell you.

Please share this with your friends and family.

ENDNOTES

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