



LETTER
TO A YOUNG

OBAMA

SUPPORTER

HUGH HEWITT

OTHER TITLES AVAILABLE FROM THE NEW PAMPHLETEER:

NO.1 *Everything Could Explode at any Moment:
Dispatches from the Lebanese-Israeli Front*

BY MICHAEL J. TOTTEN ISBN: 0-9789028-1-5

NO.2 *Blog Digest #1: The Hezbollah War*

EDITED BY MICHAEL J. TOTTEN ISBN : 0-9789028-2-3

NO.3 *Hassan Nasrallah: In His Own Words:
Writings and Speeches by the Head of Hezbollah*

EDITED BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ ISBN : 0-9789028-0-7

NO.4 *Best Recipes from the Jewish Blogosphere*

BY JUDITH WEISS ISBN : 978-0978-90284-1

NO.5 *Embrace the Suck: A Pocket Guide to Milspeak*

COMPILED AND INTRODUCED BY COL. AUSTIN BAY
ISBN : 978-0978-90285-8

NO.6 *The Consolation of The Shoes*

BY MANOLO THE SHOEBLOGGER ISBN : 978-0-9789028-6-5

NO.7 *Raising Wild Boys Into Men:
A Modern Dad's Survival Guide*

BY TONY WOODLIEF ISBN : 978-0978-90287-4

NO.8 *The Pocket Guide to Fantasy Football: 10 Strategies to
Dominate Your League from Draft Day to the Playoffs*

BY DAVID SANDORA & DENNIS VELASCO ISBN : 978-0978-90288-2

NO.9 *Who is Fred Thompson?*

BY DEAN BARNETT ISBN : 978-0-978-90289-6

NO.10 *The Plucky Smart Kid with the Fatal Disease*

BY DAVID SANDORA & DENNIS VELASCO ISBN : 978-0-978-90289-6

TO ORDER, VISIT WWW.PAMPHLETGUYS.COM

— I S S U E N O . 1 1 —

LETTER TO A YOUNG
OBAMA
SUPPORTER

By Hugh Hewitt



THE NEW PAMPHLETEER ■ NEW YORK ■ 2008



THE NEW PAMPHLETEER
PAMPHLETEER PRESS, LLC
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
WWW.PAMPHLETGUYS.COM

COPYRIGHT © 2008 BY HUGH HEWITT
DESIGNED BY SCOTT RUSSO/SCOTTRUSSO.COM

ISBN: 978-0-9799853-7-9

MANUFACTURED IN THE U.S.A.

LETTER TO A YOUNG
OBAMA
SUPPORTER

By Hugh Hewitt

An Introductory Note for Parents

If you are holding this pamphlet, chances are you bought it with the intention of giving it to one of your kids who is wild about Barack Obama.

Alternatively, one of your kids who is wild about Barack Obama thought this might be a good way to fill you in on why he or she is in fact wild about Obama.

Either way, you need to know one important thing—the passion that millions of young voters have for Senator Obama is very real and unlikely to waver in the least bit between now and November absent excellent and detailed appeals to their *reason*. There are tremendously appealing reasons to support Senator Obama, especially for young people who think the country is broken, its politics bitter and boring,

elected officials stupid, and President Bush and Vice President Cheney at best incompetent and at worst evil.

The only way to change a young voter's mind about supporting Obama will be to sincerely and persuasively explain to them why the charismatic senator from Illinois would be a disaster as the president and how that will gravely impact their future.

In short, you have to make an adult case to your adult children based on the facts.

This past March, my friend Michael Barone urged me to pick up a book co-authored by a Democratic political activist Barone respected a great deal, Morley Winograd. The book, co-authored with Michael D. Hais, is *Millennial Makeover: My Space, YouTube & The Future of American Politics*.

What you will learn if you read *Millennial Makeover* is that this generation of young people—called “Millennials” and born in the ‘80s—are completely different in their hopes, dreams, ambitions and expectations than you, and even from the two age cohorts between you and them. To be around or under 25 in 2008 is to be in a unique category of voter. Winograd and Hais put forward a lot of explanations for why this is so—the obvious one being the

hyper-connectivity of those under 25.

All these changes have resulted, in their words, in a generation “united across gender and race in their desire to find ‘win-win’ solutions to America’s problems,” deeply committed to a “strong environmental focus,” often deeply religious, and almost always “activist doers.”

They are also incredibly optimistic about their own futures: Millennials are fairly confident about how they will fare in the future, especially with regard to economic concerns, such as having a fulfilling career (46%), holding good jobs (43%), being financially well-off (39%), having a sufficiently high-quality education (51%), being able to afford a home (40%), having access to health care (36%), and retiring comfortably (36%). (Frank N. Magid Associates, January 2006)

That’s what Senator Obama has tapped into: The optimism of the Millennials and their developing “activist generation” culture. Senator Obama is telling the Millennials that he will deliver what they want—and the lifestyles they expect—if they will just direct their activist impulses into his political campaign. Explaining why that is a false promise is therefore the only way to persuade a young Obama supporter to change his or her mind.

So, if you send this to a son or daughter, nephew or niece, or even a young co-worker, attach a note suggesting a lunch to discuss it. These Millennials are a happy, thoughtful, serious bunch who expect and deserve to be taken very seriously. If you want to change their minds about Obama, the first thing you'll want to do is begin a conversation you understand will go on for some time.

FOR THE YOUNG OBAMA SUPPORTER

Dear Millennial:

You know you are being watched closely, don't you? By the legions of political consultants, pollsters, and pundits whose lives revolve around the presidential campaign of 2008?

And of course by corporate America which is largely run by men and women at least twenty years older than anyone born in the 1980s, and which is desperately trying to figure out what makes you tick, where you are going, what you want to buy, where you want to travel, and what you want to achieve.

Both groups have commissioned an enormous amount of research about your generation, and have tagged anyone born in the '80s as part of the "Millennials."

According to Morley Winograd and Michael Hais in their just published *Millennial Makeover*, your "upbeat optimistic attitudes" along with your ethnic diversity, openness to non-traditional sex roles, strong connections to family and friends, and concern for the wider community "will bring major and long-lasting changes to American society and politics."

Indeed, because of your passion for the planet and your

interconnectedness, you have already profoundly shaped the debate over climate change.

Now you are poised to perhaps decide the 2008 presidential election. The “youth vote” has often been talked about in elections past, but rarely lived up to its billing because young voters just didn’t show up at the polls in large numbers.

This November looks to be different. You are very engaged in the election, and leaning—by a large majority it seems—towards Barack Obama. Yet as with so many other things, your generation is very open to new information and arguments, and not at all self-conscious or stubborn when it comes to changing your mind when new perspectives arrive. So it seems that many of you will be keeping an open mind until you actually check a box or pull a lever.

I’m hoping to persuade you to think twice if you are leaning towards Senator Obama.

If you had a malignant, life-threatening brain tumor and it needed to be removed in a complicated surgery that, if it didn’t kill you, could leave you badly impaired if it was not conducted with consummate skill and care, would you want your surgeon to have performed that particular surgery in the past, and not just once or twice, but scores if not hundreds of times?

If you could be given golf lessons by either Tiger Woods or the local club pro, guitar lessons by Eric Clapton or the guitarist for the garage band playing downtown, cooking lessons by Emeril Lagasse or by the night cook at the local diner, which choice would you make in every case?

Would you rather take a tough course from the school's most gifted teacher, or the rookie who is spending his or her first year in the classroom?

If you are under 30 and reading this, it is almost certainly because someone has given it to you —a mom or a dad, an uncle or aunt, an older brother, friend, teacher or boss. Someone who listens to my radio show or reads my blog or column, someone who cares about politics, and also cares very much about you.

Someone who takes you and your vote seriously.

Feel complimented that this person took the time to try and persuade you to support John McCain in November, or simply to not vote for Barack Obama.

I could have titled this essay “A Letter to Patrick,” my nephew, who will be a college junior this fall, or addressed it to Abria, my intern at the radio studio for the past two summers who is on the cusp of graduating with her BA. My nephew is

rumored to be leaning towards Obama and I'd bet my house Abria is too. Both are exceptionally bright, well-informed young people with great parents and promising futures.

So is Kirsten, the daughter of my friends Mike and Debbie—another college student, but one so attached to Obama that she has volunteered for his campaign in Arizona. So too are the scores of young people I have asked to call my show and tell me why they are supporting him. This invitation never fails to generate dozens of calls from Obama enthusiasts, eager to explain to me and my national audience what it is about the Senator from Illinois that is motivating them to get involved in politics—often for the very first time, and often at significant expense via contributions of time or money or both.

In fact, I have never seen this many young people so committed to a candidate. There have always been young volunteers on campaigns—folks who for whatever reason got the political bug early and never lost it.

But the numbers and enthusiasm of the young people throwing themselves into the Obama campaign are extraordinary—a scale of magnitude larger than anything I have seen since Bobby Kennedy mobilized his vast army of young volunteers in 1968.

I am thrilled that so many young activists are interested in the campaign. That's a huge long-term plus for the country. A democratic republic like ours cannot endure without an informed, engaged citizenry. The outpouring of enthusiasm and interest is a sign of political renewal and a rebuke to the cynics who say that voting and participation in politics don't matter, are a waste of time and energy.

Your vote does matter, and elections have enormous consequences for your life. The younger you are, the more they matter because almost certainly you will have many more years of living with the consequences than I will.

This election is so enormously important to the future of our country that I think it is almost impossible to overstate the stakes. The enemies we confront today, the precarious nature of the global environment and economy, the soaring cost of oil and the pressing food shortages in the Third World, and especially the prospect of terrorists obtaining nuclear or biological weapons, add up to a world on the edge, with the possibilities for violent, awful change very real, indeed more probable than peaceful, progressive change. I spend much of my life as a journalist reading the literature about the war and interviewing the experts on it. I believe in my heart that we are and have been on

the brink of a catastrophe so immense that it could shatter every dream you and I have, change the basics of life for every American, even end the government as we know it.

If you ever get the chance to listen to my radio show, you'll know I am an upbeat, optimistic, generally happy fellow who doesn't go in for the politics of personal destruction or venomous attacks on political opponents. This is certainly because some of my very closest friends have been lifelong Democrats. My closest friend from college—still one of the few people in the world I'd drop everything to help, and he me—was a very senior Clinton White House staffer and appointee who has been at or near the center of Democratic Party politics since we graduated from college thirty years ago. I really cannot get angry with Democrats when I am so close to so many of them.

But I can and do get very frustrated with those among them who refuse to see the peril we are in, or ignore the realities we face today. I am astonished by the politicization of the war and the denial about its realities. And I am very troubled that this refusal on the part of Democrats to level with those who follow them is undermining our effort to keep the country safe and the world secure.

The deep bitterness in our politics is a new thing, which began with the impeachment of Bill Clinton, deepened during the Florida recount of 2000, and metastasized after the invasion of Iraq. It is gangrenous and destructive, and the wreckage is accelerating because of the rise of new media and the complete lack of inhibition on the part of many to restrain their political rhetoric.

I think one of the big reasons—in fact, I know one of the big reasons—behind Senator Obama’s meteoric rise is that he is unconnected to the bitter political struggles of the last 15 years. You didn’t grow up seeing him being slammed or caricatured on the news, or lampooned by Jon Stewart or Steven Colbert. As a new face you can honestly conclude that he had nothing to do with the ugliness of American politics that launched in 1992 with the arrival of the Clintons on the national scene. He didn’t hold elected office until 1997, long after the Clinton-Gingrich wars began.

John McCain is the opposite of the fresh face. He’s been around American politics for a long time, and at or near its top for the last decade of his 24 years in the Senate. This is his second run for the presidency, and the first one wasn’t free of controversy. Senator McCain jokes that he is as old as dirt and

as scarred as Frankenstein, and he will seem ancient by comparison to the vigorous, handsome Senator Obama with the smart, accomplished, beautiful wife and two adorable young daughters. Senator McCain isn't just old enough to be your dad. He is old enough to be your grandfather. Senator Obama is much more like an older brother than a parent, another formidable advantage when it comes to winning young votes.

And of course, he is a brilliant, almost hypnotic speaker. I broadcast from the Democratic Convention in Boston in 2004, and was in the hall when Senator Obama blew away the crowd and the national television audience with a remarkable keynote address about which I can recall nothing except the beauty and skill of its delivery.

The only politician I have ever heard who was a match for Senator Obama was Ronald Reagan. These two are in a category by themselves. As you have grown up starved of serious political speech, uninterrupted and not immediately dissected and denounced on cable channel after cable channel, you aren't just an eager audience hungry for an accomplished talker, you are a collective swoon waiting to happen.

Well, it is happening already. A year after the Democratic Convention speech of 2004, I wrote a book in which I

predicted a Hillary-Obama ticket in 2008, so certain was I of the ability of Senator Obama to motivate voters, and especially Democrats weary of George Bush. Many scoffed that a rookie senator (and an African-American at that) could rise to the #2 slot so quickly. They didn't see his potential, and I didn't realize that eloquence alone could power a presidential campaign. This is perhaps the first modern presidential campaign that has turned on rhetorical skill.

There's another reason behind your—and millions of others'—commitment to Senator Obama: It is a wonderful thing to see an African-American competing for the nation's top job. Senator Obama's success is a testament to the country's long, uphill struggle to deliver on the promise of the Declaration of Independence's radical statement that all men are created equal. It is thrilling for those of us who deeply believe in the promise of this country to inspire the world and model a way forward for its young or not-yet born democracies to see Barack Obama burst upon the scene and soar so high. It is entirely possible to be proud of the country for nominating Senator Obama, even as you work hard to defeat him—just as it is possible to admire him as a man while knowing that he is not qualified to be the president.

Of course there are some are attracted to Senator Obama because of his views on particular issues—the fear of global warming is frequently cited by many of my callers, or the deep desire to see American troops exit immediately from Iraq. Senator Obama was rated as the most liberal member of the United States Senate in 2007 by the National Journal—one of the most respected non-partisan magazines in America. Needless to say, very liberal voters will be supporting him.

But political pros know that most people in this country aren't "very liberal," and that voting is only infrequently a matter of assessing issues and concluding that Candidate A is to be preferred over Candidate B because of those issues. It is a much, much more emotional assessment than that. A vote is a statement of trust and recognition of likeness—you view the candidate as understanding people like you, and wanting to do well by you.

The controversy surrounding Senator Obama's pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, in the spring of 2008 hurt the senator precisely because most Americans recoiled from the idea of a preacher yelling at the top of his lungs: "God damn America! God damn America!" Some concluded right then and there that they couldn't trust Senator Obama if

his judgment about his pastor was so flawed. That distrust deepened after another close friend of Senator Obama, Father Michael Pfleger, used the pulpit at Obama's church to launch a harsh attack on Hillary Clinton. Senator Obama's denunciation of Pastor Wright and his resignation from his church reassured some and angered others, but it did not close the issue of the senator's judgment. The Senator's associations with 1960s terrorists William Ayers and Bernadine Dohrn as well his close relationship with the corrupt real estate developer Tony Rezko have also eroded many voters' confidence in Senator Obama's judgment. Others will brand discussions about Obama's close circle as "Swiftboating" and judge these controversies to be side-shows intended to destroy Senator Obama without dealing with his ideas. Whatever your opinion, those controversies will remain central to the campaign of 2008 because Senator Obama's choice in friends and mentors suggest he is far from the "different kind of politician" he has held himself out to be.

But they are not the focus of this pamphlet. This little essay will not argue about what Senator Obama's friendships with Ayers, Dohrn, Phleger, Rezko, and Wright tell us about his judgment. However, you need to know that those controversies

are hurting Senator Obama with a lot of older Americans, and not without reason. Older voters have seen a lot of presidencies first wounded and then crippled by a president's lack of judgment when it comes to the character of his associates.

That said, there are indeed many powerful reasons for you to incline toward Senator Obama. I doubt very much if many of you can be persuaded to change your mind. But I feel obliged to try.

You see, Senator Obama is *not qualified to be the president*. He lacks even the barest minimum of life experiences needed for the job. Though his intentions will be good, his failure in the Oval Office is a near certainty because he is simply not ready—cannot be ready—to be president, and the failures that will certainly follow his taking the oath of office could—indeed, almost certainly would—devastate the country.

Now you should be asking yourself: Where does Hewitt get off? He's a radio talk show host for God's sake. What does he know about what it takes to be president?

I am not the first person to make this argument, and the bluntest version of it was in fact made by Senator Clinton and her campaign spokesman and in her campaign commercial in the days before the Texas and Ohio primaries on

March 4. This is how the Washington Post covered Senator Clinton's blast at Senator Obama's inexperience on its front page on March 1, 2008:

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton launched an across-the-board assault on Sen. Barack Obama on Friday, questioning in a provocative new television ad his ability to keep the nation safe as her advisers sought to raise an array of questions about her rival's ethics and electability.

In the ad, a narrator says that a telephone is ringing in the White House and that "your vote" will determine whether "someone tested and ready to lead in a dangerous world" will answer it. In the last scene, Clinton (N.Y.) is pictured picking up a phone while the narrator says: "It's 3 a.m., and your children are safely asleep. Who do you want answering the phone?"

So you can see that the argument that Senator Obama is in over his head is not a creation of the Republican Party attack dogs. Everyone with any experience in government knows the problem here, but very few have been heard making the case because of the roar of the crowd swooning for the senator's rhetoric and falling under the spell of his charisma.

I am going to lay out in short order two of the four reasons

why you should not vote for Senator Obama, as well as two of the four major arguments why Senator Obama is just not qualified for the job.

I am leaving out the argument as to why the judges a President Obama would appoint will be disastrous for the country because it is my experience that this subject simply does not interest voters under 30 who aren't actually lawyers or law students, and so over the side it goes, part of my commitment to keep this pamphlet to the bare minimum you need to focus on. As I noted above, I am also leaving out the worries that Senator Obama is a lousy judge of character as that argument too has very little appeal to young voters, and because I know the one thing Americans under 30 don't have is a lot of time, or the desire to read long tracts on politics.

I recognize that lots of very smart, very accomplished people are backing Senator Obama, and they do not agree with my conclusion about his experience level, or are very good at hiding that disagreement. But that doesn't make them right or even persuasive. They ought not to be able to avoid—and you shouldn't avoid asking them and yourself—the first hard question: ***Is Barack Obama anywhere near ready to be President of the United States in a time of war and economic***

uncertainty? And the second hard question: *What if he's not and he wins anyway?*

I don't think we have to spend much time debating whether John McCain is ready to be president. He wasn't my first, second, or even third choice for the GOP nomination, but that is because of the policies he has pursued over the years with which I disagreed, not because of a lack of experience. As a Senator, he has been making the sorts of decisions that presidents make for a very long time, though not with the same life or death consequences.

He did, of course, make many decisions with life or death consequences as a Navy pilot, as a POW in North Vietnam's Hanoi Hilton, and as a squadron commander after his release and return to active duty. You see, what presidents do is make decisions —hundreds of them every day, many of staggering importance. George Bush got lampooned for labeling himself the “decider-in-chief,” one of his many manglings of the English language, but the concept was as real as the phrase was memorable.

On August 1, 2007, the president invited a number of us talk show hosts for an Oval Office conversation about the war. Our meeting began after his morning intelligence briefing

and teleconferences with Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki and General David Petraeus had already concluded.

Our meeting that morning would be followed that day, and every day of his presidency, with scores more conversations, consultations, and ultimately decisions, each one of them significant, many of them important, some of them extraordinarily crucial, and a few of them world changing.

Every day, all day, that's what presidents do: Inform themselves, assess options and weigh arguments, and then decide. Sometimes they can only decide to try and persuade Congress in one direction, as President Bush did with Social Security reform in 2005. But most of the decisions the president makes are carried out for better or worse. His power as Commander-in-Chief in wartime is immense. He can – and President Bush has—authorize secret and not-so-secret interventions in foreign countries, missile strikes on terrorist targets, deals with dictators like Libya's Qaddafi, negotiations with our adversaries (at least those with whom negotiations are possible).

All day, every day, a president decides.

The pressure of the job is enormous, constant, and unrelenting in its intensity. The toll it takes on office holders

has often been seen in their faces or the graying of their hair. Unless you have been president or very close to one, you really have no idea of the awesome demands of the job, and even the best presidential historians only glimpse it and imperfectly convey it to us.

If I am correct, and Barack Obama is woefully unprepared to begin making these thousands of decisions each year in office—dozens every day from day one—and making them correctly, the consequences will begin to roll out immediately.

A president can screw up the economy and thus your life in profound and lasting ways.

He can also get a lot of Americans killed.

Inexperience in the business of making decisions makes it far more likely that he will do one or both. And Barack Obama is almost wholly inexperienced in that business.

Though Senator Obama's naivete about the war and the world in which we live is far, far more troubling than his painfully obvious lack of knowledge about the economy, I want to start with the economy because it is so much more real to most Americans than the war, which unfortunately is increasingly real only to those fighting it, their families, and

serious students of the jihadist enemy. I'll come back to the war because you should be very, very scared about the enemy we confront.

But you should also be very worried about the economy you are expecting to participate in for the next thirty to fifty years.

Let's start with the obvious: Nobody owes you anything. Not a dime. Not a cup of coffee.

Of course you know that you are not owed a job, even the one you currently hold or that has been promised to you. Unless you own your own company, you have no guarantees of employment at all. (Even if you are a "tenured" public school teacher, the looming financial disasters confronting pension funds and state and local governments could quickly unwind all those wonderful guarantees. The government can always legislate its way out of a bad deal.) Your future livelihood depends in large part on your willingness to work hard, and on your skill level, your pleasantness, your character, etc.

But here's a hard truth: Even if you do everything right and work very conscientiously, you can still end up out of work and out of money. Economies collapse. Companies fail. Low growth in the overall economy can become no growth,

national economies can decline, recessions can become depressions. Vibrant, booming economies can fall fast and hard. Ask Japan about the last twenty years.

You are not guaranteed the kind of economy that has seen an almost unbroken pattern of strong growth beginning in the early 1980s, producing opportunities and massive amounts of wealth for huge numbers of Americans and a comfortable life for hundreds of millions more. Our country's economy has been so remarkably successful over the past quarter century that most Americans have trouble even remembering what it was like in 1979 or 1980, with unemployment at 7.5%, inflation at 13.3% and the prime interest rate at 21%! There was genuine gloom about the prospects for recovery, and the appreciation for it lasted a long time, yet the memory of its predecessor conditions has faded along with the memory of Walter Cronkite and the Iranian hostage crisis.

If the president makes unwise decisions concerning the economy, he can imperil the economic engine that has lifted you and your families up to where they are today. If he botches trade policy, to name just one of several areas of the economy that intersect with his desk, we stop selling vast amounts of goods to various consumers across the globe, and

jobs vanish, often with dizzying speed.

Take one example with which almost all of you are very, very familiar: the iPod. If for whatever reason the next president allows trade barriers to spring up between Mexico, Canada, Europe, or China and the U.S. such that the export of iPods is limited to those markets or even shut off, the consequences to the employees of and investors in Apple would be enormous. Fewer international sales means fewer production jobs at its Asian facilities, of course; but it also means less money for the research and development geeks in the U.S. working on iPhone or AirMac improvements, or the next generation of amazing products. Fewer new products means less to show off in the gorgeous Apple stores staffed by smart young techies, working at night on their next big project but able to afford their rent and food because the Apple store pays pretty well. When he or she gets the layoff notice, suddenly everything is imperiled, and it's back home to mom and dad, hopefully without credit card debt following you.

Senator Obama has been campaigning on protectionist rhetoric from the start, aimed at undoing NAFTA, which governs our exports to and imports from our two largest trade partners—Canada and Mexico.

It is the same in industry after industry and for product after product—the president (and Congress) can screw things up pretty quickly.

Senator Obama is on the record as pledging to do just that, because he is on the record as wanting to raise taxes. A lot. On individuals and businesses. He isn't coy about his plan. He trumpets it. He thinks taxes are too low.

You don't have to be an economics major to understand the impact of raising taxes—it reduces economic activity. The less people keep of what they make, the less hard they will work to make more. The more people keep of what they make, the harder they will work to make more.

That which gets rewarded gets repeated. That which gets penalized tends to diminish.

Profits are what make the world go around, and more taxes mean less profit. Fewer profits mean fewer new products and less production of existing products. Fewer products and less production mean fewer new jobs and less in the way of pay hikes.

High taxes kill economies. We learned that in the '70s, and the 1981 Reagan tax cuts launched and sustained the boom that the Bush tax cuts resurrected after the attacks of 9/11 sent our economy into a tailspin.

Senator Obama believes that we can raise taxes and generate more revenue for projects he wants to pursue without hurting economic growth.

He is wrong about this, as the Democrats have been for some time. But as a young person who needs your few first breaks to get going in life, you have to be much more concerned about this policy than middle aged people like me who have been able to participate in the boom of the last few years, either directly through stock investments, or indirectly through the massive spending programs of Social Security and Medicare paid for with the tax revenues of the years of incredible technological and economic prosperity.

It is hard to convey to a young person just how fabulously wealthy this country is and how much it has grown since 1980. It is especially difficult to convey if you are currently in school or burdened with student loans that look like they could go on forever. Most of you aren't wealthy and don't have savings. That's because you are young and haven't been working during these times of incredible growth. You didn't buy a home in the '80s or '90s and see it rise in value, sometimes dramatically. You didn't buy into a mutual fund through 401(k) contributions over a period of years when the stock

market soared. You weren't around for the dot com boom, the bust, or the bounce back. You are at the starting line, not at the halfway point or beyond.

It really has been an incredible ride. And that ride could continue. But that ride could also stop. Suddenly. And when it does, those of us who have benefited and bought a home or made enough to save for retirement will be much less injured than you.

If you have any confidence in your talents and abilities, it makes no sense to vote for a man committed to taking from you a larger share of what you will produce, no matter how lofty his motives or rhetoric. It doesn't make sense to give power to a man who is proposing economic policies that we know strangle economies.

Now you may be saying it won't be that much more, or that the country needs to do something about—take your pick—health care, the environment, education.

Or you may be hoping that Senator Obama is going to take some of that new tax revenue and give it back to you in the form of student loan relief or mortgage assistance.

Let me be blunt: The government never gives productive people their money back in equivalent economic benefits. Never.

It does help the helpless, and they get far more in benefits than they pay in taxes. It does take money from the middle and upper middle class and the rich and transfer it to the poor in terms of benefits and services.

Of course we all get the benefits of a military might that deters our enemies in many respects.

But you will never recapture the money you pay in taxes, and the more you pay, the more you will never get back, the less you will save, and the more opportunities you will never enjoy for yourself or your families.

You should also pay particular attention to the fact that Senator Obama wants to undo President Bush's cut in the estate tax, which is the tax the federal government levies on the money people leave to their heirs. This particular proposal by Senator Obama you should carefully consider even if you don't think of your parents as "wealthy," or haven't thought much about an inheritance that is hopefully only coming your way after your parents have a long and wonderful life and a comfortable retirement. If your parents own a home and like most homes in America it has appreciated over the past thirty years, the Obama tax hike will cut a massive amount out of your inheritance.

This isn't debatable. Ask your parents what their home is worth. Ask them as well what their retirement accounts are worth. Inquire about how much the federal tax on their estate will be if they go to meet their maker after December 31, 2010. That's when the Bush cut in the estate tax is repealed, which unless the Congress and the next president act to extend it, will happen automatically. President Obama and the Democrats will certainly allow it to kick back in, and it will automatically set its highest rate at 55% with a \$1 million exemption. Thus if your parents leave an estate of \$2 million—not hard to do in many parts of the country where home values have soared since 1980—Uncle Sam will take from you and your siblings more than \$345,000, and your state tax collector will want more.

That's one of Senator Obama's promises to you.

Before you talk yourself out of your natural unease at losing some of your salary, a lot of economic opportunity, and a piece of mom's and dad's life work to the federal government because of your laudable concern over the plight of the uninsured or climate change, consider this.

It isn't like the government is starving for money. It took in \$2.15 **trillion** dollars in federal receipts in 2006—a huge

rise of \$350 billion in just three years! Federal revenues have been exploding since the Kennedy tax cut in 1962.

I am not one of those conservatives who want to shutter vast parts of the federal government. But I do think the spending orgy has got to stop, and the growth of government has to be capped. Not dismantled, not dramatically cut back, just capped.

But if President Obama is elected that won't happen, and you will be paying much, much more in taxes than you are now. And getting much less in return.

Few debates are more boring to those under 30 than the mess we have made of Social Security and Medicare. Your retirement is rightly one of the farthest things from your mind as you work on paying off college loans and perhaps accumulating the down payment on a house.

So I am not going to bother you with details, just urge you to recognize that everyone—Republican and Democrat alike—knows the retirement system is broken and can't make the payments it has committed to make. Whether it goes upside-down in 16 or 20 or 25 years—and it most definitely will before you hit middle age, much less retirement—it will certainly be deep in the red long before you retire, which means that unless drastic changes are made, all that money

you are putting into it now will be long gone when you turn in the office key a few decades from now.

In fact, if your parents are relatively healthy and relatively young, the retirement system isn't even going to be able to keep the commitments it made to them unless those changes are made.

Are you ready to step in? Are you ready to have them move in with you?

Irresponsibility about the costs and promises of Social Security and Medicare was on display throughout Senator Obama's first two (out of 3½) years in the Senate, and like all other Democrats, his refusal to deal with Bush's invitation to work together on a solution has obliged him to avoid any serious talk of the steps needed to rescue either system. Instead the country got nonsense rhetoric from Democrats eager to prevent President Bush from achieving a legislative breakthrough that would have helped the GOP in the 2006 elections. Senator Obama was part of this blockade on serious reform and debate.

In fact, though Senator Obama campaigns as someone who wants to work across the partisan divide, he has not done so since his election to the U.S. Senate in 2004. Not on Social Security. Not on judges. Not on immigration reform.

To the contrary, he's been a hyper-partisan and helped forfeit the unique chance to fix these pressing problems.

So why I am I so confident that Senator Obama is going to make all the wrong choices on the economy and entitlement reform? In addition to what he has said he would do, as in his firm pledge to raise taxes and not extend the Bush tax cuts, and what he has done in refusing to work responsibly towards any sort of entitlement reform solution for Social Security and Medicare, we also know what he doesn't know—the impact of government on business.

Put simply, Senator Obama has never run a business or even been employed by one other than as a junior lawyer in a law firm and for a few months as an “analyst” of some sort out of college. After that stint and before he went to law school he spent three years as a “community organizer,” which is a sort of political activist who believes in mobilizing small communities of people to bring pressure to bear on public officials in order to obtain more or better city services.

Whether or not you believe this to be noble work, it isn't for-profit work and it certainly doesn't create jobs or products. In fact, reading Senator Obama's account of those years in his first book, *Dreams From My Father*, leads a fair reader to

conclude that Senator Obama has almost no clue as to how the economy works or how jobs are created, a gap certain not to have been reversed by a few years practicing law or in the Illinois state senate and Washington D.C. Every problem he has seen or worked through—and he has considerable experience trying to help people at the very bottom of the economic pyramid—has been in some way connected to prying something out of the government—a new grant, a new program, a different policy, a new statute.

Senator Obama shouldn't be expected to understand profits and losses when he has never been responsible for managing a bottom-line business. His law firm experience won't help much since he never rose to its management, and even that sort of management (of lawyers billing by the hour) is far removed from the manufacturing and sale of products to consumers—the heart of our economy.

The consequence of a life spent filing voting rights or housing discrimination law suits or in the employ of the government is, unfortunately, a huge blind spot concerning how jobs and wealth are actually created, a suspicion toward those who do create them, and an indifference to the value of a few dollars more or less in the bank account of a business

owner. If you have never had to pay spiraling worker's compensation insurance bills or been wrongfully sued by a shakedown artist masquerading as a "plaintiffs' lawyer," you simply have no idea how such things can destroy the business you are attempting to build.

Last year a young man approached me with an idea for starting a music store that offered music lessons. He didn't have any capital and wondered if I would like to invest in return for a share of the ownership. He worked through his business plan, valued his business, and I invested with him.

Almost immediately the plan hit bumps in the road, especially long delays in getting improvements to his leased space approved by the city bureaucracy. As he was paying rent for the space this was just a bleeding wound, money drained from advertising or office supplies or a web site that could generate business leads.

This is the sort of experience that Senator Obama knows nothing about—the sweating of a new business launch, the incredible frustration of being stopped by a government that doesn't work fast or past 5 p.m. or ever on weekends, even though you do.

Senator Obama's inexperience threatens your ability to

make your own dreams come true because he simply will not appreciate the consequences of the choices pushed on him by, say, environmental activists worried about urban sprawl or endangered species. This experience gap will lead him to the sorts of errors that plagued Jimmy Carter's tenure as president from 1977 to early 1981, and which produced his dismal economic record.

And that is going to cost you and your future family money, and all that ownership and independence mean in life.

Now to the war in Iraq, and the struggle against violent jihad around the world.

Unless you are in the military, in all likelihood you haven't spent a lot of time thinking about the nature of our enemy. Besides, a lot of what is said and written about the war is just plain silly, the inevitable product of lazy habits of analysis combined with faulty premises built on bad facts.

I am certain—convinced beyond any doubt—that any American who is willing to read with an open mind a dozen books will reach the conclusion that we are in extraordinary peril from a growing population of radical jihadists getting closer to obtaining weapons of mass destruction which they will not hesitate to use.

I am also certain that armed with the facts available in these books, any fair observer will recoil from the naïveté that Senator Obama has expressed in this campaign, such as when he announced his willingness to meet without preconditions with Iran's fanatical president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, North Korea's brutal dictator Kim Jung Il, or the new fascist to our south, Venezuela's Hugo Chavez; or when he declared a willingness to invade our ally Pakistan (which has scores of nuclear weapons and a long-running battle with its own domestic terrorists); or when he scoffed at the idea that al Qaeda was already in Iraq. Over and over again, Senator Obama puts on display a world view that seems certain that the world's problems exist because of America's actions, and that we could meaningfully advance our safety by diplomacy with the world's most ruthless killers.

I know many of you have been immersed in environments where it is considered clever to assert that our enemies are in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and that the invasion of Iraq was a terrible foreign policy disaster. People persist in this argument even as Hezbollah rained down thousands of rockets on Israel in the summer of 2006 and Iran persists in the face of U.N. sanctions to pursue its nuclear dreams

and ship sophisticated explosives into Iraq that are used to kill our troops.

Devastating attacks on America have been prevented by President Bush and his aggressive policy, which warns our enemies that we will not permit the world's most dangerous weapons to be possessed by dictators with documented ties to terrorists and records of reckless conduct. Saddam Hussein was toppled because of this doctrine, which also led to the disarmament of little-known nuclear and chemical weapons programs in Libya, the exposure of the nuclear-proliferation network run by Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan, as well as a brief retreat from Lebanon by Syria.

Fecklessness in the Democrat-controlled Congress has rekindled hope among our enemies that the U.S. will weaken in its resolve to strike preemptively at its greatest threats, and that it will replace the determined Bush with the naïve Obama and then withdraw from the world's most strategic zone entirely.

North Korea already has the deadliest of weapons and has displayed its willingness not merely to provoke the West but to export WMD to its enemies. Most recently the Israelis launched a raid on a Syrian installation where North Korea

was helping the Syrians build a nuclear program. But where is the same sort of operation underway that we don't know about or the Israelis cannot reach?

Summi fundamentalists, captained if not completely or competently commanded by Osama bin Laden and his lieutenant Ayman al-Zawahiri, have demonstrated their pleasure in the mass killing of innocents. They have scores of new safe havens and millions of followers, hundreds of thousands of disciples, tens of thousands of fanatical martyrs-in-waiting. They have networks and plans and money and zeal. They also have a target in the Pakistani government that, should it succumb, would instantly equip these would-be overlords of destruction with between 90 and 150 nuclear weapons each capable of destroying a city and disrupting the economic survival of hundreds of millions of survivors.

The **Shia** fanatics of Iran and their extremely loyal and obedient servants in Hezbollah are armed to the teeth and willing to provoke even the long-feared Israeli Defense Forces. The mullahs have been questing for nuclear weapons for decades. They are close to obtaining their objective. Indeed, they may already have them. We wouldn't know if they did, as mainstream media journalists Douglas Franz and

Catherine Collins—he the former managing editor of the Los Angeles Times, she a Chicago Tribune reporter—have proved in their 2007 *Nuclear Jihadist*, a tale of the perfidy of A. Q. Khan, the father of the Islamic bomb.

More than half of the dozen books on what I call my “necessary bookshelf” on the war come from eminently respectable authors widely admired on the American left. What distinguishes them from so many of the “intellectuals” on the left is that they have done their homework, have stared fearlessly at the facts and drawn the undeniable conclusions. Read their books, or at least read my one paragraph summaries about their books.

*Lawrence Wright, a senior writer/reporter for The New Yorker, published *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Path to 9/11* in 2006. It is a riveting, compelling account, a genealogy really, of al Qaeda and its mission of death. The book received the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction in 2006, but it is little read outside of center-right circles. At a gathering of new media professionals and bloggers in Las Vegas in October of 2007, I moderated a panel before an audience that included the hard-left activist Markos Moulitsas, founder of “The Daily Kos.” When I challenged him by asking

if he had read *The Looming Tower*, his derisive response did not conceal his ignorance from the handful of us who had. His shocking indifference to facts and logic was an indictment not just of Kos but of the fever swamps of the American left. Wright's key finding is that al Qaeda exists because of religious fanaticism, not because of American actions in the Middle East, and can't be negotiated with or bought off. They want to impose Taliban-style rule because of their understanding of the Koran's demands.

**New York Times'* veteran reporter Timothy Weiner is another Pulitzer Prize winner, and his 2007 *Legacy of Ashes* is a history of the Central Intelligence Agency's six decades of failure to anticipate the most important events and deadliest threats to the country. Against this backdrop, declarations like those in the late 2007 National Intelligence Estimate that Iran has halted its nuclear weapons program would be wildly amusing were they not so frightening. Our intelligence services simply haven't been able to adapt to a quickly changing world, and hard left liberals like Senator Obama refuse to allow them the intelligence gathering abilities they need to correct this gap.

*I have already mentioned Douglas Franz and Catherine

Collins and their meticulous and riveting chronicle of the worst criminal of the nuclear world, A.Q. Khan, who first stole the secrets of uranium enrichment from Europeans and then oversaw the construction of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and then privatized his knowledge and equipped North Korea, Libya and Iran—and possibly others—with the technology of mass killing in the flash of an eye. ***Nuclear Jihadist*** is a window on the history and chronic instability of Pakistan and the new era of proliferation it has launched that threatens to arm rogue terrorists and not just rogue states with nukes. When Senator Obama said he'd invade Pakistan if he had to in order to get al Qaeda, his ignorance of that country's instability and the danger of sparking a revolution that would see these nukes end up in the control of fanatics was breathtaking.

*Robin Wright is an extraordinarily accomplished journalist and Middle East expert whose 2008 ***Dreams and Shadows*** is a beautifully written account of the state of the Arab world. It is also chilling in its portrait of the fanatics who run Hamas, Hezbollah, and the dictators of Syria and Iran. There is very little reason to hope for reform from within the elites of these groups or governments.

To this quartet of professional journalist/authors esteemed by the center-left I add pointers to three works by accomplished and widely respected conservative scholars:

★Bernard Lewis is the West's greatest student and historian of Islam. His *Crisis of Islam* explains for the layman why Islamist fanaticism is not a product of our behavior, our culture, or our wealth or foreign policy, but rather a recurring expression of a deeply rooted fundamentalist impulse within Islam, an impulse that while not dominant in recent decades, has been in the past, could be again, and whose adherents number in the millions today.

★*The War Against Radical Jihadism* is George Weigel's 2007 plea for people to wake up to what we are up against, but this accomplished theologian and papal biographer is not well known outside of the highest reaches of our intellectual life, so the pointed and alarming catalog of 16 truths Weigel assembles has not reached the audience it deserves. Like Lewis, Weigel insists that the West at least attempt to understand the theological underpinnings of our enemies' fanaticism.

★Classicist and military historian Victor Davis Hanson has written many books, each of which informs any

student of the current conflict; but his *Soul of Battle* is particularly relevant because in its accounts of the generalships of Sherman and Patton is a picture of how war must be waged as well as an explanation of why democracies are prone to exhaustion and retreat in long drawn-out conflicts like Vietnam and now the new, worrisomely though properly named Long War. Senator Obama's speeches and books display a huge knowledge gap of the history of war and how such conflicts can be won and lost.

Next, there are three polemics from writers from the center-right, each of which is a sharp blow to the face of American complacency:

**World War IV* by Norman Podhoretz is a trenchant, biting declaration of the obvious, penned in Podhoretz's characteristically blunt prose. Podhoretz is an unapologetic advocate for striking and stopping the Iranian nuclear program while it is still at least theoretically possible to do so.

**The Iranian Time Bomb* by Michael Ledeen is an unflinching look at the Iranian regime and its thirty-year history of exporting terror and a Khomeinist ideology that celebrates a fanatical Shiism above the Iranian people's deep Persian identity.

*Columnist Mark Steyn's brash, funny, and deeply troubling *America Alone* is a passionate and impossible-to-deny extrapolation of the demographic trends that daily empower Islamist fanatics by simply and exponentially increasing the numbers of Muslims in which they live, reproduce, recruit and train their killers.

Senator Obama ignores all of these warnings, but cannot point to any set of arguments and books that take an opposite view. He simply asserts that the world can be made to like us. It can't and it won't. It can, however, be made to respect us, and our enemies can be deterred from harming us.

Finally, there are two books on the essence of that respect and deterrence by the Rudyard Kipling of the American military—*The Atlantic's* Robert Kaplan.

Before the war began, Kaplan was simply a wonderful writer of books about his far flung travels. After the war he set out to accompany the non-commissioned officers and young lieutenants, captains and commanders of the American Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard wherever they would take him, and in two magnificent volumes—*Imperial Grunts* and *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts*—he captures and reveals the extraordinary competence and ded-

ication of the American military professional. The scores and scores of stories of excellence and achievement and successful counterinsurgency in this pair of books do more than encourage the reader depressed by the sad realities of the previous ten titles, they also provide a roadmap forward.

Simply put, we must do more of what our military is already doing around the world. And we must do it with more divisions, more planes, more ships, more drones, more everything.

Not only is Barack Obama *not* committed to this crucially necessary policy, he is adamant about the need for retreat from Iraq, immediately. Even as stability spreads and the security of the region improves and American casualties decline, Senator Obama is committed to abandoning all the progress won at such enormous cost out of a deeply misguided understanding of the world and in deference to the hard left edge of his party's activist, anti-war fringe.

If President Obama follows through on his promises, by the end of 2009, al Qaeda in Iraq will be back in the killing business in Anbar province and Shia radicals will be thrusting for power in Baghdad. Iran's mullahs will be assured that they face no serious threat to their nuclear ambitions and will

double, triple, or otherwise exponentially expand their secret programs so carefully detailed by Franz and Collins.

Hezbollah and Hamas will know that an untested and uncertain President Obama will flinch at the prospect of standing by Israel through any sort of tough war, and could easily use the moment to attempt to fulfill Ahmadinejad's oft-repeated prophecy of a vanished Israel.

Senator McCain will do many things I will disagree with, but he will not raise taxes and hurt growth, erect trade barriers, or ignore the looming retirement system crisis.

Senator McCain has been hell on federal spending for two and a half decades. He will stop the hemorrhaging of your money out of D.C.

And of course Senator McCain will fight the war to win, using overwhelming force where necessary, but always looking for ways to preserve the peace and save the American military needless strain and suffering. He knows the costs of war in a way only veterans can. He will keep America's greatest general in a generation, David Petraeus, in command of the crucial region of the world where jihadists are most heavily concentrated, and he will employ his longstanding relationships with the free world's leaders to foster policies of growth and

development that will allow long-disconnected regions to share in the wealth of modernity.

Senator Obama, by contrast, believes none of these things, knows next to nothing about the economy or the military, and has pledged to take actions that will directly injure your future economic prospects even as they encourage our enemies to keep striking at America at home and at our citizens abroad.

This is as clear a choice as you are likely ever to find in the voting booth because we have never ever seen a political candidate as unprepared for the modern presidency as Senator Obama.

Yes, he is a gifted speaker. But his words conceal policies which will produce an America you will not like, an economy that will not work, and a defeat in a war the consequences of which are too terrible not to ponder long and hard.