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Text: Remarks by Sen. Senatorum to the Republican National Convention

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The following are remarks by Senator Rick Santorum on welfare reform at the 2004 Republican National Convention:

SANTORUM: Thank you, thank you, thank you all. Thank you Pennsylvania. Thank you.

Let me first say that Pennsylvania put the president over the top last night, and Pennsylvania will put the president over the top in November.

(APPLAUSE)

In America, every generation has but a moment to carry the torch that defines who we are and what we will be.

Will our torch shine brighter or will it diminish? Our best hope will not be found in the laws of men, but in love of others, as President Bush defines it, compassion. Remember, "The greatest of these is love." Through love and compassion, we can shape our moment in American history for great good, as many did before us.

My father came to a coal mining company town outside of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, when he was 7 years old, from a small village in Italy. It was 1930. And, like most immigrants, he was poor. But like so many of our parents from that time, he passed on a wealth of truths to guide us in life: to love God, to love your neighbor as yourself, and to care for those less fortunate than you.

SANTORUM: Today, too many of our children are surrounded by an impoverished culture, causing an emptiness not only of the stomach, but of the heart. And it is doing to our children what the Great Depression did to our economy.

When I was in the House, I helped author the landmark welfare reform bill. And when I was elected to the Senate, I didn't just want to make it possible for poor women to work; I wanted to give them a job.

So I hired eight welfare recipients to work in my office.

One, Michelle Turner, came from the People's Emergency Center in West Philadelphia. She went from receptionist to caseworker to supervisor.

As Michelle says, "Under the old welfare system, I was forgotten, a nobody. Today my family has a future."

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Welfare reform cut the rolls and reduced poverty, but helping millions like Michelle find a job is only part of the answer.

My Italian grandfather taught me the rest in one word: family.

The key to a richer culture is a strong family, and the key to a strong family are strong marriages.

SANTORUM: That means mothers and fathers doing what they have been doing so well for over the centuries, giving love and hope to their children.

Karen, my wonderful wife and mother of our six great children, always says, "Rick, the best gift we can give our kids is a great marriage. It gives them the security they want and the example they need."

Yet, in many poor communities, the torch of marriage is dying out. While eight out of 10 mothers applying for welfare are in a relationship with the father of their children and both want to marry, often, no one helps them. And, within a year, almost all have parted ways.

President Bush is changing that. We now ask: Would you like some help in building that relationship? And the mother and father says, yes, we pay for marriage counseling with a family therapist or a pastor, rabbi, imam or priest.

John Kerry's response, he joined Senate Democrats in blocking the President's welfare reform bill and faith-based initiatives.

SANTORUM: He says he is concerned about the separation of church and state. Senator Kerry should worry more about the separation of children from their fathers.

(APPLAUSE)

Now we all agree, religion in America must never be established, but it also must never be exiled.

(APPLAUSE)

George Bush has shown his compassion by advancing his faith-based initiatives, strengthening marriage, and fighting to let the American people define marriage, not left-wing judges.

(APPLAUSE)

Sometimes I think our grandparents wouldn't recognize the torch they passed on. But I know they would counsel us to remember why they came, and why others continue to come: For our economy, yes, for our security, sure, but it is the generosity of spirit and the strength of our character molded by the light of faith that makes us that shining city on the hill. "For the greatest of these is love."

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless America.

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