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Bob Barr Announcement Transcript

May 14th, 2008 by Staff

NEWS CONFERENCE WITH FORMER REPRESENTATIVE BOB BARR (R-GA) TO ANNOUNCE HIS CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENT REPRESENTING THE LIBERTARIAN PARTY DATE: MONDAY, MAY 12, 2008

MR. BARR: Thank you. If you all could scoot in a little bit.

Russ, thank you very much. We are indeed honored to have heading up our team Russ Verney. For those of you who have not had, as I have had and as Jerry has had, the pleasure of meeting and now working with Russ Verney, he has tremendous experience running not only national campaigns but third-party campaigns as well.

When we searched the length and breadth of the country to find somebody who really could put together a winning effort, who had the winning attitude and who had the knowledge and the background and the history of how to do this, there was one name that was always at the top of everybody's list, and that is Russ Verney.

Russ, thank you very much for heading up our effort here. Thank you.

My name is Bob Barr, and I am a candidate for the presidency of the United States of America. (Applause.) I will be seeking the nomination of the Libertarian Party, for which I am a proud life member. And my wife Jeri is here and one of our sons, Derek, who works with me in my Atlanta office, and a number of other friends and colleagues, many of whom were introduced to you by Russ Verney just a few moments ago.

You might say, "Bob Barr, why are you running for president? Isn't there a field already out there? Don't we already have candidates out there? Aren't the issues already being discussed? Will not there be a fair debate of the issues that are important, not just to the American people today but to their children and their grandchildren?"

And the answer is no, we do not. We do not have a field of candidates, currently or anywhere on the horizon, that understands and will raise the issues that are important to the great heritage of America, the history of this great land, the principles on which this great land was founded, the principles of fiscal conservancy, and who will work dramatically to help reshape this country in the image of our Founding Fathers and in the image of all those who have given so much to preserve liberty and freedom in this land.

And that is why, after very careful consideration, after having traveled many, many miles and many more on the Internet – taking lessons from my son Derek here, who is the millennial generation and who knows what the Internet is; he has taught me a great deal – but after having spent, over the last several weeks since we formed our exploratory committee in America's heartland, I have heard from Americans from all walks of life, both here and abroad.

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I just returned, for example, last evening from a debate in the UK, in the United Kingdom, and met several Americans over there who were students. And I heard the same thing from them as I hear from Americans here in this great land of ours, and that is, they want a choice. They believe that America has more and better to offer than what the current political situation is serving up to us.

And the reason for that is very simple. They believe in America as I believe in America. We believe in an America that is not and should not be and should never be driven by fear, as current policies on behalf of both parties are in this country. America is a nation formed on courage. It is a nation formed on the power to take risks and to reap the tremendous rewards that come from taking risks.

It is not a country that likes to operate in the cocoon of government power and government stability and government security. Indeed, as one looks across the policy landscape nowadays, one sees not only a lack of discussion of the true problems that face us, and not only superficial solutions that are served up to a somnambulant public, but we see solutions that bear little relationship at all indeed to the principles on which our country was founded, those great constitutional principles that used to have some currency here in Washington, principles such as habeas corpus, the great writ which has fallen into such disrepute under the current administration; principles such as separation of powers, which used to stand for that balancing of powers and keeping powers in check, but yet which similarly has fallen into great disrepute in Washington these days on behalf of both parties; principles such as the rule of law rather than the rule of men, which likewise has been discarded as inconvenient and a quaint notion on the part of the current leadership in Washington.

And this has all had the effect of giving us a government that has run amok fiscally, as the American people see their standard of living dropping. They are bothered by the fact, as I am bothered by the fact, that the standard of their government keeps going up.

I mean, indeed, the figures speak for themselves. During the first three months, during the first quarter of this year, as American businesses, large and small, were losing nearly 300,000 jobs, guess who was hiring. Guess where employment was going up: Government, to the tune of nearly 80,000 jobs. During that same period of time that Americans were losing their jobs in the private sector, government was hiring with enthusiasm.

The American people are bothered by this. As they see their dollar diminishing in value, both at home and abroad, they see no change in Washington's appetite for their money. The debt is rising to historic levels. The deficit is rising. The budget stands at well over \$3 trillion, bloated by such programs as subsidies for agricultural producers, the majority of which go to people and families with incomes in excess of \$200,000.

These things bother the American people. They deserve better. They know they deserve better. I believe they deserve better. And the Libertarian Party deserves they believe (sic) better. They believe that they deserve a president who will actually stand up to the forces here in Washington, somebody who is not a part of that fraternity that has given us the crop of current candidates, who will stand up, as precious few presidents previously have, to the powers in Washington that want more, more, more, and say no; who, during his first year in office, his first days in office, will order a freeze on discretionary spending, will then seek to dramatically cut the size, the scope, the power of the federal government, not just in terms of the American taxpayers' dollars that it spends, but in terms of the power of the American individual that it robs.

So this is a brief overview of those reasons that have gone into the decision-making process that bring me here today to our nation's capital to announce my candidacy for the presidency of the United States of America.

I am a competitor. The American people are competitors. For far too long, they have been treated

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as serfs, not competitors, not peers, not equals. We aim to change this. And with the help of the American people, led by the team that Russ Verney has already begun putting together with Doug Bandow and others that have been introduced to you, and many more, we intend to succeed so that in November America will have and see a president who will then be sworn into office on January 20th of 2009 who believes that power resides and vests and shall be returned to the people of this land, not simply the power over their economic future here in this country, where Americans have seen the standards of living of their children being educated — diminished — even as we have an administration that champions the increase in educational standards in faraway lands.

The American people want to be once again in control of their lives, not beholden to those abroad who loan us money so that we can then engage in adventures overseas.

This will be a difficult process, not just the electoral process but the process of governing, of changing the direction of the ship of state that, under Democrat and Republicans alike, in almost similar measure, cycle after cycle after cycle, has simply added to rather than solved the problems that we currently see before us.

We appreciate very much you all coming here today, and we'll be delighted to answer any questions that you all have. And as Russ mentioned, if there are questions — excuse me — if there are questions that relate to the specifics of the campaign, please see Russ about those.

He is in the process of putting together the team that will lead us through not just the Libertarian Party process, which will culminate in just a couple of weeks in the nomination process, which we're confident of winning, but then thereafter over the ensuing months to victory in November.

Thank you.

Q You talked about the domestic issues and spending and so forth. Talk about foreign policy and Iraq, and what's your position on that?

MR. BARR: The United States of America is the world's strongest nation, and that strength comes not from nation-building overseas but strengthening and building our nation, which, for those of you, as I'm sure includes everybody in this room and all our colleagues, know come from continually nurturing the process of liberty and freedom and the understanding thereof in this country.

We need to be building our nation. We need to be building our nation's ability to withstand economic challenges. We need to build our nation and strengthen our nation by once again returning control over education from the halls of Washington to the halls of local schools and local school boards. These are just a couple of the issues among many that we need to be focusing on.

Specifically with regard to national defense policy and foreign policy, I believe in re-emphasizing, restrengthening the word defense in defense policy — the word defense in the Department of Defense. I believe that George W. Bush, as candidate, was correct when he told the American people that our country does not occupy foreign lands, that our country will not build foreign nations.

Unfortunately, this is just one example of many whereby in which the current administration has said, "Don't pay attention to what we said when we were running. Overlook that, and instead listen to the siren song and the sound that we defend our nation by occupying foreign lands, that we somehow strengthen our nation by building nations in lands far away." I think it's also important to let America's allies know that no longer will we be spending billions of dollars and countless man and woman hours by maintaining bases that have no more efficacy in the 21st century. These troops need to be brought home. The \$400 million plus that is being spent over in Iraq, which, by the way, is largely borrowed money, needs to be placed once again in the hands, the pockets, the wallets, the bank accounts of the American public; approximately \$400 million every day that is spent just in Iraq, nation-building and propping up the regime, the current

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regime in Iraq.

Yes, ma'am.

Q Could you be a little more specific about what you would do about Iraq? Are you going to pull out immediately? I think you have said you would. And secondly, what about these bases? Will you pull out of all the bases — (inaudible) — in South Korea, in Germany — (inaudible)?

MR. BARR: The American people, as do I, do not believe in precipitous action. I believe in responsible action. First of all, you don't signal to your adversary, regardless of the circumstances that brought you into that adversarial relationship, what your future plans and future timetable are. That is foolhardy, and only a fool would signal to whatever our adversaries are, whoever our adversaries are, exactly and how and when we would be drawing down our troops.

But I do believe that it is extremely important and in the best interests of America's defenses and our security and our relationship with our allies that we do begin immediately setting in place a plan to draw down, dramatically decrease the military, the economic and the political footprint that we maintain in Iraq.

Currently there is absolutely no incentive whatsoever for the Iraqi regime, the Iraqi government, to assume responsibility for its own economic affairs, for its own political affairs, for its own security affairs. So long as they have the American people and the taxpayer dollars that are being used to prop up the government as their security blanket, guess what: They take advantage of the security blanket.

And we actually are in the worst of both worlds over there, because not only are we providing the security blanket for the Iraqi economy, the Iraqi political system, such as it is, and the Iraqi security forces, such as they are, but we offer to them deadlines and benchmarks that then, when they are not met, they are simply changed or moved back. So that creates, I think, a very serious loss of credibility, not just with regard to the Iraqi situation, but with regard to others as well.

Q You didn't say about the other bases around the world. Would we automatically — do you intend to — MR. BARR: It would be my intent to immediately re-evaluate the size, the strength, the necessity for U.S. bases. There may very well be instances in which, for security purposes, for a period of time, it might be necessary to maintain a military presence in order to protect our nation's security. That will be, first and foremost, protecting the defense and defending the United States.

But I fail to see any reason to maintain the massive military presence in various countries around the world in nations which are fully capable of protecting their interests and their economy and their security, yet rely on us to prop up their economy and to provide the security that they are more than capable of providing themselves.

Yes, sir.

Q How do you feel about the doctrine of preemptive war?

MR. BARR: I believe that the doctrine of preemptive war finds no basis in traditional and historic notions of America's security or of America's history. And we see, I think, also that this notion of preemptively going to war to solve a problem that is either not there yet or has not risen to the level that it presents a clear and present danger to this country, we see that same philosophy mirrored in preemptive steps that are taken against our own citizens here in this country.

It's a fundamental philosophy that seems to be prevalent among many in Washington these days. In other words, rather than the traditional notion whereby we conducted both our foreign affairs and our domestic affairs, in which we responded to threats, identified threat in a measured response consistent with the measure of that threat, we now, at least with regard to Iraq, as perhaps the most salient example, we are now looking for areas in which to project our military,

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and that has given rise to a five-year occupation of Iraq at tremendous cost and only the most speculative of benefit.

Domestically what we see, for example, in terms of this same philosophy, preventive — using the power of the government to prevent rather than to react and address problems. We see people detained on a preventive basis, denied access to the courts, for example. We're talking not just about those who are not citizens of this land, but citizens themselves, fully clothed with all of the rights and privileges under the Bill of Rights. So it's a fundamental philosophy, a philosophical problem that seems to have taken hold, not just in terms of foreign affairs but in terms of the domestic view of the power of government, this notion of a unitary executive as well.

Yes, sir.

Q I understand you've been getting some resistance from former colleagues in the Republican Party. What have they said to you, and what has your response been? MR. BARR: Those — and there have been some, certainly not that many, but there have been some of my former Republican colleagues — and I'm not talking about members of the House, but just people who are active in the Republican Party — who have approached me with the thought in mind that "We understand why you're doing this, why you might run. We actually agree with those reasons why you seem to be moving in the direction of running for president and seeking the Libertarian Party nomination. We may actually vote for you. But we would prefer it if you don't run, because that would upset the apple cart. That would upset the status quo."

Well, I tell them, "That is precisely the point. The status quo has given us the litany of problems that we're all very familiar with — the debt, the deficit, the problems that we see in the economy, the trade imbalance, that whole host of problems, the occupation of Iraq. These are all children of the status quo. So that is precisely the point."

The American people, I think, understand also that a vote for the status quo, particularly if it is a vote for the status quo just to vote for the status quo, just because Senator McCain is the nominee of the Republican Party, for example, is really and truly a wasted vote, because it's not going to do anything.

So what I tell those folks, and I tell them formally today through you all's presence here, that I will be a candidate for the presidency of the United States, and it is precisely to give the American people a voice, to give them a meaningful choice so that they do not have to once again go into the polling booth on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, hold their nose and pull a lever or touch one of those magical touch screens that seem to be so much in vogue now and vote for the lesser of two evils. America deserves better. The American voters deserve better than simply the lesser of two evils.

Q Is your candidacy not likely to take the election away from, if it's possible for him to get it, the Republican candidate, John McCain? And since you've been in politics this long, with surely a high intelligence quotient, from what I've observed over the years, surely that's the first thing you thought of when you thought of running. So would you answer this question? Why do you want to risk taking the White House from your former party?

MR. BARR: Actually, that is not something that has entered my thought process. I entered this race as a competitor, from a very positive perspective. Every time, at least in recent election cycles, every losing candidate, whether it's Al Gore, whether it was Gerald Ford as far back as the 1976 race in which Reagan was excoriated by the grand poobahs of the Republican Party for supposedly losing the election for Gerald Ford, every time a candidate for one of the two major parties loses an election, they blame somebody else. And if there happens to have been a candidate for a third party, then that becomes the natural focus and the natural target of their whining. (Laughter.)

Now, at the end of the day, if I do not succeed on November 4th, then it's not my intent to blame

Senator McCain or Senator Obama. I would hope they would return the favor. If Senator McCain, at the end of the day, presuming he is the nominee for the Republican Party, does not succeed in winning the presidency, it will be not because of Bob Barr, not because of Senator Obama.

It will be because Senator McCain did not present and his party did not present a vision, an agenda, a platform and a series of programs that actually resonated positively with the American people. And it may also be because their candidate didn't resonate positively with the American people; similarly on the Democrat side and similarly if I am fortunate enough to be the nominee of the Libertarian Party.

Each of us has the future in our own hands. We in our party structure present a platform, a program, a vision, policies to the American people through a candidate that hopefully the American people can relate to, feel comfortable with, and accept at least a majority of the programs, policies and values that that candidate is putting forward. It has nothing to do with the other candidates. And I dare say that those people who would be inclined, for which I hope there are many, to vote for Bob Barr as president would not likely fall into the category of people who would be enthused about voting for John McCain, if such exists. (Laughter.)

Yes, sir.

Q With all due respect, this is a very humble forum to launch a presidential campaign. Why are we to believe your candidacy would be met with anything besides universal apathy, aside from your closest political advisers?

MR. BARR: I think this is a very important forum. I happen to place more stock in you all being here maybe than you do. I think it is very important to bring together in our nation's capital a group of men and women who indeed are looked to by the American people, through various of the media, the print media, the electronic media, the televised media, as caring deeply about the future of the country, caring deeply enough to devote their careers to talking about these issues, presenting these issues. So I don't denigrate this forum at all. I think that the -

Q (Off mike.)

MR. BARR: Well, the room only — you know, the point of announcing a candidacy is not to win an election on that day. The point is to let the American people know that they are going to have a choice, that they are going to have somebody who will stand with them and for them in terms of shrinking the size, the power, the scope and the cost of the federal government, and correspondingly increase the size, the scope, the power and the economic power that resides in the American individual, in the individual citizen.

I believe — and it's based not on just those of us in this room; certainly based not just on my discussions with our team and with my family, but with many years that I have spent as an attorney, as the United States attorney, as a member of Congress, as a former member of Congress, traveling, speaking with students, working men and women, families all across this land, who deeply believe that they deserve better, that there is a better way than simply going on, voting for the lesser of two evils.

I think that message and the substance that we will be bringing to the American people of our platform, our vision, our programs, will resonate far beyond this room. I believe that it is a vision, a program, a platform that will appeal to a large plurality, if not a majority, of the American people.

Yes, sir.

Q How much money have you raised thus far for your presidential bid? MR. BARR: We haven't begun to raise money for the presidential bid. You can't until you declare as a candidate, which we're doing today. That will formally launch the fund-raising effort. Of course, the first effort, the first steps in that effort, will be to secure the nomination of the Libertarian Party, which will

take place over Memorial Day weekend in Denver.

But we have already put together, through Russ's work and the work of our team, we have put together a budget. It is a substantial budget. We believe it is realistic. We believe that, similar to other recent and current candidates, there is a tremendous yearning out there on the part of the American people for something new and for a real choice. And we believe that we can reach those people, especially through the Internet, to raise the funds necessary.

Q Do you have any idea what states you can compete in? Do you have — (inaudible) — so-called blue states, red states, swing states, battleground states?

MR. BARR: We have a pretty clear idea of that, yes. (Laughter.)

Q (Off mike.)

MR. BARR: Well, similar to not sharing in advance a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq — (laughter) — I don't believe that you should share in advance your proactive timetable and the specific targets. But we do have a very clear idea to prioritize our efforts, both for the initial phase as well as for the long-term; that is, between the beginning of June and November.

Yeah.

Q You talked about the Libertarian Party. You talked about the platform. How difficult do you see it as getting the nomination in Denver?

MR. BARR: We do not take — I do not take and our team does not take for granted securing the nomination of the Libertarian Party in Denver. But, that being said, we feel very, very confident that we will be able to secure it. After all, despite differences within the Libertarian Party, as within the Republican Party, with which I'm very familiar, having been there, done that for a number of years, as I am also familiar through watching the current unfolding of the Democrat process, they similarly have great diversity of views and approaches and background to the individuals who will be making the decision within each one of the three parties. The Libertarian Party is no different.

But the one thing that unites all three of those parties — the Republican Party, the Democrat Party and the Libertarian Party — as three national parties of great substance is the fact that they want to win. They view themselves and believe themselves and will act as a political party, not a debating society. Therefore, the bottom line is — and I believe this will, in fact, be reflected in the votes in Denver at the Libertarian Party national convention in a vote for Bob Barr. We will work hard at it to ensure that that is the case. But I believe that going into that convention, having laid the groundwork that we are and will continue to put in place, will make clear to the Libertarian Party and the Libertarian Party activists, including especially those who will be in Denver, that the winning formula will be Bob Barr at the head of the ticket.

Q Congressman, what's your assessment of John McCain's policies, and why don't they measure up in your view? What's your problem with McCain?

MR. BARR: How long do we have here, Russ? (Laughter.) I mean, well, first of all, anybody who stands as the foundation of their domestic agenda McCain-Feingold to me cannot ever lay legitimate claim, at least with a straight face, to calling themselves or being labeled as a conservative.

Starting from that premise, one looks also, for example, at McCain's current platform, the pieces of which certainly, I understand, are still being filled in and developed. But if you go to Senator McCain's website, if you listen to Senator McCain and listen to Senator McCain's supporters — some of them are very eloquent — there really is not a great deal of substance there in terms of a commitment, a definable, identifiable commitment to cutting the size of government.

There is a great deal of talk about cutting pork and cutting earmarks, and that's fine. I commend the senator for focusing on that very small part of the federal fiscal pie that constitute earmarks. The senator has his work cut out for him. The number of earmarks had actually dropped and the amount of earmarks had dropped over the last couple of years, but they're now on the way back up.

But even if one did away with every earmark, one would make barely a drop in the bucket with regard to the national debt, the deficit, which this year will be somewhere probably in the neighborhood of between \$410 (billion) to \$500 billion.

What we need to be doing is looking far beyond simply going after earmarks. That is a legitimate target, but it's a red herring. The senator apparently is not committed to sitting down and identifying, for example, those departments of our federal government that perform at best functions that are tangential to the legitimate functions of government — the Department of Education, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Energy.

Do we need multibillion-dollar agencies for each one of these departments when the American people are hurting and are not able to control, through their own economic resources left to them, after the governments at all levels take out their share, that they're unable to meet?

I think also one has to look at the fact that the senator — and certainly the same can be said for the two senators still vying for the nomination of the other major political party — is not committed to deep and significant tax reform. As a matter of fact, there are some legitimate questions that have been raised over whether Senator McCain is simply a Johnny-come-lately to the modest tax cuts which have been the only area in which the current administration has done what it said it would do.

So I don't think that in terms of the way the senator looks at the cost, the size, the scope of the federal government, with no real specific discussion — for example, even on his website, last time I looked at it, which was yesterday, there's no discussion at all of that. And I think that reflects a basic presumption and a basic premise of the senator that Washington is Washington; Washington is fine; we just need to make some adjustments around the corners of it. We need to do much more than that.

Yes, sir.

Q How do you square your past support for the drug war and your opposition to abortion with the positions of the Libertarian Party?

MR. BARR: As I mentioned, the Libertarian Party is not a monolithic party. And the goal — my goal is the same goal as every other Libertarian that I talk with, and that is to minimize the scope and the size and the power and the cost of government, particularly the federal government, and to maximize the areas of individual liberty.

Now, one does not do that by saying, "Okay, on day one we're here, and on day two we're not going to have any government." I don't believe that and most Libertarians are much more responsible than that. Are there diversities of views within the Libertarian Party on the drug issue, on the abortion issue? Absolutely.

But I think, at the end of the day, the important thing is to begin the process, as I would do as president, to begin the process in a very tangible way of cutting federal spending, cutting the size of the federal government — for example, telling the Congress in no uncertain terms, "You send President Bob Barr a piece of legislation that once again, as a matter of routine, raises the debt ceiling, and it will be vetoed. It will be vetoed."

That process has to start somewhere, and it would start with a Bob Barr presidency. Neither of the other candidates for the other parties would do that. And we need to begin devolving the process of power that has become centered so heavily in Washington, such that even if the citizens of a

state decide, for example, that the efficacy of medical marijuana, medicinal marijuana, makes sense to those citizens of that state and they pass a legitimate referendum in that direction, that that is respected by the federal government.

So that's how that — we begin that process of taking these powers that, either by default or by specific design, have flowed to Washington, and begin the process — and it's going to take a long period of time — but at least begin the process of turning those decisions back to the people of the states.

Q So you think those should be state matters, then, just to clarify -

MR. BARR: Yes.

Q — rather than federal matters. MR. BARR: Yes.

Q (Inaudible) — your personal position, you still oppose personal drug use and abortion?

MR. BARR: No — well, yes, I remain pro-life and I remain very much opposed to drug usage. But with regard to the whole range of areas here — and I think this is also important to keep in mind as a fundamental philosophical underpinning — since 9/11 we have witnessed an historically unprecedented surge — pardon the expression — of power from the individuals and from the states to Washington. And that has correspondingly and necessarily severely limited the sphere of personal liberty and personal privacy that we have left, which has been dramatically decreased since 9/11.

And, therefore, it makes it imperative upon all of us, I believe, Libertarians and conservatives as well, to take a very close and careful look at every area in which government is controlling lives and taking power from the states to see if there is a way that we can start returning that power, initially to the states and then to the people.

Yes, sir.

Q You've talked a bit about Iraq. I'm curious to get your views on Iran and their nuclear program, especially in light of your comments on preemptive war. And, you know, if you have intelligence about an Iranian nuclear program, would you take action or would you not, given your views on preemptive war? How would you react to — (inaudible) — as a threat?

MR. BARR: First of all, I'm not going to go around making up songs about such a serious matter as going to war with a sovereign nation, as Senator McCain did. Nor am I going to make irresponsible, off-the-cuff — I hope it was off the cuff rather than something that was carefully thought out — statements about going to war and bombing Iran, as Senator Clinton made recently.

These matters involve the lives of many thousands, if not millions, of people. They involve the very underpinnings of our sovereignty as a nation and our respect for the sovereignty of other nations. They should not be ever considered lightly. And I think it's very unfortunate that at least two those candidates, Senator McCain and Senator Clinton from the other parties, treat them so lightly.

Iran is, of course, very different from Iraq in any number of ways — size, economic power, political background, political history, religion. And it has — unlike Iraq, Iran has — as a people, the Iranian people have a very strong and tangible basis in participatory government that the people in Iraq did not have, having gone in 1958 from an artificial British-imposed monarchy to a succession, from 1958 onward, of military dictatorships. There was no basis whatsoever in the Iraqi society for understanding participatory government. That's not the case in Iran. It is a nation that has a very sophisticated economic structure, again, unlike Iraq. It is a nation that is much more homogeneous in terms of its culture and its religious history than Iraq. It is a nation that has a very large number of very strong, very patriotic Iranian-Americans in this country.

So what I would do is, first of all, make sure that people in our government understand the very clear, important, fundamentally important differences between Iran and Iraq and to understand that if one superficially believes that simply engaging in a preemptive military strike or a manufactured strike or a strike based on some manufactured happening or activity, that the consequences would be extremely dire for everybody involved.

I think there is tremendous room yet unexplored, working with the Iranian people, working with our allies and those other countries that similarly are legitimately concerned about the possibility, remote as it may be, of Iran obtaining a nuclear capacity. But I have seen no evidence, no intelligence whatsoever, that indicates that that is an imminent likelihood, for one thing.

Yeah.

Q Ron Paul, Ross Perot — two names, not in the room right now. Do you agree with Ron Paul that — I believe he said over a trillion tax dollars are wasted every year on foreign military misadventure. Will you reach out for his supporters? And, of course, with Mr. Verney standing there, one thinks of Mr. Perot.

And will you also reach out for his support?

MR. BARR: We'll be reaching out to the support of all Americans who believe in smaller government, more individual liberty, more individual freedom, the true principles of federalism to devolve power from Washington back to the states. If that fits, as I suspect it does, with the views of many, if not all, supporters of Congressman Ron Paul, then, yes, we will be reaching out to them.

If that fits with the background, the views and the predisposition of those many Americans, many millions of Americans, 19 percent in the '92 election, who supported Mr. Perot for those reasons, then, yes, we will be reaching out to them. They may be, as I am, a little bit older, a little grayer, but hopefully they'll believe in the same things that they did back then.

Yes, sir, and then ma'am.

Q (Inaudible) — question from me, and that is, there's a clash always in free societies between — on illegal immigration between compassion and the rule of law. Where do you come down on that?

MR. BARR: I've never been called a compassionate conservative. (Laughter.) My wife can tell you whether I'm compassionate. I like to think I am in my personal life. I loved our dog and love our kids and grandkids and so forth. But, you know, this notion that government owes something to people simply because they're here does not resonate with me as somebody who believes in responsible government.

If one were running a charity called the United States of America, that would be one thing. This is not a charity. This is the people's business, running the government of the United States of America. The United States of America, the government thereof, has no money other than that which it takes directly or indirectly from the American people. It's their money.

And we have a responsibility — should view our services, federal policymakers, as having responsibility to use that money wisely and not simply because we believe that it would be nice to provide compassionate services to people who find their way into this country. I disagree, for example, with the court decision of the 1980s — pardon me, I forget the specific name — but the court case that found, that decided that children of illegal aliens, people who were in this country unlawfully, have a right to public education paid for by the taxpayers of this country. That is, I think, an improper, irresponsible decision. And yet we see that mirrored in a number of other areas whereby public services, taxpayer-funded services, are made available to persons illegally in this country.

If a person is illegally in this country, the taxpayers of this country and the government of this

country owe them nothing. If they choose to enter this country lawfully, play by the rules, subject themselves, for example, to presenting legitimate, verifiable, current identification at a border crossing, subject themselves to an appropriate background check to determine that they pose no security threat to this country and to a basic health check to make sure they do not pose a communicable disease health threat to this country, then that is one thing.

But people coming into this country, as compassionate as we might feel individually or through charities that we support, which, after all — and I think, whether it is a disaster in this country or an individual problem that a person has, even if they're in this country unlawfully, if they believe — that is, if charities believe there is an appropriate basis to provide support, that ought to be the support.

But the federal government, I think, needs to get away from this notion that simply because we have all of this money in the treasury and we can borrow that much more that isn't in the treasury, that we can provide these compassionate services. That is not responsible government.

Q (So you would ?) leave it up to the states or not? If a state wanted to provide public education to sons and daughters of illegal immigrants, would you object? Or, as president, would you try to stop that through your Justice Department? Or would that be a matter of the 7th Amendment and states' rights?

MR. BARR: Well, it would be sort of inconsistent for me to say I'd use the heavy hand of the federal government to force the states to do it one way or the other. But there are things that a president can do that I think are appropriate, such as speaking out on these issues, ensuring that federal funds, for example, would not be used for those purposes.

You know, we certainly have to address the issue that I identified with the court decision, and that would be addressed. That would be a task that I would assign to the Department of Justice. I'd much rather see them doing that than justifying torture, for example. I think that is a much more productive and appropriate use of the lawyers at the Department of Justice and U.S. taxpayer dollars. I don't think it's appropriate for the individual states to do that, but that's a decision they basically have to make. My role as the president would be to ensure that federal tax dollars are not used in furtherance of such misguided efforts that the states might engage in.

Yes, ma'am. Last question, I think.

Q (Inaudible) — but would you say that you might consider — (inaudible) — the Justice Department?

MR. BARR: No. No, ma'am.

Q (Inaudible.) Then also, when you go back to your congressional experience, do you think it reflected the Libertarian view? Some say that it would not. Have you changed your views since then? Would you do things differently than you did as a member of Congress?

MR. BARR: The problem is particularly, not exclusively, but particularly, as I indicated a few moments ago, since 9/11. We have seen a dramatic, quantum leap in the power and the size, the scope and the cost of the federal government, where you have, for example, an administration that believes it can, even without force of law, surveil U.S. citizens in their own country without court order. We have a problem that never confronted us before, at least that we know of.

When you have an administration that denigrates the venerable great writ, the writ of habeas corpus, and maintains the power unto itself to decide who it can detain, how long it can detain them, and never face the responsibility and never even have the responsibility of bringing that person, even if they're a U.S. citizen, before the courts of this land, before a detached magistrate, to determine if there is an appropriate basis under the law and under the Constitution to detain them, we have a serious problem.

These are problems that did not manifest themselves before the current crisis that began in earnest after 9/11. So we're facing a new paradigm, and that new paradigm is a government that believes, for example, as the current administration, in this notion of a unitary executive, that a president can, himself or herself, decide the scope of their power within Article 2 of the Constitution, that they can then act on that, and that neither the courts nor the Congress can in any way limit either the execution of those powers or the definition and scope of those powers.

That's the situation that we see now, that we face now. That is the situation that I'm responding to. And that is the basis on which I say we need new leadership and we need a real choice. And going back to the same old well that the American people have been forced to go to and drink from cycle after cycle after cycle of simply voting for the lesser of two evils, because these are the candidates that the two status quo parties have served up to it, no longer prevails. MR. VERNEY: Thank you all, ladies and gentlemen.

MR. BARR: Thank you all very much for being here. (Applause.)

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6 Responses to “Bob Barr Announcement Transcript”

Wantabefree Says:

[May 14th, 2008 at 1:09 pm](#)

Why didn't you just throw your support and resources to Ron Paul? Your platform mirrors his on virtually all issues and he has done the groundwork necessary to galvanize a substantial following. Your candidacy threatens to dilute that strength, unless of course you are jockeying for a potential VP role should Dr. Paul decide (I hope) to announce third party. I think in today's world that this ticket may have a real chance in light of the poor choice of candidates available. You have obviously learned wisely from the good Doctor in your website design though I feel you can't duplicate his success. Ron Paul supporters feel the same as you on most issues so it is a mystery to me why you have now announced your intent to run, unless you hope to garner Paul's support in the event he is not on the ticket in November or the possibility of a shared ticket with Dr. Paul.

  +0

George Whitfield Says:

[May 14th, 2008 at 7:05 pm](#)

Thank you Mr. Barr for formally announcing your candidacy for the Libertarian Party's Presidential nomination. I look forward to meeting you in Denver and then the campaign thereafter. You have my full and enthusiastic support. We can bring the US Constitution back into the nation's discourse and inform the American people that there is a better way that leads to peace, prosperity and liberty. Lets win this!

Ross Smith Says:

May 15th, 2008 at 8:25 pm

If you believe that you are responsible for yourself and your family and the government should stay out of your business, then the Libertarian Party is your party. I don't hear or see this out of the Democrats or Republicans. If Bob Barr stands for individual freedoms and live and let live, then he has my vote.

The first ten amendments to the United States Constitution were intended to limit the power of the federal government. We need someone running for President that understands this.

Sandy Rossi Says:

May 16th, 2008 at 6:23 pm

I suggest starting by making the rounds on conservative and Christian talk radio stations.

Keith Gardner Says:

May 17th, 2008 at 8:31 pm

Let's hope that Bob Barr gets more than 1% of the vote. Ron Paul served his purpose running within the Republican Party to get the message out.

I think Mike Huckabee did a good job promoting the Fair Tax. Bob Barr will also have friends in Congress from Georgia, including John Linder, and Oklahoma who support the Fair Tax.

Now it is time for Bob Barr to bring the numbers home and defeat McCain. I wish Newt Gingrich would help him. My uncle said he'd vote for Bob Barr with Newt Gingrich as running mate. The Republican Party needs a good spanking.

I would like to see Bob Barr shore up his environmental, energy, and foreign policy by working with Gov. Arnold Swarzenagger to extend the hydrogen highway across the nation so that we are able to produce energy domestically to power the hydrogen internal combustion engine.

Doing so would cause an economic boom in the United States and likely around the world.

It would also remove our dependence on foreign oil so we can apply tough diplomatic sanctions to the Middle East as a whole, including our "friends" Saudi Arabi and Pakistan to end their government sanctioned hatred of Americans and Israel which breeds terrorism.

It would also greatly reduce emmissions.

Timothy Maguire Says:

May 19th, 2008 at 5:13 pm

BARR MUST WIN THE NOMINATION FIRST. Join the campaign and be a delegate for Bob Barr this weekend.

We're organizing a charter bus trip that will take 55 Bob Barr supporters out to Denver for the vote this weekend, and then drive straight back after the vote. No hotel fees or convention "extras" needed!

Cost per person for the bus trip: \$182

Tentative Bus schedule:

Leaving Columbus, OH at 11am EDT on Saturday, May 24, stopping for pickups in Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Kansas City, arriving in Denver Sunday morning for the general session (and presidential vote). After the voting is complete (probably around 5pm), eat dinner and load the bus for the trip home, returning to Columbus, OH late Monday evening.

If you're interested, and you live within driving distance of Columbus, Indianapolis, St. Louis or Kansas City, please email me TODAY at maguire_tj@hotmail.com.

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