

Full Text of PG Sittenfeld's Remarks

"The Future I See"

Thursday, May 14, 2015

Columbus

I have come here today to affirm my candidacy and to explain my campaign.

When I entered the Senate race in January, I said Ohio needed a new generation of leadership. And I continue to believe that more than ever.

But Ohio is a big state — and I realize that many voters may not yet know who I am or what I stand for.

So today, I want to tell them.

I want them to know why I am running... what I believe... and what kinds of policies I intend to pursue.

In the weeks and months ahead, I will lay out the details of my proposals in a series of speeches on a wide range of topics, both foreign and domestic.

But today, I want to speak more broadly — and talk about the values, views and vision I bring to this campaign.

Let me begin with why I am running for the U.S. Senate.

I am running because Washington is broken — and I believe fixing it will require new faces and fresh voices... the kind of new leadership that will make this campaign an exciting conversation about the future, rather than a stale argument about the past.

I'm also running because I believe regular people are smart enough to make their own decisions — and don't need to be told who their Party's nominee should be.

An openness to new leaders who are passionate in their convictions... strong in their determination... and willing to challenge the status quo... that's in our very DNA as Democrats.

I acknowledge that there is boldness in my candidacy.

But bold is what Democrats do best — and we always do best when we are bold.

Democrats need never fear a contest of ideas.

History shows — and great Ohio Democrats like John Glenn, Howard Metzenbaum and Dick Celeste proved — that testing our candidates in a primary almost always makes us stronger in a general election.

In 2016, I believe rank-and-file Democrats want a competition, not a coronation.

And I am running to give them a voice and a choice.

I am also in this race because I think it is time — no, long past time — to have a Senate that looks more like America. I believe the Senate needs more women, minorities and yes, young people.

Though the millennial generation of which I am a member is the largest and most technologically savvy in American history, not a single one of us serves in the U.S. Senate.

And it shows, especially in the issues Congress chooses to ignore.

Take the crushing burden of student loan debt — which now exceeds total credit card debt for the first time in history — but which Congress is doing next to nothing about.

I believe it is wrong to tell young people they need an education — but then shrug and look the other way when they graduate so deeply in debt that even those able to find a job can't afford to marry, start a family, or buy a home.

Washington should be working to ease the problem, not compound it. And in my opinion, it is obscene and unacceptable that the federal government is now raking in \$135 billion in profits from college loans made to students and parents.

I was lucky enough to receive a great education without being trapped in debt.

And I'm running for the Senate because I believe the current and next generation of students deserves the same opportunity.

That is why I made my "Everyone Deserves A Shot" initiative — which would save the average college student over \$12,000 in interest payments — the first major policy proposal of my campaign.

If I am elected to the Senate, I pledge to make fixing the student debt problem one of my top priorities.

So let there be no mistake.

The 2016 Senate election is not just a choice between different candidates or different political parties.

At base, it is a contest between change and the status quo... between the old and the new... between the future and the past.

Senator Portman wants to make this election about the past — which is why he and his allies are already attacking Ted Strickland's record as Governor.

But he can't play that game with me.

If I am the Democratic nominee, voters will have a clear and simple choice.

On one side will be Rob Portman's long record of failed leadership.

On the other will be my plan for getting Ohio and America moving again.

And if we make this election about the future, it is a battle I know we can wage and win.

But before I tell you about the kind of future I see, let me say a word about the kind of Senator I intend to be.

First, I am a Democrat — and I am deeply committed to the progressive principles for which we stand.

Yes, I will compromise with Republicans to end gridlock and get things done.

But I will never retreat, equivocate or trim my convictions on the causes that count.

After all, the last thing this country needs is two Republican parties.

Second, I intend to be a Senator of the people and for the people.

I reject the self-serving rhetoric of those who describe any attempt to close the growing gap between the rich and the rest as "class warfare."

I reject the idea that elections should only decide which set of entrenched interests gain the most power and wield the most influence.

And I am fed up with Supreme Court Justices who equate money with speech — and Supreme Court rulings that allow millionaires and billionaires to hijack our democracy by buying candidates and elections.

As a Senator, I will push for policies that restore equal opportunity and rebuild the middle class — and I will fight for a constitutional amendment that finally and forever stops the corrosive impact of big money on our system of government.

Another leader in another day summoned us to greatness by urging us to ask what we can do for our country — and surely the times demand no less of us today.

And that is why I will do all I can to restore a shared sense of purpose in this nation.

For just as Lincoln reminded us that no country can exist half slave and half free, neither can America long endure if equal opportunity is seen as a myth and a strong and growing middle class becomes a distant memory.

So let me tell you about the kind of future I see.

I see a future not of big government, but of bold government — and of new leaders with new ideas for meeting our responsibilities both at home and abroad.

I see a future in which all Ohioans share in our nation's economic recovery — and that is why I will fight for a livable minimum wage, overtime pay, better child care assistance and flexible work policies, including paid sick days.

But that won't be enough to redeem the American dream. We also need more policy-makers who actually understand new technology and the power it has to reshape our economy and remake our world. We won't rebuild the middle class by yearning for yesterday or clinging to a past that will never return. We must embrace innovation, champion change, and understand the tools of tomorrow. While everyone in Congress need not be a techie, I do wish a few more Senators at least knew how to send their own tweets.

I see a future where tax cuts aren't aimed at the richest among us — but are targeted instead at low and middle income people who need them most.

I see a future in which bad trade deals that send good American jobs to Mexico and China are never negotiated in the first place — and where our workers, our environment and our currency are protected against exploitation and manipulation.

I see a future in which great American cities like Baltimore and Cleveland no longer endure endless cycles of violence, joblessness and hopelessness — and where those who live in urban communities get the skills and the training they need to go to work instead of jail.

I see a future in which Senators care more about A+ ratings for schools than about A+ ratings from the NRA — and where the 2nd Amendment is no longer misused to kill common sense gun safety laws that protect our kids, schools, and movie theaters.

I see a future in which climate change is finally taken seriously — and where scientific fact is once again respected instead of rejected. Renewable energy can mean good paying jobs and the creation of whole new industries. And it will not pollute the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the only planet we will ever have.

I see a future in which politicians and bureaucrats stop practicing medicine without a license — and women are trusted to make their own health care decisions.

I see a future where the freedom to marry the person you love is open to all — and where no American can be fired from a job or denied a place to live simply because of their sexual orientation.

In short, I see a future in which the American deed matches the American creed — and where the old dream of justice becomes a new American reality.

I also see a future in which the golden years of older Americans aren't tarnished by Social In-Security or the fear of Medicare privatization.

But at a time when the average Social Security benefit is just \$16,000 per year, it is not enough to say benefits won't be cut.

In the Senate, I will fight to increase those benefits — and pay for it by removing the income cap that allows millionaires and billionaires to avoid their fair share of taxes. Right now, 94% of Americans pay Social Security taxes on every dime of wage income they earn — and there's no reason on earth that the richest 6% should not be asked to do the same.

Finally, I see a future in which America's relations with the rest of the world reflect neither a retreat into isolationism nor a march into militarism — and where the respect we earn is not just for the power of our arms, but also for the strength of our ideals.

That is the future I see — and I know we can make it happen.

So to those whose vision is confined to yesterday's polls, I reply: the people have not yet spoken — and the race has just begun.