

KERRY

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In his speech, Kerry discussed education, health care, foreign policy and the economy. He said life is about choices and politics is about the choices you have.

"I want to offer a better choice for our country, based on truth," he said.

When asked what he was going to do about the "sky high" cost of college tuition, Kerry had several ideas.

Kerry said under the current administration, most students qualify for Perkins loans and Pell grants because they have less money that is not going as far. This amounts to an effective reduction in grants and loans, he said.

"I will raise them back up, not just to where they were before but to meet the level of inflation so we're helping people to afford the grants and loans," he said.

Kerry also wants to enact a \$4,000-per-student tuition tax cut, but he said he's most excited about a loan pay-down that encourages recent graduates to help in the community with jobs that normally don't pay well like child care, teaching or working in the local court system. People who work two years at these jobs — which could also include helping the community's at-risk kids, helping seniors or cleaning up the river — would get four years of in-state tuition paid for.

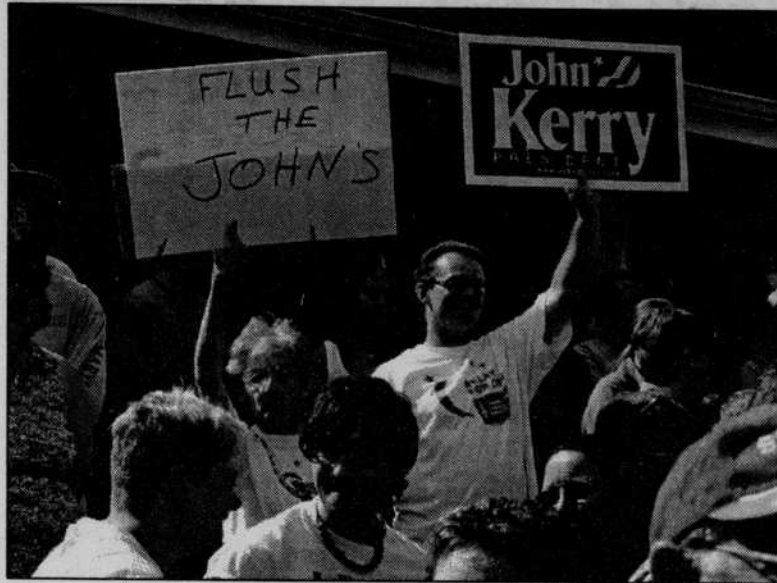
Kerry said that by paying these college graduates \$4000 per year to do work such as helping at-risk youth graduate from college, the government can save money in the long run. Otherwise, he said, the government may have to spend \$50,000 to house some of these youth in prison for life.

"I want to restore America's commitment to rebuilding community," Kerry said. "There's all kinds of work to be done here in America."

Bev Ficek, an Oregon state congressional candidate, said she thinks Kerry's ideas on education are fantastic.

"Everything goes from education," she said, adding that many problems come from lack of education, such as crime and poverty.

Kerry also highlighted his



Craig Volpe Freelance photographer

Bush and Kerry supporters were shoulder-to-shoulder when Kerry visited Springfield Friday morning. Kerry talked with locals in a Springfield neighborhood.

economic plan for the audience.

From 1993 to 2000, under the Clinton administration, average annual wages in America increased \$7,100, Kerry said. During the past four years, the average has decreased \$1,600.

Under Kerry's plan, 98 percent of Americans will get a tax cut. He said he wants to keep all middle tax cuts in place.

"We are going to take the top 1.5 to 2 percent of incomes in America, and we are just going to go back to the level that we were with President Clinton," he said.

"My choice is this," said Kerry. "We protect the middle class and close loopholes that don't make economic sense."

Kerry said the tax burden of the middle class has gone up under the Bush administration and the tax burden on the wealthy has gone down.

"This is not only morally wrong, but wrong from a policy point of view," Kerry said.

Kerry also stressed the importance of free health care for children and introduced a sliding scale of premiums so people would be covered for catastrophic events. He also said everyone should have the right to buy into the same health care that senators and congressmen give themselves.

On the issue of foreign policy, Kerry said cooperation with other countries is crucial.

"Engaging with the world in a way that lives up to American values and standards sends the message to the world that America is the country they respect," Kerry said. He said doing so would show the world that America stands for something other than "just going at it alone, going unilaterally, pushing other countries aside."

His audience appreciated his speech.

"It's fantastic; he's talking issues," veteran John Cuff said, adding that he believes that Kerry will be supportive of the plight of veterans.

Ficek said she believes in Kerry as well.

"This is the American dream. This is my dream," she said. "I want to stick to and fulfill my dream, not just for me but for my family."

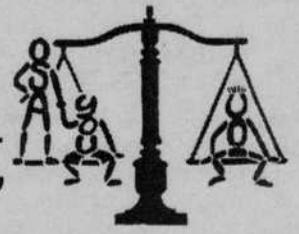
Kerry emphasized the choice for president Americans are presented with.

"You have a choice this November between policies that say the economy has turned the corner and the economy today is the best economy we've ever had," he said. "Or you can have John Edwards and I, who believe we can create better jobs, we can raise the ability of people to be able to afford health care, the ability to make college more affordable, and Americans can move down the road to the creation of all kinds of new jobs."

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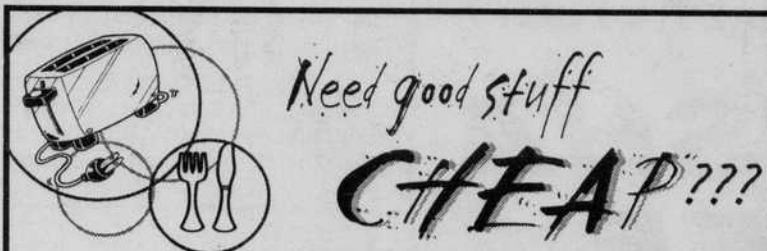
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