

Will Pryor Campaign
Announcement Speech
January 2, 2006
9:00 a.m.

Friends and family . . .

A few weeks ago Ellen got an email from one of our dearest friends, now one of our great volunteers. It said:

“I could not sleep all night thinking about our phone conversation. I feel like Abraham must have felt when he received a call in the night, except the journey up the hill will be a joyous one for all those who stand tall with you and Will. No angel will reach down to stop us, rather they will sing in unison the victory song.”

With friends like that, how can we lose!?

This is a proud and happy day for the Pryor family. An event that many of you have been anticipating for several weeks, and a moment that a few in this room have been anticipating *since the day I was born!*

I am especially grateful this morning to the love of my life, my wife, Ellen. Dear, you inspire and encourage me. And to Lindsey and Emily, you two are our pride, and our joy. This campaign will be about our family values, and I am so very proud of who you are and what we share.

From all of the Pryors this morning, to each and every one of you, thank you for helping us celebrate this moment.

This is also a special time in the life of our nation – an urgent time – when people are looking for someone who can help heal political wounds and solve problems – who can bring people together. Some of you are life-long Republicans, some tried-and-true Democrats, and others are proud to call yourselves Independent. And some of you are just life long friends!

A Different Kind of Campaign

But all of us are committed to making this a different kind of campaign, one that gives voters a real choice on how we go about solving problems. So here you are, and I hope ready to hear me say: I declare my candidacy for the United States House of Representatives, in the 32nd Congressional District of the great state of Texas!

Maybe you will understand more about me as a candidate if you know something about my political role models. Certainly, my political instincts have been influenced mightily by many people, but two stand out. One is my uncle, David Pryor, a two-term governor and three-term United States Senator from Arkansas – certainly one of the most revered public servants in the history of that Land of Opportunity. Throughout his career in public service David Pryor represented the right way to do things. And like my father, his only brother, David Pryor always watched out for the little guy whose voice is too often lost in the noise of politics.

The other is a former Congressman from Kentucky, the late Bill Natcher. I spent my last two years of high school as a congressional page in Washington. It was during Watergate. My senior year, I got to be the Personal Page to the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. I got to know what it feels like to work with people of intelligence, integrity and

decency, and I have dreamed of serving in the House of Representatives ever since.

Congressman Natcher was tall, handsome, silver haired, and always impeccably attired in 3 piece suits. In 40 years of service in Congress he never missed a roll call vote. He never hired a press secretary. He read and answered his own constituent mail.

And whenever Natcher had the floor during debate, one member would inevitably say, “Will the gentleman from Kentucky yield the floor?” And Congressman Natcher would always -- every time -- reply “Certainly I yield to *my friend*”. And then he would pause, “*and he is my friend*”.

You know what was so great about it? About “my friend” and “he is my friend”? Natcher meant it. Every time. In his heart he meant it, and everyone in the Chamber knew it.

You may recall that just a little over a year ago this district hosted the 3rd most expensive congressional race in the history of our country. Each candidate spent over 4 million dollars! And what were they talking about at the end? Those of us who live around here remember the name calling and the personal attacks.

But if you thought that was bad, listen to this!

Sticks and stones . . .

Ellen and I made this decision to run for Congress only a few weeks ago. I thought it would be smart to gauge the reaction of 30 to 40 of our political friends. By email, in the subject line, I wrote “good idea, bad idea?”

Well, no sooner had I hit the send button than the support and encouragement started flooding my in-box. Before long I also got a few responses from people who had actually run for public office themselves.

The kindest words from a former state representative were to tell me I was “stupid, stupid, stupid.” A former state senator tried to soften the blow of his concern with some kind words before he asked me: “So, Will, how overweight are you? Because...well...fat people just don’t get elected any more.”

Within the first 48 hours of my campaign I had been called fat AND stupid –by my friends! Can you begin to imagine what the opposing side is going to say? I want to say to both of these individuals: “thank you, my friends, and you are – still – my friends.”

Bringing People Together

Many of those I have talked to in the early days of this campaign ask the question that voters across this district will also want to know: *what does Will Pryor stand for?*

I believe that neither party has a monopoly on virtue, values, or the truth. I believe that every now and then, the Republican Party has some good ideas; and every now and then, Democrats trot out some bad ones.

I believe that too often **both** parties are insufferable, insisting that everything they say is true, and everything the other side says is a lie.

I disagree with the view that every issue is black or white, red or blue. In my logo design, you will notice that “Pryor” is placed between the red and the blue –my goal is to bring the best ideas of both sides together to solve problems and get things done.

My professional life for over a decade has been dedicated to bringing disputing parties together. *It’s not just what I do, it’s become who I am.*

Often, that requires challenging some very basic assumptions we have made about how our government works. Ronald Reagan once said,

"Freedom is the right to question and change the established way of doing things. It is the continuous revolution of the marketplace. It is the understanding that allows us to recognize shortcomings and seek solutions."

This campaign is ready for that challenge.

I believe this: I want the same things for my family that you want for yours. I want them to have good health and good health care; I want them to be well educated and to educate others; I want them to have freedom, and faith, and hope. I want them to inherit a world cleaner, safer and better than the one we inherited. And their generation should not have to suffer, for decades to come, from our generation's failures of fiscal discipline.

In 2000, the Congressional Budget Office forecast a surplus of \$5.6 TRILLION in the next 10 years; instead, 6 years later, we have a deficit of \$500 BILLION – growing larger every day.

I am far LESS interested in standing around and listening to our two major political parties shout at each other about who is the most responsible for this mess, and WAY MORE interested in figuring out what we are going to do about it.

And I am not AS interested, at the moment, in debating whether this regrettable war is the result of misguided intelligence, or something far worse. I am WAY MORE interested in participating in a discussion about how -- and how soon -- we're going to bring the men and women serving us in Iraq back home.

So how are we going to win this race? Ann Richards used to say, "don't tell me why you want to run, tell me how you're going to win".

We have to be smart. We have to spend our money wisely. And most importantly, we must work very, very hard. No one will work harder than I will. But I cannot do it alone. I need each of you to work along side me – at

the start by telling your friends and neighbors about this campaign, and then with me as we spread the news in the months ahead.

A Call to Faithful Citizenship

Religion's influence in politics is a popular topic these days. I am not ashamed to say that I am a Christian. I am the son of a Presbyterian minister. I am an elder in the Presbyterian Church. I believe in One God, the Father Almighty. I married into a "good Catholic family" and I respect the traditions of the Catholic faith. My faith informs my beliefs, just as I hope your faith does yours. And my faith informs me that my goal in this election, and in life, is to be obedient and to do what is right—as I discern it in the moment.

How one reaches decisions on a broad range of issues—war, stem-cell research, health care, education, budget cuts —cannot be separated from one's values, nor should it. To those whose conscience is born of obedience to religious values, a call to *faithful citizenship* is not to be feared.

In a call to faithful citizenship environmentalism becomes all about stewardship of the precious resources we are blessed with, and immigration reform must treat all of God's children decently, and humanely.

That we have children in this great and blessed land who are hungry and without basic needs reflects moral choices that we have made.

And the accumulation of policies that has resulted in our dependence on foreign oil and staggering indebtedness to China and other adversaries, *all so that we can support our consumptive lifestyles*, reflects value-driven choices we have accepted that someday will have moral consequences.

I believe that God has a Plan; but Man has a choice. And the choices we make matter.

John F. Kennedy made the point this way in his inaugural address: “Man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty, and all forms of human life.” Let us debate, let us negotiate, let us reason together, and yes—let us argue. But as we do, let us remember: *our children and our grandchildren are listening.*

Faith in the Future

I am running for Congress because . . .

I have faith.

I have faith in our future.

I have faith that – together – we will make the right choices.

I have faith in our ability – together – to solve ANY problem that confronts us.

And I have faith that come November, *we will all be together again, celebrating and singing in unison the victory song!*