

Two Open Letters to Barack Obama
Sent to both candidates and the news media by
Bill Fortenberry

The First Letter

Dear Sir,

I am writing this brief letter to inform you that you will not be receiving my vote on November fourth of this year. I have duly considered your position on many different issues, and I must admit that I find your plans somewhat frightening. I fear that were you to gain the office of the president at this time, it would spell the end of freedom for our nation. I wish that I had time to explain to you all the various and multitudinous implications of your proposed philosophies, but I do not. I will satisfy myself instead with the abasement of that policy which poses the greatest threat to our nation, namely, your desire to turn our country toward socialism.

You have stated that “the free market has failed us.” You have claimed that it is the government’s responsibility to step in and set up a new economy. You have explained that “the burdens and benefits of this new economy have to be spread evenly across the economy” and that you want to “spread the wealth around.” Such comments are nothing less than pure, unadulterated socialism. They could readily have proceeded from the mouth of Karl Marx himself, and indeed, they are synonymous with his philosophy of, “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.”

You have justified your socialistic position through an unjust condemnation of what has become known as the ownership society. You claim that it “ignores our history” and that “in our past there has been another term for it – Social Darwinism – every man or woman for him or herself.” You have here taken two opposites and claimed that they are equal; but in actuality, the ownership society was once known as free enterprise, and it is based on that great protestant work ethic which made America the nation that she is today: “If a man will not work then neither should he eat.” It was this system of private property and individual responsibility that saved our ancestors from starvation and ruin, and those who accept this philosophy have demonstrated that they have indeed learned from our nation’s history. Social Darwinism, on the other hand, has always been against the free market system, and every implementation of Darwinism on a national scale (Germany, Russia, China, etc.) has followed the path of socialism to produce a communistic society. The two systems are total opposites, and interestingly enough, the one which you condemn is, in reality, the very one which you propose. Such gross mischaracterizations are a classic ploy of socialistic regimes. Vladimir Lenin admitted as much when he said that, “There are no morals in politics; there is only expedience.” This sounds remarkably similar to your own admission that “when you’re running for president, you’re going to do some sinning.”

You will undoubtedly seek to further justify your position by arguing that the current economy is failing and that change is necessary because “someone working full-

time today in a minimum wage job does not earn enough to raise out of poverty.” I can personally testify to the invalidity of such an argument. The so-called poverty line for a family of three is \$18,000 per year. If both parents work full-time, making minimum wage after June of 2009, they will gross more than \$30,000 per year. With a house payment of \$1,000, car payments of \$200, plus insurance payments of \$200, and utility payments of \$200 per month, they will still have \$900 per month left over. This is a very livable scenario. For the past three years, I have earned less than \$20,000 per year as the sole bread winner for my family, and I was able to bring my family of three out of this so-called poverty. During that time, we never missed a single meal, we were never late in paying a single bill, and we enjoyed a very full and happy life. You, yourself, are a perfect rebuttal of this argument. According to your own testimony, you have gone from being a poor kid living on welfare to one of the wealthiest men in America running for the most influential office in the world. What greater testament could there be to the success of America’s current economic system?

I find it very strange that one who claims to have studied constitutional law could ever bring himself to embrace an economic philosophy which so blatantly contradicts the supreme law of this great land. Do you know nothing of the history of your philosophies? Socialism has already been tried in America. It was attempted in Jamestown in 1607 and failed miserably. Alexis de Tocqueville condemned your theories in the 1800’s stating that “Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word, equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude.” Less than 100 years later, Winston Churchill, a man well acquainted with the evils of socialism, would agree with him by claiming that “Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy, its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery.” And even more recently Margaret Thatcher recognized that “to cure the British disease with socialism was like trying to cure leukaemia with leeches.” Throughout history, those fighting for freedom have always recognized socialism as their enemy, and the enemies of liberty have gladly welcomed socialism as an ally in that fight.

Such enemies include Vladimir Lenin who stated that “the goal of socialism is communism,” and Karl Marx who claimed that “the meaning of peace is the absence of opposition to socialism.” Surely you must realize that your policies have placed you in the same camp as some of the worst government leaders in the history of the world, leaders such as Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Tse-tung. Surely you must realize that you are dancing to the tune of men like John Strachey who proposed that “It is impossible to establish Communism as the immediate successor to Capitalism. Accordingly, it is proposed to establish Socialism as something which we can put in the place of our present decaying Capitalism. Hence, Communists work for the establishment of Socialism as the necessary transition stage on the road to Communism.” You cannot possibly be ignorant of the similarity between your policies and those of ACLU founder, Roger Baldwin, who admitted: “I am for socialism, disarmament, and, ultimately, for abolishing the state itself... I seek the social ownership of property, the abolition of the propertied class, and the sole control of those who produce wealth. Communism is the goal.”

Is communism your goal also? I cannot help but wonder whether you are a willing proponent of this detestable system or just an unwitting pawn being manipulated by those who procured your fortune, but in either case I cannot and will not support your attempts to gain control of this country. Others may be willing to sell you their freedoms in exchange for an empty promise of prosperity, but you will not be receiving my vote this November, for like the patriots of old, my cry is “give me liberty or give me death!” and you, sir, are certainly no proponent of the first.

Your fellow citizen,
Bill Fortenberry

Mr. Obama’s Response

Dear Friend,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts about our campaign and Senator Obama's candidacy for President. Senator Obama and Senator Biden welcome an open dialogue about America's future, and hope for the broadest possible participation in a great nationwide discussion.

Hearing and exploring different positions and ways of thinking furthers this discussion. It challenges our reasoning, sharpens our analysis of issues, and leads to new solutions. We appreciate having the benefit of your perspective.

One of Senator Obama's mentors was the late Senator Paul Simon, a man of great ability and integrity. He believed that people could disagree without being disagreeable, and Senator Obama has taken that guiding principle as his own.

Thank you again for contacting us.

Sincerely,

Obama for America

The Second Letter

Dear Sir:

In my previous letter, I informed you of my decision to reject your bid for my vote this November. In response to that letter, your campaign assured me that you would welcome an open dialogue regarding your policies. Please accept this letter as my part in this dialogue.

As I stated previously, I do not support your plans to turn our country toward socialism. I have spent several months analyzing your speeches and proposals, and I have found within your rhetoric a three part plan to convert our great nation into a socialist regime. I would like to leave out the rhetoric and present that plan openly and in simple terms for all to see. I wish to show that your policies will destroy our republic by instituting national healthcare, giving unprecedented political power and protection to the labor unions, and removing the right of the people to bear arms. These policies have been criticized before, but seldom have their dangers been analyzed and proven to the extent that I will now attempt.

Let me begin with the longest of my dialogues by discussing your healthcare plan. To support this plan, you have painted the American people a desperate picture. You have described for us a pitiful situation in which hardworking families are not able to obtain vital medical treatment. You have stated that “it is indisputable that if you are poor in this country it is hazardous to your health.” Well, my own supposed poverty has not proven the least bit hazardous to my health or to the health of my family. In fact, although my wife suffered a brain hemorrhage just after giving birth to our son at a time when our total annual income was \$15,000, we were still able to get all of her medical expenses paid without missing a single payment for anything else. Furthermore, even though my current employer does not provide medical insurance, I have been able to find very good medical coverage for my family for less than \$150 per month. This is far from consistent with your bold statement that “the market has proven incapable of creating large enough insurance pools to keep costs to individuals affordable.” Your painting is flawed. I have lived in the reality that you claim to paint, and it is far different from the picture you are presenting to voters.

Our multi-payer, capitalistic healthcare system is not failing as you have claimed. On the contrary, we have the best medical system in the world. No other nation can boast of so great a percentage of its population living in perfect health. No other country can lay claim to as many medical advances as our great nation can. No other country has a better doctor-patient ratio, or as many hospitals per city, and yet you have threatened to eradicate the key component of our current medical system which makes all of this possible—our capitalistic insurance companies.

You have stated that you are tired of the insurance companies “dictating our healthcare markets.” Your policies place great emphasis on “making sure they are limited in the ability to extract profits.” You have threatened to force insurance

companies to “issue every applicant a policy” that is “at least as generous as the new public plan” with “premiums that will not depend on how healthy you are.” Allow me to point out a few flaws in your claims.

First of all, under our current system, American citizens reap the benefits of a balance of powers between themselves, their doctors, and the insurance companies. You see, if an insurance company were to charge more for its services than its customers want to pay, then those customers are free to change to a different insurance provider. Thus the insurance companies already have an incentive to keep their prices low. They cannot charge more than their customers are willing to pay. Likewise, the doctors must keep their prices to a minimum, for if a doctor begins to charge too much, he runs the risk of the insurance companies dropping him from their list of supported doctors. If the insurance companies become too miserly in their payouts, they also run the risk of doctors removing them from their list of supported insurance companies. This delicate balance of powers allows the doctors to obtain the payment that they need with as little cost to the patient as possible. In fact, a survey performed by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation found that while healthcare spending in the US reached 2.3 trillion dollars in 2007, the average cost to the individual was only \$275 per month. This is just an average of course, but at this very moment, Celtic health insurance is offering individual plans with \$30 co-pays and \$5,000 deductibles for just \$58 per month.

Your plan would force insurance companies to offer packages that are “at least as generous as the new public plan.” By your own campaign’s admission, this would ensure that they “are limited in their ability to extract profits.” Since there are very few insurance companies which are willing to operate without any hope of profit, this measure would effectively eliminate the entire private insurance industry, causing hundreds of thousands of Americans to lose their jobs and committing the government to an annual medical expense of 2.3 trillion dollars. To cover that expense you would be forced to raise taxes in excess of \$7,500 per person. This single fact, were it made known to the public, would be enough to change the tide of this election, but it’s just one of the many burdens that your healthcare plan would place upon the citizens of this country.

Under our current healthcare system, doctors and insurance companies are able to bargain with each other to ensure that both are able to make a profit while keeping consumer costs to a minimum. Should you succeed in establishing a government healthcare plan, all such bargaining would cease. One cannot bargain with the government; one can only comply or rebel. If the government decides that the doctors should only be paid so much, then that is all that the doctors will be paid. This will have one or, more likely, both of two possible consequences. First, since a national healthcare system would force doctors to accept a set income, most of our brightest and best students will seek to enter other careers which offer more lucrative futures thus severely handicapping our nation’s medical advancement. Secondly, this could very likely result in a tremendous increase in corruption within the medical field as doctors seek to obtain profits through submitting falsified invoices for government reimbursement. Thus your healthcare plan would produce a decrease in medical efficiency while at the same time providing ample incentive for an increase in corruption.

The aforementioned flaws are indeed disheartening, but by far the most frightening aspect of your healthcare plan is that it provides the government with a very powerful tool of coercion. By necessity, every healthcare system must have limitations. For instance, a national healthcare system would obviously not provide coverage for a wanted criminal desiring to have his face surgically altered. This necessity of limited coverage would give the government the power to deny medical coverage to anyone at any time. At first, this power would likely be wielded only in cases similar to the one just mentioned, but how long would it take for the government to begin denying coverage to domestic terrorists? And how difficult would it be to include in the definition of domestic terrorists those fundamentalist preachers that supposedly incite their congregations into taking actions contrary to the goals of the state? No doubt you would like to offer us several promises that your system would never degenerate to such a state, but even if we could accept your word, we cannot accept any promise that this system will not be thus abused by any future leader of our country. The only way to prevent such abuse is to not allow this system to be initiated in the first place.

The next phase of your plan involves your desire to give an unprecedented amount of power and protection to the labor unions. You have stated that “the leaders of service workers unions broke ranks and chose to endorse me...I owe those unions.” You then proceeded to admit that you “got into politics for those folks.” Your campaign website makes such bold statements as, “Obama supports the right of workers to bargain collectively and strike if necessary. He will work to ban the permanent replacement of striking workers.” These seemingly innocuous statements carry some rather ominous implications.

Our current industrial system is subject to a similar balance of powers as that which exists in the medical industry. The consumer, of course, wants a cheaper product so he purchases more goods from those companies with the best values. The employee desires to earn as much as possible and, consequently, decides to work for that company which provides the best wages and benefits. If an employer is to be successful in business, he must find a fair balance between the demands of his employees and the desires of his customers. This balance is his source of profit for if he satisfies the wishes of his employees, then they are much more likely to work to their fullest potential and increase production, thus lowering the cost of his merchandise and meeting the desires of his customers.

Your plan would upset that balance by placing unprecedented power in the hands of the labor unions. The assurance that they can strike without fear of retaliation will encourage a great increase in union membership, and history has proven that the unions thus enlarged and emboldened will most certainly exercise their new found privilege by launching a series of strikes to demand ever increasing wages and power. The employers will attempt to offset this expense by continually raising prices, and many will succumb to union pressure and relinquish control of their industries allowing the unions to establish social ownership. Eventually, a crisis will be reached. Consumers will not be able to afford the rising prices and will simply stop buying, businesses will go bankrupt,

and the economy will fail. This process has been observed numerous times in socialist uprisings all around the world. Providing such absolute power and protection to the unions always precipitates an economic collapse.

Alexis de Tocqueville predicted that the longest any such system could hope to survive is 200 years, but I do not know of a single one which has survived to celebrate even its first centennial. I am sure that you must remember the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. This grand socialist experiment began with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 which gave control of the nation's businesses to the worker's councils or unions known as the soviets. Within a single generation of this change, the country suffered a complete economic collapse. Czechoslovakia, which had a thriving industrial economy prior to its socialist takeover, followed the same path, as did Cuba, Hungary, and numerous others. There is no reason to assume that the socialization of American industries would not follow their example, and indeed our forefathers found that to be the case when they first attempted socialism on these shores.

Jamestown and Plymouth both experimented with socialism in the early 1600s through the use of the common store system. Both settlements suffered great economic failures and much loss of life as a result of this system, and both of them rejected socialism in favor of a system based on private property. In the words of William Bradford, the governor of Plymouth, "This had very good success; for it made all hands very industrious, so as much more corn was planted, than otherwise would have been." The success of capitalism in America's earliest settlements established it firmly as a fundamental component of the American economic system. Why should we abandon a system which has proven successful over the course of nearly 400 years for one that has always failed within 100 years of each implementation? To do so would be unwise at best and economic suicide at worst.

Let me now move on to the third part of your socialist plan, namely, the disarmament of the American citizenry. The second amendment to our Constitution states: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." Many people seem to be under the misconception that this amendment was included in our Bill of Rights to ensure that the citizens would be able to hunt for food and protect themselves from savages. With these two uses of firearms being no longer necessary in most of the United States, many noble, well-intentioned people have begun to argue that the right to bear arms is no longer necessary either. They are greatly mistaken in this conclusion, for the purpose of the second amendment is just as prevalent today as it was in 1791. The right to keep and bear arms was not granted to allow men to hunt; it was granted to ensure their continued freedom from an oppressive government. To better explain its grammar, the second amendment could also be read, "Because a well regulated militia is necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

In reference to the second amendment, you have stated that "just because you have an individual right does not mean that the state or local government can't constrain

the exercise of that right.” You have further stated that you “think it is a scandal that this president did not authorize a renewal of the assault weapons ban.” You said that you support legislation to ban the manufacture, sale and possession of hand guns, and to ban assault weapons. Should you accomplish these goals, you will be in direct violation of our Constitution, the supreme law of the land. The second amendment is not open to interpretation; it leaves no room for political maneuvering. It simply states, in no uncertain terms, that “the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.” Now it does not just say that the right to keep arms is protected but that the right to bear arms is also protected, and it does not demand that this right simply be preserved but that this right should not even be limited, nor is this law limited to the federal government alone as is the case with the first amendment, but it is stated as a universal law for the entire nation.

Without this right to keep and bear arms, the citizens of this country would have no recourse of action should our government overstep its bounds. They would have no means of forcing a corrupt bureaucracy to step down. It is this right which protects our nation from the threat of a military regime, and it is this right which best guarantees the continuance of all other rights granted to the citizens of this nation. Your insistence on infringing upon this fundamental right should be a matter of great concern to every American citizen.

I have here presented three of your policies which pose a dire threat to the freedoms which we enjoy as Americans. I could have mentioned many others as well, such as your plans for the complete socialization of education or your desire to force compliance with the Kyoto Accord, but I will limit myself to just these three for now. Your campaign has assured me that you would welcome an open dialogue, and it is my hope that you will honor their assurances and provide an answer to the arguments that I have here noted. I have taken the liberty to send copies of this letter to every major news network, the top twenty newspapers in the country, the national committees of both parties, numerous senators and representatives, and, of course, to Senator McCain. May your reply be equally as public.

Your fellow citizen,
Bill Fortenberry

Unfortunately, I never received the promised response from Mr. Obama, and these letters were completely ignored by the media. I have now placed them in the public domain that future generations may look back and know that Mr. Obama acted with full knowledge of the dangers of his position and that not all young Americans were deceived by his subtle words.