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The Honorable Adam Kinzinger
Former Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Illinois
Democratic National Convention
Thursday, August 22, 2024
Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Good evening. I'm Adam Kinzinger and I'm proud to be in the trenches with you as part of this sometimes awkward alliance—to defend truth, democracy, and decency.

I was just a kid when I was drawn to the party of Ronald Reagan—to his vision of a strong America, the shining city on a hill. I was a Republican for 12 years in Congress. I still hold onto the label. I never thought I'd be here. And you never thought you'd see me here.

But I've learned something about the Democratic Party. And I want to let my fellow Republicans in on the secret. The Democrats are as patriotic as us. They love this country just as much as we do. And they are as eager to defend American values at home and abroad as we conservatives have ever been. I was relieved to discover that.

Because I've learned something about my party, too. Something I couldn't ignore. The Republican Party is no longer conservative. It has switched its allegiance. From the principles that gave it purpose, to a man whose only purpose is himself.

Donald Trump is a weak man pretending to be strong. A small man pretending to be big. A faithless man pretending to be righteous. A perpetrator who can't stop playing the victim. He puts on quite a show. But there's no real strength there.

As a conservative and a veteran, I believe true strength lies in defending the vulnerable. Protecting your family. Standing up for our Constitution and our democracy. That is the soul of being a conservative. It used to be the soul of being a Republican.

But Donald Trump has suffocated the soul of the Republican Party. His fundamental weakness has coursed through my party like an illness. Sapping our strength. Softening our spine. Whipping us into a fever that has untethered us from our values.

Our democracy was frayed by the events of January 6th, as Donald Trump's deceit and dishonor led to a siege on the United States Capitol. That day, I stood witness to a profound sorrow—the desecration of our sacred tradition of peaceful transition of power, tarnished by a man too fragile, vain, and weak to accept defeat.

How can a party claim to be patriotic if it idolizes a man who tried to overthrow a free and fair election? How can a party claim to stand for liberty if it sees a fight for freedom in Ukraine, an attack

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pitting tyranny against democracy, a challenge to everything our nation claims to be, and it retreats? Equivocates. Nominates a man who is weirdly obsessed with Putin. And his running mate, who has said, “I don’t care what happens in Ukraine.” How can a party claim to be conservative when it tarnishes the gift our forebears fought for?

Men like my grandfather, who served in World War II. Who believed in a cause bigger than himself and risked his life for it behind enemy lines. To preserve American democracy, his generation found the courage to face down armies. All we’re asked to do is summon the courage to stand up to one weak man.

Some have questioned why I’ve taken the stand I have. The answer is simple: We must put country first. And tonight, as a Republican speaking before you, I’m putting our country first. Because the fact is—I do belong here. I know Kamala Harris shares my allegiance to the rule of law, the Constitution, and democracy. And she is dedicated to upholding all three in service to our country.

Whatever policies we disagree on pale in comparison with those fundamental matters of principle. Of decency. Of fidelity to this nation. To my fellow Republicans: If you still pledge allegiance to those principles, I suspect you belong here, too. Democracy knows no party. It is a living, breathing ideal that defines us as a nation.

It is the bedrock that separates us from tyranny—and when that foundation is fractured, we must stand united to strengthen it. If you think those principles are worth defending, I urge you: Make the right choice.

Vote for our bedrock values. Vote for Kamala Harris.

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