Transcript of Sen. Obama's remarks

by UPI

ST. PAUL, Minn. -- The following are U.S. Sen. Barack Obama's remarks before supporters in St. Paul, Minn., following the Montana and South Dakota primaries.Sixteen months have passed since we first stood together on the steps of the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois. Thousands of miles have been traveled; millions of voices have been heard. And because of what you said, because you decided that change must come to Washington, because you believed that this year must be different than all the rest, because you chose to listen not to your doubts or your fears, but to your greatest hopes and highest aspirations, tonight we mark the end of one historic journey with the beginning of another, a journey...(APPLAUSE)... a journey that will bring a new and better day to America. Because of you, tonight I can stand here and say that I will be the Democratic nominee for the president of the United States of America.(APPLAUSE)But I want to thank -- I want to thank all those in Montana and South Dakota who stood up for change today. I want to thank every American who stood with us over the course of this campaign, through the good days and the bad, from the snows of Cedar Rapids to the sunshine of Sioux Falls. And, tonight, I also want to thank the men and woman who took this journey with me as fellow candidates for president.At this defining moment, at this defining moment for our nation, we should be proud that our party put forth one of the most talented, qualified field of individuals ever to run for office. I have not just competed with them as rivals. I've learned from them as friends, as public servants, and as patriots who love America and are willing to work tirelessly to make this country better. They are leaders of this party and leaders that America will turn to for years to come.And that is particularly true for the candidate who has traveled further on this journey than anyone else. Senator Hillary Clinton has made history in this campaign.(APPLAUSE)She has made history not just because she's a woman who has done what no woman has done before, but because she is a leader who inspires millions of Americans with her strength, her courage, and her commitment to the causes that brought us here tonight.I congratulate her on her victory in South Dakota, and I congratulate her on the race that she has run throughout this contest.(APPLAUSE)We've certainly had our differences over the last 16 months. But as someone who's shared a stage with her many times, I can tell you that what gets Hillary Clinton up in the morning -- even in the face of tough odds -- is exactly what sent her and Bill Clinton to sign up for their first campaign in Texas all those years ago, what sent her to work at the Children's Defense Fund and made her fight for health care as first lady, what led her to the United States Senate and fueled her barrier-breaking campaign for the presidency: an unyielding desire to improve the lives of ordinary Americans, no matter how difficult the fight may be. And you can rest assured that when we finally win the battle for universal health care in this country -- and we will win that fight -- she will be central to that victory. (APPLAUSE)When we transform our energy policy and lift our children out of poverty, it will be because she worked to help make it happen. Our party and our country are better off because of her, and I am a better candidate for having had the honor to compete with Hillary Rodham Clinton.(APPLAUSE)There are those who say that this primary has somehow left us weaker and more divided. Well, I say that, because of this primary, there are millions of Americans who have cast their ballot for the very first time. (APPLAUSE)There are independents and Republicans who understand this election isn't just about a change of party in Washington, but also about the need to change Washington. There are young people, and African-Americans, and Hispanic- Americans, and women of all ages who have voted in numbers that have broken records and inspired a nation.(APPLAUSE)All of you chose to support a candidate you believe in deeply. But at the end of the day, we aren't the reason you came out and waited in lines that stretched block after block to make your voice heard. You didn't do that...(APPLAUSE)You didn't do that because of me or Senator Clinton or anyone else. You did it because you know in your hearts that at this moment, a moment that will define a generation, we cannot afford to keep doing what we've been doing. We owe our children a better future. We owe our country a better future. And for all those who dream of that future tonight, I say: Let us begin the work together. Let us unite in common effort to chart a new course for America.In just a few short months, the Republican Party will arrive in St. Paul with a very different agenda. They will come here to nominate John McCain, a man who has served this country heroically. (APPLAUSE)I honor, we honor the service of John McCain, and I respect his many accomplishments, even if he chooses to deny mine. (APPLAUSE)My differences with him -- my differences with him are not personal. They are with the policies he has proposed in this campaign, because while John McCain can legitimately tout moments of

independence from his party in the past, such independence has not been the hallmark of his presidential campaign.It's not change when John McCain decided to stand with George Bush 95 percent of the time, as he did in the Senate last year.It's not change when he offers four more years of Bush economic policies that have failed to create well-paying jobs, or insure our workers, or help Americans afford the skyrocketing cost of college, policies that have lowered the real incomes of the average American family, widened the gap between Wall Street and Main Street, and left our children with a mountain of debt. It's not change when he promises to continue a policy in Iraq that asks everything of our brave men and women in uniform and nothing of Iraqi politicians, a policy where all we look for are reasons to stay in Iraq, while we spend billions of dollars a month on a war that isn't making the American people any safer.So I'll say this: There are many words to describe John McCain's attempt to pass off his embrace of George Bush's policies as bipartisan and new, but "change" is not one of them.(APPLAUSE)"Change" is not one of them, because change is a foreign policy that doesn't begin and end with a war that should've never been authorized and never been waged. (APPLAUSE)I won't stand here and pretend that there are many good options left in Iraq, but what's not an option is leaving our troops in that country for the next hundred years, especially at a time when our military is overstretched, our nation is isolated, and nearly every other threat to America is being ignored.(APPLAUSE)We must be as careful getting out of Iraq as we were careless getting in, but we -- but start leaving we must. It's time for Iraqis to take responsibility for their future. It's time to rebuild our military and give our veterans the care and the benefits they deserve when they come home. (APPLAUSE)It's time to refocus our efforts on Al Qaida's leadership and Afghanistan, and rally the world against the common threats of the 21st century: terrorism and nuclear weapons; climate change and poverty; genocide and disease. That's what change is.Change, Minnesota, is realizing that meeting today's threats requires not just our firepower, but the power of our diplomacy: tough, direct diplomacy, where the president of the United States isn't afraid to let any petty dictator know where America stands and what we stand for. (APPLAUSE)We must once again have the courage and the conviction to lead the free world. That is the legacy of Roosevelt and Truman and Kennedy. That's what the American people demand. That's what change is. (APPLAUSE)Change is building an economy that rewards not just wealth, but the work and the workers who created it. It's understanding that the struggles facing working families can't be solved by spending billions of dollars on more tax breaks for big corporations and wealthy CEOs, but by giving a middle-class tax break to those who need it, and investing in our crumbling infrastructure, and transforming how we use energy, and improving our schools, and renewing our commitment to science and innovation. (APPLAUSE)It's understanding that fiscal responsibility and shared prosperity can go hand-in-hand, as they did when Bill Clinton was president.(APPLAUSE)John McCain has spent a lot of time talking about trips to Iraq in the last few weeks, but maybe if he spent some time taking trips to the cities and towns that have been hardest hit by this economy -- cities in Michigan, and Ohio, and right here in Minnesota -- he'd understand the kind of change that people are looking for.(APPLAUSE)Maybe if he went to Iowa and met the student who works the night shift after a full day of class and still can't pay the medical bills for a sister who's ill, he'd understand she can't afford four more years of a health care plan that only takes care of the healthy and the wealthy. She needs us to pass health care right now, a plan that guarantees insurance to every American who wants it and brings down premiums for every family who needs it. That's the change we need, Minnesota. (APPLAUSE)Maybe if John McCain went to Pennsylvania and he met the man who lost his job, but can't even afford the gas to drive around and look for a new one, he'd understand we can't afford four more years of our addiction to oil from dictators. That man needs us to pass an energy policy that works with automakers to raise fuel standards, and makes corporations pay for their pollution, and oil companies invest their record profits in a clean energy future, an energy policy that will create millions of new jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced. That's the change we need, Minnesota.(APPLAUSE)And maybe if John McCain spent some time in the schools of South Carolina or St. Paul, Minnesota, or where he spoke tonight in New Orleans, Louisiana, he'd understand that we can't afford to leave the money behind for No Child Left Behind; that we owe it to our children to invest in early-childhood education; and recruit an army of new teachers and give them better pay and more support; and finally decide that, in this global economy, the chance to get a college education should not be a privilege for the few, but a birthright of every American. That's the change we need in America. That's why I'm running for president of the United States.(APPLAUSE)Now, the other side will come here in September and offer a very different set of policies and positions, and that is a good thing. That is a debate I look forward to.(APPLAUSE)It is a debate that the American people deserve on the issues that will help determine the future of this country and

the future for our children. But what you don't deserve is another election that's governed by fear, and innuendo, and division. What you won't hear from this campaign or this party is the kind of politics that uses religion as a wedge and patriotism as a bludgeon...(APPLAUSE)What you won't see from this campaign or this party is a politics that sees our opponents not as competitors to challenge, but enemies to polarize, because we may call ourselves Democrats and Republicans, but we are Americans first. We are always Americans first.(APPLAUSE)Despite what the good senator from Arizona may have said tonight, I've seen people of differing views and opinions find common cause many times during my two decades in public life, and I've brought many together myself. I've walked arm-in-arm with community leaders on the south side of Chicago and watched tensions fade as black, white, and Latino fought together for good jobs and good schools. I've sat across the table from law enforcement officials and civil rights advocates to reform a criminal justice system that sent 13 innocent people to death row. I've worked with friends in the other party to provide more children with health insurance and more working families with a tax break, to curb the spread of nuclear weapons and ensure that the American people know where their tax dollars are being spent, and reduce the influence of lobbyists who have all too often set the agenda in Washington.(APPLAUSE)In our country, I have found that this cooperation happens not because we agree on everything, but because, behind all the false labels and false divisions and categories that define us, beyond all the petty bickering and point-scoring in Washington, Americans are a decent, generous, compassionate people, united by common challenges and common hopes. And every so often, there are moments which call on that fundamental goodness to make this country great again.So it was for that band of patriots who declared in a Philadelphia hall the formation of a more perfect union, and for all those who gave on the fields of Gettysburg and Antietam their last full measure of devotion to save that same union.So it was for the greatest generation that conquered fear itself, and liberated a continent from tyranny, and made this country home to untold opportunity and prosperity.So it was for the workers who stood out on the picket lines, the women who shattered glass ceilings, the children who braved a Selma bridge for freedom's cause.So it has been for every generation that faced down the greatest challenges and the most improbable odds to leave their children a world that's better and kinder and more just.And so it must be for us.(APPLAUSE)America, this is our moment. This is our time, our time to turn the page on the policies of the past... (APPLAUSE) ... our time to bring new energy and new ideas to the challenges we face, our time to offer a new direction for this country that we love.The journey will be difficult. The road will be long. I face this challenge -- I face this challenge with profound humility and knowledge of my own limitations, but I also face it with limitless faith in the capacity of the American people. Because if we are willing to work for it, and fight for it, and believe in it, then I am absolutely certain that, generations from now, we will be able to look back and tell our children that this was the moment when we began to provide care for the sick and good jobs to the jobless...(APPLAUSE)... this was the moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal...(APPLAUSE)... this was the moment when we ended a war, and secured our nation, and restored our image as the last, best hope on Earth. (APPLAUSE)This was the moment, this was the time when we came together to remake this great nation so that it may always reflect our very best selves and our highest ideals. Thank you, Minnesota. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

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