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Huntsman hunting for 'a little love' in New Hampshire

By [Lloyd Jones](#)

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GOP contender calls for term limits in Washington and no back door for lobbyists

CONWAY — Former Utah Governor Jon Huntsman, who is running in the Republican presidential primary, came to town Sunday and shared his vision for American and told a crowd of about 75 at American Legion Post 46 what he will do on Day 1 if elected the next commander in chief. His three chief goals are tax reform; regulatory reform; and energy independence.

During the 80-minute town hall meeting, Huntsman was joined by Mary Kaye, his wife, and fielded a host of wide-ranging questions.

"I don't want anyone leaving this room without understanding with clarity why it is I am running for president of the United States of America," Huntsman, 51, who was elected to two terms as governor of Utah along with serving as ambassador to China, said. "I know why a lot of you turn out to these events, you just want to look at someone who is crazy enough to run for president. Then you know what, you're going to leave and you're going to say, 'That guy sounds pretty sane; he looks pretty normal, why would he be doing a crazy thing like this?'

"I'm running because I believe it is absolutely unacceptable that we're about to hand down the greatest nation that ever was, the United States of America, to the next generation — my kids, your kids, your grandkids, your friends, neighbors and relatives — in a condition that is less good, less competitive, less productive, more divided and more saddled with debt than at any time in recent history. We have a tradition in this great country, we always hand upward as it relates to the next generation. For the first time in recent history, we're passing downward everything we stand for, everything we have. I say if that isn't enough to shake you out of your sense of

complacency, I don't know what would. We have a divide in this country and it's called joblessness. This divide is unhealthy, it's unnatural, it's un-American."

Huntsman believes the United States is losing its competitive edge, and it starts with the tax system.

"When I was governor of the state of Utah," he said, "I went through tax reform. I promised the people of my state that we would deliver essentially a flat tax; that we'd lower the rate; we'd broaden the base; we'd clear out the loopholes and the deductions; and we would simplify. Of course, people would call you crazy when you talk like that. It took us two years, but we got it done. We came up with what the Cato Institute called the best tax code in the country. I want to take what I learned from that and I want to apply it nationally."

Two weeks after appearing on Saturday Night Live and plugging the outlets of North Conway nationwide, Huntsman smiled and said he came to town "to pick up a little bit of something, a little bit of love that I'm hoping you'll give me in return, for heaven's sake. If nothing else, I hope we helped to pick up business a little bit here."

Aside from cleaning up the tax code, Huntsman also wants to clear up the regulatory environment by repealing Obama Care and repealing Dodd/Frank Act; moving towards greater energy independence; deal with the debt; get out of Afghanistan; and reform Congress.

"I want to move this country towards greater energy independence," Huntsman said. "For eight presidents we've been talking about ways in which we can become more energy independent. Eisenhower talked about 20 percent being the maximum amount of oil that we ought to be importing from overseas. Nixon stood up and said 38 percent imported oil, that's unacceptable. Carter stands up and says 40 percent imported oil, that's unsustainable and we're going to create the Department of Energy to make sure it doesn't get any higher than that. Here we sit at 60 percent imported oil. I say the days are gone as far as I'm concerned where we can deal with that transfer of wealth, \$300 billion a year from this country to regimes that are transactional at best when we've got all of the products, all of the raw material in this country to allow us to get back on our feet.

"It's accessible, it's affordable and it's better for the air and it carries important national security implications," he continued. "And when we wake up to the fact that the United States of America has more natural gas than Saudi Arabia has oil, I say how stupid are we? When are we going to get with the picture and start transitioning for transportation; start transitioning for power and electricity and start transitioning more into basic manufacturing? It can be done, we just need a little bit more leadership for it."

Huntsman said American can no longer take half-steps and half measures to deal with the nation's escalating debt.

"We have a cancer growing internally that is metastasizing, that is going to shipwreck the next generation if we do nothing about it," he said. "The super-committee talks about \$1.5 trillion in cuts

over the next 10 years, I say nonsense. I said that's just scratching the surface. We've got to be bold and courageous about the percent that we allocate for our GDP and spending so it is sustainable, not 24 percent, but more like 19 percent. I like the Ryan Plan, it is an aggressive approach. I am the only Republican in the race who has embraced the Ryan Plan. It's aggressive and it's hard-hitting, but it's what this country needs."

Afghanistan

"I say we have fought the war on terror for 10 years and we have a lot to show for it," Huntsman said. "We need a president who is going to stand up before the American people and say we have made some gains. We have routed the Taliban; we have had free elections since 2004; we have upended and dismantled al-Qaeda; we have killed Osama bin Laden, but nation-building in Afghanistan with 100,000 troops, at a time when this nation so desperately needs to be built, is unacceptable for me and I think it's unacceptable for a lot of American citizens.

"I say we don't have a foreign policy," he continued. "We don't have a national security strategy that will be effective until we get our house in order right here at home. That means fixing our economy. All I want to do is have a foreign policy that says first and foremost we're going to put economics first. I'm tired of the days where we spend all of the resources to protect the rest of the world for others and they go in and take the economic advantages. I say I want a foreign policy that is first and foremost driven by economic policy."

Huntsman believes reform is needed in Congress, and that it should start with term limits.

"Where is the sanity and common sense in politics today?" he asked. "You've got Congress at the extreme ends rhetorically pointing fingers of blame at a time when the work of the people needs to get done. First and foremost we need term limits. As president I'm going to talk about term limits. This thing called incumbency, it grows very deep in terms of its roots and pretty soon you become part of the structure and it's impossible to ever leave your office in Washington. I say this country needs term limits.

"Number two, we need to do away with the revolving door that allows members of Congress to go right into the lobbying profession, trading in on their relationships and insider information," Huntsman continued and drew wide applause for the comment.

During a 70-minute editorial board at The Conway Daily Sun Tuesday morning, Huntsman expanded on the lobbying profession, recommending any former senator or congressman be banned for life from partaking as a lobbyist.

"We have a deficit of trust with our government," he said. "We as people in the United States of America no longer have trust in our institutions of power. We no longer have trust in Congress. What was the latest poll I saw, 8 percent approval — I'd still like to find those people. We are running on empty as it relates to our trust in our institutions of power and something needs to be done. This is a precarious position for the greatest nation on Earth to be."

If he could have dinner with any three people throughout history, Huntsman would like to dine with Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison and Steve Jobs, but also wouldn't mind making space at the table for Jimi Hendrix.

Huntsman calls it an honor to serve the country and has answered the call when four U.S. presidents sought him.

"I know there are a lot of people who say, 'That Huntsman guy, no way, no how would I ever vote for him because he worked for a Democrat (serving as ambassador to China under President Obama),' he said, smiling. "I did. I also worked for President (George) Bush and I also worked for President (George W.) Bush. You see I was born in the Navy and I was raised with the ethic that you always put your country first and that is a philosophy I will take to my grave. I wish more people believed in putting their country first."

Huntsman is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. He and Mary Kaye have seven children, including two adopted girls from China and India. When he is not working or spending time with his family, Huntsman enjoys riding his Harley and considers himself a street food connoisseur, frequenting taco stands. He is also an avid motocross racer, which has been a passion his entire life.

Huntsman yielded the floor to "the finest human being I've ever know," his wife, who talked a little about her husband.

"First of all he's very humble and you don't see that a lot of times in politicians," she said. "As you can tell he's a straight-shooter. He's going to tell you exactly what he feels, he always has and I will tell you we've been married 28 years and he's the same man that I married 28 years ago. I was attracted to him because of character, integrity, honesty, something that he had way back in high school which is very rare as well."

Candidate Huntsman fielded questions from the audience, with the first coming from a man who would like to see the candidates focus on the drug epidemic in this country. The man lost a child to a drug overdose.

"We just can't ignore the drug problem and sweep it under the rug," the man said. "This is a beautiful community. We had a drug murder back in April, but our politicians are sweeping it under the rug, it's this code of silence — it's killing our kids, it's killing our families and our communities. I like you as a person. I think you'd be an excellent president but we need to talk about the drug issue and we need to do something about it. My son shouldn't have died and he shouldn't have been treated like a piece of garbage, automatically stamped accidental overdose when there was someone who delivered that controlled substance. It's an issue no one is talking about."

Huntsman paused and then relayed this subject is very personal to him. "I know it exists for you and it exists for me because my sister died because of addition," he said. "Every day I think about it. You know when I ran for governor nobody talked about it during that campaign but when I was elected governor it all of a sudden became very real because you look at the totality of the

population, you look at some of the challenges that people have; you look at law enforcement issues. We have the House of Hope about three doors down from the governor's mansion. I used to walk down to the House of Hope which was a methamphetamine treatment center for moms, and I used to sit in that living room to heard from those moms about their personal stories. Some didn't make it, some died on their way to recovery, but the stories that I heard and the lessons that I learned and how I was able to apply it to be a better governor. It's a real issue and rest-assured when I get elected president, I'll take the same step as when I was governor, I'll be mindful of it. I will work with our governors and I will make sure it is a priority."

Huntsman was asked what he would look for in a supreme court justice. He said he looks for three things: intellectual acuity; experience; and temperament.

A local educator asked Huntsman about education. He was the first governor to opt out of the No Child Left Behind mandate.

"My approach to education has been dramatically informed," he said with a grin, "by this clinical trial that we've had playing out at home called raising seven kids. Have we seen it all and experienced everything, absolutely we have. Public, private, home schooled, international schools, every variation of education that exists in the world. I walk away with a few thoughts having seen all that and having been a dad.

"I came to the realization that education works best when we move it more toward to local level," he continued. "These things called unfunded mandates, or even funded mandates if you meet certain criteria. If you have a school that reaches adequate average yearly progress so they say — we have some great schools in our state — but it was impossible to meet the criteria for adequate yearly progress, it was a huge downer. People felt like losers, like their schools didn't matter because they weren't measuring up, yet they were perfectly good schools. When I am president I'm going to move as much of the education decision making to the locals because parents, teachers, administrators and school board members do not want their schools to fail and beyond that I'm convinced we need more in the way of choice and in the way of opportunity."

Huntsman has said he would end the Environmental Protection Agency's gross regulatory overreach, but stresses that he does care about the environment.

"Like anything," he said, "there has to be a balance. People sometimes think it's an either/or. You've got to find the appropriate balance between expanding the economy, creating jobs and also preserving the environment. Everybody wants clean air and an environment that's worth passing onto the next generation. We can't make it so simplistic as either/or, it's a constant balancing act."

Huntsman, who has held over 100 gatherings in New Hampshire, has a message for the voters, leading up to the Jan. 10 primary.

"Continue to take your responsibility as first primary in the nation seriously because you punch above your weight. When New Hampshire weighs in with their vote, people in this country pay attention. I can honestly say that coming from the other side of the country. When New Hampshire

weighs in you probably don't realize it living right here in the middle of it, when you weigh in people pay attention. Why, because you've had access to the candidates, you get to see them, you get to hear them on a regular basis — therefore your level of analysis and scrutiny are that much better. So when you weigh in, it's a vote that really does mean something and whoever carries the state and does first, second and third, that is pretty much a clear message to the rest of the country that they've passed the muster in the most rigorous of grassroots, old-fashioned politics."

To learn more about Huntsman's candidacy, visit jon2012.com



Jon Huntsman meets with The Conway Daily Sun staff Monday. (JAMIE GEMMITI PHOTO)