



Trump's 'Gettysburg address' makes closing argument for choosing him and unveils first-100-days agenda as he promises 'the kind of change that only arrives once in a lifetime'

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Donald Trump planted a flag on hallowed ground Saturday morning by laying out near the Gettysburg National Battlefield what he would do in his first 100 days as President of the United States.

Touting 'the kind of change that only arrives once in a lifetime,' Trump told an audience of about 300 invited guests that he will 'drain the swamp' in Washington, replacing the current government 'with a new government of, by and for the people.'

The symbolism factor was high, with a campaign aide telling reporters Friday night that the Civil War battle in Gettysburg memorialized by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 'was the moment when the war turned.'

The Republican nominee left the podium and made a beeline in his motorcade for the National Military Park – the battlefield memorial – spending about as much time there as it took Lincoln to speak his 272 words.

Trump's own war – a two-front clash against both Hillary Clinton and the mass media – will come to a climax on November 8 when most Americans will choose a leader for the next four years.

He summed up the substance of his campaign in a 'Contract With The American Voter' – a point-by-point set of initiatives that track with the themes he has focused on for 16 months.

'It is a contract between myself and the American voter, and begins with restoring honesty, accountability and change to Washington,' Trump said.

Included are six anti-corruption pledges, seven actions related to jobs and trade and five on immigration and the 'rule of law.' He ended his contract with a list of 10 bills he said he would try to quickly shepherd through Congress.

Aides promised the Republican nominee would put more meat on the bare bones of some of his mainstay pledges, but little in the speech broke new ground.

Instead, Trump formalized his signature pledges by announcing a legislative package that he said he would help shepherd through Congress.

He also reiterated a laundry list of executive actions that he has sketched out in speeches stretching back more than a year.

The small crowd gathered in a hotel ballroom was a far cry from the 10,000 rowdy fans he typically draws, but they brought moments of enthusiasm.

The audience rose to their feet and chanted 'Trump! Trump! Trump!' as he entered. One man shouted: 'We love you!'

And in a sign of how deeply the GOP's most negative campaign slogan has taken root, half the crowd chanted 'Lock her up!' at the first mention of Hillary Clinton's name.

Trump reinforced his improbable but now undeniable populist bona fides, casting Clinton as the embodiment of a corrupt political establishment that's willing to throw the middle class under bus the day after Americans vote.

'Hillary Clinton is running against all of the American people, and all of the American voters,' he said.

The billionaire real estate tycoon minced no words about his fears that rampant voter fraud could cost him and other Republicans a fair shot at winning 17 days from now.

Citing Pew Research Center numbers, he said that '1.8 million dead people are registered to vote.'

'And some of them are voting. I wonder how that happens!'

He also referred to 2.8 million people who are 'registered in more than one state' and said that '14 per cent of non-citizens are registered to vote.'

Saturday's two loudest applause lines were Trump's pledge to repeal and replace the Obamacare medical insurance law and to end federal funding for 'sanctuary cities' – Democrat-run municipalities that offer safe harbor to illegal immigrants.

Saturday marked the second time Trump has engaged in the customary 'first 100 days' routine: In June he tacked a laundry list on to a speech castigating the Clintons for profiting from a 'special interest monopoly' in Washington.

That set of promises was predictably vague, including pledges to 'appoint judges who will uphold the Constitution,' 'stand up to countries that cheat on trade' and 'pass massive tax reform to create millions of new jobs.'

But on Saturday, for instance, those vagaries were supplemented by some concrete initiatives.

His famed wall on the U.S. border got a budget line-item with a proposed piece of legislation that will fund its construction – 'with the full understanding that the country of Mexico will be reimbursing the United States.'

Trump's light overtures on tax reform were ornamented with a few new numbers: a 35 per cent tax cut for middle-class families with two children, and a reduced 10 per cent rate for American companies that bring overseas money back home.

Before rattling off his policy to-do list, Trump aired more grievances against the journalism profession and the parade of women who have accused him of unwanted kissing and groping years – and in some cases decades – ago.

He said after the election, he plans to sue them.

'Every woman lied when they came forward to hurt my campaign. Total fabrication. The events never happened. Never,' Trump declared.

'All of these liars will be sued after the election is over.'

He also said he would litigate against the Democratic Party for allegedly paying saboteurs to start fistfights at his campaign rallies.

On Saturday he enlisted two advisers to tee him up.

Retired Lieutenant General Keith Kellogg delivered the first pre-speech warmup, a somber seven-minute note of reverence on what Trump hopes will be remembered as the day his battle with America's establishment had a rebirth.

'I can't think of a more historic place,' Kellogg said.

'It's really a historic time in our life,' he added as he drew parallels that stretch backward 153 years to a similar 'time when the future of our nation was in doubt.'

'We are waging another battle – a political one,' he said.

Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani framed the day in more practical terms, quoting Lincoln's famous three-minute speech.

'I don't know if I could call government, right now, "of the people, by the people and for the people",' Giuliani said.

'I think it's government of the lobbyists, permanent politicians ... the big gigantic multinational corporations, and the unions that can donate massive amounts of money.'

'People are somewhere down there – somewhere,' he lamented.

The policy agenda Trump described, a senior campaign aide said Friday night, was far beyond what Democrat Hillary Clinton could put on the table.

She can't articulate her policy goals, the aide said, because her donors haven't yet told her what to think.

'Secretary Clinton has no core,' the aide charged during a conference call, quoting a Democratic aide in a hacked email recently released by WikiLeaks.

'Her policies are determined by the checks that are given to her, and nothing else. And of course no one actually disagrees with that. Everyone understands that she's a special-interest-driven candidate.'

The aide described Saturday's event as 'our chance to lay out a positive vision for the country, from Mr. Trump, about what he's going to do in his first 100 days in office, and how he's going to go about doing it.'

Clinton won't follow suit – 'she can't even go there' – the aide predicted, 'because she doesn't even know what checks she's going to get between now and when she would hypothetically be elected.'

The aide promised 'new material' on Saturday but quickly played it coy, saying: 'I don't want to say what it will be.'

'What you're seeing tomorrow, is Mr. Trump identifying the 10 most important principles for the first 100 days, and then offering policy solutions to go with those.'

Trump's Gettysburg address comes with just 17 days to go before the Nov. 8 election. He and Clinton have debated three times. And, most worrisome for Republicans, an estimated 4 million Americans have already cast ballots through early voting programs.

As the call was going on, Trump himself appeared on the Fox News Channel with host Sean Hannity to preview Saturday's speech in an equally vague fashion.

'We're going to be lowering taxes. We're going to be strengthening our borders,' he said, remixing buzzword bromides that have been speech staples for months.

'We're going to be getting rid of regulations,' Trump continued. 'The regulations are going to be gone ... we need them for security or we need them for certain things like the environment, but our regulations are just taking over our companies. We can't compete anymore.'

'We're going to be terminating, repealing and replacing Obamacare. We're going to be saving our Second Amendment, There are a lot of things, Sean. It's gonna be - I think it's gonna be very special.'

A second senior campaign aide on Friday night's conference call compared Trump's promised policy brain-dump to a famous 1994 Republican congressional gambit responsible in part for the GOP taking over the lower chamber of Congress after 40 years in the minority.

'I worked on the original "Contract with America" back in the mid-'90s,' that second aide said.

'And I think the most important aspect from that contract, in addition to the 10 principles, was the accountability provision – that basically the Republican candidates in 1994 said, "If we fail to bring these to a vote in the first 100 days, you can kick us out".'

Acknowledging that 'it's a little bit different when you're the president,' the second aide said that 'the sentiment will be the same, which is that changes need to come very rapidly. And progress needs to come very rapidly.'

The policy proposals Trump will unveil Saturday, the aide said, 'are not going to wait until deep into his term, or in his second term.'

The comparison with the Contract with America could be fraught with trouble, even though its architect Newt Gingrich is advising Trump's campaign.

When Gingrich became Speaker of the House, his rank-and-file pledged to enact eight budget reforms and bring 10 specific bills to a vote.

The bills met with varying levels of success: Some became law while others died in the U.S. Senate or met the business end of President Bill Clinton's veto pen. The U.S. Supreme Court later ruled one was unconstitutional.

By 2000 the president of the libertarian Cato Institute determined that the 'Contract' never accomplished what its authors set out to.

'The combined budgets of the 95 major programs that the Contract with America promised to eliminate,' Ed Crane wrote, 'have increased by 13%.'

Like the GOP prior to 1994's electoral takeover, much of Trump's October has been spent playing defense. But the aide suggested he's jumping back on offense while the Clinton campaign is trying to coast to victory.

'We're just running two different campaigns in the home stretch,' the aide said.

'They're going to sit on their lead. They're going to wait out the clock. You have a lot of folks commenting that she doesn't have to do anything except show up or not show up.

'We just have a different take on it. We just think that taking the case directly to the voters ... is really the way to go.'

'If you listen to them out on the stump – Vice President Biden today, Senator Kaine, President Obama – they're talking most predominantly about Donald Trump,' the aide said.

'And Donald Trump wants to talk predominantly about issues that affect everyday Americans. And that is the difference, and that will continue to be the difference.'