



REMARKS FOR U.S. REP. DIANA DEGETTE

PRE-EVENT RALLY FOR SEN. JOHN EDWARDS

WOMEN FOR KERRY-EDWARDS

26 AUGUST 2004

Hello Colorado. It is so great to see all of you here today to rally to help put Democrats John Kerry and John Edwards in the White House. While this is an absolutely critical election for all Americans, it is particularly important for women. That is why we must also work hard every day from now until November 2 to elect more Democrats to public office.

Today, we have two fantastic candidates for Colorado with us: Jennifer Mello, candidate for CU Regent, is the only woman running for statewide office in Colorado this year. I certainly hope that this is the last year that there is only one woman on the statewide ballot. We are also going to elect Joanna Conti as the second Democratic woman to our Congressional delegation when she defeats Tom Tancredo in the 6th District. Make absolutely sure – double check – that you vote for every race up and all the way down the ballot. We need every strong Democratic woman – and even man – elected on November 2.

We're here today because it is Women's Equality Day. When you look at all of the accomplishments, the strength and intelligence of Teresa Heinz-Kerry and Elizabeth Edwards, I can confidently say that John Kerry and John Edwards get what this day means. They have chosen strong women as their partners and are standing side by side with all of

us in the battle for equality. And after the last four years, the battle is a lot tougher than it was in 2000.

It is clear from the Bush Administration's policies that W may stand for a lot of things, but it certainly does not stand for women.

As President, George Bush has waged an unyielding campaign to reduce or eliminate many of our critical rights and programs. He has removed scientific reason from the development of policy and replaced it with political calculation and a fealty to the right wing of his party. As a result our reproductive rights are quickly but too quietly eroding. Whether it is family planning overseas or access to over-the-counter emergency contraception here at home, George Bush is telling all of us that we are second-class citizens.

What troubles me so much is that these policies eroding women's rights and undermine women's ability to compete in education and the workplace imply that, somehow, we matter less; that our roles as citizens, providers, educators and wage earners for our families are of less value.

That is why this election is so vitally important. It is why you need to not only dedicate your own time to this campaign, but also bring as many of your friends and neighbors and relatives into this process as possible. If all of us volunteer and vote, we will win.

The great news is that we have a ticket that is committed to our issues. John Kerry and John Edwards truly believe that, in America, women should be able to go as far as their talents take them. They will restore the optimism and opportunity to America that has been so sorely missing over the last four years.

Under a Kerry-Edwards Administration, the government would stop trying to play doctor in the doctor-patient relationship. Government will not dictate whether women get access to contraceptives, will not determine whether doctors can provide reproductive health information to their patients and will not ban medical procedures necessary to save a woman's life.

Unfortunately, the Bush-Cheney Administration has spent much of its energy tearing down the very programs and institutions that have helped women – and all American families – create opportunities for themselves.

John Kerry and John Edwards will turn equal pay for equal work from the empty slogan it has been for the last four years into a reality. Gender should have no place in determining how much any person earns. By increasing transparency and improving enforcement we can make sure that companies follow the spirit as well as the letter of the law. They will also restore the overtime protections that have helped provide working families the extra income they desperately need to make ends meet.

They also understand that, families cannot move forward if they do not have access to affordable after-school programs and quality educations. We must open the after-school programs to the half million children who have been denied entrance since 2001. And when John Kerry and John Edwards tell the American people that no child will be left behind, it will not be an empty campaign slogan, but a real commitment to fund public education programs for every student in our country.

One of our nation's greatest accomplishments over the past 30 years has been the destruction of barriers to women's participation in education and school athletic programs. The Title IX program has been critical to this success, yet even it has been undermined. With a Democratic White House, this will change. Education opportunities for all Americans and yes, that includes women, should be expanded not denied. Title IX plays an integral role in opening new opportunities to women in college education and athletics. It should be strengthened and beginning in 2005, it will.

A lot has happened over the last four years to make our lives more challenging and less secure. Our nation demands leaders who put the best interest of all Americans above personal self-interest.

Only John Kerry and John Edwards have spent their entire career working to make our nation safer and stronger for every American. That is why with your help and hard work for the next 68 days, John Kerry and John Edwards will be our next President and Vice President of the United States.