

Rick Nolan for Congress
Prepared Announcement Text
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While exploring a potential candidacy for Congress here in the 8th District, I've traveled through all 18 counties consulting with DFL party leaders and activists, Labor leaders, and hundreds of regular people – loggers, miners, small business owners, seniors, students, working families. Over and over again, they've told me the same thing in one way or another:

"We don't feel like we matter anymore in Washington. Wall Street matters. Big banks and big corporations matter. The rich and the powerful matter – so they just keep getting richer and more powerful. If you're too big to fail, you matter.

"But if you're struggling – if you're unemployed – if you're losing your home – if you can't make the rent or you depend on a food shelf to get you through the month, you don't matter at all."

Well, I have a message today for all those people who have come to believe they don't matter anymore in Washington and in America:

You DO matter. And today, I am announcing my candidacy for Congress in Minnesota's 8th District BECAUSE YOU MATTER. And because we can't wait any longer to begin turning this desperately hurting nation around and making 8th District priorities Washington's priorities once again.

I left Congress three decades ago, proud to have served honorably and effectively. And very proud that my colleagues, along with nationally syndicated columnist and Congressional critic Jack Anderson had named me one of the "most respected" Members of Congress for both "effectiveness" and "integrity."

At the age of 36, I had a young family that needed much more of my time and attention - and a lot left to learn about life and business on the outside. I never intended to seek public office again.

My view has changed because times have changed.

America is at a tipping point both economically and socially. The American dream is in jeopardy in what I believe to be the most dangerous and challenging time since the Great Depression.

The American dream and America's middle class – the people who really built this country – are under assault by big corporations and powerful special interests.

Social Security is under assault by those determined to hand it over to Wall Street.

Medicare is under assault by those determined to hand senior care over to big insurance companies and a ridiculous, unworkable voucher system.

Working families and Unions are under assault by the "right to work for less" crowd.

American jobs are under assault by politicians who hand over big tax breaks and trade concessions to corporations so they can transfer their operations to Latin America, Asia and the Pacific Rim.

Public employees are under assault by ignorant public officials who blame firefighters, law enforcement officers, waste haulers and teachers for the economic mess, instead of where that blame belongs – with lobbyists for powerful wealthy individuals and corporations – and with terribly misplaced economic priorities in Washington.

Hard-earned worker pensions are under assault by people who want to balance the budget on the backs of folks who work and struggle for decades to put away enough money to finally retire with dignity and security.

I cannot stand idly by while this corporations and special interests continue to have their way with us. I believe I have the ability to join and help lead the fight to turn our country around and put it on the right track, to make sure regular people do matter again in Washington.

I'm tired of hearing politicians from both parties talk about "tough budget choices" where the people on the tough end of those choices are always those least able to survive them.

We need to face down the debt and balance the budget. And those decisions are all about priorities.

Do we continue to spend trillions of dollars on wars in the Middle East, and on maintaining a military footprint of hundreds of thousands of troops and military bases in countries that pose no threat to us?

Or do we end those wars, bring those troops home, and re-invest those trillions in roads, bridges, railroads, schools and low-interest loans to small businesses to create real jobs again in America?

Do we continue the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest of Americans at a cost of trillions of dollars over the next decade?

Or do we reform the tax code to require the rich to pay their fair share, and give the middle class a break for a change?

These are choices Congress makes. And right now, they are making destructive, terrible public policy choices in Washington.

Of course we need to compromise when we make decisions. Compromise isn't a dirty word in politics. It's a good and necessary principle. The problem is that too many Democrats are compromising before the negotiations even begin. They're walking into the room and announcing, "here's what we're willing to give up."

That's what happened last week when the President put Social Security and Medicare on the chopping block – where they have never been before under Democratic administrations. Social Security and Medicare are social, intergenerational compacts with the American people. I will never vote to support cuts or schemes to take care of everybody over 55 and throw the rest of the nation under the bus. We are a better country than that.

Moreover, we are a country in desperate, urgent need of good paying jobs for millions of unemployed and under-employed Americans. The economy will not grow strong again until we restore income and income security to the middle class. Today, non-taxpaying multinational corporations are sitting on trillions of dollars in cash while they demand more tax cuts before they will be willing to invest that money.

Obviously, they don't need more tax cuts. What they need is a middle class in America that can afford to buy their products. Right now, the rich are getting richer. The poor are getting poorer. And the middle class is being eliminated.

We can create and keep good Middle Class jobs by reversing the current tax and trade policies that provide incentives for companies to move manufacturing overseas. That's what other countries have done and what we must do.

We create jobs by rebuilding our infrastructure, and investing in mass transit and high-speed rail here in America. We finance these policies by eliminating the Bush tax cuts for the rich and putting an end to costly wars of choice and an ever-expanding military empire.

The money and the needs are there. The simple truth is, we need to take back control of our government and rearrange our priorities. That's what this campaign is all about.

I do truly believe America's best days can still be ahead. But time is running out. We need to turn our country around and put it back on track with the urgency of NOW. And I'm determined to help Minnesota's 8th District lead the way.

I'm a son of the 8th. Born and raised here. My family and my business are here. I tap maple syrup in the spring, harvest wild rice in the fall and cheer my local C.I. Rangers hockey team all winter. My neighbors and I never miss a hunting or a fishing opener. Those are 8th District holidays we all look forward to each year with great anticipation. I know the people up here. I know their hopes and dreams and aspirations because I have the same ones for my family.

So again, my message to them is that I'm running because they matter. Because America matters. Now before we hit the trail, I'll be glad to take your questions.