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# Palin introduces herself, jabs critics

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Discussing her background and digging into national policy, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin addresses the Republican National Convention on Wednesday in St. Paul.

 By **Martha T. Moore**, USA TODAY

ST. PAUL — After five days of scrutiny, criticism and adulation, Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin introduced herself to the nation with a combative, funny and patriotic speech highlighting experience she says is more valuable than the Democratic ticket's.

Palin talked about her background in the town of Wasilla, where she got her start in politics on the local PTA, and her record in the statehouse, where she overhauled Alaska's ethics laws. She served as mayor of Wasilla from 1996 to 2002 and was elected governor in 2006.

**PALIN'S SPEECH:** [Read the full text \(PDF\)](#)

Republican John McCain has touted his running mate as a leader in efforts to reduce reliance on imported oil, pointing to her efforts to build a \$30 billion pipeline to get natural gas from Alaska's Prudhoe Bay to the rest of the United States.

"The fact that drilling won't solve every problem is no excuse to do nothing at all," Palin said.

"In a McCain-Palin administration, we're going to lay more pipelines, build more nuclear plants, create jobs with clean coal and move forward on solar, wind, geothermal and other alternative sources," she said.

Palin also echoed an accusation McCain has consistently leveled against Barack Obama: that the Democrat's promise of change is really about his own political ambition.

"There are some candidates who use change to promote their careers. And then there are those, like John McCain, who use their careers to promote change," she said.




Thursday morning on ABC's *Good Morning America* Democratic Vice Presidential candidate Joe Biden said Palin "had a great night ... she had a very skillfully written speech."

But Biden said he was more impressed about what "he didn't hear," Palin talking about health care, how people will fill their gas tanks and how they will get their kids through college — issues Sen. Barack Obama, the Democratic candidate for president, has been stressing in his campaign.

Biden did say that he thought Palin was the target of sexism regarding comments made about her ability to be vice president while raising a family of five children, including her newborn baby who has Downs syndrome.

"The truth is some of this stuff that the press has said about the governor are outrageous, over the top, totally unfair and it has been sexist," Biden said. "And I think the way the governor has handled it has been admirable."

Palin's speech Wednesday night is the closest look many Americans will get at the Alaska governor, chosen last week in a surprise move by McCain. In interviews after Palin's speech, voters across the USA gave her generally positive reviews.

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For Kathryn Caswell, 40, of Charlottesville, Va., an independent-leaning Republican, Palin lived up to her advance billing by the party.

"Not only did she come across vice presidential, I could even see her in the role of president," Caswell said. "She really was able to stand up even against Obama."

Stephen Reiter, 35, a marketing manager and Republican from Woodbury, Minn., said Palin "came across as a real person up there." An occasional Democratic voter, Reiter said "she was strong and she was funny. She will connect very well with the normal people, the regular people, the working class people."

In the convention hall, GOP delegates cheered, roared at Palin's zingers against Obama and laughed at her jokes. When she became governor, she said, she got rid of some traditional perks of office.

"That luxury jet was over the top," she said. "I put it on eBay."

Charles Chiusano, a delegate from Fairfield, Conn., said her deconstruction of the Democratic platform bodes well for her candidacy. "She knows what the important points are and knows how to refute them," he said. "It showed she will be a good debater."

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Palin's family was in St. Paul for her big moment. They included Bristol, the governor's 17-year-old daughter whose pregnancy was announced Monday, and Bristol's boyfriend, Levi Johnston. During Wednesday night's speeches, Bristol and Levi held hands while seated in the VIP box.

Palin's partisan speech provoked partisan reactions. Democratic voters said they waited in vain to hear about issues important to them.

Palin didn't mention health care, home foreclosures or equal pay for women, said Steve Thrapp, 62, a registered Democrat and retired airline pilot from Fort Collins, Colo. "That wasn't her. That was obviously a speech written by committee." He called Palin's attacks on Obama "mean spirited and ill-conceived."

Maureen Shaw, a 27-year-old publicist living in Hoboken, N.J., said she was struck by what Palin did not say. "She did not address anti-choice issues," says Shaw, who runs the reproductive rights committee for the National Organization for Women's New York City chapter. "Palin's anti-choice position is truly the bridge to nowhere."

Shaw was among those who supported Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton during the Democratic primaries. But she will cast her vote for Obama and says that McCain's choice of Palin was a patronizing gambit to attract female voters.

"It's insulting," she said.

Christine Todd Whitman, a Republican former governor of New Jersey, said it will take persuasion to win over independents, particularly from states with strong support for gun control and abortion rights. Palin is a member of the National Rifle Association and opposes abortion, except when the woman's life is at risk.

"It'll take a little bit of time to say, does she approach problems ... the way I would want them approached, does she think somewhat the same way," Whitman said. "Because, clearly, we'll differ on some of the basic social issues."

Palin and Democrat Joe Biden will meet for a debate Oct. 2 in St. Louis.

David Tyson, former West Virginia GOP chairman, said the scrutiny Palin has received seemed to inspire her. "I think it made her stronger," Tyson said.

For a candidate whose depth of experience has been questioned, Palin's speech "covered all the bases," said Michael Bayham, a Louisiana delegate.