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If you're a true Republican, you'll vote for Kerry

By Pete McCloskey

Although I'm a lifelong Republican, I will vote for John Kerry on Nov. 2. The choice seems simple under traditional principles of the Republican Party.

I first met John Kerry in the spring of 1971. Each of us was just back from Vietnam — he as a Navy officer and I as a member of Congress — and were appalled by what we had seen there. I found Kerry to be idealistic, courageous and, above all else, truthful to a fault. He demonstrated courage in Vietnam, but as Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. once said, the courage to speak against prevailing opinion in civil strife is often greater than that demanded on the battlefield.

During Kerry's public career after his election to the Senate, he has clearly grown and matured. I believe he is incapable of deliberate deceit or dissembling. This alone represents a refreshing hope for a return of public faith in our government.

That Kerry has attained the solid support of former Secretary of Defense William Perry, with whom he has worked for years on issues of nuclear proliferation, confirms his ability to study, listen and reach sound judgments.

The primary issue in November will be who can best lead us in the bitter struggle against the Islamic fundamentalists who perpetrated 9/11 and are willing to die to kill Americans throughout the world. The Iraq occupation has caused thousands of new suicide bombers to join the jihad against us; with Kerry as president, the nation will properly refocus the battle away from Iraq and against the true enemy, Al-Qaida.

As Kerry has stated, we desperately need the cooperation of every country in the world, friend and enemy, where terrorist cells can germinate and operate.

We need to be more humble in asking for this assistance. A return to the "speaksoftly but carry a big stick" philosophy of Teddy Roosevelt should be far more effective than the bluster, bravado and

"shock and awe" firepower of the neocon advisers who have commandeered White House foreign policy.

There are many other reasons to support John Kerry.

The incredible budget deficits projected to be \$2.3 trillion or more in the next decade, disrespect for the United Nations, international law and Geneva Conventions, secrecy in government — all of these are positions Kerry would certainly reverse.

As a Catholic, Kerry is sure to maintain the constitutional separation between church and state, recognizing that while we are indeed a nation under God, everyone is free to choose his or her own faith in God.

He will also end the inordinate secrecy that has characterized this administration. It seems incredible that a matter as important as our national energy policy could be decided in secret by Vice President Dick Cheney's energy task force — individuals whose very names have been withheld from the public.

Kerry's record on environmental issues is superb, an area where the Bush administration has been a disaster.

Finally, there's the matter of John Ashcroft and prospective judicial appointees who could undo *Roe vs. Wade*, a woman's right of choice and many of the civil liberties we have earned over 225 years.

Each of the foregoing reasons for supporting Kerry is based on traditional Republican values of fiscal responsibility, limited governmental intrusion and the accountability of individuals.

In truth, John Kerry and John Edwards come far closer to the Republicanism of Teddy Roosevelt, Earl Warren, Barry Goldwater, George Bush the elder and, yes, even Richard Nixon, than does the present incumbent.

Ending secrecy and bringing truth and honesty back to the White House are reasons enough to elect Kerry and Edwards.

PETE MCCLOSKEY represented the San Francisco Peninsula in Congress from 1967 to 1983. He earned a Navy Cross, Silver Star and two Purple Hearts as a Marine rifle platoon leader during the Korean War. He wrote this column for the Mercury News.