

[Hillary Tunes Up](#)

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Body

No one who listened to Senator Clinton's speech to abortion rights supporters at Albany yesterday can have any doubt that she's running for president. In speaking about abortion previously, Mrs. Clinton has tended toward the combative. "There are a number of forces at work in our society that would try to turn back the clock and undermine a woman's right to choose," she said during her Senate campaign, "and we must remain vigilant." At a Washington rally last spring, she inveighed against Republicans who oppose abortion rights. Just two weeks ago, at a dinner sponsored by the International Women's Health Coalition, Mrs. Clinton attacked the Bush administration for undermining the reproductive rights of women worldwide.

But yesterday, before the 28th annual conference of the Family Planning Advocates of New York State, Mrs. Clinton sounded more like her husband, outpouring empathy for those who oppose abortion. "I, for one, respect those who believe with all their heart and conscience that there are no circumstances under which abortion should be available," she said. Instead of clashing, Mrs. Clinton said, advocates on both sides of the issue ought to unite on "common ground." Quoth she: "The fact is, the best way to reduce the number of abortions is to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies in the first place." The senator called abortion a "sad, even tragic choice to many, many women."

It's become increasingly clear that at least some Democratic leaders are waking up to the need to move their party away from an extreme position on abortion so as to reach out to the "values voters" who are said to have won President Bush the election. Mrs. Clinton was once an exemplar of the combative stance that alienates such voters, but she's now effecting a turnaround. The senator did criticize Mr. Bush on the abortion issue - but she did so from the right: "Unfortunately in the last few years, while we are engaged in ideological debate instead of one that uses facts and evidence and common sense, the rate of abortion is on the rise in some states," she said. "In the [first] three years since President Bush took office, eight states have seen an increase in abortion rates and four saw a decrease."

Mrs. Clinton contrasted this to the first three years of her husband's administration, when "we saw the rate of abortion consistently fall." Mrs. Clinton also said that religious faith was the primary reason that teenagers abstain from sexual intercourse, and therefore avoid unwanted pregnancy. These comments come on the heels of a speech she made Wednesday at a fund-raiser in Boston, in which she promoted the idea of faith-based solutions to social problems. According to a dispatch in the Boston Globe, Mrs. Clinton invoked God more than a half-dozen times. "I've always been a praying person," she told the crowd.

Indeed, said Mrs. Clinton, there has been a "false division" between faith based initiatives and the separation of church and state. "There is no contradiction between support for faith-based initiatives and upholding our constitutional principles," she said. Rather, the faithful must be allowed to "live out their faith in the public square." Attorney General-designate Gonzales couldn't have put it better. Not that we seek to mock the senator. On the contrary, there's something about having to run for office that can bring understanding, as happened to Mrs. Clinton after she kissed the wife of Yasser Arafat. Once she became a candidate, Mrs. Clinton was forced to meet with

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people who were able to steer her to a better position, and today she is a resolute supporter of Israel and a leader, within her party, in the war on terrorism.

As she seeks to make herself viable on a national scale, Mrs. Clinton has already staked out a position to the right of Mr. Bush on illegal immigration. In a November interview on Fox News, she said that she doesn't "think that we have protected our borders or our ports." She reiterated her stance last month. "I am, you know, adamantly against illegal immigrants," she told ABC Radio, a position that wants for - how should we put it - nuance. She called for a new entry-and-exit system that would track immigrant workers. "People have to stop employing illegal immigrants," she said.

We have plenty of differences with Mrs. Clinton, but if all this can be taken as opening salvos of the 2008 president contest, terrific. It increases the pressure on the Republicans to deliver on their agenda. On Sunday at Palm Beach, Fla., Mrs. Clinton told the hundreds who gathered to hear her that "on both political and substantive grounds, my husband did it just right." In an ironic way, she seems to be running as an incumbent of sorts. She herself noted that she plans to copy her husband when it comes both to substance and to politics, and - though she didn't say this - what he was noted for was coopting the Republican agenda.

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