

Reagan Institute---A Time for Choosing
Simi Valley, California
November 30, 2022

Thank you. It is good to be back to the Reagan Library and Institute. Our 40th President has been an inspiration throughout my life. Thank you for making this library a place where we all can come for strength..... and hope for a world at risk.

President Reagan is remembered for his cheerful “Morning in America” view of the world; but he wasn’t afraid to face challenges with a penetrating seriousness. He spoke of the burdens of everyday Americans like record inflation; high interest rates; gasoline shortages; and disrespect abroad for American leadership. President Reagan understood that the American Century was already underway and that the Soviet Union and totalitarian regimes like them, were a fundamental threat to freedom loving people around the world. While I just described our world in the late 70’s, it could also ring true today.

The American people chose Ronald Reagan to lead our nation in 1980. I was the Bentonville City Coordinator for the Reagan campaign and I will never forget the optimism of that election night when America said we want a new direction. From the day he took office, Reagan took the oath seriously and he showed us all how much can get done when you don't care who gets the credit.

The results were economic recovery at home, a renewed respect on the world stage and a powerful legacy that inspires us even today.

During those years, I was honored to work with President Reagan as a young United States Attorney fighting domestic terrorism and violent crime. He fought to rebuild our economy and restore America's leadership in the world. *I learned a lot from President Reagan and there are many lessons that apply to today's world.*

We have seen another election cycle pass in America and we all look forward to the peaceful transfer of power in the House of

Representatives in January which just might give us another Californian as our new Speaker.

And as the American people often do, we saw a remarkable pragmatism in their choices. They rejected extreme candidates and voted for democracy and the future. Many Americans chose leaders who reflected the voters' dislike for a process that has gone from dignified leadership to the worst kind of schoolyard antics.

The voters embraced leaders who were problem solvers and got things done. This is illustrated by the fact that no Republican Governor running for reelection was defeated. In fact, favorability of the Republican Party is as strong as ever. By a double-digit advantage, the public trusts the GOP to handle our most significant economic and foreign policy challenges. True, there was not a national red wave but there was a red wave in states like Iowa and Arkansas where the GOP gained seats at both the federal, state and local level. And I would add that there is a rising tide for the GOP in New York where Lee Zeldin got

over 47% of the electorate because he talked about enforcing the law against violent criminals.

One point needs to be made crystal clear: The voters did not reject Republican ideas. They rejected some candidates because they did not embrace Republican principles. Historically, Republicans do not attack America's democracy; Republicans do not denigrate our political system; Republicans do not undermine confidence in America; and Republicans do not attack those institutions that are fundamental to the rule of law and preservation of our Republic.

Yes, the midterm elections reflect a victory for democracy and a rejection of those candidates who failed to understand the time. In other words, the last election was a "time for choosing"; it was time for taking a stand and when a nation feels divided, candidates must speak with clarity and work to unite rather than divide Americans. Elections are about choosing and now we must understand it is a "time for doing."

We must aspire beyond our differences and create an America that is defined by our shared values of freedom, individual responsibility, equality of opportunity, and respect for the rule of law that allows us all to chase our American Dreams.

Today, we are called to renew our work to diminish the barriers between Americans of different race. Early in my career, while a young U.S. Attorney, I investigated and prosecuted extremists who committed acts of violence against their fellow Americans. One such group was led by neo-nazis who preached white supremacy and violence against law enforcement. When a “time for choosing” had passed into a “time for doing”, I donned a bullet proof vest and assisted in the negotiation and arrest of the leader of the group after an armed stand-off that lasted for 3 days. I then prosecuted the leaders to the fullest extent of the law. I understood the risk to our democracy from those that undermined our principle of equality under the law. I will never understand

leadership that chooses to diminish or divide Americans. And I will never understand why a leader would give credibility to such hate filled extremists by breaking bread with them.

Americans are doers. When it comes to individual responsibility we must value the entrepreneur who dreams and dares;.... as much as we honor the worker whose sweat makes that dream a reality. From a policy standpoint, we have to make sure that every American worker has the dignity of earning wages that is more than what the government might pay someone to sit at home.

For that reason, as Governor, I declined federal assistance when it discouraged people from returning to work. The dignity of providing for yourself and your loved ones should be the cornerstone of liberty.

During my time as Governor, we spent less time talking and more time doing. We lowered taxes; reduced the size of government; kept our businesses and schools open during the pandemic; and over 11,000

new businesses have been created in the private sector. Our economy has expanded resulting in lower taxes and \$2 billion in reserves. I have governed and led as a problem solving conservative.

To me that is the essence of commonsense conservatism. Don't overstep the limited role of government; reward and encourage work; and use freedom to pursue prosperity and the enjoyment of life.

In addition to the new business starts, during the last 8 years we have created more than 125,000 new jobs and, at the same time, we have reduced state government employment numbers by 3,000 workers.... and we did it while improving services. This was the result of a massive effort to transform government to improve efficiencies and to increase the use of on-line services. A wise man once told me "if you can find it in the yellow pages then Government should probably not be doing that." While almost none of us have seen a phone book

lately,..... the truth of that statement survives. Government simply tries to do too much.

Another challenge we must face is the growing divide between rural America and our urban areas. I understand our small communities and farm life. I grew up on a cattle and poultry farm on the Spavinaw Creek outside of Gravette, Arkansas, a small town of less than 1,000 people. I learned what it was like to travel long distances to see a doctor; or to have access to a hospital. And today, there is a urgent need for improved health care in rural America. And despite this urgency, we see a serious imbalance between funding for medical education and research and the reality of where Americans work and live. Consider the leading causes of death in the United States since 2019 excluding COVID. These include heart disease, cancer and diabetes, among others. The highest rates of these diseases are in the heartland of middle America.

In other words, communities with the greatest health risks are rural. By reason and logic, we should expect our national resources for

fighting disease be directed towards these states. But that is not the case.

Currently, NIH funds more than 50,000 grants at more than 2,500 universities and other research institutions. Yet, last year there were only 309 research grants out of 50,000 categorized under “rural health”. Grantees for rural health research included Harvard, Duke, Johns Hopkins, Dartmouth, and the University of Virginia.

None of this is intended to be criticism of individual researchers or their universities. But I offer an idea for reform that makes sense. There are 60 million Americans, about 19% of the total population who live in rural areas. Therefore, let’s require 20% of all new NIH grants be reserved for health related research among rural populations. This would not impact current grants but this would help bridge the rural/urban divide on at least one important issue....health care. I have fought hard to expand rural health care in Arkansas but it is a real need across our country.

Like many conservatives, I am concerned about the changes in our culture whether that be limits on free speech on our college campuses or the undermining of the values I want to pass along to my children and grandchildren. I see those values undermined by a push for social engineering in many public schools. A quick look back in history tells us that the cultural war is not new. I remember being a part of the Moral Majority of the 80's that helped Ronald Reagan get elected. We were fighting the liberal agenda that was crushing down on us from the courts to academics. What we see today is not new and has not diminished in importance; but the question always remains as to how do you contend for your beliefs? From a Republican point of view, the answer is you impact the culture through your individual actions, engaging your community, parents being involved in education decisions, and through your house of worship. A time for choosing is upon us every day and unfortunately too many are doing the wrong thing when they disagree with their neighbors. Too many on the right

and the left are silencing opposition and even worse....using and abusing government authority to do it.

If you think a business is too “woke” then don’t buy their stuff.

(pause) A conservative should not mimic the political left by using the power of the state to punish a business if the business is operating lawfully.

Another lesson from the leadership of Ronald Reagan is the simple principle of peace through strength. I love the story about Helen Thomas and Ronald Reagan. Ronald Reagan always referred to the Soviet Union as the Evil Empire. In his second term he finally visited Moscow and when he returned, Helen Thomas asked him: So, what did you learn from your trip? Reagan replied, “Well, I found the Russian people friendly with a good sense of humor and wanting many of the same things in life that we do.”

Helen Thomas then sarcastically asked him, “Don’t you wish you would have known that 10 years ago?” His reply: “Well, Helen, they weren’t that way 10 years ago.” That was his humorous way of saying

America's strength made a difference in bringing down the iron curtain and the Soviet empire.

While I was in the U.S. Congress, I was asked by President Bush to join his administration. As part of the new department of Homeland Security I was called upon to protect America from terrorism after the 9-11 attack killed over 3,000 Americans. I saw first-hand how our military strength helped keep us safe in the homeland.

As I met with foreign leaders, I witnessed first-hand how united our allies were in support of the United States. They wanted our friendship and they followed our leadership. Since that time the United States has veered off course. Our goodwill was damaged in the botched withdrawal from Afghanistan and this Administration's weak support for the protestors in China do not reflect the heart and soul of this great land.

Today, America is facing enemies and threats that test our resolve; that challenge our leadership; and undermines trust between

the U.S. and our allies. And yet, I have full confidence that Americans are up to the challenge.

The United States is an extraordinary country. We are extraordinary because of our history and our people. We are made of immigrants that have forged a new home out of hard work, risk taking and a love of freedom that comes from loss and sacrifice.

Today, our welcoming spirit is challenged by a crisis on our southern border. It is a crisis caused by terrible policies created by the Biden Administration and even worse messaging. To fix the problem, you have to understand the scope of the crisis. We have to fix the broken asylum claim system where it takes 6 years in the courts to make a final decision; we must coordinate between the states and federal enforcement authorities on both drug enforcement and border enforcement; we have to break the cartel's control of the border; and we must expand the use of expedited removal for those who are not legally allowed to stay in this country. When you make these corrections, then you will see a more secure border. When I led the

Arizona Border Control Initiative in the Bush administration, I never dreamed our nation could lose ground on border control; diminish respect for the rule of law; and leave so many migrants dying in the hands of human smugglers devoid of any respect for life.

We must do better!

While at Homeland Security, I was sent to Europe to negotiate data sharing agreements to help us detect terrorist threats. As I had dinner with an official in the European Union, I pointed out that the United States was forged out of common values. I asked what common values held the European Union together. He thought and then said European countries have in common two values: 1. That there be no more war. 2. That the government has a preeminent responsibility to provide for its citizens.

America is different. We are doers. We were founded with an unquenchable thirst for freedom and sometimes it takes sacrifice to maintain freedom. And while we have compassion to care for the most

vulnerable, we never want to rob any American of the dignity of their own self-worth.

I think about the core values in our foreign policy. It is to protect our peace and freedoms in America. But we also understand a larger responsibility to do what is practical and realistic to support those who want basic freedoms across the globe. Our forefathers came to the United States fleeing tyranny, seeking freedom of religion and pursuing dreams only available for those in a free land. And when we come from those origins, we see the world in a different way.

That is why the United States should always support the oppressed against the oppressors. And that is why we must continue to support Ukraine in its fight against Russia. The people of Ukraine have a right to decide their own future and we know all too well the designs of evil dictators like Vladimir Putin and their disdain for American ideals of freedom. Ukraine must win.

And when it comes to China, the Communist leadership must know our determination to not allow Taiwan to become another victim of China's expansion. We also must fight for fair trade that requires those who participate in global trade to follow the rules.

The picture I have painted this evening is similar to the challenges faced by Ronald Reagan. President Reagan's response to these challenges were to follow our conservative principles. I still believe that principles are at the heart of the Republican party and that common sense and compassion win the hearts and minds of voters.

In October of 1964, I was 13 years old and I sat in front of our black and white television set with rabbit ears. My brother and I had our can of Goldwater in hand as we watched Ronald Reagan give "the speech".

His inspiration that night ultimately led me to choose conservatism over big government solutions. And to choose a strong America over a country in retreat.

Fast forward to the year 1992 in Houston when then former President Ronald Reagan gave his last public address. I was there. My 17 year old son was there also and I watched as Ronald Reagan inspired a new generation.

Reagan taught me a lot..... but there are 3 important characteristics of Ronald Reagan that are so needed today. He was a consistent conservative, win or lose. He lost in 1976 and won in 1980 and he was the same common sense conservative. So, stick with your principles.

He was also a pragmatist when it came to working across the aisle for the good of our country. After he was elected Reagan worked with Tip O'Neal to get his economic reform package through.

Most importantly, he was an optimist about America. Today, we need GOP leaders who mirror Reagan.....consistent conservative; pragmatic in governing; and optimistic despite our challenges. We

need leaders drawing us together based upon our shared values; not alienating us when we disagree.

I share Reagan's hope for this wonderful country. Our best days are ahead and America will continue to lead the free world.....because we must. There is no one else. As the famed Russian dissident Alexander Solzenitzen said: "if America does not lead the free world then the free world will not have a leader."

Some might find it a bit old fashioned to close my remarks in this way but I am reminded of the words of an old hymn: "In this free land by thee our lot is cast. Be thou our Ruler, Guardian, Guide and Stay." To me it makes a difference, to understand and lean upon the Providential care that we need in our individual lives and the life of our nation.

So thank you and May God Bless America.

