

REMARKS

NATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING

MAY 22, 2014

I AM DEEPLY HONORED BY YOUR VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN ELECTING ME AS NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA. I HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO HOLD A NUMBER OF HIGH-RANKING POSITIONS IN MY LIFE, BUT NONE MEANS MORE THAN TO LEAD THE ORGANIZATION THAT, FOR ME, ENABLED ALL THE REST. FOR IT WAS AS A BOY SCOUT THAT I LEARNED THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP.

NOW, AS AN ASIDE, I MUST SHARE WITH YOU THAT MY BECOMING NATIONAL PRESIDENT AFTER A CAREER IN CIA BRINGS SCOUTING FULL CIRCLE BECAUSE, YOU SEE, ROBERT BADEN-POWELL DURING HIS MILITARY CAREER SERVED AS A SPY. HE WORKED FOR THE BRITISH DIRECTOR OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AND OPERATING UNDER

COVER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, SOMETIMES POSED AS A BUTTERFLY COLLECTOR. HE ONCE SAID, “FOR ANYONE TIRED OF LIFE, THE THRILLING LIFE OF A SPY SHOULD BE THE VERY FINEST RECUPERATOR.” HE DID PIONEERING WORK IN RECONNAISSANCE, OR AS THE MILITARY THEN CALLED IT, SCOUTING. JUST A BIT OF TRIVIA WITH WHICH YOU CAN WIN SMALL BETS.

BEFORE I GO ANY FURTHER, LET ME THANK WAYNE PERRY FOR HIS DYNAMIC AND HISTORIC LEADERSHIP DURING A PERIOD OF CHALLENGE FOR THE BOY SCOUTS. WAYNE, WE ALL OWE YOU A GREAT DEBT OF GRATITUDE FOR YOUR REMARKABLE SERVICE, YOUR DEVOTION TO THIS MOVEMENT AND YOUR STEADY HAND OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS. I KNOW THERE WERE COUNTLESS VOLUNTEERS IN MAKING THE FIRST-EVER NATIONAL JAMBOREE AT THE SUMMIT A HUGE SUCCESS, BUT IT WAS YOUR VISION AND DRIVE THAT GOT US THERE.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT MY SCOUTING RESUME.

SCOUTING WAS A BIG PART OF MY LIFE GROWING UP. I HAVE A PHOTOGRAPH OF MY FATHER IN HIS BOY SCOUT UNIFORM IN FRONT OF HIS HOUSE IN KANSAS CITY, A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN 1918. THERE WAS NEVER ANY QUESTION IN OUR HOUSE ABOUT JOINING THE SCOUTS. I WAS A CUB SCOUT, BOY SCOUT AND EXPLORER SCOUT IN QUIVERA COUNCIL IN WICHITA, KANSAS. MY OLDER BROTHER AND I ARE BOTH EAGLE SCOUTS AND ALSO BOTH EARNED OUR GOD AND COUNTRY AWARD. WE BOTH ATTENDED NATIONAL JAMBOREES AT VALLEY FORGE, HE IN 1950 AND I IN 1957. I RECEIVED MY VIGIL HONOR IN THE ORDER OF THE ARROW IN HI-CHA-KO-LO LODGE IN WICHITA. I REMAINED ACTIVE IN SCOUTING AS A COLLEGE STUDENT, SERVING AS AN ASSISTANT SCOUTMASTER IN WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA. AND THEN I WENT MISSING FOR THIRTY YEARS.

OH, MY SON WAS A SCOUT DURING MUCH OF THE TIME I WAS DIRECTOR OF CIA. I'LL NEVER FORGET THE FATHER-AND-SON WILDERNESS CAMP-OUT NEAR CHESAPEAKE BAY. I THINK THE WILDERNESS ASPECT OF THE OVERNIGHTER WAS PROBABLY DIMINISHED BY THE TWO LARGE BLACK TRUCKS WITH SATELLITE DISHES PARKED NEARBY AND THE FACT THAT CIA OFFICERS ESTABLISHED A SECURITY PERIMETER AROUND THE ENTIRE CAMP. TO MY SECURITY OFFICERS' CHAGRIN, THE SUNDAY MORNING ACTIVITY WAS TEACHING THE KIDS HOW TO SHOOT SKEET – JUST WHAT THE SECURITY GUYS WANTED: ME, THE CIA DIRECTOR, IN THE MIDST OF A BUNCH OF 12 AND 13 YEAR OLDS WITH SHOTGUNS.

WHEN I RETIRED AS CIA DIRECTOR IN 1993, I WAS APPROACHED ABOUT JOINING THE BOARD OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL. WHEN PEOPLE ASKED WHY I HAD BEEN INACTIVE FOR SO LONG, I REPLIED

SIMPLY, “BECAUSE NO ONE ASKED ME TO HELP.” AND THAT WAS BEHIND THE EFFORT I STARTED IN THE MID-1990S AS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL EAGLE SCOUT ASSOCIATION TO IDENTIFY, LOCATE AND TRY TO RE-ENLIST ADULT EAGLE SCOUTS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY WHO WERE INACTIVE IN SCOUTING. WE COULD NOT – AND CANNOT -- AFFORD TO HAVE SUCH MEN SAY I HAVEN’T RE-ENGAGED BECAUSE NOBODY ASKED ME.

NOT LONG AFTER I RETIRED AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE IN THE SUMMER OF 2011, THE LONG ARM OF SCOUTING REACHED OUT AGAIN. IT HAS A WAY OF DOING THAT. I ELUDED THE ARM FOR A WHILE, BUT IT SOON BECAME APPARENT THAT RESISTANCE WAS FUTILE. AND SO I STAND BEFORE YOU TODAY MAKING MY FIRST SPEECH TO A NATIONAL GATHERING OF SCOUTS SINCE THE 2010 JAMBOREE.

WHY AM I HERE? SIMPLY BECAUSE I CONTINUE TO BELIEVE, AS I HAVE THROUGHOUT MY LIFE, THAT THERE IS NO FINER PROGRAM FOR PREPARING AMERICAN BOYS AND YOUNG MEN FOR LEADERSHIP THAN THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA.

FIFTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, WHEN I RECEIVED MY EAGLE, I WAS A FIFTEEN YEAR OLD BOY ATTENDING HIGH SCHOOL. I WASN'T A STRAIGHT A STUDENT, NOR WAS I A PARTICULARLY GOOD ATHLETE. ALTHOUGH I WAS INVOLVED IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, I WASN'T REALLY A STUDENT LEADER. THIS WAS ALL TRUE IN COLLEGE AS WELL. WHEN I WENT TO WASHINGTON, D.C. AT AGE 22, I COULD FIT EVERYTHING I OWNED INTO THE BACKSEAT OF MY CAR. I HAD NO CONNECTIONS AND I DIDN'T KNOW A SOUL.

THE ONLY THING I HAD DONE IN MY LIFE TO THAT POINT THAT LED ME TO THINK I COULD MAKE A

DIFFERENCE, THAT I COULD BE A LEADER, WAS TO EARN MY EAGLE SCOUT BADGE. IT WAS THE ONLY THING I HAD DONE THAT DIFFERENTIATED ME FROM SO MANY OTHER HIGH SCHOOL KIDS. IT WAS THE FIRST THING I HAD DONE THAT TOLD ME I MIGHT BE DIFFERENT BECAUSE I HAD WORKED HARDER, WAS MORE DETERMINED, MORE GOAL-ORIENTED, MORE PERSISTENT THAN MOST OTHERS. EARNING MY EAGLE GAVE ME THE SELF CONFIDENCE TO BELIEVE, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, THAT I COULD ACHIEVE WHATEVER I SET MY MIND TO. MY EAGLE AWARD WAS THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT STEP, TOWARD EVERYTHING I WOULD LATER ACCOMPLISH.

I ALSO AGREED TO SERVE AS PRESIDENT OF THE BOY SCOUTS BECAUSE THE INSTITUTION THAT PLAYED SUCH AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SHAPING MY LIFE TODAY FACES SOME DAUNTING CHALLENGES. WHEN PRESIDENT BUSH ASKED ME TO BECOME SECRETARY OF DEFENSE IN 2006, WE WERE

LOSING TWO WARS. I TOLD HIM, "IF YOU THINK I CAN HELP, IT IS MY DUTY TO DO SO." IF ALL OF YOU THINK I CAN HELP SCOUTING, THEN IT IS MY DUTY TO DO SO.

I HAVE A REPUTATION FOR BLUNTNES AND CANDOR. AS I USED TO TELL FOREIGN LEADERS WHO WERE TAKEN ABACK BY MY PLAIN TALK, IF I HAD WANTED TO BE A DIPLOMAT, I'D HAVE JOINED THE STATE DEPARTMENT -- NOT CIA. MY BLUNTNES MAY DISTURB SOME OF YOU, BUT IT'S PART OF THE PACKAGE. AND MAYBE IT'S TIME FOR BLUNT TALK.

LET ME SAY RIGHT HERE THAT AS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL EAGLE SCOUT ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER OF THE BOARD BETWEEN 1997 AND 2006, I WAS HARSHLY CRITICAL OF THE WAY THIS ORGANIZATION WAS RUN. I FREQUENTLY DESCRIBED MEETINGS OF THE BOARD AS HAVING ALL THE SPONTANEITY OF A MEETING OF THE SUPREME SOVIET OR OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST

CENTRAL COMMITTEE. EVERYTHING SEEMED SCRIPTED AND THE VOLUNTEER LEADERS SEEMED TO ME TO BE LARGELY FIGUREHEADS. ON RETURNING TO THE BOARD, I BELIEVE ALL THAT HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY.

THANKS TO THE LEADERSHIP OF REX TILLERSON, WAYNE PERRY, BOB MAZUCCA, WAYNE BROCK AND MANY OTHERS, I BELIEVE THE VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP HAS ASSUMED ITS PROPER ROLE AS THE GUIDING HAND OF THIS MOVEMENT. THERE IS STILL ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT, BUT AS SOMEONE WHO HAS NOT BEEN INVOLVED FOR THE PAST EIGHT YEARS, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEN AND NOW IS LIKE NIGHT AND DAY.

IN EACH ORGANIZATION I HAVE LED, MY GOAL HAS BEEN TO MAKE GOOD INSTITUTIONS BETTER. IF YOU WANTED THE STATUS QUO, YOU SURELY GOT THE WRONG GUY. SO, WHAT WILL BE MY PRIORITIES DURING THE TWO YEAR TERM I WILL SERVE AS PRESIDENT?

FIRST, TO CONTINUE TO IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY IN THE VOLUNTEER GOVERNANCE OF SCOUTING. THE BSA IS NOT THE CIA. WE SHOULD HAVE NO SECRETS FROM EACH OTHER OR FROM OUR VOLUNTEER LEADERS ACROSS THE NATION. THE BOARD HAS ASKED AUBREY HARWELL TO CHAIR AN AD HOC COMMITTEE TO LOOK AT OUR BY-LAWS, REGULATIONS AND GOVERNANCE. AMONG OTHER THINGS, I WANT AUBREY'S GROUP TO LOOK AT HOW WE CAN BE MORE TRANSPARENT TO VOLUNTEERS NATIONWIDE ABOUT ALL ASPECTS OF OUR OPERATIONS. I INTEND TO MAKE THAT AN IMPORTANT PRIORITY.

A SECOND PRIORITY IS TO IMPROVE OUR MARKETING, WHICH IN TURN IS CLOSELY TIED TO RECRUITMENT AND TO OUR REPUTATION. I BELIEVE THAT THE LION'S SHARE OF OUR MARKETING – AND OUR SPENDING ON MARKETING – SHOULD BE LOCAL. THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF IMPROVING COUNCIL FINANCES AND RECRUITMENT OF

BOTH BOYS AND ADULT VOLUNTEERS DEPENDS ON LOCAL ACTION AND LOCAL SUPPORT.

LET'S FACE IT, THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA IS NOT LIKELY TO GET MUCH FAVORABLE PUBLICITY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. FIRST OF ALL, YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT THE NATIONAL MEDIA ISN'T MUCH INTO REPORTING GOOD NEWS OF ANY KIND. FURTHER, I BELIEVE MARKETING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IS NOT VERY USEFUL EITHER IN TERMS OF RECRUITMENT OR FUND-RAISING FOR COUNCILS. RECRUITMENT FOR SURE, AND MOST FUND-RAISING, MUST BE DONE RETAIL – ONE FAMILY AT A TIME, ONE DONOR AT A TIME, AND BOTH, FACE-TO-FACE.

I THINK OUR MARKETING NEEDS TO BE FOCUSED ON LOCAL MEDIA – WHETHER TRADITIONAL LOCAL TELEVISION AND NEWSPAPERS OR SOCIAL MEDIA. EVERY DAY, IN EVERY DISTRICT AND EVERY COUNCIL, THERE ARE COUNTLESS GOOD NEWS STORIES ABOUT SCOUTING, FROM

EAGLE PROJECTS AND SCOUT SERVICE PROJECTS HELPING THE COMMUNITY TO SCOUTS HELPING OUT DURING NATURAL DISASTERS – SUCH AS SCOUTS DID AFTER THE HORRIFIC MUDSLIDE IN OSO, WASHINGTON, NOT TOO FAR FROM WHERE I LIVE. FOCUSING ON GETTING THESE STORIES LOCAL PUBLICITY ON A CONTINUING BASIS SEEMS TO ME A WAY TO INTEGRATE LOCAL MARKETING WITH LOCAL RECRUITMENT AND FUND-RAISING.

FOR THE MOST PART, THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL OFFICE SHOULD BE TO DEVELOP AND MAKE AVAILABLE TO COUNCILS THE MEDIA TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES THEY MAY FIND USEFUL.

MANY COUNCIL SCOUT EXECUTIVES AND PROFESSIONALS ARE UNEASY ABOUT ENGAGING WITH LOCAL MEDIA BECAUSE THEY ARE SO OFTEN FOCUSED ON SUBJECTS LIKE MEMBERSHIP POLICY OR PAST ABUSE. SO, MAYBE WE OUGHT TO THINK ABOUT HOW TO ENGAGE

LOCAL VOLUNTEER LEADERS IN REACHING OUT TO LOCAL MEDIA WITH STORIES ABOUT OUR SCOUTS DOING GREAT THINGS FOR THAT COMMUNITY. AND ABOUT WHY FAMILIES NEED SCOUTING IN THEIR LIVES. REPORTERS ARE A LOT LESS LIKELY TO CONFRONT PARENTS OR VOLUNTEERS WITH NATIONAL POLICY ISSUES THAN SCOUT PROFESSIONALS. SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE TIP O'NEILL FAMOUSLY SAID THAT ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL. I WOULD PARAPHRASE THAT TO SAY ALL RECRUITMENT AND NEARLY ALL POSITIVE SCOUT STORIES ARE LOCAL – AND I THINK THE TWO ARE RELATED. SO, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF NEW VICE PRESIDENT FOR MARKETING DAVID WEEKLY, LET'S THINK ABOUT HOW BETTER TO ENABLE LOCAL SCOUT COUNCILS AND DISTRICTS TO GET THE WORD OUT ABOUT ALL THE GOOD THEY ARE DOING. NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS SHOULD BE AN ENABLER, NOT THE DRIVER.

I'VE MENTIONED RECRUITMENT SEVERAL TIMES. WE ALL KNOW THE DOWNWARD DIRECTION OF OUR MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS. WE MUST FIRST STOP THE DECLINE AND THEN BEGIN TO ADDRESS HOW WE GROW AGAIN. I DON'T HAVE ANY EASY ANSWERS TO THIS CHALLENGE. I DO BELIEVE IT STARTS WITH EMPHASIS ON RECRUITING CUB SCOUTS. TEACHING LEADERSHIP AND SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT REASONS FOR JOINING SCOUTS FOR ALL OF US, BUT I SUSPECT THAT FOR MOST PARENTS OF BOYS OF CUB SCOUT AGE, WHAT THEY WANT MOST OF ALL IS A CHANCE TO SPEND TIME WITH THEIR KIDS. UNLIKE MANY OTHER ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE TO BOYS, SCOUTING OFFERS PARENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE FULLY ENGAGED SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH THEIR CHILD – NOT JUST CHEERING FROM THE SIDELINES. PERHAPS WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT HOW BETTER TO GET THAT ACROSS TO PEOPLE. IF WE CAN GET BOYS INTO CUB SCOUTS, OUR

CHANCES OF GETTING THEM INTO BOY SCOUTS IS FAR GREATER.

WE ALSO KNOW THAT KIDS ARE THE BEST RECRUITERS OF KIDS. HOW CAN WE DO BETTER IN ENCOURAGING BOYS WHO ARE ALREADY IN SCOUTING AND THEIR PARENTS TO REACH OUT TO THEIR FRIENDS AND INVITE THEM INTO CUBS AND BOY SCOUTS? AND MAKE SURE THAT CUB SCOUT PACKS, BOY SCOUT TROOPS, VARSITY SCOUT TEAMS, EXPLORER POSTS AND VENTURE CREWS WELCOME FIRST-TIME VISITORS ENTHUSIASTICALLY – AND FOLLOW-UP EFFECTIVELY?

WE MUST DEVOTE MORE ATTENTION AND RESOURCES TO SCOUTREACH. KIDS FROM DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES NEED SCOUTING MOST OF ALL. WE HAVE THE CHANCE TO CHANGE LIVES IN DRAMATIC WAYS BY GIVING THESE BOYS THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE SCOUTS – THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A HEALTHY, SAFE ENVIRONMENT WITH POSITIVE ADULT

ROLE MODELS, THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE A WORLD THEY WOULD NEVER OTHERWISE SEE AND FUTURES THEY NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE. AT EVERY LEVEL OF SCOUTING, EXPANDING SCOUTREACH NEEDS TO BE A RENEWED PRIORITY FOR US.

WHETHER RECRUITING OR FUND-RAISING, WE NEED RENEWED EMPHASIS ON BUILDING STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS IN OUR COMMUNITIES – WITH SCHOOLS, OTHER NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, CHURCHES, AND CIVIC, SERVICE AND VETERANS’ ORGANIZATIONS. FURTHER, WE NEED TO BE FAR MORE AGGRESSIVE IN RECRUITING HISPANIC, AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND ASIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY LEADERS TO OUR COUNCIL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL BOARDS. NOTHING WILL HELP OUR RECRUITMENT IN THESE COMMUNITIES MORE THAN TO HAVE SUCH LEADERS INVOLVED IN AND AS ADVOCATES

FOR SCOUTING. WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY TALKED THE TALK.
NOW IT IS TIME TO WALK THE WALK.

ALSO KEY TO RECRUITMENT IS CONTINUED PROGRAM
INNOVATION TO ENSURE THAT SCOUTING REMAINS
RELEVANT TO BOYS AND YOUNG MEN IN THE 21ST
CENTURY. I STRONGLY SUPPORT THE STEM INITIATIVE ON
ITS OWN MERITS BUT ALSO BECAUSE PARENTS ARE MORE
LIKELY TO BE DRAWN TO A PROGRAM THAT, IN ADDITION
TO BEING FUN, WILL HELP THEIR SONS AND DAUGHTERS DO
BETTER IN SCHOOL.

A TWO YEAR TERM ISN'T A LONG TIME.
TRANSPARENCY, MARKETING, RETENTION AND
RECRUITMENT, CONTINUED PROGRAM INNOVATION. THESE
WILL BE MY PRIORITIES. PLUS ONE OTHER. IN EACH
INSTITUTION I HAVE LED – CIA AND THE AMERICAN
INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, THE
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE – THERE HAS BEEN TENSION

BETWEEN THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION OR HEADQUARTERS AND THE FIELD. THUS, THE TENSION BETWEEN BSA'S NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND THE COUNCILS IS NEITHER UNIQUE NOR SURPRISING. BUT I HAVE A STRONG PREDILECTION FOR EMPOWERING FIELD COMMANDERS – THOSE ON THE FRONT LINES – AND HOLDING THEM ACCOUNTABLE. THEY ARE THE ONES CHARGED WITH ACCOMPLISHING THE MISSION – IN OUR CASE, RECRUITING BOYS AND VOLUNTEER LEADERS, RAISING FUNDS, AND DELIVERING A QUALITY PROGRAM.

I KNOW THAT THE DEDICATED PROFESSIONALS ON THE NATIONAL COUNCIL STAFF AGREE WITH THE EMPHASIS ON LOCAL COUNCIL SUPPORT. I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH WAYNE BROCK AND HIS TEAM TO REVIEW NATIONAL COUNCIL PROCEDURES, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS TO CONTINUE THE EFFORT TO MAKE OUR NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS A MORE EFFECTIVE AND RESPONSIVE

SERVICE CENTER FOR COUNCILS -- AN ASSET FOR THEM AND NOT A THORN IN THEIR SIDE. INDEED, MAYBE WHAT IS NOW KNOWN AS THE BSA NATIONAL OFFICE OR HEADQUARTERS OUGHT TO BE RENAMED THE BSA NATIONAL SERVICE CENTER TO BE A CONSTANT REMINDER OF ITS MISSION.

AND I WANT TO HEAR FROM COUNCIL AND REGIONAL SCOUT EXECUTIVES AND BOARD PRESIDENTS IF THEY HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THE QUALITY OR LEVEL OF SUPPORT THEY ARE RECEIVING FROM HEADQUARTERS – AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THAT SUPPORT. OR OTHER CONCERNS ABOUT OUR MOVEMENT. FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT WILL HAVE A FULL TIME, INDEPENDENT REPRESENTATIVE AT SCOUT HEADQUARTERS TO HELP ME BE MORE EFFECTIVE FOR SCOUTING. CHARLES CRIMMINS HAS SUPPORTED ME FOR TWO YEARS IN MY ROLE AS CHANCELLOR OF THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND

MARY AND NOW WILL DO SO IN IRVING FOR MY SCOUTING ROLE. I URGE YOU TO MAKE HIS ACQUAINTANCE. DON'T HESITATE TO CONTACT CHARLES WITH YOUR SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS AND ISSUES WHERE YOU THINK I CAN HELP. HE WILL BE THE FOCAL POINT FOR ALL COMMUNICATIONS WITH ME AND ALSO MY TRAVELS AROUND THE COUNTRY IN SUPPORT OF SCOUTING. CHARLES, PLEASE STAND SO FOLKS CAN RECOGNIZE YOU.

FINALLY, LET ME ADDRESS THE MEMBERSHIP ISSUE, AN ISSUE THAT HAS LEFT US DIVIDED, DISTRACTED AND DEFENSIVE. A YEAR AGO, THIS MEETING SAW A RESPECTFUL AND CIVIL DEBATE OVER MEMBERSHIP POLICY. IN A DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, A STRONG MAJORITY OF THE VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP OF THIS MOVEMENT FROM ALL ACROSS THE NATION VOTED TO WELCOME GAY YOUTH INTO SCOUTING. IN ALL CANDOR, I WOULD HAVE

SUPPORTED GOING FURTHER, AS I DID IN OPENING THE WAY FOR GAYS TO SERVE IN CIA AND IN THE MILITARY

THAT SAID, I ACCEPT THE VOTE OF A YEAR AGO, AND I STRONGLY SUPPORT IT. AND, IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION, SCOUTING MUST PROVIDE A WELCOMING AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR GAY YOUTH, A PLACE WHERE THEY CAN BENEFIT FROM SCOUTING AND NOT FACE BULLYING OR DISRESPECT.

BUT, I ALSO BELIEVE STRONGLY THAT WE MUST PUT THIS ISSUE BEHIND US AND MOVE FORWARD, RE-FOCUSING OUR ENERGIES AND OUR PASSION ON MAKING SCOUTING AN EVEN BIGGER, BETTER PROGRAM FOR KIDS. I AM, AS YOU MUST ALREADY KNOW, A HARD-EYED REALIST. GIVEN THE STRONG FEELINGS – THE PASSION – INVOLVED ON BOTH SIDES OF THIS MATTER, I BELIEVE STRONGLY THAT TO RE-OPEN THE MEMBERSHIP ISSUE OR TRY TO TAKE LAST YEAR'S DECISION TO THE NEXT STEP WOULD IRREPARABLY

FRACTURE AND PERHAPS EVEN PROVOKE A FORMAL, PERMANENT SPLIT IN THIS MOVEMENT -- WITH THE HIGH LIKELIHOOD NEITHER SIDE WOULD SUBSEQUENTLY SURVIVE ON ITS OWN. THAT IS JUST A FACT OF LIFE. AND WHO WOULD PAY THE PRICE FOR DESTROYING THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA? MILLIONS OF SCOUTS TODAY AND SCOUTS YET UNBORN. WE MUST ALWAYS PUT THE KIDS AND THEIR INTERESTS FIRST. THUS, DURING MY TIME AS PRESIDENT, I WILL OPPOSE ANY EFFORT TO RE-OPEN THIS ISSUE.

NO ONE CAN FORETELL WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE BUT, NOW – AT THIS MOMENT IN OUR HISTORY – WE MUST MOVE FORWARD BY FOCUSING ON WHAT UNITES US: OUR BELIEF THAT THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA IS THE FINEST ORGANIZATION IN THE WORLD FOR BUILDING CHARACTER WHILE TEACHING BOYS AND YOUNG MEN TO MEET AND OVERCOME CHALLENGES, TO CHEERFULLY

SERVE OTHERS, AND TO LIVE LIVES BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THE SCOUT OATH AND LAW.

IT IS TIME TO FOCUS ON THE FUTURE, AND TO DO SO WITH CONFIDENCE AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS. WE ARE UNITED BECAUSE WE ALL BELIEVE IN THE EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF SCOUTING TO BE A FORCE FOR GOOD IN A COMMUNITY AND IN THE LIVES OF ITS BOYS AND YOUNG MEN. WE ARE UNITED BECAUSE WE ALL BELIEVE THAT EVERY BOY WHO JOINS THE SCOUTS IS A BOY ON THE RIGHT TRACK. WE ARE UNITED IN OUR VISION OF A COMMUNITY OF INVOLVED, COMMITTED ADULTS WHO PROVIDE THE CHANCE FOR EVERY BOY TO HAVE FRIENDS HIS OWN AGE WITH WHOM HE CAN CAMP AND LEARN AND LAUGH, LED BY CARING ADULTS WHO SET AN EXAMPLE NOT JUST OF SKILLS, BUT OF CHARACTER, OF THE JOY OF SERVICE, OF THE JOY OF LIFE. ADULTS WHO ARE LEADERS AND TEACH BOYS TO BE LEADERS.

AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF THE ARROW ORDEAL INITIATION CEREMONY, UNCAS, SON OF THE CHIEF OF THE DELAWARES, SAYS TO HIS FATHER, “IF WE WOULD REMAIN A NATION, WE MUST STAND BY ONE ANOTHER. LET US BOTH URGE ON OUR KINDRED FIRM DEVOTION TO OUR BRETHREN AND OUR CAUSE. OURSELVES FORGETTING, LET US CATCH THE HIGHER VISION. LET US FIND THE GREATER BEAUTY IN THE LIFE OF CHEERFUL SERVICE.”

IN CHALLENGING BOYS TO LEARN SKILLS, MASTER CHALLENGES AND TO STRIVE TO LIVE UP TO HIGH PRINCIPLES AND MORAL VALUES, TO FIND THE GREATER BEAUTY IN A LIFE OF CHEERFUL SERVICE, TO BUILD STRONG CHARACTER, SCOUTING TEMPERS THEM AND TURNS THEM INTO STRONG LEADERS FOR TOMORROW. LEADERS WE DESPERATELY NEED.

SCOUTING’S GIFT TO AMERICA – ITS LEGACY – FOR OVER A CENTURY HAS BEEN ONE GENERATION AFTER

ANOTHER OF WORTHY LEADERS FOR OUR COMMUNITIES
AND FOR OUR COUNTRY. THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US,
HERE TODAY AND GOING FORWARD, IS THE SAME THAT
FACED OUR PREDECESSORS: IN THE WORDS OF UNCAS,
“FIRM DEVOTION TO OUR BRETHERN AND OUR CAUSE” -- TO
SUSTAIN AND STRENGTHEN SCOUTING SO THAT IT
CONTINUES TO PROVIDE FOR AMERICA SERVANT LEADERS
OF CHARACTER, OF FAITH, OF SKILL, OF COURAGE.
RESOLUTE AND UNITED, THIS MUST BE OUR COMMITMENT.
THIS MUST BE OUR OATH. THIS MUST BE OUR PRAYER. THIS
MUST BE OUR PARTING PLEDGE TO ONE ANOTHER.

GOD BLESS THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA, AND GOD
BLESS AMERICA.

