

**Remarks of Jay Timmons  
President and CEO, National Association of Manufacturers  
Upon accepting the Business Citizen Award**

**Adam Smith Awards Dinner  
June 11, 2014**

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*[Acknowledgement of Larry Nichols, George and Susan Allen, Greg Casey, NAM partner organizations and NAM staff]*

Ladies and Gentlemen, tonight we are here to celebrate the enormous benefits of free enterprise and capitalism. The philosophy of Adam Smith helped chart an economic course that built the most powerful and benevolent country in the history of the world.

There is no system, other than free enterprise, that has been responsible for lifting countless billions of people out of the depths of despair and poverty. The free market levels the playing field, and through its invisible hand promotes equality of opportunity.

But as we sit here tonight, this system is being challenged and confronted by legions who believe that the fruits of labor that a man or woman has rightfully earned belongs not to them and their families, but to society...and that government is better able to determine how those fruits will be divided.

They boldly defend populist schemes that are creeping into our economy. They vilify companies who employ millions of Americans and who are simply trying to compete against others around the globe. They discourage the risk taking and personal sacrifice of entrepreneurs.

They throw the term “profiteering” at capitalists like it was muck from a swamp. But profit is good because it is essential to growth! Successful companies invest in develop new products, build new facilities, create new jobs, and reward investors – including countless millions of our nation’s retirees. Profit provides hundreds of billions of dollars to help communities...and schools...and civic associations...and families in need through charitable endeavors. No government program forces a company to do that. They do it because it is the right thing to do.

To be sure, there are good and well intentioned men and women in office who succumb to the siren song of collectivism in an attempt to assist the least among us. They will claim everyone needs to pay their “fair share”. But the results of their efforts only weaken our country. It draws us down to the least common denominator, instead of celebrating our exceptionalism as a people and as a nation.

Many policy makers doubt the resolve and the will of Free Americans to fight for and defend a system that has made us second to none. They believe that the wants and desires of the moment trump the long term commitment to a system that has actually led more people to a higher standard of living.

The American people understand this basic fact. Free enterprise is at the core of our beginning as a nation. Capitalism is part of our DNA and it presents itself through our ingenuity...our creativity...our entrepreneurial nature...and our unyielding spirit. If fact,

- 6 in 10 Americans believe that holding the line on taxes and reducing regulations on business is the best way to grow the economy, create new jobs and raise pay for working middle class families.
- By a two to one majority – 64 to 33 percent say that expanding economic growth for everyone is more important than narrowing the gap between rich and poor.

If so many Americans support the cause that we in the business community so strongly advocate, why do we keep losing policy battles and elections to those who are hostile to our agenda?

Business once had supporters in both parties. But over time, we allowed pro-business Democrats to be defeated in nominating contests, or we simply failed to give our vigorous support to them in a general election if their seat wasn't considered completely "safe". Think of this: just a few years ago there were 54 Democrats who caucused with the conservative Blue Dog coalition. Today, there are just 19.

Decent, hard-working centrist voices who advanced Freedom and stood against the aggressive reach of government. We didn't agree with them on everything, but we did on most things.

Sadly, we accepted their losses and as a result, business became reliant on the benevolence of just one party.

Now today, there are fringe elements who are using intolerant social propaganda and distorting the records of honorable men and women, driving them into the wilderness of defeat – and with that defeat, we lose their God-given talents and support for those very principles that have enabled free enterprise to thrive.

We were given another painful reminder of this fact just last night as a stalwart friend of business, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, was defeated in his primary in an upset election.

The truth is, both parties are getting it wrong.

One party today is seen as the defender of free enterprise and a champion for competitiveness.

The other party is viewed as an advocate for individual liberty and a champion for equality of opportunity for all.

Free Enterprise. Competitiveness. Individual Liberty. Equal Opportunity. These are the four pillars upon which our great nation was built.

The instability and uncertainty we face today...the denigration of institutions that have made us strong and mighty...this is a result of elected officials who are all too willing to allow some of those pillars to erode.

It's not just Freedom for business that Americans demand...it's also Freedom for the individual. The American people as a whole are far ahead of the politicians and they want our leaders to embrace all four of those fundamental principles.

It may well be that one party will someday embrace all of these principles equally. If so, that Party will govern for generations to come. It may well be the Republican Party...or the

Democratic Party...or even perhaps another way. But that re-alignment is possible in our lifetimes. The millennial generation has already told us what's ahead.

That generation – the emerging majority in our country – is far more civic-minded than the baby boomers – thanks in large part to contemporary technologies. Half of them identify themselves as political Independents. They are more interested in the accumulation of personal wealth than are older generations. A significant majority support comprehensive immigration reform as the pathway to the American Dream. And these millennials are nearly unanimous in their support for marriage equality, and they recognize and embrace the fact the American families today come in all different configurations.

Free Enterprise...Competitiveness...Individual Liberty...and Equal Opportunity – those are the four principles that unite Americans and they are the ingredients for success in the future.

The business community has an obligation to advance these principles and to lead by example. It is critical that we are involved in the electoral process now more than ever before...to help renew the faith of the American people in our government and our institutions.

But ladies and gentlemen, I submit to you that we cannot lead if we keep doing things the same – following different paths...assuming resources are unlimited and that our benefactors will keep supporting our divergent plans...playing it safe and letting others speak out in election contests when it really matters, so they can take the heat instead of us...and then, pointing the finger of blame at others in our community when these strategies fail.

To make a real difference, we must look inward and challenge ourselves in two ways:

- First, we need to stand up to the forces that are influencing important primary contests – demonizing American businesses and trying to throw out those who are willing to actually govern.
- Second, we must eliminate duplication and parochialism in our own political and advocacy programs, something the economic Left long ago figured out.

Tonight, I'm urging leaders of the business community – those who are in this room and the many others who are not – to come together to create a new paradigm. I'm asking you to join me and other association leaders to think long-term. Let's figure out how to appeal more broadly to Americans, including the millennial generation.

We need to unite. I was very pleased to see Tom Donohue in the introductory video. Tom has been a great friend and mentor to me and many of us here, and I think the U.S. Chamber of Commerce deserves a lot of credit for all the great work they are doing throughout the country. John Engler needs to be involved. He has a brilliant mind for carving together coalitions and majorities. Dan Danner and the NFIB have an army of business leaders who stand tall for Freedom.

Together, we can determine how to eliminate duplication and competition for resources...how to put more resources where they are truly needed...and how to elect more officials – of both parties – who know how to grow an economy, promote Liberty, and govern.

We need to ask ourselves, “are the structures and organizations that are in place the right model?” and “how can we consolidate functions, technologies, operations and perhaps even cede oversight and authority to others in order to get lead on target and get the job done”?

We each need to ask ourselves: “Is my vision helping progress? Or, am I holding us back from efficient use of resources and getting the right people elected?”

My friends, we have an exceedingly difficult challenge before us. We in the business community have too many programs, too much competition on technology, and too many cooks in the kitchen. We are not being wise stewards of the resources entrusted to us by our donors and members.

Too many of us believe that our plan alone should be the lead; that our particular organization should be the loudest voice in the debate; that no one else is capable of doing the job better than we can – even if that results in duplication, wasted resources and a lack of focus.

So a choice must be made. We can shrug and accept things as they are. Or we can acknowledge what so many of our members and donors are saying to us privately – we need a course correction. So let’s join together and plan a course for the future.

In short, let us re-examine, reform, re-align and restart as we approach the critical 2016 presidential elections and beyond in 2018 and 2020. Our attention today is rightly focused on the 2014 elections, but we must begin planning for the future now.

We can do this. And it all begins by remembering that the advancement of Freedom and our democratic values is bigger than any one of us or any one of our organizations...and a cause worth sacrificing all else to achieve.

Free enterprise. Competitiveness. Individual Liberty. Equal Opportunity.

Our end goal is economic growth and a better life for all Americans and for all those who want to live the American Dream.

As Ronald Reagan said: “There’s no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he doesn’t mind who gets the credit.”

Thank you Greg Casey, and the Adam Smith Foundation for this honor and thank you to you all for being here this evening.