

## **BETTER RENEWAL THAN REFORM**

The following is adapted from Representative Samuel Rohrer's (R-Berks) speech to Chester County Action made on May 5, 2007.

*Today, the cry is for reform. People want a change in the way government, and those in it, have operated. They are tired of arrogant public servants who appear to line their own pockets at the expense of the taxpayer. They want servant leaders who make decisions based on duty and responsibility, not opportunity and self interest. The voters have weighed in and made clear changes in Senate leadership—fifty new Pennsylvania House Members and dozens of congressmen. The new Pennsylvania Speaker of the House created a Speaker's Reform Commission on which I serve. Much good has happened, but much more needs to be done.*

*However, I say that the real challenge is not so much reform, as it is renewal. I believe that we must have renewal in two fundamental areas: a renewal of values and a renewal of vision.*

**Not all values are the same.** *Values are the distinguishing marks of people and parties. When it comes to the two organized parties, I believe that the Democrat Party has totally rotted from within; as a party, it is now impossible for them to renew themselves. Having repudiated almost every core moral and patriotic value once held by "rank and file Democrats," the Democratic Party has become a nest for Socialists and Al Gore alarmists. As a party, they have rejected the traditional family unit in favor of non-procreating arrangements under the guise of personal liberty. For a long time, the leaders of that party have supported and defended the killers of the unborn. They have joined in assaults with the Anti-Christian Litigation Unit, successfully throwing God out of the public square and the Ten Commandments out of our schools, while throwing condoms into our young girls' purses. And then, this party waves the white flag of surrender to our enemies under the pretense of "doing the right thing." Now they have just passed the "Thought Crime" Bill in Congress, which represents perhaps the boldest attack yet on the very Constitution they swore to uphold.*

*On the other hand, while the Republican Party leadership in this state and nation squandered opportunities in the last ten years, the battle for renewal in this party is alive and can succeed. Clearly, rather than putting a lid on the growth of government, these past leaders have just recast the growth with another name. Rather than fixing historic problems, in many cases they have created new ones. As far as the public is concerned, there was not enough difference to warrant a continuation of the same leadership in Pennsylvania—out went Senate leadership, out went fifty House members, and out went a State Supreme Court Justice.*

### **So what values do we, as the Republican party, need to renew?**

**First,** *we need a clear recognition that we are one nation—not many nations—and that we are under God. Not any God, but the God of our Founders. The God who, as "The Creator", has endowed us with certain fundamentally inalienable, or God-given, rights among which are life, liberty, and private property. It is the God of the Bible Who gave us the Ten Commandments to govern our actions and upon which any successful and free nation must rest. These are the same commandments that used to hang in our public school classrooms and still hang behind the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court bench.*

*It is a **renewal** in our commitment to the value of a family consisting of one man, one woman, and children. It is the renewal of our commitment as the bedrock of society and the realization that it is the parent who best raises children, not the welfare department, not the public school, and not Hillary's village.*

*It is a **renewal** of the belief that there are things in which we must believe strongly enough to die for and more importantly, to live for.*

*It is a **renewal** of the belief that we are responsible for our actions – not our neighbors, not government, not anyone else. It is a renewal of the concept that we are to make decisions and cast our votes in view of the impact on our children and grandchildren, not simply the next election.*

*It is a **renewal** of our commitment to truth, not pragmatism, as the basis for the creation of public policy and the decisions of life. There is only one concept that the members of the Pennsylvania House can read and that is this: "And ye shall know the truth and truth shall set you free." Only a belief in absolute truth, that there are some things that are always right and some things that are always wrong, can ever set one free. It is only this truth that caused William Wilberforce to persevere for fifty years until slavery was abolished and the slaves were set free. It is this same moral truth that drives me to pursue nothing less than the total abolishment of property taxes that increasingly enslave our people and rob them of their fundamental right to private property.*

**Secondly,** *we need a renewal of vision. We must look up and out and get our eyes off ourselves and the immediate gratification of self. I read a story about a young girl who was on a boat ride with her father in South Pacific. It was a beautiful, clear day with a balmy breeze. With the sun overhead, you could see all the way to the horizon. The little girl, putting her hand above her eyes and looking toward the horizon, said, "Daddy, I can see farther than my eyes can see." That little girl expressed the quality of a leader—the ability to see farther than the eyes can see.*

*Let me share another example of someone who had the vision thing right. Walt Disney was a leader who spent his life seeing what was not there – and turning his vision into reality. The Disney entertainment empire is a tribute to that vision. Soon after his Disneyland theme park opened in 1955, a woman who worked for the Disney Studio was walking through Disneyland and noticed Walt on a bench between Fantasyland and Tomorrowland, staring off into the sky. She stopped and asked, “What are you looking at, Walt?”*

*“My mountain,” he said, pointing to an expanse of empty air.*

*A few years later, in June 1959, the Matterhorn Bobsleds attraction opened to the public – a scale model of the famed Alpine peak.*

*Disneyland itself began as a vision that only Walt Disney himself could see. When the project was still in the planning stages, Walt took his friend, TV host, Art Linkletter, for a ride out to Orange County. Linkletter recalls:*

*“We went and went and went and went and went, down through the orange groves. And finally we came to the place where it was going to be, and I couldn’t believe my eyes--- because it was so far from downtown Los Angeles. And it was so small – the communities in those days were so straggly. And I thought, ‘My land, to put up a bunch of merry-go-rounds out in the middle of a cow pasture is ridiculous!’”*

*As they walked around the property, Walt described in glowing detail the various lands of this park— Fantasyland, Adventureland, Tomorrowland, and more. Then Disney advised Linkletter to buy property around the park and sell it to developers. “You’ll make a fortune,” said Disney.*

*But Art Linkletter failed to grasp Walt Disney’s vision. He said thanks, but no thanks. Looking back on that decision, Linkletter calculates that each step he took on that property was worth about \$3Million –money that could have gone into his pocket, but did not.*

*A few years later, Walt Disney envisioned another and even larger Disney theme park. He laid the groundwork, but died in 1966, almost five years before the opening of Walt Disney World in Orlando. On the day the new park opened, a visitor commented to Mike Vance, Creative Director of Walt Disney studios, “Isn’t it too bad Walt Disney didn’t live to see this?”*

*“Oh, but he did see it,” Vance replied. “That’s why it’s here.”*

**When a leader can see the invisible, his followers can do the impossible – even when he is gone.** *And, do not mistake eyesight for vision. It is not. In fact, some of the most visionary people in the world are those who can see nothing at all. As blind-deaf author Helen Keller once noted, “The most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight, but no vision.”*

**Vision establishes hope.** *It sets a direction. It creates momentum. It crystallizes progress. It forms the future.*

*We must recognize that vision comes from ideas coupled with passion. Good vision recognizes that not all ideas are equal. Freedom is superior to slavery. Responsibility is superior to rebellion. America is unique among nations.*

*So let’s not sit back and be part of the crowd who whines and complains about what is not. Let’s work and understand that there is no problem that does not also present a wonderful opportunity. Let’s not forget that there is no problem so big that it cannot be solved with sound values coupled with a vision for the future based on superior ideas. Let’s put forward hope and a vision for the future, undergirded with passion and a commitment to work hard, because the alternative is very bad and the rewards are very good.*

*There is no healthcare crisis too big. There is no property tax dilemma too complex. There is no Rendell budget too tempting. There is no impending pension plan collapse too intimidating. There is no Islamic terrorist too threatening.*

**These all have solutions** *that are common sense and workable, but we must have the passion and will to do them.*

*Today, in Pennsylvania, we have a number of daunting challenges. We have a burgeoning state budget proposal and a Governor committed to growing big government even bigger. The solution? No tax increases, no new programs, no new borrowing. We have an apparent property tax dilemma. The solution? Eliminate the property tax, broaden sales tax that allows everyone to contribute a little, truly restore home ownership. We have an increasingly costly healthcare system. The solution? Get government out, don’t invite more in, and promote free-market options like HSA’s. Lastly, we have roads and bridges that are deteriorating. The solution? No new taxes and no selling of the turnpike to international interests. Increase of funding by thirty percent by eliminating the costly prevailing wage law.*

**What is required** *of those in office and in the Republican party? The honesty to truly examine where we are and why we are there. The commitment to the renewal of core values. The creation of a vision for the future, the next generation. The seeking of God’s blessing, and more people who are willing to remain involved and to get more involved.*

**The challenges may be daunting, but the opportunities are greater.**