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Remarks at the Reagan Ranch
“Constitutional Conservatism and the Senate GOP Agenda”
October 8, 2014

Introduction and Overview

I’m honored to be here today. Ronald Reagan was a great hero of mine. His influence looms large over both our nation and my own personal political life. In 1976 I was locked in a tight primary race in my first Senate campaign. The polls were close, and it was anyone’s race. A few days before the primary, Governor Reagan endorsed me. I’m told it was his only pre-primary endorsement *ever*. I’ve always been grateful for his support in that race. In my Senate office, we have a Reagan conference room, which displays the telegram formalizing his endorsement, as well as memorabilia from several of my bills that he signed into law as President.

President Reagan made tremendous contributions to American conservatism. He implemented a conservative agenda that led to a renewal of American greatness, helped create millions of new jobs, and defeated an evil empire. He showed that conservatism is a winning philosophy.

President Reagan also recognized the signal importance of the U.S. Constitution. Time and again he returned to the Constitution as the basis of our government and the source of our guiding principles. He referred to the Constitution constantly in advancing his conservative agenda—an average of 16 times in each State of the Union speech. In his First Inaugural address he made the Constitution’s opening words a key focus, emphasizing that government’s role is to serve “We the People,” and not the other way around. He returned to this theme in his farewell address, in words worth quoting here: “Almost all the world’s constitutions are documents in which governments tell the people what their privileges are. Our Constitution is a document in which ‘We the People’ tell the government what it is allowed to do. ‘We the People’ are free.”

My goal today is to explain how a conservatism rooted in the Constitution’s enduring principles—what some call *constitutional conservatism*—provides a framework for practical solutions to many of our most pressing challenges. I believe such an approach can serve as a foundation for successful Republican governance in the next Congress and beyond, just as it did under President Reagan.

We’re at a critical point right now. The flaws in President Obama’s agenda are increasingly clear. The economy remains sluggish nearly six years into his presidency. Millions of Americans are still unemployed or underemployed; millions more have given up looking for work altogether. The President’s signature achievement, Obamacare, has caused premiums to spike and kicked millions of Americans off their health plans. Our national debt continues to grow. At home and abroad, our nation appears adrift. Equally important, it *feels* adrift.

Now is the time for Republicans to tell America how we will right the ship, how we will solve the problems Obama has wrought. We have an opportunity to present a positive, conservative, reform-oriented agenda that will show the American people that we are the party of solutions, the party that can bring our nation out of its current malaise and restore it to growth and prestige and prosperity.

The Current Challenge

Even in the face of such opportunity, this is a time of significant challenge for conservatives. Many commentators, across the political spectrum, have identified what they describe as a Republican identity crisis. Republican voters and elected officials, the narrative goes, are angered at the President's overreach and opposed to his agenda, but have offered few constructive policy proposals of their own. According to these commentators, today's Republican party knows what it is *against*—the Obama agenda—but is unable to articulate what it is *for*.

A related narrative suggests that there is an ongoing GOP civil war, a political fight, not only between the Tea Party and the Republican establishment, but between competing ideologies. Between libertarians and social conservatives, populists and elites, hawks and isolationists. Even among those on the right who are seeking to identify an affirmative policy agenda, there is a sense that today's GOP lacks a unified governing philosophy.

Our challenge as conservatives, then, is to develop a positive, reform-minded agenda that will both unify our party and present a compelling vision to voters searching for a way out of our current problems.

This is not a new challenge. Because conservatism includes a diverse set of ideological commitments, the GOP's successes over the last 50 years have all included a similar effort.

Beginning in the 1960s, Frank Meyer, who for many years was an editor of *National Review*, undertook to unite the two often disparate wings of conservatism—traditionalist and libertarian—by showing how each needs the other.

Ronald Reagan was among the most ardent advocates of this view, known as fusionism. In a 1981 address to the Conservative Political Action Conference, President Reagan lauded Meyer's effort to "fashion[] a vigorous new synthesis of traditional and libertarian thought—a synthesis that is today recognized by many as modern conservatism."

The effort to reconcile liberty and tradition was manifest in many of President Reagan's programs and much of his rhetoric. He taught that it is not the state, but rather families, churches, neighborhoods, and communities that foster the virtues liberty needs to survive. For President Reagan, liberty and tradition were not competitors, but complements. Each needed the other to thrive. This remains true today.

Our current challenge, however, is not merely to unify. We must also present a compelling vision. It is not enough simply to offer a set of policy proposals. We must root our agenda in principles, and explain to the American people why those principles—and the policies that flow from them—offer the best way forward.

Constitutional Conservatism

The fundamental insight of conservatism lies in the root of the word: *conserve*. To be a conservative means to appreciate that our established institutions and inherited traditions reflect the accumulated wisdom of those who have come before.

American conservatism thus contains an important protective element. It involves a commitment to conserve the principles and institutions that have made our nation so great and so free. As conservatives, we recognize that the Constitution gave us a precious gift—a system of government that is both active and restrained. That has the necessary authority to meet challenges, but contains within its interior structure checks on that same authority. That gives families and communities space to thrive, but is attuned to the imperfections of human nature.

Our commitment to the Constitution leads us to resist programs or ideologies that would cast aside our constitutional principles in favor of novel theories or untested designs. In the 1950s, conservative heroes like Russell Kirk and Whitaker Chambers urged Americans to stand strong against Communism and other collectivist impulses, and to conserve our liberties by restoring traditional faith and morality. More libertarian-minded thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman argued passionately against the New Deal as a misguided reordering of the state and federal spheres, as well as an unconstitutional expansion of federal power. They urged a return to more limited government, and argued that reducing federal intrusion into the economy would free up space for individual liberty and innovation to flourish.

Subsequent decades brought new challenges. In the 1970s we faced out-of-control inflation, punitive tax rates, and a Soviet menace. It took a committed conservative like Ronald Reagan to show America that we could return to greatness by returning to our founding principles of limited government, individual freedom, and strong defense.

Today we face different threats, and fresh attempts to depart from our constitutional principles. An enormous expansion of the administrative state is now invading core individual liberties. Already the federal government has assumed authority to force Americans to purchase products they do not want; now it presumes to tell them they must violate deeply held religious beliefs. It continues to issue regulations that stifle our economy, impede innovation, and diminish individual freedom.

As conservatives, we must continue to fight all of these attempts to expand government at the expense of our constitutional ideals. But we must not be defined only by what we are against. We must offer an alternative, affirmative agenda that can capture the public's attention and demonstrate that we are the party, not of shutdowns, but solutions.

As we develop this agenda, we must take care always to keep the Constitution as our guide. By so doing, we remain true to the title *conservative*: we conserve our founding principles, and apply those principles to today's challenges.

Restoring Political Constitutionalism

Looking to the Constitution as our guide must be an active process, and one that each of us has an independent obligation to undertake. In particular, we cannot simply rely on courts to do the job for us. There is an unfortunate tendency these days to think of the Constitution as the judiciary's domain, to leave it entirely up to judges to decide whether a law is constitutional.

This tendency to leave things to the courts diminishes the other branches' role in the constitutional system and misses the many lessons the Constitution has to teach. The judiciary's role in assessing constitutionality is a narrow one. Judges ask primarily whether a law satisfies some legal

rule announced in a previous case. Is the regulated activity commerce? Is the punishment for noncompliance a tax or a penalty?

But fidelity to the Constitution is about much more than narrow legal reasoning. Honoring the Constitution involves looking to the principles that undergird it—values like individual liberty, respect for civil society, and democratic accountability—in determining whether a given course of action is wise.

Obamacare provides a ready example. I have said many times that Obamacare is unconstitutional. Notwithstanding the Supreme Court’s contortions, the individual mandate exceeds Congress’s powers under the Constitution. It is not a regulation of interstate commerce, and it is not a tax.

But those are not the only reasons the law is unconstitutional. In addition to flunking formal legal tests, it violates many of the enduring principles made manifest in the Constitution. It invades liberty by compelling individuals to purchase insurance against their will. It undermines federalism by coercing state governments to expand Medicaid. It dilutes the separation of powers by transferring vast legislative authority to the Executive. And so on.

Whether or not a law meets whatever legal tests the Supreme Court has set forth does not end the inquiry for those of us who seek the Constitution as our guide. Instead, we must practice what James Ceaser and others call *political constitutionalism*: the notion that it “falls mostly to political actors making political decisions to protect and promote constitutional goals.”¹

Constitutional Conservatism in Practice

The Constitution has many lessons to teach about good lawmaking. First, through its various checks and balances, it teaches that unrestrained government is a threat to liberty, and that in order to protect citizens from government’s constant tendency to expand its sphere, government must be restrained from both without *and* within.

Second, by providing that all powers not delegated to the federal government are reserved to the states, the Constitution teaches that states and local communities should be equal partners with the federal government, and that most decisions affecting Americans’ lives should be made at the local level, not by some distant, national bureaucracy.

Third, the Constitution teaches that good governance consists in deliberation and considered judgment. By dividing and separating powers among many locus points, the Constitution helps avert sudden lurches in policymaking, even as it enables more modest improvements supported by broad coalitions. It forces rival officeholders to work together, and is designed to prevent any one person or interest from unilaterally making, changing, or eliminating laws.

Perhaps most fundamentally, the Constitution teaches the virtue of *prudence*. Prudence is a habit of mind that should come naturally to conservatives. It restrains us from seeking immediate and complete vindication of a single, abstract principle. Rather, prudence counsels us to work within our existing circumstances to vindicate the enduring principles upon which liberty depends. Prudent

¹ James W. Ceaser, *Restoring the Constitution*, *Claremont Review* 12:2 (spring 2012).

lawmakers make experience, not theory, their guide, and recognize that success requires harmonizing competing values.

The Constitution is an exercise in prudence. It contains within its structure a clash of many competing principles: the democratic, majoritarian House; the deliberative Senate; the unified and energetic Executive; the independent judiciary. There is tension between individual rights and majority will, energy and stability, limited powers and flexibility to act. The Constitution mediates many rival goods. It is founded on compromise. And it institutionalizes prudence as a signal virtue of our Republic.

As constitutional conservatives, we must remain true to our ideological principles. But we must also recognize that we operate in an imperfect world where we do not control all the levers of power. We cannot simply charge forward hell-bent, blind to present realities. To do so is the very antithesis of conservatism. It would also jeopardize our hopes for success, because in the messy world of politics, adopting an all-or-nothing strategy usually produces only the latter result: nothing.

Those who demand immediate, wholesale change miss this important lesson. Our task as conservatives is to *conserve*, to retain what works, what is true to our constitutional structure, as we work to correct the excesses of recent decades.

Constitutional Conservatism and the Senate GOP Agenda

So, what is it we seek to conserve? We seek to preserve cherished liberties that make us a free people and provide each individual with the autonomy to live a life of meaning and dignity. We seek to safeguard free markets and entrepreneurial opportunities that produce economic growth and enable all to share in greater material prosperity. And we seek to revitalize a civil society in which strong families, churches, and charities thrive; where neighbors look out for each other; where those with means help those in need; where individuals can reach their highest potential and communities flourish.

But in order to conserve this vision of American society, we must advance affirmative reforms. Edmund Burke famously taught that a state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation. Conservatives must offer a principled, forward-looking agenda that addresses today's challenges in a manner that is consistent with enduring constitutional principles and that heeds the Constitution's many lessons.

For some programs, such as Obamacare, this means repealing the program root and branch and replacing it with one that is both more effective and more in line with limited government and a free society. For other programs that have become more embedded in the fabric of American society, advancing reforms consistent with the cause of constitutionalism will involve more incremental improvements.

Advancing our conservative vision involves limiting and restraining federal overreach that crowds out voluntary institutions and individual initiatives. But it also requires an energetic government directed at promoting policies that enable individual opportunity and encourage civic engagement.

To work towards a government of this sort, conservatives must set forth a detailed reform agenda. Some have already begun to do so. In the coming weeks and months, I hope to contribute to this effort. For now, I would like to outline five policy areas that I believe should be central to the efforts of a Republican Senate majority.

Health Care Reform

First is health care reform—*real* health care reform. Obamacare offends core constitutional principles on multiple levels. It restricts liberty by forcing Americans to purchase products they do not want. It offends federalism by invading a field Congress has no authority to enter. It undermines limited government by transferring massive power to federal policymakers. And it undermines democratic accountability by empowering unelected bureaucrats to micromanage virtually every aspect of health care.

As a consequence, we are already seeing Obamacare displace private initiative. As Jim Capretta notes, “Instead of taking the lead to solve problems and improve care, the major players in the health system—employers, states, providers, and insurers—are now waiting for the latest pronouncements from HHS about what is and is not acceptable under Obamacare.”² This is the very type of situation our Constitution was designed to avoid. Instead of promoting innovation and community-based solutions, the federal government is crowding out private actors. It is sapping vitality from our medical profession and quashing opportunities for growth. It’s also massively increasing our debt, threatening to limit the prosperity and freedom of future generations.

Rather than simply returning to the conditions that predated Obamacare, we need health reform that facilitates access to care and protects the most vulnerable among us, but that also eschews bureaucratic mandates and profligate spending. We need a market-based solution that government monitors, but does not direct.

Earlier this year, Senators Richard Burr, Tom Coburn, and I offered such a solution. Our plan, the Patient CARE Act, employs market-oriented solutions to cut costs and includes patient-centered reforms to expand coverage. It empowers states to provide coverage and reduce costs; enhances purchasing power through targeted tax credits; strengthens consumers’ ability to choose their own health plans; increases transparency regarding plan costs, quality, and outcomes; and eliminates health-care-related distortions in the tax code.

Our plan achieves many of the same goals as Obamacare—such as expanding coverage and protecting access to care for individuals with preexisting conditions—while ensuring that the federal role in health care remains limited, effective, and respectful of individual consumers. It allows providers to experiment with new types of coverage rather than mandating a one-size-fits-all formula. It keeps costs down by expanding the health care marketplace and empowering consumers to shop around. It incentivizes rather than forces healthy individuals to purchase insurance. And it gives states greater flexibility in how they use Medicaid funds, in keeping with the federal nature of our constitutional system.

² James C. Capretta, “Health-Care Reform to Lower Costs and Improve Access and Quality,” in *Room to Grow: Conservative Reforms for a Limited Government and a Thriving Middle Class* (2014).

Obamacare represents a direct assault on many of our most cherished values: individual liberty, prosperity, limited government, federalism. Our alternative avoids all of these problems and represents a real solution to critical health care challenges.

Tax Reform

A second area that demands our attention is tax reform. Our tax code is far too long and complicated for most Americans to comprehend. Its administration alone saps hundreds of billions of dollars each year that could instead be saved or invested. Our current tax system undermines prosperity, discourages entrepreneurship, and gives vast authority to a largely unaccountable IRS.

We must stop treating the tax code as an instrument for social engineering. Such a strategy is flatly contrary to our constitutional values of liberty and limited government. Instead, we should make every effort to minimize the disruptive impact of our tax burden on growth and opportunity.

Several basic principles should guide our efforts. First, reforms should encourage *job creation and economic growth* by making the tax code more internationally competitive, reducing distortions, eliminating overt obstacles to growth, and lowering both individual and corporate rates.

Reforms should also promote *simplicity and fairness*. The income tax base has become excessively riddled with exemptions, exclusions, deductions, and credits. The amount a person pays in taxes should not depend on the creativity of his or her accountant.

True reform must provide *permanence and certainty*. Temporary, expiring provisions have, over time, significantly inhibited efforts by individuals and businesses to plan responsibly for their future, and any serious solution should remedy this situation.

Finally, tax reform should boost *saving and investment*. Many aspects of the current code discourage these wealth-building activities. This in turn hinders long-term growth and economic stability. A tax environment that encourages saving and investment will help ensure an improved standard of living for future generations.

All of these commonsense principles can attract broad support. By streamlining and rationalizing our tax code, we can boost prosperity and encourage the entrepreneurial spirit that has made this nation great. Such reforms would also reign in recent IRS excesses and limit the power of unelected bureaucrats to interfere in our lives and pursuits. By pursuing these reforms, we can make our tax code the province of the people rather than the powerful, while checking government's continued expansion.

Regulatory Reform

A third priority is regulatory reform. The federal bureaucracy continues to grow, further inserting itself into nearly every aspect of American life. The annual cost of regulatory compliance now approaches \$2 trillion, to say nothing of the billions lost through foregone business opportunities. Under President Obama, the growth of the regulatory state has accelerated at an unprecedented rate. Approximately 80,000 pages of federal regulations are published each year. And there are now more than a million individual restrictions in the Code of Federal Regulations.

Congressman Paul Ryan has spoken eloquently and persuasively about overregulation’s pernicious effects, particularly on the poor. Many federal rules disproportionately burden low-income households, which must “contribute a larger share of their income to pay for cost increases resulting from these regulations.”³ Similar economies of scale disproportionately burden small businesses as they struggle to keep up with the reams of red tape rolling out of Washington.

The scope and power of the modern regulatory state is plainly inconsistent with constitutional limits and the type of society those limits were designed to support. Regulation is now the primary means by which the federal government burdens our economy, encroaches on our liberties, and crowds out civil society—all without meaningful accountability to the people or their elected representatives. Government is not supposed to be a barrier to prosperity and growth, but an enabler. It is supposed to help lift up, not hold back.

The current administrative state *demand*s reform. But our efforts must be prudent—carefully calibrated to deliver relief without sacrificing essential health and safety protections.

To begin with, we must ensure that all federal agencies follow existing statutes and executive orders, including the requirement to perform meaningful cost-benefit analysis to ensure that new rules do more good than harm.

Similarly, we must not allow outdated, outmoded regulations simply to pile up. This principle—endorsed by every President since Jimmy Carter—has seen much lip service over the years but little action. What we need now is an effective review mechanism to identify outdated regulations still on the books and provide for their revision or repeal.

We must also ensure that courts are not used to manipulate the regulatory process. We can do this by limiting standing in citizen suits to those parties actually affected by the challenged regulation. This will help prevent special-interest groups from using litigation to accomplish what they cannot do through the ballot box.

Finally, we should consider ways to increase judicial oversight of agency action in order to provide a more robust independent check on new regulation. Two ways to do this would be to require agencies to satisfy a heightened standard under the Administrative Procedure Act, and to rein in the enormous deference courts currently give agency interpretations of law.

These reforms offer meaningful ways to reduce unjustified, burdensome, outdated, and duplicative regulations. They will protect our economy, our liberty, and our right to democratically accountable government, while simultaneously ensuring legitimate standards for health and safety. They are precisely the sort of prudent, incremental reforms that the Constitution counsels us to seek.

Innovation Agenda

A fourth area of focus should be implementing an innovation agenda. Innovation increasingly drives employment and economic growth across the nation and around the globe. In most communities, high-tech job growth is consistently faster than in other sectors. In fact, demand for high-tech jobs is expected to surpass demand for jobs generally through at least 2020.

³ *Expanding Opportunity in America: A Discussion Draft from the House Budget Committee* (2014).

Our constitutional values teach that the federal government has an important role to play in helping to foster entrepreneurship and economic growth. But that role is not one of heavy-handed regulator. Rather, government's proper role is to act as a facilitator, fostering an environment that encourages the research and development that will drive our prosperity and quality of life in the decades to come.

Now is the time to combat abusive patent litigation and to create a harmonized, uniform system for protecting trade secrets. Bipartisan legislation in these areas is already written and should be a top priority in the next Congress.

We should also consider ways to create a voluntary framework for combating online piracy and for protecting critical infrastructure through public-private information sharing.

Equally important is equipping our workforce for the new economy. We can do this by investing in STEM training, and by revamping our immigration laws to ease the entry process for high-skilled workers. Many countries, such as Canada, structure their immigration laws to favor such workers, and it is far past time we followed suit.

Keeping the internet open and competitive must also be a priority. We should encourage continued deployment of broadband networks and mobile services and ease the process of expanding wireless spectrum.

As a general matter, we must resist the urge to regulate what is working well according to market forces. Net neutrality is a terrible idea whose time has not, and never should, come. The last thing we need is government telling ISPs how to carve up bandwidth. Keep the internet free and it will continue to drive our economy forward.

Fostering innovation in these ways will strengthen our economy while keeping government in its proper constitutional role—as a helpful partner, not an all-present planner.

Mobility Agenda

A fifth priority should be developing and refining a mobility agenda. For 50 years we've been fighting a war on poverty. For 50 years we've spent trillions of dollars on massive federal welfare programs that have largely failed. The poverty rate has remained essentially unchanged since 1967, and increasing numbers of Americans worry—with some cause—that their children won't have the same opportunities to get ahead that they did.

This is a grave problem. Our constitutional system is predicated on the idea of a free and prosperous citizenry. When people remain mired in poverty generation after generation, they may lose faith in the value of hard work, and turn instead to government as the answer to all their problems. This in turn sets up a conflict between the desire for security and the ideal of limited government. Citizens who feel abandoned or left behind may—understandably—be more willing to sacrifice some of their rights and liberties if they believe doing so will save them from economic extremity.

One of government's legitimate obligations is to create conditions for broadly shared prosperity. For our constitutional system to thrive, we need citizens who believe both in the

government and in themselves. Simply throwing more money at failed programs does not do this. Nor does it foster social cooperation. Quite the opposite.

I believe government *does* have an obligation to help struggling citizens, to remove obstacles and create ladders of opportunity to success. What we need today is a concerted effort at serious reform. Bright young leaders in our party from Congressman Ryan to Senator Marco Rubio have developed innovative proposals to expand opportunity and reinvent the safety net.

These proposals highlight the need for adaptability and accountability in our income mobility efforts. In my home state of Utah, such an approach to HUD monies has helped more low-income families find stable housing while reducing federal handouts.

Let me offer two additional thoughts on reforms that can help keep the American Dream alive throughout society.

First, we must reform our antiquated labor laws to make hiring easier and to enable employees to change jobs more easily in the new economy. We need standards that incorporate part-time work, flextime arrangements for working parents, and alternative methods of compensation. Individuals should have the freedom to negotiate the terms of their work, and federal rules ought not punish law-abiding employers seeking to create win-win situations for families and productivity. And it is past time that we reformed our labor laws to ensure that the rights of workers—not labor unions—come first.

Second, education—the gateway to opportunity in our society. The seeds of reform—from school choice to teacher accountability—are beginning to take hold in states and localities. We must make the Department of Education a facilitator of such reform, rather than an overlord. The federal role should be to assist state efforts through cooperative programs and increased flexibility, not top-down directives. The Department should serve primarily as a clearinghouse for education research and as a means to disseminate best practices to states. Experience shows that education decisions tailored to local needs are better for children than one-size-fits-all nationwide decrees.

And rather than simply continuing to subsidize the ever-growing cost of higher education, we must incentivize institutions to reduce costs, which they can do by eliminating unnecessary administrative activities or implementing competency-based programs for students who already possess skills and experience in their chosen field.

Summary

All of these proposals aim to improve our nation's well-being while taking account of the Constitution's lessons. They offer incremental reform rather than wholesale revision. They seek to preserve the proper role of the states rather than impose top-down, conform-or-else mandates. They recognize the threat of overbroad government power. And they take account of current political realities.

Proposals and principles like these also offer opportunities to unite the various strands of conservatism by focusing on improving economic well-being and restraining government to its proper role. Every conservative can support efforts to get government out of health care and reduce related infringements on religious liberty. We can all get behind efforts to reduce taxes and streamline

regulations to promote real growth and opportunity. And conservatives of all stripes can champion efforts to foster innovation and move people from poverty to opportunity in ways that do not swell our already bloated federal bureaucracy.

Constitutional Conservatism and the GOP Vision for America

I am confident that such policies can win broad support. In the coming weeks and months, I will say more about each of these principles and proposals. But as we appeal to the American people, we must not confine ourselves to reciting a set of policy bullet points. We must also sketch out our vision for America and show how constitutional conservatism can lead us to a richer, more robust society.

Today, as we see the federal leviathan reaching its jaws around many of our most cherished institutions, we need an invigorated conservatism that will return the federal government to its proper role in our constitutional structure.

A federal government that stops trying to eliminate all the vicissitudes of life will allow more room for family, neighbors, and churches to care for each other. A federal government with narrower, politically accountable regulatory authority is far less likely to order individuals to violate their deeply held beliefs. It also has less capacity to issue mandates that inhibit innovation and economic growth. Such a government will not insinuate itself into all aspects of our lives in ways that enervate our civic institutions and undermine our ability as individuals to choose freely how to live.

Constitutional conservatism is about much more than lowering taxes or eliminating waste, though reducing the size of government does both those things. It's about returning government to its rightful role in our society.

You may recall the *Life of Julia* ad from President Obama's reelection campaign, which tells the story of a young woman who graduates college, has a child, and works until retirement, all with nary a mention of a mother, father, brother, sister, husband, or other family member. Instead, Julia owes all her successes and opportunities in life to the federal government, which is there to support her every step along the way. The ad is a perfect distillation of the ultimate end of the progressive state—government as replacement for family and community, God and priest, mentor and friend. That is not the government our nation's founders envisioned, nor the one they created.

Government's role is not to provide universal social and economic support, but rather to create opportunities and remove obstacles. A vigorous, dynamic constitutional conservatism will return government to its proper role—that of supporter, not director. As Ronald Reagan said in his First Inaugural, we must make government “work—work with us, not over us; . . . stand by our side, not ride on our back. Government can and must provide opportunity, not smother it; foster productivity, not stifle it.”

That is the vision I believe Republicans must offer. By keeping the Constitution as our guide and working to conserve our founding principles, we can offer a hopeful, reform-oriented agenda that will unite the conservative movement and win the hearts and minds of a broad majority of Americans looking for change.

Thank you.