

Remarks at the 45th Dorchester Conference

Seaside, Oregon, March 7, 2009

By U.S. Rep. Greg Walden

Good morning.

We gather again near the magnificent Pacific, only miles from where Lewis and Clark wintered before returning to Washington to tell the President of their dangerous, fabulous experience, and the land of vast opportunity that lay out west.

This young democracy was gathering to its shores peoples seeking freedom and a future. They'd had their fill of oppressive governments.

History books are filled with their stories, and many of us in this room talk about our own ancestors who braved the Oregon Trail in search of a better life. Ordinary people...set free...to build an extraordinary country we call America.

I know their spirit—that pioneer spirit of carving a new trail, that hunger for freedom—still beats in our hearts today.

But now, freedom is under attack.

We have become all too familiar with those ruling by brutality, or killing innocents with acts of terrorism. These are obvious enemies of freedom.

But my concern is about the more subtle loss of freedom caused by those who control our government, and with the most sincere of intentions believe that if we just hand over our money and our freedom, they can build a government that will march us to our future.

They are wrong. And I will oppose them.

Where does freedom stand with Democratic leaders in Washington? Let's take a look.

Freedom of speech? They want to bring back the Fairness Doctrine so federal bureaucrats decide what can be said on our nation's airwaves. We support First Amendment rights for talk radio, but Democratic leaders want to control criticism by controlling what's said on the air.

They are wrong. And I will oppose them.

Second amendment rights? They want the government to register every person and every firearm. Just look at HR 45...originally authored by White House Chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel.

They are wrong... and I will oppose them.

The freedom that comes with a secret ballot when workers consider forming a union?

They want to take this away... a move economists say will cost 600,000 American jobs...

They are wrong...and I will oppose them.

The freedom to pass along to your children the family farm or small business, and not having to sell it all to pay the death tax....

They're for higher estate taxes, we're against them...

They are wrong and I will oppose them.

They're for taxing the unemployed...we're for freeing those on unemployment from sending a portion of that payment back to the government.

They're for cutting back on charitable donations...by raising taxes on those who exercise their freedom to give... The president's plan would eliminate more in charitable giving than the combined budgets of the Boy Scouts of America, St. Jude's Hospital and the Cancer Society.

Well, they're wrong. And I will oppose them.

They're for new energy taxes. The president's proposal will send more of our jobs overseas and rob family budgets of \$1,300 in higher energy costs...

Here in Oregon...the Democrats can't even keep faith with the generous who give to the Cultural Trust or to all of us who pay a tax on our phone bills to support emergency responders. They want to take money given for one purpose and put it another... breaking the bond of trust with those who pay.

A government that takes away our freedoms and violates our trust is a government that needs reinventing, reforming...and let's just say it: that government needs to be REPLACED.

And that is history's call to us. When Ronald Reagan beat Pat Brown 58 to 42 for Governor of California, he described the result as a "rebellion of ordinary people."

Well, if there was ever a call for a new "rebellion of ordinary people" ...this is that time!

This is not a battle for power for power's sake...this is a cause to put new ideas into action that will work for Oregonians.... and that Oregonians can afford. Oregon voters are paying attention, now more than ever as their lives and future depend on it. People aren't desperate, but they do not have unlimited patience to wait for either party to be up front about what needs to be done, what can be done, and how to do it.

Our first step is to understand what happened, and I think Bob and his colleagues laid that out last night. The change I want to discuss with you comes down to two things.

1. We need to connect on the basics with Oregonians and Americans. An economy

that gets off its back, jobs with a future, kids knowing there is an Oregon with opportunities as big as an Eastern Oregon sky. Voters haven't heard that from us in a long while, or it's been lost in the noise. People must see and hear ... and believe in a real alternative from our camp.

2. We need to recruit strong candidates, new candidates, for every single election in Oregon. We cannot let one seat go unchallenged, from city council, to county commission, to the State House and Senate, to Congress, to statewide including Governor and, yes, Attorney General.

The Republican nominee for Attorney General in 2008 was the Democrat nominee funded by a Hall of Fame list of liberal, special interest groups. How in the world did that happen?

Well, never again, my friends, never again. And let me promise one thing: we are going to take back Washington County, the key to a new Republican majority.

And we are going to rebuild our party, and get going again with a plan to close the gap on voter registration.

Today, I join in that effort and present to our new state party chairman Bob Tiernan a check for \$10,000 to help put us on offense.

Bob and I didn't always see eye-to-eye when we served in the Legislature, but this is a new day and he's committed to building a strong party organization that will have the horsepower to help elect Republicans. Bob... Godspeed in your efforts...and I hope others will join me in supporting the fund raising event with our new RNC Chairman Michael Steele later this month.

Now, I want to announce that I will devote 2009 and 2010 to these priorities:

Develop new ideas and policies with Oregonians to turn Oregon around, and

find, motivate and support candidates to re-build Oregon for all of us, not just the interest groups.

I have formed a political action committee--the New Pioneers PAC--and we are going to invite people from every corner of Oregon to get involved.

Not just with a check, but to join in citizen meetings we will organize throughout the state, that I will attend, to hammer out real world solutions to get Oregon back on track. These won't be one shot town halls, but meeting after meeting after meeting to drill down to solutions that we can afford and that will work.

We will start with jobs and our economy here in Oregon. I am joining with House

Republican Leader Bruce Hanna to bring together men and women from main street... from one person software companies run from home to the small employers who are the back bone of Oregon's economy, to our largest companies, to join us for a series of meetings starting on April 15th....yes tax day.

We are going to tackle the fundamental issues that stand in the way of economic recovery. We'll ask the questions that count, and develop common sense answers.

What do we need to do right now to make it possible for businesses to start hiring, to start growing again...to get back to work?

What should government stop doing that gets in the way?

What can Oregon do to get credit flowing for Oregon businesses?

How do we take the stimulus money, even if we don't support that approach, and use it to build long-term jobs through Oregon businesses, not to expand the reach of government in our state?

The challenge is clear: if we have the solutions and we have the candidates, then we will earn the opportunity to lead Oregon and the country. It's as simple as that.

But if we have one without the other, candidates but no policies, then we will meet each year at Dorchester and wonder what happened.

It starts with ideas that connect with every day concerns of Oregonians.

Without these we won't find the candidates to run under our banner.

And while there will be times that we must say "NO" to the bad ideas and policies of the Democrats... We can't just say "No".

Too often in the past when we've "just said NO"...our citizens heard that to mean: "Nothing to Offer."

We need to become the Ideas Workshop for Oregon. Even if every idea does not become reality, Oregonians need to see that we are the ones working hard toward solutions that matter.

Unfortunately, many on the other side want to use this economic crisis as an opportunity to enact their long-held desire to turn America into a government run economy, and to pick the winners and the losers.

You know something's oddly off course when the Russians have to warn us about the problems of too much government in the economy.

Do we honestly believe that Oregonians wake up every day and want government to take care of everything? To make every important decision in their lives? That this is the only future possible for us and our children? That the need to take care of those who cannot help themselves means that our entire society is turned into a government enterprise?

We can help those in need without becoming Venezuela.

We do not have to give up on America to turn our situation around.

What our national and state leaders do not understand is that America is more than a post office to receive your government check or an Internet site to receive your thoughts for the day.

America and Oregon are about freedom and opportunity... about how to live the one life we are given.

About the risks and rewards, the choices and accountability to reach the dreams we nurture all of our lives.

Americans voted for change...not for surrender.

Oregonians want a chance at success, not a guarantee. They want their children to have an opportunity in this beautiful place we call Oregon, not a lifetime, get-out-of-risk for free pass.

When I look into Oregonians' eyes I don't see a lack of hope, I see desire--the desire to turn things around and decide for themselves how to do it.

We don't want to be told how to live any more than where to live. And we won't be fooled into thinking that borrowing money from the Chinese to rush to repave a few roads is either sustainable economic policy or a substitute for unleashing again the lions of innovation and creativity.

Just think what a couple of young guys with a waffle iron and an idea created in a garage in Eugene?

Let's ask ourselves this: What would it take to make Oregon the hotbed of invention, not just of the nation, but also for the world?

But more than just becoming a place for innovation, we must make Oregon a place for manufacturing and development.

If we are the "land of the empire builders" then let's start acting like it!

Right now, the answer from Democrats is to tax success, tax innovation, regulate everything that moves, and chase the best minds and capital from the state and reward

special interests.

This is not a recipe for success it's a death sentence. We'll never have the resources to educate our kids if we don't grow the economic base of our state.

Instead of raising the capital gains tax we should eliminate it. Let's keep that capital and brain power here in Oregon--inventing and creating new jobs and opportunities.

Instead of driving up energy costs we should work to lower them...so we can attract high tech, keep irrigated agriculture and have an advantage for manufacturing.

Instead of abandoning our great natural resources we should harness them and use them.... creating jobs in our forested communities and reducing the cost and loss from catastrophic fire. And develop geothermal, wind, hydro and solar power.

Now ask yourself, if you are an entrepreneur living outside of Oregon, what are the odds you would move to a state with one of the highest personal income tax and capital gains tax rates in the nation?

And if you are an Oregonian who's been successful in creating jobs, what are the odds that you move out of state a year or two before you sell your business?

Sometimes I think that Oregon's tax rates were sponsored by the Vancouver Chamber of Commerce.

And now Democratic leaders of the Oregon Legislature want to raise the tax rate from 9% to 11%, and President Obama wants to raise federal capital gains rates from 15% to 20%.

So we want new jobs, and we want new investments, and we want businesses and entrepreneurs to take new risks, and the reward is that we are going to raise capital gains and income taxes---in a recession no less.

What on earth is going on? Who in their right mind believes that this is how you rebuild Oregon or America? Is it any surprise that when new executives move to Portland the first call they make is to a Realtor in Vancouver?

We have an entire class of politicians who refuse to understand, or even try to understand, how our economy works. They've spent their careers signing the back of a paycheck, and have never had to sign the front of one.

They believe that our government can use your taxes to write a check for a public works project, and it has the same economic effect as Bill Gates investing in Microsoft software development, or Phil Knight investing in new technology and innovation at Nike. Or someone we have never heard of in Beaverton or Hillsboro putting his life savings in an invention to build something we can't even imagine?

Oregon will not survive as we know it if this thinking becomes law. This is not about punishing the rich, or grabbing every available dollar we can to maintain current government programs. This is about a fundamental American truth...one that the world has marveled at and come to depend on. We are the one country that continued to honor and reward investment, and innovation, and risk-taking--no matter how large we grew--because we understood that real jobs and growth only happen when the pie is expanded, when ideas grow into innovations that attract investors and customers around the world. And workers are hired to build these innovations.

Do we really believe that none of this matters after November 4, 2008? That it's all up to the government now? No worry if the inventors and risk-takers go away---your state and federal government have your back, and your future?

So Oregon, don't raise your capital gains taxes, abolish them. That's right, abolish them. You've already taxed the business owner once, do you need to tax him or her again and raise the rate while you're at it? Send a message to America and all of the world that there is one corner of the United States that welcomes job creators, that welcomes risk-takers, that will do what it takes to nurture and grow jobs.

Let us return from this coastal setting to our communities, much as Lewis and Clark did to Washington... excited by the vast opportunity to create something new.

We are the "new pioneers" and it is within our power to do so.

We know that the course ahead will not be easy...but then nothing worth attaining ever is.

This is our state and our country. And ladies and gentlemen...this is OUR TIME.

God bless you...and God Bless America.