

Thank you.

I live in the town in New England where Thornton Wilder wrote the great play, *Our Town*, which reflects the simple joys of life and the freedoms we have come to enjoy as Americans. Our town is in New Hampshire, where our motto, you may know, is "Live Free or Die."

My son lives just down the creek from me in a home his children often visit to let their children play in the woods, or draw sap from the maples, or enjoy the garden or the stream, protected from pollution by our common action through our government—another of our great freedoms allowing us to live and enjoy life, without polluting industries buying our town council's votes so they can poison our water or air. We would not allow it in our town, and we mustn't allow it in our states or nation.

The grown children of my family have jobs far away now, having gone to school and studied the things they enjoy in life, out of which they have fashioned careers. But they all come together in times of joy or sadness or crisis.

When my grandchildren and great grandchildren gather round in our woods, or in any of the great cities where we meet from time to time, I look around at

them and see in them the great range of freedoms we enjoy—so many careers, businesses, professions. The good life is this: being able to live up to your fullest potential, following your dreams and your interests. Being able to support yourself and your loved ones with the fruits of your labors , and to have something of your time and money left over to see something of the world and its wonders. It is all that anyone in the world wants to be left alone to do.

How blessed are we to live in such freedom! Here and around the world, poverty and oppression keep so many lives down, keep many good people from living the lives they might.

And yet we live in a time when the human scale of things is challenged by giant enterprises that threaten to pull our jobs to other shores and buy our elections and our representatives out from under us. These enterprises turn good communities into wage colonies, where the local banks are replaced by payday loan companies and pawn shops. —storefronts that indicate <sup>LEAVING EMPTY</sup> of the growing stress of a community. Giant stores, owned by people far away, suck the lives out of our Main Streets and turn the middle class into swiss cheese. We are in an opening time of epic struggle between human scale and corporate scale, between human interests and

international business interest, and they are quite different ~~interests~~.

Our freedoms are at stake. Our freedoms are not given us, we take them. We defend them, sometimes with our lives, our fortunes, and our honor.

It is for our freedoms that we gather today.

For we are not free if we do not live in a democracy that reflects our interests and our values. And it is not <sup>A</sup> democracy when we have no representatives, freely elected, to represent us.

In days of old, we knew the people who proposed to represent us. We knew them on Main Street, or we listened to them speak in the park. The newspaper told us all about them. They might put up some posters and have some banners in a parade, but money was not much of a consideration as we elected our leaders and moved forward as a community, a society and a nation.

We are in danger of losing that when we lose the human scale of our democracy. Our towns have grown large, many of our newspapers have turned away from real reporting, and television and radio ads and expensive direct mail campaigns have become the battlegrounds for those seeking office. Large,

special interest organizations have been the only pockets deep enough to keep pace with the game, leaving us behind.

Otherwise good candidates become junkies for campaign donations. Once elected, their addictions continues and their time is often given more to their big contributors than to us. The walls between us and our once-representative government are in danger of growing ever higher and thicker.

There are so many things we care about in our nation and our world. I care about environmental and social issues, and you have your own issues. Can we work out our differences on the floor of the legislatures and of the Congress as free citizens, through our representatives? Or will the people we elect be working for the people who fund their reelections? That is the future we must avoid.

We Americans are a great family, indeed, and this is a family matter. It is a time for the adults and the elders and the young people to come together to find a solution and to make whatever sacrifices are needed until we are sure that our democracy is secure.

In my long walk across America several years ago, many people came to tears when they told me that they no longer felt that they had representation, which



means that they no longer felt like free Americans. We cannot afford that. In my present trek across America to encourage voting and the reform of our election systems, I have heard many people say they thought it meant nothing for them to vote, as the game was rigged and they would not get representation. Special interests would get the representation. We cannot afford that way of thinking, and we must do what we can to remove the things that make that opinion valid. Americans feel abandoned by their elected leaders and by their parties, so busy cozying-up to fatcats and no time for us or our opinions or needs.

We are here today to prevent the rise of walls between us and our representatives--our agents in the world. We cannot expect a peaceful world, a just world, a clean and beautiful world so long as our values of peace and justice and responsible stewardship are not represented in the shaping of local and national policy. This matters! Our freedom is what we are talking about.

So this is no small issue; The "Clean Elections" movement will indeed move forward, for we are not free without free elections.

In Arizona, candidates can now run for office without the necessity of taking big dollars from special

interests. If they can raise enough \$5 contributions from the registered voters in their districts, then they qualify for full campaign funding from the state. That happens to be much cheaper for the citizens of Arizona than paying off the special interests with special tax loopholes, environmental loopholes, special subsidies and all the rest that big contributors get for their dollars—for why else do they contribute? Republicans and Democrats use the new system in Arizona, and it is revolutionizing and restoring democracy in that state--as the original Clean Elections system is doing in the state of Maine.

Here we are today in the heartland of good government reform. From these prairies and towns have come the great populist reforms that reshaped American politics a century ago. Minnesota is where the best Clean Elections program should be adopted, taking the best from the other states and making the finest model law in the nation. From here, we can build for a federal Clean Elections system, and that will change the world.

This is not my home town, and yet it is. We are a family looking to our future, and our town is alive with its old people and young, working together to cause a great and positive change, to renew our great experiment, so that we might always live free.

We are a coming together of old and young, experience and energy. We share an idealism and a love for each other and for the institutions that allow us to live together in freedom and justice, ever improving on our imperfect past. This is the democracy that so many have died for. We owe much to them, don't we? We owe it to them to march forward ourselves to restore and elevate our democracy—the fountain of our freedoms.

Without the young people here, there is no energy to move us to the future. We need them and we thank them. What is happening in Minnesota, a grand alliance between students and the seasoned reformers of other generations, is important and new. You are a coming together of generational currents that will change history here, and you are showing the way for the students and activists of other states and for the nation. This new alliance is historic and I am proud to be among you and see it happening. To the old activists and to the political leaders and social leaders, I say this: support the idealism of these young people and you will find your way to a better world, and sooner than you could have imagined.

Thank you.