USC Annenberg Ceasefire! Bridging the Political Divide Monday, June 18, 2007

7:00PM Address

Greetings: Geoffrey Cowan

Introduction: Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa

Address: Mayor Mike Bloomberg

Dean Geoffrey Cowan: So as we start, and as I ask you now to actually spend a moment calling you to attention, if you weren't introduced I apologize. I'll call your names, too. I want to say a word about this event, this Conference, and why we're holding it.

There's a hunger in America and in the world for governments that work and for civil discourse. We called this event "Ceasefire," in Margaret Carlson's phrase, with the obvious goal of finding an alternative to crossfire, crossfire in the media, and crossfire in public life. To some it seems that we're living in an era in which extreme partisanship manages much too often to trump every other feature of public life.

Of course, we're speaking of words and not bullets, and events in Iraq should remind us of just how lucky we are even in the most extreme of circumstances in this country, but our own problems are real. And while partisan debate is healthy and, in fact, is the hallmark of our democratic society, this Conference seeks to ask are there times when partisanship and name calling go too far and make governing almost impossible?

During the next day we hope to explore the depths of the problem and to look for solutions. Are things really worse today than they were in the past, and what can we learn from the past? Is the press a part of the problem?

Some of you probably read Tony Blair's comments to Reuters last week in Great Britain where he said, "The relationship," and I'm quoting here, "between public life and the media is now damaged in a manner that requires repair. It reduces our capacity to make the right decisions in the right spirit for our future." That was Tony Blair, last week speaking in England.

Is that true in America? And, if so, and to the extent it is, is there anything that can be done about it? Are new media part of the problem, and are there ways in which they can be and are part of the solution? Are there structural reforms worth exploring for government?

Now, I know that issues of process tend to put voters to sleep. But 100 years ago process was actually sexy. In California, Hiram Johnson was elected to office, and the initiative, and the referendum, and recall were all created because they were exciting issues for the populace at that time. And Theodore Roosevelt actually put those issues along with the direct primary at the core of his Presidential Campaign in 1912.

So here's some questions we may want to probe during the next two days. Is it easier to solve problems and avoid extreme partisanship at the local and state level? Does the initiative referendum and recall process help or harm the process of governing and of government? Are there virtues to divided government, with one party in charge of the Executive say and the other in charge of the Legislature? Or are there virtues in single party rule? Is Los Angeles more governable because we have a nonpartisan form of government here in LA?

What's the impact of the ways in which political district lines are drawn in California and in the nation? Should we be talking about the role of campaign finance or ethics reform or about term limits or is this primarily a function of individual leadership, of women and men who reach across political, ideological, and cultural boundaries? What can we learn from the experience of history of other countries, of other states and communities, and of the remarkable group assembled here in this room?

We hope to come up with some topics for further exploration, and we hope to meet again to discuss them a year from now or 18 months from now to see how we can carry forward possibly at the time of a new national administration.

To start us off, I'm delighted to welcome, and it seems odd to be welcoming him here to his home, but nevertheless to welcome our host, the dynamic and creative Mayor of Los Angeles, who has the unique perspective of having served as the Speaker of the Assembly in California in a deeply divided State Government, and now serving as the Mayor of Los Angeles with our nonpartisan government, please join me in welcoming and thanking Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

[Applause.]

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa: Good evening, everybody, and thank you, Dean Cowan, for that introduction. It's an honor to cohost this inaugural event as the Annenberg School opens its doors to the Center for a communication leadership, and thank you, all, so much for being here tonight.

Allow me to say, Dean, that you're off to a magnificent beginning – where are you, by the way? There you are. You're off to a magnificent beginning. No one can accuse you of easing your way into the assignment or hewing to the conventional advice about managing expectations. And with this historic and star-studded Conference the Annenberg School is swinging for the fences in its very first at bat. I can't wait to see what kind of an encore you'll have, but knowing you and the Annenberg School, I know it will be quite an encore.

And none of this would be possible without the vision and the leadership of Wallis Annenberg, and let's acknowledge her wherever – there she is. Wallis, why don't you stand-up for us?

[Applause.]

The grand dame of Los Angeles. We're blessed to have here in the City of Los Angeles some of the most civic minded, philanthropic leaders anywhere on the face of the earth, private citizens, like Wallis, who understand their obligation to community and understand that a community is more than an economic market.

From the Science Center, to [Lackma], to her never-ending efforts at USC, Wallis has quietly laid the groundwork for generations of progress, and we're very honored to have you here, and thank you for this effort. This effort came together as result of a dinner Wallis had at her home, that I hosted with Mayor Bloomberg. As a result of conversation at the dinner table this event came to place, and we acknowledge you, Wallis, for that initial idea.

Now, it's always an honor for me to introduce a good friend and, in particular, my good friend and fellow Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Despite our obvious differences, I want to be absolutely clear, this is a man for whom I have a tremendous respect and admiration. It's true he's a Republican and I'm a Democrat. He may have earned his stripes on the trading floors of Wall Street. I grew-up on the picket lines and in meeting halls of organized labor. He's a compact 5 foot 7. I, of course, loom – no, I tower above him at

5 foot 8.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm proud to stand with the Mayor of New York. I want to thank Mayor Bloomberg personally tonight for building a bridge here to Los Angeles. He's come west with an important message about the need to prevail over partisanship in New York, in Los Angeles, and everywhere in between.

Today, when so many Americans are tempted to tune out, when our debates are so often reduced to the cynical and shallow shorthand, like who favors amnesty and who supports the troops, when the 24-hour news networks concentrate almost exclusively on conflict and division, where insults pose as insights, and meanness so often masquerades as meaning, when we continue to see stupefying inaction on many of the most urgent issues facing our people, from healthcare to education, to social security, to energy and dependence, to global warming, to immigration, to the problem of poverty, and the crisis facing America's middle class, it's time to take back the national debate.

Surveys show most Republican and Democratic voters fundamentally agree on basic issues, and yet it's the biggest issues which seem to get lost in the political stalemates in Washington. As the country wakes up to this reality, Americans are taking note, local leaders are filling the void. While Washington drags its feet on global warning, cities and states have been tackling the issue head-on.

And Mayor Bloomberg has been setting the standard with a bold plan to cut carbon emissions by 30% by 2030. It's fitting that you're here in Los Angeles, Mayor Bloomberg, because Los Angeles is raising you up, one, we'll be cutting carbon emissions by 35% by the year 2030.

[Applause.]

And as it should be, two great American cities competing to add to the public discourse through action, not words, working across partisan lines to get things done. And, of course, Mayor Bloomberg has done much more than just that. He made rescuing urban schools the hallmark of his first term, and I want to thank him for tutoring me along the way, for escorting me through the schools of New York, for opening up his reform leadership team to Los Angeles. And while we weren't successful with, while we were successful with our legislation, we weren't successful in the courts, we were, Mayor Bloomberg, you should know, very successful in electing a Reform Board, and we hope to do all the things that you have done here in New York.

[Applause.]

I don't have to tell you that Mayor Bloomberg aggressively tackled the booming post 911 deficit and turned it into a surplus. And, coincidentally, Mayor, here in LA, when I was elected Mayor some two years ago we had a \$295 million deficit. We've reduced it by \$200 million in two years. Again, looking to New York, with the kinds of measures that you were able to implement and taking a page from your book.

And bucking many of those in his own party, Mayor Bloomberg has led on the issues of poverty and gun violence. He even got away with something a Democrat in Los Angeles could never do, he raised property taxes by 18%. I don't think I'm going to take your lead on that one. You know, we both have a 70% popularity rating right now, and mine went down quite a bit after the immigration debate, I don't think I could suffer a property tax increase, but my hat is off to you, Mayor Bloomberg.

And I believe it's no secret to the success of Mayor Bloomberg. The people of the City respect a leader who knows it's not about ideology, it's about ideas, it's about the willingness to think big, to take big

risks, to do big things for a great City, and to do so regardless of the political costs or consequences.

And so, friends, I'm delighted to welcome one of America's great mayors to Getty House. Please put your hands together for Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

[Applause.]

Mayor Michael Bloomberg: Well, thank you, everyone. Mayor Villaraigosa, it's a pleasure to be in LA, the greatest, most exciting City west of the Hudson River. I say that as a totally neutral observer, of course.

Over the past two years the Mayor and I have found that we have a lot in common. We are both passionate, as you know, about education and taking illegal guns off the streets of our Cities. We are both fluent in Spanish, although my accent is a little bit better, I think, and we still both have no idea what happened at the end of The Sopranos, so.

Let me also thank Wallis and the Annenberg School for hosting this Conference. The last time I was in California the Annenberg Family hosted a dinner for Mayor Villaraigosa that I had the pleasure of attending. The Annenberg's are a great family, some of whom even live in New York City, but most importantly every time I come here they feed me, so I will continue to come back as long as that is the case. And, Wallis, the food looks like it will be as good tonight as the last time you fed me. I hope so.

I also hope that tonight and tomorrow, seriously, everyone at this Conference will share with us their thoughts about the governmental changes that we face in our nation and how we can deal with them. Solutions to these problems require a diversity of opinion and fresh approaches so that in that spirit, let me begin by cutting to the chase of why I think this Conference is necessary.

America, the most wonderful country in the world, I think, is at a crossroads. The politics of partisanship and the resulting inaction and excuses have paralyzed decision making, primarily at the Federal level, and the big issues of our day are just not being addressed, leaving our future in real jeopardy.

Now, we can accept this or we can say, "Enough is enough. I'm not going to take it anymore." And together build a brighter future for our country. I believe we can turn around our country's current wrongheaded course, but only if we start basing our actions on ideas, shared values, and a commitment to solve problems without regard for party.

The point of this Conference is clear. We do not have to settle for the same old politics. We do not have to accept the tired debate between the left and the right, between Democrats and Republicans, between Congress and the White House. We can and we must declare a ceasefire and move America forward.

While a ceasefire is essential, it must be followed, however, by change. Real change, not the word but the deed. Not slogans, but a fundamentally different way of behaving. One built on cooperation and collaboration, and it is needed now because more than ever, Washington is sinking into a swamp of dysfunction.

No matter who is in charge, sadly today, partisanship is king. It has become a contest in Washington to one up the other side and to score points for the next election. Decisions in DC these days are more political and less issue based than I think ever before, and the consequences have been disastrous for us.

When you go to Washington now you can feel a sense of fear in the air. The fear to do anything or say anything that might affect the polls or give the other side an advantage or offend a special interest group.

This is paralyzing our government, and it's leading our elected officials to push all the big, long-term problems into the future generations: healthcare, social security, budget deficits, global warming, immigration, you name it.

Their inaction and partisan gridlock are destroying our relationships and reputation around the world. They are hurting our economic competiveness, driving scientific and medical discoveries overseas, and jeopardizing our future as the land of hope and opportunity.

Now, in Washington they do see the same problems we do, but instead of working to address their causes and provide real lasting solutions, they tinker around the edges, offering Band-Aids that do nothing to stop the bleeding, giving us platitudes and promises, but never the decisive, merit based legislation and leadership that we so desperately need.

And then they blame the other side when the bleeding gets worse. Why do elected officials [act] this way, you might ask? I think there's one primary answer. They've become hooked on partisanship because it offers easy answers, and then it consumes them. It becomes their most important priority. We're talking about a serious, harmful addiction here and, unfortunately, there's no promises, clinic for leadership or for partnership, or for partisanship. If there were maybe they'd stop making so many empty promises.

The United States can't afford for this to continue. We need Washington to break its addiction, to end the gridlock, and to stop passing the buck to future generations. Leading from the front is what built America, but these days the Federal Government isn't at the front, it's cowering in the back of the room, ducking responsibility, and hoping no one notices.

The fact is our country is going to meet the challenges of this new century without the benefit of the kind of progress that political parties could provide but now refuse to take responsibility for, and they refuse to end this corrosive culture of partisanship.

It's a waste of time pointing fingers and blaming the politicians in Washington, I think, however. After all, we, you and me, we elected them. Now, I think if we want Washington to change, we, the individual voters, have to do something differently. We have to hold those we elected accountable.

Now, from my experience, ending Washington's paralysis means bridging divides, and that does not mean just splitting differences, that's a common, political copout. Public policy is not a zero [sum] game, and it doesn't always have to be a partisan tug-of-war. Believe it or not, by thinking outside of the box and bringing creative ideas to the table, we can increase the overall benefits that both sides can achieve and, more importantly, what America can achieve.

That's what nonpartisanship permits, getting big things done, producing real results, solving tough problems. And that's what governors and mayors around this country have been doing recently, stepping in to solve national problems at the local level, and I think you are blessed here with two examples of the kind of leadership that we really need, in your Governor, Governor Schwarzenegger, and your Mayor, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

State and city governments can lead the way, but in many cases you should know that our actions are limited and preempted by Federal policies, and more and more those policies are failing to keep up with the times and failing to respond to our most pressing problems. We need Washington to begin taking the same nonpartisan, results oriented approach that is succeeding at the city and state level.

As I see it, this approach is based on five values of leadership that have the power to bridge the partisan

divide, and it all begins with one, independence. Now, there's nothing wrong with belonging to a political party, about two-thirds of us do. But joining a party doesn't mean you should stop thinking for yourself. Neither party has God on its side, a monopoly on good ideas, or a lock on any single fiscal, social, or moral philosophy. And anyone who says their party does and the other one doesn't, is either a fraud or just not a very good student of history.

For progress we have to start evaluating ideas on their merits, not their origins. Conventional wisdom has to be challenged, no matter whose conventional wisdom it is. And we must be willing to call them like we see them, no matter what party discipline demands. In other words, independence from politics, ideology and petty selfishness.

Nonpartisan leadership also requires good old-fashioned honesty and common sense, and I know you hear – you will hear a lot about that from the participants in this Conference. Promising a chicken in every pot without saying who'll pay for it, or a secret plan to end the war, or falling back on motherhood and apple pie without taking on the underlying reasons why families are struggling to make ends meet, that's not honesty, nor is it honest to make decisions that are guided by political expediency or campaign donations or by faith based science instead of real science.

Honesty means having the courage to tell the public the unvarnished truth, the down sides as well as the up sides, the costs as well as the benefits, and it means making decisions on the merits and only on the merits.

I would bet that all the participants at this Conference will tell you that voters respect and reward those who rely on common sense to make their decisions, and those who refuse to let politics get in the way of doing the right thing for the right reasons. Taking this approach builds trust and trust bridges divides. Governors and mayors in this country are doing this every day, and Washington has got to start doing it, as well, if we are to have a future.

Innovation is another value central to nonpartisan leadership. Innovation means discarding the old tired solutions that haven't worked, digging down to the roots of a problem and finding creative new ways to attack its source. There are a lot of great ideas out there and, goodness knows, I don't have them all, but I have made my career encouraging others to develop them and then being willing to try them even when no one else will.

Sure, supporting new programs or policies that are untested requires vision and creativity and that support may be unpopular, but you can't be innovative unless you're courageous. As the old saying, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

My experience has been that if you have the facts on your side and you've taken a common sense approach, even if you must admit that you're not sure it will work, even if you have to tweak it as you go along, and particularly if you have to accept input from others, well, pretty soon I'd think you'd find people will be lined up to join you because they'll respect your willingness to try and your openness as to the risks, but it's up to you to have the courage to go out on that limb first.

And that leads us to another key value of nonpartisan leadership, teamwork. Teamwork means reaching across the aisle or down Pennsylvania Avenue so that you can build the coalitions needed to get things done. But it also means having the best team at home in both business and government, the organization is only as good as the people who work there.

We need to hire the best, not the yes men, or the campaign contributors, or the politically connected. Now, I know that sounds obvious, but in Washington that's just not the way it's done. Where in the

Constitution is it written that ambassadors have to be big campaign donors, passing over career diplomats to give big owners jobs as ambassadors to important foreign posts doesn't help us overseas, at the very time that international opportunities and problems should be central to our Federal Government's planning and work.

Where does it say we should care about campaign experience or party affiliation in filling Federal jobs? That doesn't get us the best and the brightest, and sadly both parties do it in both the Legislative and Executive Branches, and I think both are wrong.

I believe you hire the most qualified people, you empower them, you lead them, and you hold them accountable. And that's the fifth value of nonpartisan leadership, accountability. I built my company on the idea of getting and delivering better data and listening to what the data told me, even when the message wasn't pleasant. By using data to manage you can hold yourself and others accountable for results.

But today in Washington, instead of using data to make decisions and manage, the data is manipulated to justify ideological positions. That's why [idea logs] throw good money after bad, while results oriented managers fix problems before they invest more money in them. Too often failing Government agencies get bigger budgets, while successful agencies have their budgets cut, because Government caters to those screaming the loudest regardless of what they're screaming about.

In business, you should know, it's exactly the opposite, you invest more in the most successful departments and less in those that aren't performing well. Never, or almost never in Government do we promote those who deliver and dismiss those who don't. Never or almost never in Government do we admit when we fall short of our objectives. Never or almost never in Government do we accept the blame ourselves and say, "I screwed up." It's always mistakes were made, round-up the usual suspects, let's hold a hearing. Accountability, good luck.

I think all of these values are essential to nonpartisan leadership, but they do apply to business philanthropy, as well as government, but in government they are too often absent, especially at the Federal level. And the good news is that mayors and governors around the country are embracing these values to tackle the big challenges.

And let me touch briefly on a few of them and how it's possible to bridge the divides and make real change. Let's start with education, because it's an issue that your Mayor and I both care deeply about, and it's a challenge that both our Cities share.

When I came into office, the New York City School System was failing badly, and that means we were failing our children. Tinkering at the margins for decades had done nothing. In New York we needed to get at the source of the problem, the inefficient, ineffective, and unaccountable Board of Education. With support from school leaders, parents, leaders, and over the objections of the Teachers Union we won control of the system but, as Mayor Villaraigosa knows, that's when the hard work begins.

When we announced that we would end social promotion, as we pushed to lengthen the school day to provide extra help for struggling students, when we worked to expand the number of charter schools, when we cut the bureaucracy and redirected that money into the classrooms, at each point we were met with resistance from politicians and special interests, but in each case I'm happy to say for our children we succeeded.

We even in the end raised teachers' salaries 43% in the last five-and-a-half years, thereby winning support from the unions and cooperation on some critical issues, including a new program of merit pay

for our principals.

Now, change is hard, I understand that, but you can't solve problems by wishing them away, or studying them to death, or deferring to ideological advocacy groups. You have to make hard decisions, take action, and hold people accountable for results. In the case of education, it's teachers and principals and parents and students, and particularly with Mayoral control of the school system, holding the Mayor and his appointees accountable.

The results, let me just jump to the chase, steady progress has been real and it holds great progress – promise for the future. Our graduation rates in the last four years have gone up 20% from high school, and math and math scores have increased by over 20% and reading scores by 10%. Now, we still have a long ways to go, but I think it's safe to say that our children are finally getting the education that will make the great American dream really a possibility for them.

Bad as our schools were five years ago, the outlook as you remember, for New York's economy and particularly after 9-11 and the internet bubble, the economy was even worse, the outlook there. And after 9-11conventional wisdom was the businesses would flee and New York would return to the bad old days of the 1970s when the City nearly went bankrupt.

And there was good reason to be worried, we faced a major fiscal crisis and large budget deficits, the largest in the City's history, but we learnt from the lessons of the 1970s. When you stop investing in the future you begin a downward spiral, and we refused in New York to let that happen, so we made the hard decisions to cut the budget without gutting it, insisting that agencies do more with less by achieving efficiency gains.

And as a last resort, as the Mayor was nice enough to point out, I did raise property taxes and income taxes on high earners – you forgot that one – so that we would have the money, seriously, to incent our municipal employees to continue providing the great services that underpin the City's quality of life.

Now, as you can imagine, cutting spending and raising taxes didn't make me the most popular man in town. I like to think of it as a character building experience, but I can tell you what it did do. It allowed us to close the huge budget deficits, balance the books, and continue investing in the future. Building new schools, revitalizing old industrial areas, creating the largest affordable housing program in the nation, supporting our cultural institutions and parks and libraries and universities, and expanding worldwide advertising to attract businesses and tourists.

And because public safety is the foundation of economic growth we developed economic ways to crack down on crime within our budget and to crack down on illegal guns, and as a result in the last five years we've driven crime down in New York City by nearly 30%.

Now, none of the initiatives, none of the undertakings are owned by the Republican or Democratic parties. They were built on the values of nonpartisan leadership and they paid-off. Today New York City's economy is stronger than ever. We've turned a \$5 billion annual deficit into a \$4 billion annual surplus. And we've drove unemployment last year down to an all-time low.

And our bond rating has climbed to an all-time high, AA, the same as the State of New York's. The income tax hikes have been rolled back, the property tax hikes have been offset through \$400 rebates to homeowners, and this year we're not only cutting property taxes by 7%, we're also making cuts of more than \$200 million to the sales tax and small business taxes.

But we're not just using the surplus to cut taxes, you should know, and I would caution against that, we

are also saving for the future. Consider this, the Federal Government requires cities and states to set aside funding for future retirees, pensions, but not for future retirees' healthcare, and even though we have just as much of an obligation to pay our healthcare costs as we do pay the pensions.

This makes no sense, whatsoever. And keeping a debt off the books doesn't make it go away, so what we've done is something fairly unusual. We've set-up a new trust fund for future retirees' healthcare costs, and we've dedicated \$2.5 billion of our surplus towards it. We still have roughly \$47.5 billion left to go but at least we've made a start, and I think that's just common sense and basic fiscal responsibility.

In politics there is nothing so tempting for an elected official as to spend a surplus. I just want you to know it's great to tell people they're getting more. They stop picketing you. They stop holding signs up against you. They answer better in the polls. What elected officials do when you have a surplus is they treat it like found money, and instead of saving it for a rainy day or for their elderly parents, they go on a spending binge.

And, of course, in Washington they go on spending binges without a surplus. After all, they print money, something we don't do at the state or city level. These binges mean that they don't balance the budget or shore-up social security or control healthcare costs, they just keep expanding programs and services and helping themselves to more and more pork barrel grants. A culture of instant gratification dominates Washington, and guess who is going to pay the bill? You will, your children will, and your grandchildren will, and mine, as well.

The healthcare costs that we're saving for in New York, and I'll finish with this, highlight another serious problem. Not only is our country's healthcare system terribly expensive, it is terribly ineffective. It offers no incentives for doctors and patients to seek preventive care. As a result, patients that could be – or problems that could be prevented with cheap basic medicines or with smarter personal choices, especially around diet, exercise, and smoking, are not dealt with effectively until they become life threatening and require expensive procedures.

Even though American medicine is the most advanced in the world, we're not delivering the simple preventive medicine that would allow us to avoid more diseases and live longer, healthier lives. You should know that in the United States we pay 50% more for healthcare than they do in Europe but on average we live four years less. In effect, we're paying more for the privilege of getting sick and dying early.

Once again, this makes absolutely no sense, and once again no one in Washington is willing to do something or talk about how to fix it. Instead, everyone wants to talk about universal health insurance, and that is an important goal, but it's not going to change the underlying reality of a health system that is both too expensive and too ineffective.

And that's why in New York we have dramatically increased health insurance coverage, we're moving towards a pay for prevention system of healthcare that rewards primary care doctors who succeed in keeping people out of hospitals. A key step to doing this is providing prevention oriented electronic health records to help doctors deliver better preventive care.

Now, these records can also enable private insurers, as well as Medicare and Medicaid, to hold doctor's accountable for their patients' performance and to pay more to the doctors who keep their patients healthy. And helping people live longer, healthier lives is also why we're working so hard to increase screenings for breast cancer and colon cancer and HIV.

That's why we're working hard on other public health issues, like keeping guns out of the hands of

criminals, keeping kids from starting to smoke, and helping more adults to stop, trying to get more nutritious meals in our public schools and to keep artificial transfats out of our restaurants and out of our arteries. Once again, not Republican or Democratic ideas, these are ideas that can cut to the root of our problems and be doing so, have the power to cut through partisanship.

And we're pursuing, incidentally, the same approach to try to reduce poverty. The Mayor mentioned that if there was ever an area that called out for new ideas and less partisan talk about it, this is it.

For instance, we've invested in a pilot program that offers financial incentives to poor families to encourage them to make decisions that will help them to rise out of poverty. Under this program, which we've funded with \$50 million in private money, you can earn cash if you keep your doctors' appointments, maintain high interest, high rates of school attendance, and participate in job training programs. This is an approach that's worked well in Mexico, and it's never been tried in the United States.

I don't know if it will work, but we do know two things. One, if we stick to the same old Government solutions we're going to continue to fail those that really have a need in our country, and, two, financial incentives certainly do encourage higher performance for the wealthy, why shouldn't they do it for those just starting up the economic ladder? It's human in nature and it's the foundation of our economic system. Why shouldn't Government tap into that? And it may prove to be the best antipoverty program since the earned income tax credit, or it may not, but we're not going to be afraid to find out and we're not going to let partisan politics keep us from doing so.

Finally, I want to close by touching on an issue that is increasing, that an increasing number of people on both sides of the aisle are finally recognizing as a major problem, and that's global warming. The science is undeniable and more than any other issue climate change highlights the need for long-term plans that begin tackling the causes of the problem now. California has been a leader in this effort, and I want to applaud both Governor Schwarzenegger and Mayor Villaraigosa for their bold plans.

[Applause.]

And let us not forget Richard Daley of Chicago and Manny Diaz of Miami, who I think will go down as two of history's great Mayors, and dozen of other mayors across this country who have been leading on environmental issues for many years.

In New York we've laid out our own detailed plans for reducing carbon emissions, as the Mayor said, by 30% by the year 2030. That's for the City. We've committed to reduce the City's carbon emissions of City Government by 30% by the year 2010, and so I will get that done before I leave. We're going to invest in more clean energy sources and create a truly sustainable 21st Century. And like California, where we are today, we're going to hold ourselves accountable for meeting interim goals.

Let me just leave you with one thought about Washington. Anybody can set goals for the year 2050 or the year 2070, but we'll never reach them unless we start taking real action now, and that's what cities and states, New York, Los Angeles, California, New York are doing along with many others, but the Federal legislators aren't doing that. As usual, they are way behind the curve, laughably setting some goals so far off in time that they will literally all be dead before the deadline comes, and then you'll have a very tough time holding them accountable.

Global warming and with all of the areas I've talked about really we face big challenges, and we're not going to solve them with small ideas, with the same old approaches or partisan attacks. And that's why no matter what the issues, cities and states are experimenting with innovative new ideas and bold new

approaches, and that's the way it should be.

As Justice Brandise once said that, "States are the laboratories of democracy, and we're the pioneers." We can't wait for Washington to come riding to the rescue, we've got to take the bull by the horns, I think, and do it ourselves, and that means embracing pragmatism over partisanship, ideas over ideology, and results over rhetoric.

Now, tonight and tomorrow, we're lucky enough to have an All Star lineup of speakers, beginning with a few people who know this issue as well as anyone, Judy Woodruff, Governor Kathleen Sabelius and Harold Ford, Jr., who recently gave us the benefit of his wisdom in New York. You and Newt Gingrich were great, and I just want to say thank you.

We're going to hear a lot of bold ideas and common, practical sense thinking at this Conference. I'm looking forward to it, because together we really do have a chance to change America for the better. I know it won't be easy, change never is, but when you start thinking about the potential benefits of what we can achieve, you start realizing that this challenge is too important to ignore.

Partisanship may be king in Washington, but the rest of us don't have to pay tribute. We are standing at a crossroads. We have a choice. In one direction the swamp of dysfunction, and in the other the bridge that spans the divide. Now, I know all of us in this room know the right way. It's time to get moving. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Dean Geoffrey Cowan: Thank you, thank you, Mayor Bloomberg, for those wonderful remarks and for all the exciting things that you're doing in your laboratory.