

USC Annenberg
Ceasefire! - Bridging the Political Divide
Tuesday, June 19, 2007

10:00AM Keynote

Greetings: Wallis Annenberg, *Vice President, Annenberg Foundation*

Introduction: Gray Davis, *Former Governor of California*

Address: Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

Mr. Cowan: As we move to the next segment, I want to ask to come up here one of my personal heroes, I think the greatest philanthropist in Los Angeles and a woman who's used philanthropy for so much creativity and who's had a crucial role in putting this event together. Please join me in welcoming the remarkable Wallis Annenberg.

Ms. Annenberg: Thank you very much, Geoff. Good morning. I am delighted to be here, and I'm here on behalf of the Annenberg Foundation and the Annenberg School to participate in the effort to find common solutions to our common problems.

It has been said that democracy is how we choose the people who get the blame. Well, if that's true, why is it that so many public officials are unwilling to share it? Why is it that so few public leaders follow the model of Governor Schwarzenegger, Mayer Bloomberg, and our own Mayor Villaraigosa, of giving -- of joining hands instead of pointing fingers, of doing what works instead of what's written on decades-old party parchment, of recognizing that the things that unite us weigh so much greater, stand so much taller than the things that divide us?

I realize it's easy for me to say, as a private philanthropist, I know no party allegiance and I know how hard it is to effect change where it matters most, on the streets, in the shelter, in peoples' hearts and minds. In the philanthropic world, when you find an approach that actually makes a difference, no matter its origin or ideology, you want to reach out and grab it with both hands, the left and the right. That is why we have all convened here in Los Angeles, to talk about finding that vital center and then building outward, to learn from what's already working in different parts of the country, to look to even the tiniest nonprofits and private initiatives, which have so often been great laboratories of social action.

Sometimes it's just a matter of abandoning old ideas and assumptions, like the marine biologist who explored the bottom of the ocean using a big net with three-inch holes, and then concluded there were no creatures smaller than three inches. Sometimes you learn by trying something new.

That's why I am so pleased that we will be hearing from Governor Schwarzenegger, whose leadership of this state has been as adventurous and as unpredictable as one of his blockbuster action movies. He'll be the first person to tell you, if we don't forge new alliances, even highly unusual ones, if we don't build bridges instead of walls, if we don't start working together, all of us, well, then, we'll never reach the day when there's simply no one left to blame.

That's why it gives me great pleasure to introduce not Governor Schwarzenegger, but the man who will be introducing him, [laughter] a remarkable leader in his own rite, and a man who shows us, by this very presence here, that there is a deep spirit of unity and cooperation in our public realm, one that recalls the words of George Washington, who said, "That if parties had to exist, his wish was to reconcile them."

Friends, Distinguished Guests, here to introduce Governor Schwarzenegger, is my dear friend, Governor Gray Davis.

Governor Davis: Thank you, Wallis, for your kind introduction and for your generosity that made it possible for political leaders from both parties to come here, leaders who understand the posture that you would have to take to work for people means crossing the lines, crossing party lines, having the courage to do that, to find solutions that work for all of us. So I'm thrilled that you made this possible. I'm thrilled that we're in the presence of two great mayors, Mayor Villaraigosa and Mayor Bloomberg. I'm thrilled that Janet Napolitano and my successor, Arnold Schwarzenegger are here. Last night we had Governor Sebelius and many distinguished journalists.

I also feel like I'm back home, because, whether you knew it or not, most of the speeches I gave were rehearsed in CAA's old theater. So this is my first chance to speak in their new theater. But it's a magnificent building.

As I said, it's my privilege to introduce two very distinguished governors that have embraced the motto of this conference, working across the partisan divide to advance the common good; Governor Schwarzenegger of California and Governor Napolitano of Arizona.

Governors are executives. We are expected to solve problems, not just talk about them. Unfortunately, for many years, Washington has failed to grapple with some of the most difficult issues facing society: stem cell research, greenhouse gasses, immigration reform, just to name a few. Unlike Washington, the governors don't have the luxury of passing the buck. When Washington doesn't act, governors have to tackle these problems head on.

In 2002, I was honored to sign the first bill that authorized stem cell research in America, from any source, including human embryonic stem cells. I acted, in part, because Sharon and I had just lost my mother-in-law, Mary Ryder, to Alzheimer's. And it was my hope that research would be spawned that could spare other families the pain that we had experienced.

In that same year, I was pleased to work with an assemblyman -- assemblywoman, Fran Pavley, to sign the first bill in America calling for the reduction of greenhouse gasses by 19 -- by 2009; a bill, I might add, that Detroit fought, and, unfortunately, is still fighting today. Nonetheless, 11 other states have adopted similar legislation.

I want to thank and salute Governor Schwarzenegger for bucking his own party and embracing the need for stem cell research and the need for reduction in carbon emissions. I am convinced that his strong support of stem cell research was instrumental in persuading voters in 2004, to pass a stem cell financing mechanism for research done in California.

I'm also convinced that his work every day will ensure that California leads the nation in the reduction of carbon emissions. And I know that his steadfast advocacy for the reduction of carbon emissions, not just here in California, but around the country, is one reason why the issue is now center stage in Washington.

Another issue on which Congress is yet to act is immigration reform. Now, as governors know, when Washington act, the problem doesn't go away. As a matter of fact, it shows up at the doorstep of every border governor. Governor Napolitano has dealt with immigration with grace and courage as the governor of Arizona. She's called for stronger border control, tougher employer sanctions, and a common sense and comprehensive approach to identity -- identity theft, among several proposals that she gave recently at the National Press Club in Washington.

And she's seen the worse of immigration as a former prosecutor. She's seen drug tunnels. She's seen human smuggling. She's seen over-crowded emergency rooms. But through it all, she has approached this issue with a calm, centrist, bipartisan, hopeful approach, a model that all of Washington could and

should emulate.

Now it's my great pleasure to introduce my successor and my friend, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Governor, I want to thank you for carrying the baton to advance stem cell research and reduce carbon emissions. I know these issues are not particularly popular in your party. On this and many other issues, however, you have reached across party lines to craft good legislation to advance the interest of your constituents. The Governor and I traveled different paths, but we both have the great privilege of trying to improve the lives of everyday Californians.

And one other thing, we both married way over our head; [laughter] my wife, Sharon Davis, former First Lady, sitting next to the current First Lady, Maria Shriver. I know -- I know Governor Schwarzenegger has days when he couldn't survive without the love and support of Maria Shriver and her inspiration and advice. Many days my wife said to me when I'd come home and complain, "Snap out of it. You spent your whole life trying to be governor, now just enjoy every moment, the good, the bad, and the indifferent."

Governor Schwarzenegger, thank you for being a leader. Thank you for keeping California in the forefront of important policy issues. Give it up for Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Governor Schwarzenegger: Thank you very much. And it is wonderful to see all of you here today. I want to thank also Governor Napolitano for being here. Where is -- Oh, yeah, right here. Hi. How are you? Are they treating you well in my state?

Governor Napolitano: (inaudible)

Governor Schwarzenegger: Very nice. Good to see you. Good to see you. And I want to thank first right off the top, the Annenberg School for hosting this event. And I want to thank also Mayor Villaraigosa and Mayor Bloomberg for convening this conference, which I think is very, very good idea and is a very important conference.

I also want to thank Governor Davis for his kind introduction. Thank you very much for the kind introduction. I also want to thank you for having devoted your entire life to public service. And most importantly, I want to thank you for showing really the ultimate of bipartisanship or post-partisanship when I came into office, because every single time I needed help, every single time I called this man for advice about anything, he was immediately on the phone, not thinking about, well, he's a Republican, I'm a Democrat, why should I help him; he always called back, because he wanted to do what is the best thing for the people of California. So I want to thank you for your friendship in that and thank you for hanging out with us and having a good time with us. A big hand for Gray Davis. Thank you.

I also want to thank my wife for being here today, the great First Lady, and someone that has taught me a lot about bipartisanship. So I wanted to thank you also for helping me so much. Big hand also to Maria.

Now, as far as I'm concerned, there is really no more urgent issue facing America today than the topic of this conference, which is "Bridging the Political Divide." In fact, we ought to send a tape of everyone's speeches here today to our Presidential candidates, so they stay on course of the campaign and they will, you know, be focused on the things that are really important rather than to attack each other. Because for America to continue thriving, the rest -- as a great democracy that can inspire the rest of the world, we need new ways of doing the peoples' business.

All of our most deeply held dreams and aspirations require us to build on our common bonds rather than keep resorting to the tired battle cries of partisan politics that divides and demoralizes us. We need new

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methods of breaking through the political gridlock to make progress in issues that people care deeply about, issues like healthcare, climate change, immigration, border security, education, the economy, public safety, and the list goes on and on and one. But as everyone knows, it is nearly impossible to take -- to make progress in any of those issues when the two major political parties dig in and cling on to their positions and hold on to their philosophies like an Alabama tic. [laughter]

Look at immigration reform, for instance. The debate in Washington is broken down once again. It's a classic example of an issue that Republicans and Democrats must work on together in order to fix the problem, but they seem to fail each time. We in California here cannot do this by ourselves, otherwise we would. The nation's borders are federal responsibility. One side says, "Send all the illegals back where they came from and build a big border, big fence." And the other side says, "Forget about it, give everyone amnesty."

Well, hey, I have an idea. How about being realistic and just solving the problem? There's a totally reasonable centrist approach to the issue, and this is this: secure our borders, while at the same time recognizing the economic and social reality by providing a guest worker program and a path to citizenship for those already here and who met certain criterias, like have paid a fine for coming here illegally, learning the English language, and being law-abiding citizens.

There is a mainstream solution and it is time we introduce the concept of the mainstream back into the American political life. And the place to start with is immigration. Now, here in California, we have discovered an alternative to fighting all the time. We are very lucky because now Democrats and Republicans are working together.

After I spoke about post-partisanship in my inaugural address just last January, it was amazing the kind of reaction that I got, from all over the world actually. It made news stories all around the world. Imagine there's such political divide out there that even if we just talk about working together it becomes newsworthy.

Certainly the voters in California like the ideas of their elected officials working together. I mean, you can see the results in the last election: 91% of all Republicans and a huge amount of Democrats voted for me. But, most importantly, two-thirds of all Californians say that the state is heading in the right direction. And for the first time in 10 years, the approval rating of the California legislature is higher than the disapproval rating.

As we all know, in Washington and in a lot of other states, it is totally the opposite. We know that we are on the right track here in California, and I am very, very happy that the legislatures are working together. And I want to say thank you to the Democrats and to the Republicans for making this happen. I want to thank also my Chief of Staff, Susan Kennedy who makes all of this happen. Is Susan here today? I just wanted to make sure that we point out -- Oh, yeah. Right here. Big hand to Susan Kennedy right over here, my Chief of Staff.

Now last year, in spite of election year, we got so much done. Think about it. We reformed prescription drug costs. We lowered them by 40 to 60% for the most vulnerable citizens. We passed the world's most far-reaching plan to reduce greenhouse gasses, and we began rebuilding the state's infrastructure, building more schools, expanding the university system, fixing our levies and our transportation infrastructure and so on. And already this year we passed the most comprehensive prison reform in generations; 53,000 new beds will be built.

Now, I didn't do any of this by myself. This was done because of a lot of help and everyone in Sacramento working together. And I have to admit that I have learned my lesson the hard way. In 2005,

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I contributed to the polarization in Sacramento. I tried to push through some initiatives that I thought were good ideas, but I did it the wrong way. It was all about us versus them.

I'm not a person that gets all introspective about my failures, which are not that many. [laughter] But I do know when something doesn't work, and dividing people just doesn't work. But division seems to be the order of the day in our national politics and it's all about divide and conquer. You find an issue that splits the country in half, then crack it just enough so that you come out ahead; I have 51%, you have 49%; I win, you lose.

But something larger gets lost in the process, which is the public's trust, the public's respect, and the public's faith in government. The left and the right don't have a monopoly on conscience. We should not let them get away with that. Most people are in the middle politically; this is where the real action is. You can be a centrist and be principled. You can seek a consensus and retain your convictions. What is more principled than giving up some part of your position to advance the greater good of the people? That is how we arrived at the Constitution of this country. I can guarantee you our Founding Fathers would still be meeting at the Holiday Inn in Philadelphia if they wouldn't have compromised.

Why can't our political leaders today do the same thing? Some people say, "Arnold, haven't you maybe sold out a little bit here and become an Independent?" "No. I am still a proud Republican and I support the guiding principles of the Republican Party: lower taxes, a strong defense, free market, and the belief in the power of the individual."

Whether you're Republican or Democrat, you don't have to give up your principles. Besides, isn't it the ultimate principle to serve the people? I mean, after all, we are elected to be public servants, not party servants.

When I talk about working together and centrism and post-partisanship, some people dismiss it says, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, this is just some lightweight idealistic idea that Schwarzenegger has." Well, yes, Schwarzenegger and Tony Villaraigosa, Michael Bloomberg, Edmund Burke, John F. Kennedy, and the list goes on and on. Edmund Burke said, "All government, indeed, every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue and every prudent act is founded on compromise." John Kennedy called compromise, "The art essential to keeping our nation united, enabling our government to function."

Politics is about compromise; it's about give-and-take. It all starts with something very basic, and that is establishing relationships.

In the courtyard of my state -- of our State Capitol in Sacramento, as many of you know, I have a politically incorrect smoking tent. And let me tell you, a lot of people come down there, they take off their jackets, loosen up their tie, take out the stogy out my humidor, and they smoke and they schmooze.

How come Republicans and Democrats in Washington don't schmooze with each other? I mean, you can't catch a socially transmitted disease by just sitting down with some people who maybe hold ideas different from yours. [laughter]

I mean, my in-laws, for the last 30 years, every time I go over there to the house and they have people over, it's Democrats and Republics that are there. They talk about the Peace Corps, the Job Corps. They talk about Special Olympics and all kinds of things, and then they bridge out with other subjects. Sometimes they agree; sometimes they disagree.

But you can disagree with your opponent and still maintain respect. Now, I remember when I spoke to the Republican Convention in 2004, I told them how I became a Republican because of Richard Nixon.

Some people were angry. They thought that by me mentioning this president who had resigned in disgrace that I, in some small way, have maybe rehabilitated him.

Let me tell you a story related to that. In 1977, over the Christmas holiday, Senator Hubert Humphrey, as he lay on his death bed at home in Minnesota, began calling old friends and colleagues, supposedly to wish them Happy Holidays, but really to say good-bye. On Christmas Eve, he called Richard Nixon, the man who had defeated him for the presidency, and he found both of the Nixons ill and very depressed in San Clemente.

Senator Hubert Humphrey was so troubled by this, that he called the Nixons back the next morning, and he said he didn't have long to live and he'd already made funeral arrangements, which included lying In State in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol. He invited Nixon to attend the ceremony as an honored guest, befitted to the rank of a former President. And at that time, may I remind you, Nixon was still the object of great animosity -- [Phone rings] I'm not here. [laughter] -- and had not returned to Washington since his resignation three years earlier.

Now, according to an eyewitness, many people gasped when Nixon walked in, when he came in and took his place. In the photos, you can see him sitting there with President Carter right in front of the flag-draped coffin. Now, think about that. What political grace and human compassion Humphrey showed. Where has that world gone? How do we get it back? What bridge can we take to return there, that is the question.

I believe that we can start by simply just talking to each other, by working with each other. I mean, after years of sharp division here in California, we are consciously trying a new approach to solving the problems, and it works. Democrats and Republicans are now working together. The smoking tent is very busy. We're talking about all kinds of issues there.

Right now the issue that we're trying to address is healthcare. The problem is so pressing that we got together. We can't wait for the federal government anymore. They've been talking about fixing the healthcare system and creating universal healthcare since 1912, since Teddy Roosevelt. Nothing has happened. It's almost 100 years later. So we said, "Let's do it ourselves."

We're in the middle of the process right now and here's the politics of the situation. Part of the plan that I put on the table provides coverage for children of undocumented immigrants. My fellow Republicans oppose this, and I totally understand their opposition. After all, doesn't it encourage people to come here to California illegally and then stick the California people with their medical bills? Or the fact is, we have really no choice about paying the medical bills of people who are in California illegally, because federal law requires us to treat anyone and everyone who shows up at an emergency room and needs care. We have no choice, absolutely none. And you're very lucky, I'm very happy about that law, because I wouldn't I wouldn't want to have a motorcycle accident in China or in Africa somewhere and to go to the emergency room and someone ask me for my papers. So I like this.

But what it says, basically, is, that the real question here is not do we cover them or not cover them, but do we treat them in emergency rooms at three or four times the cost of a doctor's office or health clinic, or should we be treating them more efficiently and more cost-effectively? That is really the question. I say, let us recognize the reality of the situation and deal with it practically. Now, my Republican colleagues are having real trouble with this.

Now, here's what the Democrats don't like about my plan. It provides individual mandates which requires personal responsibility. I believe that part of the healthcare answer is mandatory medical insurance, just like we have mandatory car insurance. Well, a lot of Democrats say that individual mandates are unfair.

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My position is that people who won't take responsibility for themselves end up costing everyone else money. That's the case right now. All of you who are insured are paying for the uninsured through a hidden tax. But for people who, of course, can't afford coverage, government should help them. And I think that everyone's proposal has that included in Sacramento.

So these are the kind of things that we are trying to work out, and I'm absolutely confident that we will. That by the time we are finished with this negotiation this year, we will have comprehensive healthcare reform and will do something that is the best for the people of California. So far everyone has maintained a good attitude and no one is calling each other names, which itself is great progress in Sacramento.

But this is the dynamic that I'm trying to encourage in California on all the different issues, if you're talking about the environment, healthcare, infrastructure, prison reform, energy, water supply, and the list goes on and on.

Now, Mayor Villaraigosa and Mayor Bloomberg, they're the same way: one is a loyal Democrat and the other one is a loyal Republican. But they're reaching out to everyone, because, as I've said earlier, it's all about being a public servant, not a party servant. And you also know that if you stick to just one party's proposal, you miss half of the good ideas.

To paraphrase Thomas Jefferson's first inaugural address, "We're all Democrats. We're all Republicans. And, of course, we're all Americans."

We will have our disagreements; yes, there will be many. But when we work together and we are open to compromise, it is amazing of what we can accomplish. I mean, just look at the things that we have already accomplished here in California. And if we keep on going and doing it, which I believe we will, because success breeds success, we can achieve what is perhaps the most important call of all in a healthy democracy, and that is to get the American people believing once again that their government works for them and has their best interests at heart.

Thank you very much. Thank you.