

Opening Remarks, JCLAC August 10, 2009

Welcome to the first Open Public Meeting of the Jackson County Local Action Coalition. My name is Will Reishman, and it's up to me to give you a sense of how this process started, and how those of us who have been involved perceive what's happening.

First, how many of you read the Mission Statement that appeared in the paper a few weeks ago, or that's been available on our web site? That does remain a fair expression of what we're about. It might be worth a few minutes for those who haven't read it.

There is no doubt that there's a deeply unsettled feeling abroad in the land, people are frustrated, they're uneasy, their sense of comfort and continuity has been undermined. Many want to do something, but don't know where to start, nor what direction to go.

That's what brought us together – we realized that this is the way many people were feeling, what with tea parties and all, yet we're all fumbling for answers.

Our Mission Statement evolved over a period of a few months as a small group of us tried to understand if we could arrive at some clarity about what we -- together -- could accomplish.

I'd be the first to say – the mission of the Coalition is a work in progress; we certainly don't have all the answers, not by any means. Those of us involved so far are just folks, doing the best we can, making it up as we go.

That's why we invited you here – to learn together, so we can quickly refine our understanding of some complex issues, and develop sensible plans for broad popular action that will get results...

Quite frankly, you're here to add to our modest talents, from your own sets of skills, from your commitment, and your courage.

The one thing that was clear from the beginning – we need to reduce our dependence on Washington. Let me put that a better way. It's time for our county, our communities, and thousands like us all over the country, to stand up and take back control over our own lives.

We've allowed the Central Government to usurp more and more of the functions of society, and it's corrosive of human dignity, it's destructive of our liberties, and it breeds a profound poverty in the very fabric of society.

Now the Federal Government has its place – fending off foreign invasions, or maintaining a sound monetary system – which they need to improve on quite a bit, I'd say. There's lots of things IT can do better than the states or localities, but it's kind of hard to think of too many of them, right here, ...on the spot like this.

So, maybe you could say that I approach these political type questions from more or less a Libertarian perspective. (And I admit I've still got a Ron Paul bumper sticker on my pick-up.) But for the sake of this coalition that's incidental, it may be "my flavor," it may add some useful insights,...but in the end, it is, in fact, not essential.

That leads to another principle to which each of us in those early meetings is very committed - we don't want to be part of another auxiliary to an established political party or faction.

We have borrowed a term from a friend that aptly describes how we see this group developing – Transpartisan, beyond partisan, across the divide of partisanship. We are committed to keep this coalition **transpartisan**. Why?

Frankly, we don't have time for anything else. The urgency of the moment makes the divisiveness of partisanship foolish.

A few weeks ago at an earlier meeting of people who had heard about this group on the Bill Meyer Show, about half way through, one couple got up and walked out. We later learned they had decided we weren't committed to being what they viewed as conservative Republicans in our approach.

I took that as a sign of success - our message was getting across.

Something that I've come to understand during this process is that the Opinion Molders, the Governing or Power Elite, want to keep the people divided. So they are intent on stirring up, on stoking controversy over hot button issues.

Then most people with some political consciousness or awareness perceive themselves as falling into one or another of two often hardened points of view - liberal/conservative, pro-choice/pro-life, Democrat/Republican; either you're a Genghis Khan militarist or you volunteer at the Peace House 20 hours a week; either you're an totally sold-out environmentalist - or you're a carnivorous, unconscious, smoke-belching-pick-up-driving red-neck...

Wait a minute! Yes, in fact, many of our rigid stereotypes are rarely fair or just - yet our Overlords are quite content to see us divided by them – that serves very well to keep them in power.

But not here, and not now!

If this Coalition is to succeed, **we will be transpartisan**. We refuse to fall into the trap set for us by those who would keep us divided and powerless.

It's not that political issues, and the moral principles upon which they are based are unimportant. It's simply that what we have in common here in the Rogue Valley, on the priority issues that affect the welfare of our families, neighbors, those we care about - on the majority of these issues - we are convinced there is a great deal of unity. It is upon that foundation that we will build a healthy and prosperous Jackson County, even in the difficult times that very likely lie ahead.

So this is what we are seeking: to identify the essential priorities that will affect the prosperity of the varied communities among us, then to work together in a broad popular coalition to break the paralysis that has prevented solutions in the past, to combine the strengths of our common interests **and** our differing perspectives - - then to break stereotypes and advance new paradigms.

For example, we are convinced that we can achieve unprecedented agreement in the wise use of our natural resources, by combining the wisdom and experience of generations of productive Americans with a contemporary understanding of good stewardship.

Another example: We can enjoy, even celebrate an amazing increase in local food production and processing, as local producers are successfully supported by thriving local markets for the burgeoning product of their farms.

I mentioned earlier that it's foolish to be divided by partisan biases - that the times are too urgent for that. Let me share a bit from my vantage point in the financial markets.

In my judgment, it's clear that the United States has entered a new era; we will not go back to the way things were. We have lived beyond our means for far too long, fueled by deficits and credit cards. The result is a historically unprecedented accumulation of debt.

For a generation now foreign suppliers have traded real things, whether oil, or Toyotas, computers or tennis shoes - for promises. They have traded real things for little green pieces of paper, IOU's that are now obviously uncollectible.

While it's true the Chinese and others are also trapped - in a very real sense it's like a colossal co-dependency, we are in the weaker position.

We have gutted our productive capacity and deepened our dependency on government spending – just in the last year alone, through the end of July, the Federal debt has increased by a mind-numbing \$2.1T, \$181B in July alone.

And now the powers-that-be are flogging the same tired old schemes for keeping the wheels on their bus. The Washington/Wall Street combine is once again recklessly engineering a semblance of economic health by nothing more than news management and financial gaming. (See: recent article in German magazine Der Spiegel – “Banks Reopen

Global Casino”) as if they’d learned nothing from the financial panic of the last couple of years.

The U.S. faces a protracted period of economic retrenchment, considerably worse than Japan experienced in the last 20 years. The income of the average American family has been declining in real terms for almost thirty years; the personal savings of most Americans is gone. Government spending is out of completely control, and interest on the Federal debt consumes almost ¼ of all government revenue.

All but a favored few percent of Americans will be forced to adjust to a permanently lower standard of living. Though it's not at all clear what it will be - there is going to be a **New Normal**.

(See Maybury’s video, “The Impoverishment of Youth”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7F51OfLO5Ts>)

It's in this environment that we need to look to our own, to be about our own business. I mean there’s only so much, very little really, that we can do about health care reform, cap-and-trade, or about \$2 Trillion deficits.

While Washington invites us to rely on their schemes to deliver us in these troubled times, we believe that it is much more sensible, and liberating, to get together as a community of adults, and figure this thing out for ourselves.

Let’s counsel together - analyze our strengths and our weaknesses. Then develop plans to benefit as much as possible from our assets, and work as hard as we can to compensate for our liabilities. Somehow, that’s just common sense.

The success of this effort is up to people like us here tonight. Those who have taken these beginning steps can only do so much; we only have so much time and talent. Several priorities are clear:

#1) The Coalition needs to develop a robust research capability – to make certain that the positions we take are well founded, and that we represent them well. This learning process will guide our decisions as we define and focus our action plans.

#2) To change things, we obviously want to influence those in positions of power – legislators, county commissioners, water district officials, and so on. We will employ a variety of traditional means for influencing these public servants intelligently and creatively – and I underline the word - creatively.

#3) To further assure our message is heard - we have aimed from the outset to influence next year’s local elections. That will be an increasing priority as we get into 2010.

Depending on the breadth of support we receive - perhaps we might even become a local independent political party – who knows?

#4) We obviously have an enormous educational job ahead of us. Many folks just aren't going to come out to a meeting. We may need to go door-to-door providing information, and recruiting our neighbors to join us in a broad local political effort. This will lay the groundwork for networks that will aid in future communication efforts as well as a wide range of cooperative endeavors.

#5) Some of us must dedicate ourselves to the practical nuts and bolts of laying the foundation for a new era in the local economy, independent of anything government can do. The most urgent of these tasks may well be to increase local food production, and simultaneously enlarge the market for the product of local farms...