



Capitol Comments

Newsletter from your
Iowa State Representative
Richard Anderson

State Capitol
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A New Era of Responsibility

“Obama Takes Power” reported the headlines in Tuesday’s USA Today newspaper. From inside the Iowa Capitol, my limited experience (4 years in the Iowa House of Representatives) tells me that governing is a lot work. So I thought a better headline would have been, “Obama Assumes Responsibility.” It can be a heavy responsibility being a steward of public funds, working on public policy, which some people feel very passionate about, and responding to citizens in need.

One theme that stood out to me during President Obama’s speech was the call to service, to responsibility. He said, *“What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility -- a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task. This is the price and the promise of citizenship.”*

Paraphrasing Stephen Covey, author of Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, service is the rent we pay for living in such a great country.

In hard times, service flourishes. Many of us have not seen truly hard times. I must admit, I have not. I have only heard the stories... of my great grandfather immigrating to America from Norway, being separated from his family on Ellis Island due to illness, and re-uniting with his family in Iowa years later. Stories of my grandfather fighting for freedom in France in World War I, my grandparents struggling through the Great Depression, my mother wearing dresses made out of flour sacks and walking to country school on top of the fence posts because the snow was so deep, and my uncle's life in a German WWII prisoner of war camp filled my childhood imagination.

It may be that we are moving into a period of hard times. Certainly we are moving into difficult financial times – for us as individuals, businesses, and governments. We can sit back looking to government to bail us out of the various predicaments we may find ourselves in, or we can rise up, assume personal responsibility and act. I know that not all can. Those are the ones the rest of us are called upon to serve.

President Obama's message spoke of spiritual satisfaction and definition of character. I might add development of character. This message takes us back to timeless truths and ageless values. The values I most desire as I represent you – integrity, wisdom, courage, compassion, humility and, of course, responsibility.

How am I to respond as your state representative? President Obama is asking elected officials to “end the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn out dogmas, that for far too long have strangled our politics.” This I have tried to do. This I am willing to do.

How am I to respond personally? How are you to respond personally? Now is the time for change. Our future depends on it.

As we begin the process of building our state budget, may we be good stewards and people of integrity. As we work on public policy, may we be people of wisdom and courage. As we respond to citizens in need, may we be compassionate and responsible.

How to Contact Me

Please feel free to contact me regarding issues and concerns.

Capitol Phone: 515-281-7329,

Address: State Capitol Building, Des Moines, IA 50319

E-mail: richard.anderson@legis.state.ia.us

Please send me an e-mail if you would like to receive my weekly newsletter.

I look forward to hearing from you.