

# U. S. Department of Transportation

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TALKING POINTS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION NEIL GOLDSCHMIDT, JEWISH FEDERATION OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

In a few short days we will come to the High Holy Days, a time of the greatest significance to all of us as Jews and as Americans.

It is a time for us to pause from the flow of daily events that comprise our lives, a time to apply a critical examination to ourselves.

It is a time to separate out the truly significant from the unimportant. That which matters from that which merely occupies space.

It is a time to for looking back and reflecting on the year that has passed, a time for looking forward to the year ahead.

One year ago at this time I had just come to my new job in Washington and had just left a job with a great deal of meaning to me, that of Mayor of the City of Portland. With our children Josh and Rebecca, my wife Margy and I moved to the Capitol at a time when the polls in the country showed the popularity of the President was at a low ebb.

But we did so without hesitation and for a very simple reason, for the same reason that you in your community have become involved with the Jewish Federation and with other community service efforts. As Jews we have always felt the need to contribute, to give something back, to repay this country for the opportunity to be Americans.

And I did it as well quite simply because I was convinced then as an individual and as a Mayor that Jimmy Carter had earned my support regardless of political consequences:

\* For the urban policy, our nation's first, which spoke to the needs and hopes of the nation's cities, too long disenfranchised by the federal government;

\* For his energy policy, our country's first attempt to deal constructively and comprehensively with this most important national and international issue--an issue capable of leaving our country open to the international blackmail of foreign nations who control the world's oil supplies:

\* For his policy on human rights around the world. A policy that recognizes the importance of extending to citizens of the world the same opportunities for freedom of expression of religion that we enjoy as Americans;

For these and other reasons I felt a responsibility to give whatever I could offer to my country and my President.

I did not think my decision, however, a special one. For I believe that the history of Jews in this country is first and foremost a history that testifies to a special relationship that exists between Jews and America, between America and Jews. In the great cities and small towns, in the neighborhoods and national councils, we have sought to represent the high ideals and basic values that are our heritage both as Jews and Americans:

- \* Of equal opportunity and equal justice;
- \* Of education and the requisite of hard work;
- \* Of the fundamental promise;
- \* Of more choices for more of our people.

And as we have held these values and tried to live them we have as Jews been willing to take on the role of the conscience of our country, unflinchingly, though sometimes painfully, calling out not only the greatness of America but also her shortcomings.

For we have always believed in America, believed in the promise of America, believed in the great experiment of the partnership between a people and their government and the ability of that partnership to solve whatever problem could arise.

And believed as well that courage and commitment and hard work would ultimately triumph over the dark night of cynicism and hate.

Now those beliefs are being put to the test. Now we are in the midst of a period of unprecedented national and international change. A time when old assumptions, many of which are no longer accurate are being shed:

- \* For too long we assumed America was wealthy enough to afford waste;
- \* We assumed that energy would be cheap and always plentiful;

\* We assumed that our technological superiority would guarantee us world economic dominance;

\* We assumed that we could spend our way out of any problem.

But events at home and around the world are causing us to reassess these assumptions, to re-think them, and in many instances replace them.

Today we recognize the imperative of conservation--not only of energy but of all of our resources, of capital and of our human resources as well.

We recognize the imperative of competition and the need to re-tool American industry to meet the world's industrial challenge; the need for American innovation through increased research and development; for a new era of cooperation between government, industry and labor to fulfill the promise of work for our people.

And most important, we recognize that in this time of change that we hold fast to our values. For our assumptions may change to reflect new realities; our values never change; they are fixed and true. And so while change and the turbulence of change has led some to fear and may invite the hate groups and fear-mongers to cover their heads with hoods, our values shine through and protect us from all fear.

And yet we must recognize that there is even then a danger:

\* A danger that our idealism will give way to doubt and cynicism;

\* A danger that our sense of purpose will be clouded over by frustration and anger;

\* A danger that we will cease to be guided by our own instincts and follow instead a voice that leads us only into self-defeat.

If we allow this to happen, if we abandon the values that have guided us we do harm to the communities of which we are a part, to America and to America's role in the search for peace in the world.

America cannot be an effective advocate for peace in the world if it turns its back on its people at home.

America cannot advocate the rights of citizens of the world by ignoring the needs of the people in its cities or by rolling back the advances made by our working men and women.

America cannot lead the world into a new era by retreating into the shadowy pages of the past. Nor can we seek to seal together lasting relationships among the nations of the world by ripping up the covenant of partnership between the people of this country and their government.

The year that lies ahead, the decade that lies ahead asks of us that we renew our faith as Jews and as Americans in the promise of this land. It tests our ability to face hard choices with courage and to reassert our fundamental beliefs and values with conviction. It measures our practices against our promises--just as you have done in your work through the Federation, extending the warm hand of welcome to Soviet Jews and the gentle arm of support to our senior citizens. By these acts we seek to live up to the words of Maimonides:

"Anticipate charity by preventing poverty: Assist the reduced fellowman, either by a considerable gift, or a sum of money, or by teaching him a trade, or by putting him in the way of business, so that he may earn an honest livelihood, and not be forced to the dreadful alternative of holding out his hand for charity. This is the highest step and the summit of charity's golden ladder."

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