

Remarks for Jay Timmons
National Association of Business Political Action Committees PAC Management Conference
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Washington, DC

Good morning. It's great to be with you, and thank you so much for having me.

Thank you, David [Schild] for that introduction, and thank you Geoff [Ziebart] for all of your hard work and leadership. You have many friends at the NAM, including a former NABPAC President, Ned Monroe.

Of course, so many of you represent NAM member companies, and we're grateful for your steadfast partnership.

Given the state of American politics, this conference comes at a pivotal time: A new speaker, a gridlocked Congress, an emboldened administration, an unprecedented, and I might add, unsettling, presidential race.

So I hope you know how important your work is, how influential each of you can be...and must be. Your work is more valuable than it's ever been.

There was a time when people thought lobbyists were the kings and queens of the Hill in the business community. The impression was that if you wanted to win, you had to have all the right Capitol connections.

But now, we have so many more tools at our disposal. PAC and grassroots and electoral efforts that were once considered optional are now absolutely essential.

Without those of you in this room, and the advocacy tools you direct and the strategies you design, we would not be as successful legislatively. Why's that? Because our politics have changed. Washington, DC, has changed.

Increasingly, the debates in Washington are not over how to govern. They're debates over whether to govern.

The people we entrusted to lead our nation can barely get the basics done. One of the biggest victories in recent weeks was a long-term transportation bill. That's good news, especially for manufacturers. But paying for our roads and bridges shouldn't be headline news. It should be a basic expectation.

Yet that's the new normal. The government's biggest accomplishments these days are simply paying our bills and keeping our lights on. And sometimes they can't even do that.

When they struggle to get the small things done, we might as well forget the big things—tax reform, immigration reform, regulatory overhaul.

Except that's exactly what the American people—and American business—need and deserve...getting the big things done.

So, why do we see this gridlock? Because the extremes of the political spectrum are pulling both parties away from governing, away from the majority of Americans. They're pulling them away from their past support of business and free markets.

On the Republican side, we've seen really troubling developments in recent months: A cabal of right wing ideologues forced out a principled, dedicated conservative from the Speakership—a man

who was a friend of business and whose greatest sin, apparently, was that he thought government should actually function.

Now, thankfully, a forward-looking leader answered the call. And we can agree that Paul Ryan is an honest, thoughtful, positive force who actually wants to solve problems. We just have to hope the vocal, yet small, elements of his own party don't get in his way.

Then there's the Democratic Party. Look at their presidential debates. There was another one last Saturday. You've got a self-identified socialist on the stage, and the other candidates have no interest in calling him out for it. In fact, they're falling over themselves to show that they're actually more "progressive" than he is.

I don't think anyone is under the illusion that modern Democrats were the most pro-business party. But to the extent that they reject the philosophies and strategies of centrist Democrats like Sam Nunn or the Blue Dog caucus...or even *Bill* Clinton for that matter, is pretty astonishing.

Heck, the president can't even say "yes" to a privately-funded infrastructure project, the Keystone XL pipeline, that the State Department said was environmentally and economically sound.

Now, we could play the blame game. And in fact Americans are really good at that. We could blame the media for this polarization. We could blame radical gerrymandering for the extreme partisanship in Congress. We could blame self-serving organizations—you know who I'm talking about—that demand loyalty to ideology rather than reality. We could blame demographic realignments. We could blame the Internet.

But the bottom line is this: if you and I don't stand up—if we don't rise up as one united voice of the business community—then we will only have ourselves to blame for less than desirable outcomes.

On the left and the right we see people vilifying companies who employ millions of Americans and who want to compete and win against foreign competitors. On the left, we get attacked for financial success by those who don't believe anyone really earns the fruits of their labor. Then on the right we are continuously attacked with false accusations of cronyism. This simultaneous rise of collectivism and uninformed populism is toxic and dangerous. It threatens America's standing as a leader among nations.

But most of this isn't news to you. The big question isn't really what's happening or why. The question is...what are we going to do about it?

And the answer is...we have a moral imperative to step up. To save our economy,...our government,...our country...our very way of life...from a status quo that falls short of who we are and who we aspire to be.

That means it's time to make an even greater commitment to shaping the electoral process. It's not enough anymore to take our concerns to Capitol Hill, make our case, and reason with our leaders. Too many of them have no incentive to make the reasonable decisions.

About a year and half ago, I spoke at the Adam Smith Awards Dinner. Some of you were there. Many of your companies were represented.

At the time, I called for us all...the collective business community...to come together to create a new paradigm, to think long-term, to figure out how to appeal more broadly to Americans, including the millennial generation.

I lauded the efforts of leaders like Tom Donohue at the Chamber, John Engler at Business Roundtable, Matt Shay at the National Retail Federation and Dan Danner at NFIB. And I made the

case that we needed to determine how best to use our resources, while eliminating duplication and competition.

Because in the business community we had—and we still have—too many programs, too much overlap, too many cooks in the kitchen.

Afterward, many of you told me how much you agreed: We need to streamline and ensure our money is spent to maximum effect.

Since then, we've made progress. The NAM, with the NFIB, National Retail Federation, Associated Builders and Contractors and over 100 manufacturing organizations formed the America Votes Business Coalition.

Our mission is to advance the cause of the business community and combine our resources and political intelligence to make sure we're greater than the sum of our parts.

It's a step in the right direction. But the work and the progress must continue.

We want a new direction in this country—and not just because it's good for our business—and for bottom lines. It's about more than that. It's about promoting American values. It's about ensuring that we keep our nation exceptional...and making it more so for the next generation.

At the NAM, we are guided by four core values, four pillars that happen to be the foundational principles of the country we love. We are committed to advancing them every day, because when America stays true to these values, not only is manufacturing strong—so is our country.

The first of these is free enterprise: market forces that drive innovation and growth better than any system ever conceived.

The second is competitiveness: our ability to expand markets and succeed in the global economy.

The third is individual liberty: the creativity and entrepreneurship unleashed by protecting, defending and advancing the basic freedoms enshrined in our Constitution and Bill of Rights.

And the fourth, equal opportunity: our shared belief that every one of us, if given the chance, has the potential to contribute to the success of our companies, our communities and our country.

All of us in this room can rally around these values. We live and breathe them everyday in business. The trouble is, we can't say the same about all of our elected leaders.

Increasingly, the major parties are moving away from these principles or picking and choosing between them.

So it is up to us to make sure people who don't support those pillars of American Exceptionalism don't make it to Washington in the first place. And I think voters are ready for real leadership and new solutions.

Recent elections have made one thing very clear. To succeed in our mission, we have to play in the nomination contests—of both parties.

Too often, after a politician with extreme views wins a primary, the general election is a cakewalk for him or her because of the make up of the district or state.

So when a pro-business leader gets a primary challenge, in the Democratic or Republican primary, we have to defend that leader. We have to get off the sidelines. It's not just the incumbent that's under attack. Our values are under attack as well.

And likewise, when a pro-business candidate steps up and takes on an anti-business incumbent, we need to be ready to support that candidate, be they Democrat or Republican.

If there's a politician hostile to our values—free enterprise, competitiveness, individual liberty, and equal opportunity—we don't want them in Congress. Especially when there's a viable alternative.

Now, we make no apology for this. Why should we?

Free enterprise has lifted more people from poverty than any system devised by humanity. Competition sharpens our skills, produces innovation and empowers us to improve the human condition.

Individual liberty is nothing less than the foundation of our country. And equal opportunity means it doesn't matter where you come from or what you look like or whom you love—you get a chance in America to achieve your dream.

There is no excuse for undermining these principles. And we will never apologize for defending them.

A while back at the NAM, we determined that our association was too old-fashioned and was ill-equipped to navigate this new reality. So we began a transformation—to become a new generation association—prepared to win fights on all fronts.

And in these political fights, we're leaving no stone unturned. Three years ago, we launched NAM-PAC, after decades of choosing not to have one.

We launched our online Election Center. If you're a manufacturer, the Election Center has all the tools your employees need for election season, such as information on how to register to vote, candidate voter guides, and best practices for building a successful voter education program. The Election Center also has all the resources employers need to talk legally and effectively with employees about voting.

To be successful in our work, we also have to constantly self-examine. We have to challenge the status quo. What's working? What's not?

We've done that at the NAM. For example, we took a hard look at the effectiveness of voter education efforts—and found that just 17 percent of the 12 million manufacturing workers in the U.S. had heard from their employers about the importance of voting during the 2014 elections.

That was a sobering but honest evaluation. Now we know exactly where to improve.

So, while we don't explicitly endorse candidates—yet—at the NAM, we are working harder than ever to make sure our Manufacturing Army knows what's at stake.

Overall, we're committing more resources this election cycle to our get-out-the-vote efforts than in any past elections. We're investing more time and energy this cycle to mobilize voters in support of our values.

So here's what I ask of you today. You didn't think you'd get through all this without an “ask,” did you?

First, get involved with the America Votes Business Coalition. And ask your trade associations to also join. It's free and it just meets for 90 minutes once every quarter. So please join us.

Second, keep raising money. It is vital for us to be able to support the right people at the right time with the right resources.

Third, work to influence who receives your PAC's donations. Take an active role in helping to vet, interview and support PAC donations to the right candidates.

And finally, be proud of our profession. Recognize it's more than a job. And our work is more important than ever before.

I certainly don't go to work every day at the NAM because it's just a job. I'm there because it's a mission. I hope you know your role is part of this mission. I hope you are inspired every day by what you can help achieve...by the history that you can help write.

Ladies and gentlemen, the road ahead will not be easy—but in this country, we have the power to chart our own course.

As leaders in this free enterprise system, all of us have an obligation to build a future that is worthy of who we've been, who we are, and who we aspire to be.

For my part, I pledge my own best efforts, and the commitment of the NAM, to keep defending those four pillars—and to preserve, protect, and advance American Exceptionalism.

I am truly honored to count you all as colleagues in this important work. Thank you so much for your leadership in our drive for success.

Thank you.