

Public Service: Vital to America's Future
Administrator of the Year 1992

L. Ralph Mecham

Opening Remarks

Distinguished faculty members, students and guests of this great university, it is with deepest thanks and, I hope, forgivable pride that I accept the award of Outstanding Public Administrator of the Year. As Jack Benny once said, "I probably don't deserve this, but then I've got arthritis and I don't deserve that either".

Interest in public service came naturally to me from early youth; four of my seven uncles taught in the public schools, one of them serving as a principal throughout Utah and southern Idaho. It seemed to me that they had a special dedication and sense of mission about their work. This conclusion was fortified when I talked with their students who, it seemed to me, venerated my four uncles. Moreover, my great aunt, who was very close to us as I grew up, viewed her school teaching vocation as a special calling. As I am told, so too did her sister whom I did not have the privilege of knowing. As a youth, I devoured newspapers and news magazines and was particularly interested in government and education. Therefore, it was a special thrill to be selected while I was at West High School to be a Salt Lake City commissioner for a day; I was proud to be water commissioner, the same position held by the great gilder sleeve of by-gone radio fame.

When I married the former Barbara Folsom, I discovered that I had married into a family of educators, including Barbara who taught in the Granite School District with the idea of supporting me through graduate school, a dream that only lasted one year and was terminated by the birth of our oldest son Mark (so much for planned parenthood). Her mother, Maurine Bennion Folsom, also taught school before she married Barbara's father and moved to Chile where Barbara was born.

Barbara's grandfather, Milton Bennion, for whom the education building is named at the University of Utah, along with two of her uncles and currently her cousin, served as vice presidents at the university. Another one of her uncles served as Salt Lake City School Superintendent for over 20 years and now his son and her cousin has that same position. Coincidentally, my brother Alan is chairman of the Salt Lake City School Board where they are having their problems with decreasing enrollment, which is unevenly distributed as well. Yet another cousin is president of Rick's College. My oldest brother, Paul, is an executive in the Utah State Government.

Another generation is now caught up in the public service as well. Our daughter Meredith worked in the U.S. Senate and was in charge of business relations for the U.S. Treasury Department until marriage drew her south to Durham, North Carolina, where she became assistant secretary for state administration and is now deputy chief of staff to Governor James

Martin. Further west, our son Stephen is chief of staff to Utah's Governor Norman Bangerter while on leave as a member of the Utah Public Service Commission, which among other things regulates utility rates in the state. If we had more children, perhaps we would be able to take over all 50 states.

As a missionary in Great Britain from 1947-49, I fell under the tutelage of a great mission president, Selvoy J. Boyer, who had been majority leader of the Utah State House of Representatives and a leader in the farm bureau. As fate would have it, I spent nearly my entire mission assigned in or near the mission headquarters in London. President Boyer knew of my great interest in government so when the burdens of caring for the 200 missionaries and managing a dozen or so districts weighed heavily upon him, he would call me and say "Elder Mecham, let's go for a walk." Almost invariably, our talks would be devoted in part to his days in the state legislature where he fought the political wars of Utah during the Governor Herbert Maw administration. Later I was to become a disciple of the then professor G. Homer Durham who headed the Political Science Department and Institute of Government at the University of Utah. I served both as his research and his teaching assistant and learned from him that government was not only interesting but also there were challenging career opportunities as well.

Since then, I have had the privilege and modest distinction of serving in all three branches of the federal government, first, in the U.S. Senate with Senator Wallace Bennett, followed by a presidential appointment in the U.S. Commerce Department, and for the past seven years in the federal judicial branch after appointment by the U.S. Supreme Court. Mixed in with all that I was pleased to have a fulfilling assignment as vice president under Dr. James C. Fletcher at the University of Utah and then 15 years in corporate life, which gave me an interesting opportunity to contrast the differing administrative methods and discipline required in the management of private industry.

I am particularly honored to receive this award in a time when many people view public service and government with skepticism, if not at times outright hostility. For example, only 36 percent of the respondents to a poll late last year said that they could trust the government to do what is right "just about always" or "most of the time". Always good for a few laughs is Ronald Reagan's oft repeated line; "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are, I'm from the government and I'm here to help."

Some of this distrust towards government may be due to a number of recent improprieties. The federal regulated savings & loan failures have led to the censure of a United States senator, the investigation of a leading governor, and questions about many others. The taxpayers have had to pay a bailout of over \$500 billion by the year 2000. Defense contractor scandals and misuse of HUD funds are other examples of today's questionable ethical behavior. George Washington was right when he observed in his farewell address- "it is substantially true, that virtue and morality is a necessary spring of popular government". Even though secularism seems to have been established as our public religion, I will dare to quote Washington's declaration in that same speech: "And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of

peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle”.

The news is not all bad. Most of the unethical behavior has involved either politicians or political appointees, not career public servants. Unfortunately, the press rarely prints a story on the successes of government and when they do it's buried in the back pages. Consequently, many people develop a negative image of government and the public service. It has been my experience, however, that most public servants, and indeed even most politicians, are honest and adhere to high moral standards.

The message needs to be heard and many of you in the audience can help. I urge the faculty members to remember the importance of public service and teach its value to your students. I also urge the students to consider public service as a career. It is very challenging and rewarding to know your programs and accomplishments are vital to the well-being of the nation. I believe you would find, as I have, that public service can be an opportunity for a brighter future for you and our nation.

Public Service: Vital to America

Public service is vital to our nation and to us in our communities and homes. First, consider that the federal government has more than three million civilian employees and that state and local governments and public schools employ another 15 million. Together, federal, state and local government employees account for nearly 15 percent of the approximately 120 million Americas employed in the civilian work force. Consequently, government provides many more jobs than even the largest corporations.

Government is also a large purchaser of goods and services. During fiscal year 1990, the federal government accounted for 423 billion dollars of the gross national product, while state and local governments generated another 674 billion dollars. The total of nearly 1.1 trillion dollars comprised slightly more than 20 percent of the total GNP of 5.46 trillion dollars.

These are impressive statistics, but the real purpose of government is to ensure the opportunity for “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” of its citizens. I am reminded of what president Lyndon Johnson said in a speech at the University of New Mexico, “Government is not an enemy of the people, government is the people themselves.” I believe it is true in our American scheme of things that government has seldom been the enemy of the people. Accordingly, in America the public service must be responsive to the will of the people while protecting our constitutional values.

I would like to focus your attention for a moment on some of the functions and services we expect our government and, in turn, each public servant to provide.

- (1) National Security. We expect the federal government to provide for the common defense of the nation. Even with the fall of the Soviet Union and the virtual collapse of communism, many dangers, such as international instability, unscrupulous fanatical leaders, and terrorists remain. Currently, nearly a quarter of the federal budgetary outlays go to national defense. More than two and a half million military and civilian employees

are involved in our national defense. This number does not include other security agencies such as the CIA and State National Guard units. Assuring the safety of our airways, waterways, and highways is also of great importance. It is obvious that both government and the general public consider national security a top priority.

- (2) Justice and Law Enforcement. We look towards government for protection from crime and for resolution of disputes. We want to feel safe in our homes and on the streets. We look for leadership in such areas as fighting “the war on drugs”, combating organized crime, and investigating illegal insider trading of securities.

After law enforcement agencies do their job, people expect the courts to provide swift but fair and equitable justice. As director of the administrative office of the US Courts, my primary goal has been to provide the federal courts with the highest level of service and resources to further the accomplishment of this critical mission.

I might mention the judiciary, the third branch of government, accounts for less than two percent of the total federal budget. The legislative branch accounts for another three percent. The vast majority of the federal budget, therefore, goes to the executive branch and its many agencies.

- (3) Education. The people expect the government to provide excellent public-school systems, support for colleges and universities and model curriculums throughout the educational process. For example, in a recent poll, 63 percent of Americas were willing to spend more money and resources on educational programs, such as head start, to halt what is perceived as a general decline in its quality. However, several important school bond issues have been defeated recently by the local voters.

- (4) Health and Safety Regulations: Most people advocate the development of government regulations and enforcement that protect their health and safety. Recent examples would be the federal drug administration’s investigations into falsified or misleading test results for silicone breast implants and new experimental drugs, the occupational safety and health administrator’s enforcement of safe working conditions in poultry houses in North Carolina, and the environmental protection agency’s concerns over decreasing water quality.

- (5) Scientific and Medical Research: Projects conducted and funded by government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, The National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the National Science Foundation have made this country a leader in discovering new scientific and medical breakthroughs. Approximately 60 percent of government research is done by universities compared to only 40 percent in government laboratories. In the field of research, therefore, there is an unusual partnership between government and academia.

- (6) Welfare Programs: Although many argue for reforms, I think the vast majority of Americans believe that government at all levels needs to help ensure that all Americans have adequate food, shelter and medical care. This is highlighted by recent political debate over national health care. We have learned from other countries that governments can try to do so much that the quality of medical care may actually be reduced, sometimes sharply so.

There are only a few examples of what we expect from government. The public also looks towards the federal government for leadership in many other areas such as transportation, environmental protection, and energy policy. We expect congress to pass fair and just laws.

At the state and local levels, we expect the trash to be collected, roads to be functional, our children to be adequately educated, and the police to protect us. In short, the people expect a great deal from our government and we want it done effectively and efficiently. We want all these services but at times we are unwilling to pay for them. This means that at times we must be able to do more for less money.

On Sunday, February 22, 1992, former Michigan governor and U.S. cabinet member George Romney (also a one-time Utahn) ran an ad in the Washington Post and New York Times. In it he said, "It is free competitive enterprise that produces the greatest economic progress—not, primarily, government and regulation control. Excessive reliance on government to solve social problems has become counterproductive." I agree with Governor Romney.

Thus, while arguing that public service is an honorable profession, I am not arguing for more government or that government can answer all of our problems. In fact, I would argue for less government in many instances. Today, however, government is an accepted instrumentality of great importance to our society and we must have devoted, dedicated, and qualified people running our government at all levels for the benefit of all the people, including the taxpayers.

In a similar vein, David Osborne in his latest book published two weeks ago entitled "Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector from School House to State House, City Hall to Pentagon" contends that "our fundamental problem is that we have the wrong kind of government.... We do not need more government or less government, we need better government." I fully agree with at least part of his conclusion, namely, that we need better government. Osborne believes as I do that, we can cut costs without eliminating essential services through a more imaginative and efficient approach to government. His goals of greater decentralization, more emphasis on performance instead of regulations and attempts to enlist local support by making people feel they own their government, is right on target.

At the same time, Osborne's critics are correct when they claim that government and business are different and that it is more difficult to measure performance in government

than in business. In my estimation, however, this does not deny the value of many of his other objectives and conclusions.

I realize that in urging that more of our “best and brightest” Americans ought to be interested in pursuing careers in government and politics because of the vital importance of government to our way of life, that I could well be weakening another important objective to limit government. I have learned the truth of what my political science mentor, Dr. Homer Durham, said namely, that talented and creative managers will quickly see how much there is to do, how much better it can be done, and how many other programs there are that ought to be created. Thus, costs could go up and the size of government increase unduly. But to me it is worth taking that risk. It is easier to rein in creative and innovative professionals than it is to achieve much from individuals with lesser skills and bureaucratic mentality.

Unfortunately, I have to admit, however, that there are too few rewards for our government officials who seek economy in government. The reward system instead tends to foster expansion, the adding of more people, and higher budgets. These impulses, if they are to be kept under control, require, as in the care of preservation of liberty, eternal vigilance.

Importance of Career Public Executives

Who ensures that these and other government programs run effectively? For the most part it is career public executives and employees who are the managers, engineers, lawyers, teachers, scientists, analysts, and other professionals and support staff who comprise the public service. In Washington, each president brings in a thin layer on top political appointees committed to him and his philosophy of government, but these political appointees cannot operate huge agencies and complex programs entirely on their own. The permanent processes and on-going programs need the continuity and expertise of the senior public executives and their staffs.

Realizing the importance of career public executives, President George Bush’s first address outside the White House after his inauguration was before a meeting of members of the senior executive service. President Bush offered this praise: “How well the tasks of government are done affects the quality of the lives of all our people. Moreover, the success of any leadership in implementing its policies and objectives depends heavily upon the expertise, quality, and commitment of the professional career employees of government.”

Many of these career executives are well trained and know the intricacies of the laws and regulations governing the programs they implement. They are professional line managers of the government which means they are in charge of a mission accomplishment and service delivery. Their importance could be seen clearly during Richard Nixon’s second term. The Watergate scandal had paralyzed the President’s Administration. If not for the on-going efforts of the career administrators, the government could have come to a

screaming halt. Instead, programs continued to operate, and the health and welfare of the citizenry was protected.

The cohesion career executives provide is even more important when one considers the constant turnover of political appointees. A recent commission on the public service, chaired by Paul Vockler, found that the average tenure of Senate confirmed presidential appointees is about 2 years, and that of other non-career senior executive service member is 18 months. In contrast, 70 percent of career executives have been with their agencies 10 years and 50 percent for 15 years. This lack of stability at the very top means that it is the career public executives that have the institutional memory and necessary knowledge to keep programs operating during turnovers. This is particularly true during changes in presidential administrations.

Realizing the importance of career public executives, the Vockler Commission expressed concern that the growing number of political appointees was hampering government efficiency. Often, political appointees are awarded so called “plum positions” with little regard for their expertise in the program areas they will be managing. As a result, program delivery may suffer because it takes time for the political appointee to gain the knowledge needed to manage effectively.

Contrast this situation to the British tradition. Perhaps some of you have seen the BBC comedy “Yes Minister”, which shows the minister espousing ideas that are completely ignored by his top administrator because the administrator knows how things really work and get done. While this is a bit of an exaggeration for the sake of humor, British agencies are operated primarily by career people, usually with good reason. Understandably, however, presidents want to “control” the government they were elected to lead. It is no surprise they want “loyal” supporters to be in key positions. This creates a constant tension with the government.

In this regard, the judiciary is fortunate to be somewhat outside the two political branches of government. While a handful of judicial nominations have been controversial, particularly at the Supreme Court level, the lifetime appointment of judges serves to insulate the judiciary from most political pressures. I am fortunate that my own top executives are career employees and are outside the political process. They are dedicated and talented individuals. Through commitment and hard work, they deliver effective programs to the judiciary.

It has been my experience that government executives work just as hard and well as their counterparts in the private sector. Perhaps former Secretary of State George Shultz stated it best in a letter to the Vockler Commission: “Speaking as one who has also served in the private sector and academia, I believe that the department’s workforce is on a par with the best I have known in the private sector.”

Public Service as a Career

All of my experiences in government and academe have been richly rewarding. That is why it disturbs me when I find that many young people are not interested in public service as a career. The Vockler Commission noted that leading universities such as Stanford, Harvard and Rennsalaer Polytechnical Institute were reporting less than five percent of their students were accepting positions in the federal government. There appear to be two primary reasons for this: Pay, and what I believe to be a false perception that a career in public service is not as rewarding as a private sector career.

As to the public government, I believe the pay issue has, in large part, been addressed. The Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act has introduced locality pay and has allowed agencies to offer incentives such as bonuses and travel reimbursements to recruits. In 1991, a raise of 25 percent was given to federal judges, congressman and the senior executive service. The current recession also makes a government a more attractive alternative. Overall, public service is a more rewarding career at the federal level than it used to be.

The second reason, lack of a rewarding career, needs to be confronted with better education about the opportunities available in the public service. First, the government needs to do a better job of recruitment, particularly in providing students with the necessary information about how and where to apply for employment. Government should also focus on partnerships with educational institutions through increased internship programs and broader curriculums.

I also believe academia can do more to help overcome this negative image. A 1987 report, *Collegiate Community Service: The Status of Public and Community Service at Selected Colleges and Universities* concluded that “The best incentive for public service seems to be a commitment to service on the part of the institution from the president on down... strong institutional support for public service results in increased levels of student participation in service.” I believe faculty members should encourage curriculum development that leads to a better understanding of the public service. They should impress upon their students the need and the value of a career in public service.

I urge all of the students in the audience to give thought to a career in public service. Public servants are a far cry away from the all too popular image of faceless bureaucrats. Instead, for the most part, they are talented scientists, teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, analysts and administrators. Please consider internship programs, get involved in voluntary service to your community. If you do, I believe you will find the experience as a challenging and fulfilling as I have. I echo the words of John Kennedy who said “Let the public service be a proud and lively career. And let every man and woman who works in any area of our national government, in any branch, at any level, be able to say with pride and honor in the future years: I served the United States Government.”

What is an Outstanding Administrator?

Given the importance of career public executives, what is it that makes an outstanding administrator? More than anything else, good public administrators must have commitment and dedication to the programs they manage and the people they serve. Most

of them enter public service because they believe their work will contribute to the public good. They get satisfaction from doing the right things well. Through a sense of duty, they remain committed to their programs over many years and through many policy struggles. They are well trained and most endeavor to continually update their skills to maintain and increase their competency.

In recent years, government executives have been faced with the same fiscal challenges as executives in the private sector. Budget cutbacks have driven public service executives to try new and innovative approaches to the delivery of necessary services. This situation has developed their management skills even further. When you deal with questions of public health, safety and justice, each and every decision may have far-reaching implications. Through determination and dedication, public servants usually ensure service delivery even in the face of severe budgetary cutbacks.

This dedication to public service can mean sacrifices. For example, most federal judges take a large pay cut when they choose the bench because many of them leave positions as senior partners in prestigious law firms. They are willing to take this pay cut because they wish to contribute to the public good by ensuring that justice is meted out fairly and equitably. They view a judgeship as the culmination of their legal careers. Government employees choose a public service career for the intangible satisfactions rather than to make their fortunes. They are driven by a desire for accomplishment. I would argue that the image of the American dream goes beyond just striking it rich monetarily to striking it rich intellectually and purposefully.

Good public administrators must have integrity and a highly developed sense of morality. As President George Bush observed, "It's a question of knowing right from wrong, avoiding conflicts of interest, bending over backwards to see that there's not even a perception of conflict of interest." I believe that high ethical standards breed public confidence in government.

Due to some of the events I mentioned earlier, public confidence in government appears to be waning. Other institutions, however, are not immune to what appears to be an overall decline in ethical behavior. In the private sector, recent examples are the BCCI banking scandal, Silverado, Soloman Brothers' manipulation of the government securities market, and the collapse of Robert Maxwell's publishing empire. The high salaries of top corporate executives have been criticized by some as flagrant abuse while companies are struggling to survive. In religion, regrettably, we have the widely publicized improprieties of televangelists Jim and Tammy Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart and cult leader Jim Jones.

Even academia is not immune. Professors and University Presidents have been elevated to the high priesthood of our secular religion but even some of them have feet of clay. There is the misuse of federal research funds by Stanford, MIT and many other major universities. David Baltimore, a Nobel Laureate noted for his discoveries in the molecular biology of the gene, resigned as President of Rockefeller University apparently because he did not investigate charges that research data submitted by one of his associates had

been falsified. Too many instances have occurred recently where researchers have falsified data to advance their careers. Robert Gallo, known as a pioneer in the identification of the AIDS virus, has been accused of stealing the very virus he claimed to have discovered from a French laboratory that sent it to him. Worse, Gallo is accused of engineering a subsequent cover-up of the circumstances surrounding the case. This has caused some commentators to label the Gallo case as a “Scientific Watergate”.

My point is that ethical behavior within government may, at times, not be up to the standards we should expect, but government certainly does not have a monopoly on questionable behavior. Again, it is worth noting that most government improprieties have involved politicians and political appointees rather than career public executives.

In an effort to address unethical behavior in government, congress passed the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 and the Ethics Reform Act of 1989. Inspectors general in each cabinet agency are on the lookout for fraud, waste and abuse. Regulatory agencies are overwhelmed by their tasks of trying to keep people honest. Look at the criticisms of the banking regulators that seem almost more strident than criticisms of the bankers themselves. We must avoid the tendency to think that if you can get away with it, it is okay. We must, also, be careful not to overregulate behavior. What is legal is not necessarily ethical or for the public good. I believe that educational reforms such as more courses on law and business ethics and revised curriculums that would require ethics classes in all academic fields would be a better approach than excessive regulation. We must be made aware of the value of ethics and morality.

As a society, we must recapture a basic trust in the integrity of others and instill in our children a respect for and a belief in the power of honesty and virtue. We must regain the attitude of the philosopher Sophocles who said, “I would prefer even to fail with honor than to win by cheating”. If we allow ourselves to expect less than ideal behavior, it follows that that is what will transpire as President George Washington maintained. A renewed respect for the teaching of religion would help. Remember the 34th Psalm which reads “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, do good; seek peace and pursue it”.

In the public service, it comes down to the integrity of the individual leaders. They must instill moral values throughout their organizations. I, myself have established goals for the administrative office of the U.S. Courts that I feel represent its purpose and values. I truly believe that the vast majority of public servants have high ethical standard and that public service is an honorable profession.

But, every four years, and all too frequently in between, there are those who advance the idea that we can have public virtue without private morality. The obvious implication is that the United States can have a great society without first having great people. In the current presidential election primaries, for example, the so-called “character issues” are hanging out there for all to see. Interestingly enough, there seems to be a consensus in the media that the issue of sex in the current presidential campaign is to be dismissed as somehow beneath serious consideration. Some say it is irrelevant. We are told to quit

linking sex with sin and to stop placing impossible moral burdens upon would-be chief executives. Recently Thomas R. Reeves, the author of “A question of Character: A life of John F. Kennedy” wrote in The Wall Street Journal, ‘Fortunately, the majority of Americans have not bought the argument. Most continue to demand that the nation’s foremost official be a person of exceptionally good character, in private as well as public.’ Reeves goes on to say, “It is, I submit, neither priggish nor foolish to want a highly honorable person sitting in the oval office.”

Many years ago, William Cowper said in a similar vein, “When was public virtue to be found when private was not?”

In my view, good character is an essential requirement not only in our president, but also in any public official if they are to succeed in their office and to be model leaders for our democratic people. However, I also believe firmly in the validity of repentance even for the political candidates and leaders.

The notion that a high standard of personal ethics and moral conviction are not always required in our governmental leaders is, I believe, heresy. But Christine Hoff Sommers, a professor at Clark University, believes that even in the universities we insist only on teaching the student to exert a “societal morality” even while neglecting to teach them “personal morality”, a situation which she described as “ethics without virtue.” She then says that “Students taking college ethics are debating abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, DNA research, and the ethics of transplant surgery while they learn almost nothing about private decency, honesty, personal responsibility, or honor. Topics such as hypocrisy, self-deception, cruelty or selfishness rarely come up.”

If our universities are not teaching personal ethics, is it any wonder that our politicians do not feel particularly inhibited about pushing into the gray areas of behavior and beyond believing they need not pay a political price.

Dr. Kenneth Adelman, currently a nationally syndicated columnist, in examining the recent notoriety achieved by former D.C. Mayor Marion Barry and the late Robert Maxwell, the communications titan whose body was found in the ocean, said, “The lesson is clear: examine a leader’s character, above all, for that character will eventually determine behavior. Poor character will invariably lead to deplorable behavior, damaging the whole society, if, as here done by a public figure.”

All successful human relations and thus all success in government is, in my estimation, built upon integrity and relationships of personal trust. This, it is not surprising that the great English writer and lecturer, Malcom Muggeridge wrote late in life how “he came to believe that the machinations of power, how it was organized and welded, who governed whom and by what means – all this was less important than a nation’s soul’ its character, its religion; its humor and art and music and literature.”

I am prepared to advance the proposition and contend strenuously for the proposition that there is a moral, indeed a spiritual determinism that governs the quality, well-being,

success, and even the prosperity of our society. Political scientists, politicians, philosophers and others over the years have advanced their own contrary deterministic ideas. There is the oft-debated battle between nature and nurture over which is the ultimate determinant in our lives. At the risk of going beyond my scholarly depth, I will only observe that the nature determinists argue that our genetic inheritance governs while the behaviorists or environmentalists believe just as strongly that it is our environment and experience which controls. Then there are those who claim historical materialism as the determinant. Hegel, Marx, Spengler, and Engels appear to be in this camp. The so-called inexorable historical forces of Marxian dialectical materialism now lie in shambles with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Communist Bloc. China and particularly Cuba are likely soon to follow, along with North Korea.

I do not underestimate the importance of heredity, environment, economics, historical forces, or other popular forms of determinism. But I do believe there are overriding principles which governs this world and our lives which for want of a better way to describe it, I will call moral-spiritual determinism. We violate these moral laws as old as the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount at our peril. Central to this form of determinism, in my view, is the fact of free agency which we are privileged to enjoy as its greatest expansiveness in our free society where liberty prevails to an exceptional degree.

Old and New Testament and ancient American prophets ringingly proclaim that for a society to prosper, its people must faithfully obey the author of these moral and spiritual laws. Therefore, I am sure we should look less to the Gross National Product and more to the Gross moral product of a nation in order to determine its true worth and its character and quality.

It does not seem to me to be as easy, however, to readily demonstrate that each individual in a society will be equally benefitted, in the short run, from following their moral principles. However, at the risk of seeming to be a mystic, I believe that even a dapper mafia don who may appear to be remarkably successful in the short run while avoiding the immediate judgements of the courts must, nonetheless, pay the immediate price of the weakened character and loss of peace of mind. There is a validity, I believe, in the central message of Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" which could well be autobiographical. As you will recall, Dorian Gray was a handsome youth whose portrait was painted by a leading artist. The portrait proved to have supernatural qualities and became the mirror of the subject's inner life, so that whatever Dorian feels, or thinks is reflected in the portrait, Dorian himself retaining his youth and handsome exterior. Dorian Gray's immoral behavior causes him to degenerate through debauchery and dissipation and his portrait mirrors all his hideous vices while he remains as outwardly attractive and seemingly unsuccessful as even a current mafia don. The portrait mirrors the true inner man which is not evident to the world. Finally, Dorian stabs his now unspeakably revolting portrait. Forthwith he himself is found dead with a knife through his heart, a ghastly wreck of a man, all his sins on his face, while over him hangs the portrait of the youthful and innocent Dorian restored to what it was in the beginning. In short, I do not think you can sin and get away with it. In the short run, it may seem to be

outwardly true to the world. But all must pay an immediate and increasingly great price for departure from the moral laws that govern the universe.

Church and state may well be separate under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, but morality can never be separated from politics or government. If we as a people do try to create such an artificial separation, then American will surely decline and fall.

As I said earlier, successful government and successful human relations are based on trust. When people cut corners, are dishonest, and lack integrity, they lose the confidence of their colleagues and thus their ability to function effectively in our society. It is impossible to have successful duplex living with honesty in one personal cubicle and dishonesty in another. George Washington said that honesty is the best policy. That is all right as far as it goes. But honesty is more than a policy that is pragmatically arrived at. It is also right in itself. I think George Washington would have agreed with Wilford Brimley, who speaks for oatmeal cereal that eating it is “the right thing to do.” The same is true for honesty.

William Raspberry, the gifted columnist of The Washington Post, recently said, “You can’t exercise moral authority while denying the authority of morality.” Thus, we pay a very high price for the moral relativism that too often permeates our professions, universities, government, and high schools. We have to do more than teach about ethics, we have to teach ethics. As Christine Sommers said, we must not “lose sight of the fact that some things are clearly right and some clearly wrong, that some ethical truths are not subject to serious debate.”

Paradoxically, at the same we in our country are becoming wishy washy about teaching ethics and morality, the Russian Government is moving in the opposite direction. The ex-Soviet Union’s moral wreckage may eclipse in size and weight its economic wreckage. The Senior Superintendent of the Moscow Public Education Department said recently “There are no values in our society.” After 74 years of being taught to venerate the godless communist party, the Russian Deputy Administrator said, “The biggest question for education is the moral education of the young people.” All this, after a relentless attempt by communist educators to demonstrate that bourgeois morality was a snare and a delusion. This moved William Murchison, a columnist for the Dallas Morning News to note in contrast, “American schools, for the past 20-30 years have trafficked in moral neutrality.”

In conclusion, I deeply believe that public service is an opportunity for a bright future. Individually, it can provide a rich and rewarding career. Collectively, promoting the public good enhances the economic, social and political well-being of our country. Public service is, and will always be, vital to our nation’s well-being.

Conclusion

Again, I thank you deeply for this award and for the opportunity to speak with you about the public service and ethics in government.