



COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL POLICY

EXPANDING THE BIG TENT The Honorable Jim DeMint



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It is great to be back with a band of brothers and sisters. I feel like I've been in Siberia for a little bit because when I came out of the Senate I discovered that there was a rule that you could not really meet with any Congressman or Senators and you weren't really supposed to be in meetings where they were in attendance. So I've tried to be very careful. but that's all over in January and I can't wait to get back on the Hill and back working directly with a lot of you and thank you so much for what you do. It is exciting to be here and I look at the program agenda of all the folks who have spoken before me and we are working with all of those and I think there is one thing that I'm sure you've picked up whether it was Cruz last night or Lee or Rubio or others is that more and more of the conservative leaders are speaking in positive tones and talking about how our ideas make life better for Americans. And part of that is a result of what all of us has been doing together. I know a lot of the leaders here of conservative groups meet with us and others every week on the Hill all around the country we meet and more and more not only are getting on the same page of what the right ideas are, the right values, the right policies but how do we talk about those in a way that actually win conservative victories? That create an atmosphere where good conservative champions can run for office and actually win talking boldly about our ideas. I've seen that and I believe that. The title of this talk is about a big tent and the Republican establishment talks about big tent in a way of let's compromise everything we believe so that we can attract more people. I can tell you from talking to thousands and thousands of Americans that the majority of Americans share our ideas. They sometimes don't like our labels or maybe the way we present it but the majority of Americans love what we love. And they hate what we hate about the things that hurt our country and hurt people. If we can learn to talk to people in a way that helps them understand what is really on our hearts, we can change this country. And we need to do it now and that is why so many of us are working together on not compromising our values or principles but how do we translate what it is we really believe into something that wins the hearts and minds of the American people. And it's harder for me probably than anyone in this room, if there's ever been a policy nerd it's me and I love policy and if someone needs me to explain it to them I will explain it to them. But I know from being in the advertising and marketing business talking about the chemicals that are in your household cleaner is not the way to sell it. It is to talk about the benefits and how it makes your life better and our ideas make life better and they built the greatest country on the face of this earth and we should never back off from talking to them. I want you to see a video. I would love to talk policy but I know people who have come before me like Mike Lee who has worked with us to develop a conservative reform agenda, worked with a lot of you that I probably

couldn't lay out all the policies any better than what you have already heard. So let's just talk about a little bit of a different angle and if our AV people will just show this very short video it will give me some points to talk about here.

This is just part of the communication effort that we are working on right now and if you look at that, first of all, we need to realize that well over 80% of Americans probably over 90% of Americans would look at that and say I agree with that. That is what I love. That is what I want to be a part of here in America. And you also realize that is what conservatism is all about. That is what we want to conserve. And what makes us different from the left is we're talking about the things in our hearts that are within us and unite us as a country that people really love, that make their lives better, and that built this strong country. and on the other side is the left and at every opportunity that they have they divide people into groups and play one group against another and they are tearing our country apart and at the same time they are advocating federal one-size-fits-all solutions that force uniformity into all of that. And it is creating so much tension in our country and fighting between each other when in fact if people look at that and understands what really brings us together and makes us Americans is the most wonderful thing on the face of the earth.

I was watching TV late at night, which I sometimes do when I'm brain-dead and I can't really do any work. I usually look to try to find a Western, to watch Clint Eastwood or something where the bad guy always gets his due at the end. But I came across a Clint Eastwood movie. How many of you have seen Grand Torino? Some of you. I will try to bring the rest of you along because as I saw it I realized it was making a point that so many of us are trying to make. Now Clint Eastwood was this old Korean War veteran. It started with him, it was his wife's funeral actually and an old middle are may be lower middle class neighborhood in his home. And some friends around kind of ignoring him and talking about other things. And his family who was there, his son and daughter-in-law were talking about how they could get him in a home so he wouldn't have to live by himself. And his granddaughter, the only thing she wanted was his Grand Torino. His prize was in the garage and he kept it polished or whatever. She didn't seem to really care about him. But right after that they show him he sitting on the porch every afternoon. He gets his cooler of beer and drinks. And next door to him is an Asian family with three or four generations living together. and there are always kids and older people coming in and out and he is just sitting there grumbling about them. You know, all kinds of slurs, ethnic and whatever, you know terrible. None of us would want to talk that way. But as the movie goes along he begins to see things that he loves about how they live and how they think. In fact, he comes to the defense of one of their daughters when this Asian gang is coming after her and he tells them never to get close to her again. And that gang forces a 15-year-old who lives next door to try to steal his Grand Torino and he catches him. And the family is so embarrassed they say you can have this boy for a week to work. And he sits there on his porch and watches him doing all this work and he comes to admire his work ethic and once he gets everything in his home done they go next door and start working on a neighbor's family. What you see through this movie is that these are very different people. Again he's a Korean War veteran. He didn't seem to like Asians. It seemed to be everything that would divide them but the family came to love him because he stood up for them. and what you saw as the movie went on is that they came to love the same things. They were different as they could possibly be but they loved the family, they loved really taking care of each other, they hated things that hurt each other and by the end of the movie after Clint Eastwood had given his life to try to save the family and get the gang and you are sitting there at the reading of the will and the granddaughter was sitting there expecting to get the Grand Torino and the lawyer said and the Grand Torino goes to this 15-year-old who lives next door. And the movie ends with him driving down the street in the Grand Torino and you realize that's part of Americana. The most diverse nation on the face of the earth with people from everywhere living here but we are united more than any other country by the values that we care about. The values of family and community and self-reliance and hard work, honesty and decency and integrity those things pull us together. Those are what we're trying to conserve and what we have to learn to do as conservatives and I'm speaking as someone who's made a mistake many times.

When people come up to us and want us to talk about a policy or issue and they say DeMint, “why are you against common core? Why are you against standards in education?” And I said, “I want every child in America to go to bed at night and to be able to dream about anything that they want to achieve and I know that every child in America is different. With different dreams and ideas and interests and aptitudes and we need to make sure in this country that every parent has a choice of a school that will work for their child and help them to achieve the opportunity that is in front of them in this country.” That is what I want and I know that no bureaucrat in Washington or no common solution is going to do that for every child. I want every child to graduate. That is not soft pedaling our ideas. That is telling people what our ideas do for them. And it’s easy if we don’t get caught up in talking and explaining a policy when we realize that what we need to do as conservatives is realize that you can pretty much roughly divide the country into three parts. You’ve got the conservative base who are always with us. You’ve kind of got the left base that is never going to be with us no matter what. And we’ve got about a third of the country and we’ve talked to thousands of them and we got all these research panels set up and we know that most of them agree with all of our ideas. They love the things that we love. They hate the things that we hate. But they don’t like the labels. And all we need in certain parts of the country is just a few of these people to begin to realize that the way they have been voting is actually hurting them working against the things that they care about. And if we can begin to help those folks see the benefits and the outcomes of these ideas that we talk about they are going to begin to back into the fact that they have been betrayed by the party they voted for and they need to look for alternatives. And what we need to do on our side and what we’re doing at Heritage is try to make it as simple as we can and to keep working on message ideas that help people see what it is that we are talking about. Because what we do want for people is a better life for them and their children, a stronger country and a brighter future for all of us. Opportunity for everyone and favoritism for none. That is what we want out of all of this. And we can do that there really is just three things from a political side that we need to work on. We need to always have a strong economy that spins off the jobs in the opportunities. We have to have a strong society that reflects the values of the people because that is how you get safe communities and good schools and strong families. We don’t need to shy away from that. You can’t have a good economy unless you have a strong society. And we need a strong defense. If we can help people see that these are the things we need to make sure work as elected officials, as volunteers, as American citizens then we can begin to present the policies that help make their life better.

What we are doing at Heritage is working with all of you and we really can’t do it without you and if you know anything about Heritage and this is something I want to make sure that we preserve as we see ourselves as serving the conservative movement and leading the conservative movement and being the flagship. Whenever we can find another organization that is doing something we are not trying to replace it but how can we help that organization do what they’re doing better. How can we come alongside to be that resource? But we understand, and I know especially from being on the inside, that is important to have the policy research that we do and we are doing more of it than ever and get it to the members of Congress to candidates for the White House to make sure that they understand what really builds that strong economy, that strong society and that strong defense. And we are doing that. And you will continue to hear more and more of it. But I know that Congress does not respond to good ideas, the right ideas. They are not looking for what makes the country look better. I know some individually are and they are trying to respond to power and money and various constituent groups and that is real loud inside the Beltway. The only way we can change that is through the people of this country. It’s to inform them and engage them and get them active in pushing against their members of Congress and getting engaged in the political progress and understanding how to identify folks who are carrying those ideas that will make our life better. To do that we need better and better communication.

At Heritage we have created a news source called The Daily Signal and within a few months about 4 million people a month are already coming to it to get their news. And we have revealed that the Department of State was the one going through all these files on Benghazi and separating out the

damaging ones. That story that came out this week, it came from The Daily Signal. We don't want to be just the news source we want to be the source that the news gets the information from. And the fact that we have people working all on the Hill, hundreds of people. we can be certainly a complement to other conservative organizations. We will have things like America within which is more of a longer-term discussion with the American people to help engage them with the right ideas and bring them into the conversation. It is not going to change 2014 but we believe it can change 2016 and remind candidates how to talk about conservative ideas in a positive way. The other thing that we are doing and we put it under the column of advocacy, working directly on the Hill through our policy promotion people and of course you have probably heard about Heritage Action which is a C-4 and now they've got over 9000 sentinels, trained all across the country to contact Congressman and Senators, working with a lot of other groups. When something comes up like the Export-Import Bank or something that we're trying to take down crony capitalism, we can get thousands of people calling and writing to Congress in a day. And we know that we will make a difference and we have seen it make a difference. The amnesty bill would've been amnesty if we did not have the grassroots pressure on Congress. We would've had a couple of UN treaties, an Internet sales tax and I hope that we can change gears with the next president and actually be working on positive policy legislation but right now our goal is to minimize the damage. But the one thing that I want you to remember today is that the left's progressive liberal ideas are dividing our country. The only philosophy, the only ideology that can unite America is the conservative ideas, the conservative philosophy. Because it searches for those values that unite us. That are in our hearts and that pull us together whether it's the crotchety old Clint Eastwood in an Asian family that he doesn't think he has anything in common with. That's what America is everywhere. all very different. But we share the love of the values and the principles that makes our lives better and the world freer and we know it works. We've got all the evidence. So we can go ahead boldly and I'm convinced after watching the elections this year to replace good bold conservative candidates with establishment type milquetoast doesn't work. We've seen it before. And we saw it in 2010, probably the best wave that we've had in a while where people like Rubio and Mike Lee and others stood up on principle and did what they said they couldn't do. Ted Cruz did the same thing. So our ideas win the elections. The more positive we get about them the more confident that we can be that these candidates can run on them. But what we need to do as a movement is to clear the path. To cultivate the ground. To start the parade of ideas that our candidates can jump in that parade and win elections. We are not going to win by counting on Republicans to come up with the agenda and to drive that agenda. We do it. And the good candidates will jump on our parade and move forward. So thanks. I think we might have a minute or two for some questions but thanks for being a part of this whole team with us.

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