

Marine Corps League – Huntsville, AL – 13 September 2011

Politics seems to be in everything I do these days – whether I like it or not...church, grocery store...even at a recent birthday party with family and friends I printed off some – no politics stickers - for everyone to wear and would point at it if the conversation started to become political...okay, they had to remind me a time or two as well. I guess it is just in my DNA.

So as I prepared for tonight's thoughts I naturally drifted to the arena I now participate in – the political arena. I respect everyone's position, and it is certainly not my intent to offend anyone tonight. I'll do my best to share some thoughts, but remain somewhat in the middle of the road.

I want to start by sharing a memory from the very early days of the past legislative session.

I remember sitting in the basement of the Alabama State House at a meeting with our newly elected Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Senators. There are 35 Senators in Alabama and 22 of us are republicans, 13 Democrats. Not so long ago the numbers were the other way around. It is rumored that at one point there were so few Republicans that you could hold a meeting in a broom closet. On this day we had all 22 Republican Senators gathered around a long conference table discussing strategy for the upcoming session. It was a somewhat casual atmosphere, ties were loosened, suit coats were off –and at one point I leaned back in my chair and surveyed the table...taking it all in. I remember thinking I'm in at the very heart of government in my state and... I wondered how in the hell did I get here. I'm not a lawyer...I'm just a Marine...but then, I am a Marine!

I can now answer that question - I'm here for a reason.

I'll share with you that my first presidential vote was in 1984 and I proudly cast that vote for Ronald Reagan's second term. He remains one of my favorite Presidents. Even as a young Marine I supported his "Peace through Strength". He believed the best offense was a strong defense, and I'm not talking about a Saturday afternoon in Tuscaloosa. President Reagan was very fond of Marines.

He personally wrote to a young Marine prior to his deployment to Beirut – before the bombing of the Marine Barracks - "Some people work an entire lifetime and wonder if they ever made a difference to the world. But the Marines don't have that problem."

I hear two things in that quote – a compliment and a charge. No doubt President Reagan was paying a huge compliment to Marines, past and present, but he was also charging Marines, past and present, to make a difference in the world, in the lives of others...the charge – make a difference in your world.

And that is why I'm in politics, that's why I'm Montgomery.

I'll also share with you that I use several things to guide me in my decision making as a state legislator. I don't mind sharing that I often rely on my military training, doctrine and leadership studies. Believe it or not I draw some of my resolve from the Armed Forces Code of Conduct that I was first introduced to as a Marine recruit in boot camp some 28 years ago. Yes, even though I'm retired from active duty, I still believe in the articles of the code of conduct. Three of which I'll highlight tonight. Let those words sink in for a moment – it may have been a while since you've heard them.

Article I - I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

Article II - I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.

Article VI - I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.

While it is the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who are bound by the Code of Conduct, I think Americans across our land, from sea to shining sea, young and old alike, should take note of the words in these articles I've shared tonight.

Past generation's sacrifices, *your sacrifices*, shall not be forgotten – this nation was built on principals that must not be violated. And now, back to politics. Ours is a nation at war, on several fronts...some in far off foreign lands but also right here on Main Street USA - and politics is a part of the battlefield.

The political rhetoric will only ramp up in the coming months. The President's Job's Bill is a clear indication of this. Make no mistake; this is just the beginning to the 2012 Campaign Cycle. He has asked that you contact your congressman and Senator. I'll ask that you do the same, as he says, dust off the fax machine, send an email, or better yet, write a letter. It is clear he thinks Americans overwhelmingly support his bill. I say let's find out. I ask that you send a message, whether you are in support of the Job's Bill or against the Jobs Bill. You see, Washington needs to know where the people stand. They need to know if we want all, or a portion of the bill to pass, every bit as much as they need to know if we want the bill to be blocked. So yes, my message tonight is to get involved, talk to your friends, neighbors and family members. Study this bill, chase down the facts, determine your position – don't allow the media to influence your position – and then write your legislative representative in Washington.

Going back to the Code of Conduct - We must get involved in the political arena at all levels. For this is how we will guard our country and our way of life. This is how we will never surrender. This is how we will fight for freedom, be responsible for our actions and re-dedicate ourselves to the principals which make our country free. We *must* trust in God and in the United States of America.

God Bless and Semper Fi