



BY PETER GOETTLER

“
Working
to meet a
moment.
This
moment.
”

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Threat... and Opportunity

On my very first day at Cato, I fielded a question I could see coming a mile away: “What do you want to change?” I said I had no idea. I just got here. But I also said I was sure there were things we would change.

Not because anything was wrong at Cato. Over 15 years Cynthia and I made Cato the cornerstone of our philanthropy because we believed it was a great organization. But even great organizations can become greater. How to keep Cato getting better was a project we’d all work on together.

Because continuous improvement is something for which all of us as human beings must strive.

And there’s another reason. Our responsibility to you. When voluntary contributions fund your work and mission, it carries a profound commitment. A responsibility to achieve the best performance and most impact possible from those contributions.

Three years ago we put up a timeline at Cato HQ showing the advance of liberty over the sweep of human history. And we entitled that timeline “Better. Every. Day.” It was to remind us that while we sometimes despair that liberty may be in retreat, through the course of humanity freedom has been advancing.

But there was another meaning. That Cato was striving to be—Better. Every. Day. To more forcefully execute on our mission. To mount the best fight for liberty we can. And to fulfill our crucial responsibility to all of you.

And this is reflected in our strategic vision. Accountability for individual performance. Each policy area to have its own strategy and vision to generate the “products” that further our mission: ideas, influence, and impact. Investments in distribution—technology, content creation, and outreach—that spread our ideas further and to an audience that is broader each and every year. And innovations—like Project Sphere and other initiatives—that let us reach new audiences, including the unconverted and the young.

But as we’ve worked hard to lift our level of performance and impact, little did we know at the same time we were working to meet a moment. This moment.

For these are troubling times for our country and for liberty. And the threats are coming from all directions. Both sides are more willing than ever to use the power of the state to win elections... and to maintain their own power. And more willing to wield that power in

illegitimate ways to reward friends and punish enemies.

Our reckless fiscal and monetary policies go nearly unquestioned in the political arena. I’ve heard conservative leaders boast about their pandemic spending and the infrastructure blowout. And worse, a progressive leader recently reveled in the Biden administration’s accomplishments, gleefully summarizing them in three horrifying words: “four...trillion...dollars.” Progressives have always judged the wonders of free markets and capitalism by an impossible standard, measuring them only against a utopian ideal. But now many conservatives are also moving away from free markets and free enterprise as they give primacy to cultural issues and insist—wrongly, so wrongly—that markets have failed working people.

But with our beliefs in markets and free people perfectly intact, we’re prepared to meet this moment. A moment that’s downright frightening for our country, but absolutely galvanizing for Cato. For never have the stakes been higher for our mission, and never have we been better equipped to take up that mission. And it’s exhilarating that you’re with us. Cato’s partners have never been more generous, as they recognize the urgency of the moment... and strongly affirm the steps the Institute is taking to meet it.

This is the essence of both the threat and opportunity we face. The threat that the challenges to liberty are stronger than they’ve been, but the opportunity of knowing our ability to meet these challenges is also stronger. The threat that the challenges to liberty are coming today from all directions, but the opportunity of knowing that the exhausted middle majority is frustrated by both sides and wide open to rational alternatives like ours. The threat that public policy has gone haywire in so many ways, but the opportunity that more and more Americans can see that what’s being done is clearly not working. Which, of course, is the opportunity to fight for what does work: educational freedom, free enterprise, free expression, and more.

I can’t tell you how much your partnership means to us. I hope you feel how seriously we take our responsibility to you. To deliver the maximum of ideas...influence...and impact from the resources you entrust to us. And I hope you know how deeply grateful we are for your generosity... for your encouragement...and for your partnership.