



Remarks by Bob Knight  
Former mayor, city of Wichita

Americans All® Press Conference, November 6, 2003  
Wichita, Kansas

Thank you very much, Allan, for your introduction.

I want to take just a quick moment to tell you about several people. One is Allan Kullen, who just spoke. He's not from here; he's from Washington, D.C. He is a very successful businessman who has used his resources on behalf of others. He has personally financed an awful lot that's gone on with the People of America Foundation and Americans All® through his own private resources. And it is a rather staggering amount, at least in my world of finance. So, I think, not just those assembled here today, but children all over America, owe a real debt of gratitude to Allan Kullen. And he gets much of his inspiration from his beautiful wife, Diane, who came here with him to participate in today's event and whom I'd like to stand and be recognized.

There are so many ideas that are kind of swirling around. We live in a very complicated world, and it's not difficult at all to find subjects that divide us. And that's the way it ought to be. In our country, when people have different opinions as to how their part of the world ought to be proceeding, they have the freedom to discuss it, to debate it and even to argue about it. Yet, at the end of the day, we're supposed to reconcile. That's as it should be. There are so many subjects that intelligent people can have different perspectives on. We've all been shaped differently by life experiences. But the one thing that we should hold in common, that we should stand behind solidly as a people, whether it's locally, statewide, or nationally, is the significance of every human being. Every single human being counts. And, if we really believe that, from the bottom of our hearts, perhaps we would conduct our lives and our public affairs in a little different way than we do today.

The reason that I am both intrigued by and committed to this foundation is that they really believe, in their heart of hearts, that they can change America. And I really believe, in my heart of hearts, that it's worth pursuing. To dream great and exciting dreams about every child in America having equal opportunity ought to be more than just some trite political slogan. It ought to be something that occupies our time beyond just election years. It ought to be something that we think deeply about every day. This foundation is really setting out to transform America—to reconcile people who come from different parts of the world, who have different customs but share a common humanity. And, as diverse as we are, we need to celebrate that. Yet, at the end of the day, we have to find a path of uniting around our diversity. That's what America is all about.

There isn't any child in America that shouldn't take pride in what his or her forbearers brought to this country—not a single child. And yet so many go through their lives without even understanding it. They feel as though, somehow, there's very little value in their personal being. If they only understood what their mothers, fathers, grandfathers, grandmothers and even generations beyond had contributed, each would feel a true sense of authentic value. And that's what this is all about. It's teaching young children, in K–12, about what we have to rally around. And that's respect and equal opportunity for one another and making this a better place for everyone.

So my wife, Jane, who is with me this morning, and I, are very honored to be associated with this foundation. And, I, too, want to thank Mayor Mayans and all the other speakers, particularly the students here this morning, for their support. I don't want you to give up on us, those of us who are older, because in our heart of hearts, I know we all agree with you. And you are a real model for the rest of us.

I want to spend the rest of my life working with others to bring opportunity for every child and every citizen. I believe deeply, at the very bottom of my heart, that civil rights are worthy of our time and our attention, and that's my reason for saying yes to Allan Kullen's call.

So I want to thank all of you very much. You're all busy people. You're all important people. You have tremendous decisions to make every day. And the fact that you're here means a lot to me, personally. I can tell you, though, it means a lot more in terms of us being persuasive in locating the headquarters for Americans All® in Wichita, Kansas.

Thank you.



**Bob Knight**  
 Former Mayor,  
 Wichita, Kansas

**Bob Knight** has had 24 years of continuous public service, more than anyone in the history of Wichita, Kansas. Except for two years as secretary of commerce for the state, he has served on the Wichita City Council since 1979, and was elected mayor for seven terms.

He initiated and promoted *Wichita's Promise*, a community organization focusing on youth, and was active in launching several other youth programs. His *Project Freedom*, a campaign against drug and alcohol abuse within the community, was recognized nationwide and won numerous awards. Yet the *Campaign to Promote Racial Justice* is the reason he has earned a national reputation for championing social equity. Mr. Knight was the recipient of the 2000 Municipal Leader of the Year Award from *City-County Magazine*, the 2000 Local Elected Official of the Year Award from the National Association of Home Builders and the 2001 A. Price Woodward Brotherhood Award from the National Conference for Community Justice. His *Building Bridges*, a program that uses community dialogue to increase respect among people from different races, cultures and religions, received the 2001 Innovation Award from the National League of Cities.

In 1989 Mr. Knight was given the Financial Leadership Award from the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Under his leadership, the city of Wichita received several awards, including a blue ribbon for best practices in community development from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Webber Seavy Award for community policing. In 2003 Mr. Knight was the first recipient of the Gloria Hobson Nordin Social Equity Award in honor of his lifetime commitment to diversity and public service.

Among numerous other past affiliations, Mr. Knight served two terms on the Wichita State University Board of Trustees, was on the Southwestern College Board of Trustees and served on the state board of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He also was a founding board member of Habitat for Humanity-Wichita, Inc. Currently, he is a member of the Kansas Workforce Investment Partnership Council, the Salvation Army advisory board, and the board of directors of the Greater Wichita Area Sports Commission. He is chairman of the Wichita-Sedgwick County Long-Range Planning Task Force.

Mr. Knight has a bachelor's degree in political science from Wichita State University.