

# The THURMONT Statement

*Retornare Al Segno. Return to the Banner. Though the embattled host of the Right and the Light may sometimes be scattered on the battlefield, defeated and in retreat, the faithful respond to the urgent bugle call, and regroup beneath the banner. To illuminate the struggle, and provide light, and to identify our benighted opposition, we proclaim the following, subject to amendment on each anniversary of this date, a standard of right not subject to change based upon election or poll results of any year.*

## **We are for freedom, they are for coercion.**

We conservatives are for personal responsibility and autonomy enforced by self-restraint and community standards. They, the left, are for obligations and requirements imposed from without by unelected government bureaucrats.

We are for the ideals that make America exceptional. They wish to transform America into their own version of Utopia, which in reality is a nightmare society enforced by central command and control, based on values alien to the great American tradition.

We are for the ideals of individual and local freedom which inspired past generations to create an exceptional nation. They believe in creating individual and local dependencies.

We believe that our founders and the generations which followed created and maintained a system of ordered liberty while acknowledging the Supremacy of our Creator, resulting in a nation whose blessings have inspired the world's huddled masses yearning to breathe free. They believe that the United States should apologize for its affluence, throttle back its enterprise and redistribute its wealth to nations hostile to our values.

We acknowledge the role of nature's God as we seek to perfect our behavior to serve His purpose for each of us personally and that eternal life in heaven is the ultimate reward. They believe that government can perfect man and aim to punish with hell on earth, those of us who oppose them.

We are for health care decisions being made by the patient with the counsel of their doctor, using the insurance they chose to pay for in a free market. They are for having distant government bureaucrats make health care decisions that are binding and irreversible, and in phasing private insurance completely out of existence.

We think the American people are smart enough to choose our own cars and own hierarchy of values. They think Americans can't be trusted with automotive autonomy because our values aren't in sync with saving the planet.

We believe government threatens the right to keep and bear arms and our free exercise of religion. They believe government should take away our firearms, prohibit open displays of worship and silence respectful, public reference to the Supreme Being.

We believe that individual states ought to decide whether to allow responsible and safe energy production off their coasts, and that domestic fossil-fuels development is a responsible necessity in our modern world. They believe the federal government should have the power to stop the states' development of alternative energy sources, impose punitive energy taxes on consumers, and force Americans to sacrifice energy and economic development for the supposed good of the planet.

We believe that the Constitution is the most effective tool in human history for balancing freedom and order and perpetuating

itself if it is properly safeguarded. They believe in a living Constitution which will mean whatever they say it means, if they even read it or refer to its provisions.

We believe in the system of checks and balances devised by the founders. They believe that change you can believe in means that what they call gridlock must be overcome and opponents demonized.

We believe in healthy debate in a free society where our citizens can measure the pros and cons of proposals being considered in a deliberative fashion. They believe that robust debate means destroying the reputation and criminalizing the actions of those who would oppose them and ramming through new taxes and new powers for government with little debate and even less deliberation.

We believe that the productive ingenuity of the American people harnessed in a freedom system that rewards accomplishment can best create growth and happiness for the greatest number. They believe that abundance and materialism should be punished, appetites should be curbed and surplus should be seized and redistributed according to need.

We believe that lowering taxes also inspire increases in production and that a rising tide does lift all ships. They believe that higher taxes always pay for more human progress.

We believe that limited government and spending restraint is recommended not only because of the salutary effect on the gross domestic product of the nation but because it is morally right. They believe that government must be increased in size and power to enforce fairness, and that less money and power for the individual citizen is what is morally right.

We believe that government is best which intrudes least. They believe that government is best which asserts itself in our affairs most.

We believe in equality of opportunity and in the eyes of the law, a level playing field for all. They believe in equality of result achieved, implicitly, at the point of a gun to reduce the property of those who have by taking it to give to those who have not.

We believe that our rights come from God, and therefore they are inalienable, and that those rights are antecedent to a limited state whose job it is not to grant rights but to help secure those rights already existent. They believe that the state itself grants rights, or withdraws such a grant of rights, as the state itself sees fit.

We believe in ordered liberty serving a moral and righteous purpose according to the Intelligent Design of the Creator of the Universe. They believe in unchecked, undisciplined, libertinism which serves no purpose, accomplishes no worthy goal and is an abject failure by any measure. We believe in a moral order rooted in God's glory and in the wisdom of the ages. They believe in a moral (dis)order that is man-made, post-modern, and not reliant on – and sometimes hostile to the very notion of a Supreme Being.

We believe that the traditional family is the natural, essential building block of a free society. They believe that the traditional family is an antiquated, restrictive construct that sometimes is a stumbling block to the enlightened aims of the state's elite. We believe both parents are, and should be, the best educators of our children. They believe parents can't be trusted even to choose which schools their children attend and that parents should not be allowed to interfere with how they indoctrinate our children in their school system. We wish to teach the young, right reason and purpose. They wish to teach education and socializing skills to better listen to the dictates of their authority.

We believe that in our freedom system the government should fear the people, and the police are under the law. They believe that the police and the government are the law and both should be feared by the people.

We are for personal choice for all of God's children, including unborn. They have a different and deadly definition of "choice," which isn't a choice at all for those terminated with a silent scream.

We wish to protect the defenseless. They never, ever acknowledge the Creator's words in His book, for whom he reserves the greatest punishment: he who would harm the little children.

We think the principle of subsidiarity makes sense – that choices and decisions are best handled at the most local level possible such as state, county, town, neighborhood and family. They prefer centralization of all decisions possible, where efficiency is greater when it is in their hands instead, and that local choice, liberty, and individual decision-making must yield to the mandate of them, the enlightened and wise, supreme central planners.

We believe that the United States is a moral actor on the world stage, and that American enlightened self-interest serves the greater cause of humanity. They believe that the United States is an immoral colossus whose appetites must be restrained, and that American interests are inimical to the human dignity of oppressed peoples.

We believe peace and safety are achieved through preparation and strength. They believe peace is achieved through disarming and expressing good intentions, and trust of others who might harm us.

We believe our enemies are best identified by the combination of their words and above all by their actions. They believe our enemies' words are misunderstood, their actions should be overlooked, and their only condemnation is for past actions of the United States, never against those who strike at our beliefs, hurt our allies and kill our people.

We believe that Communist states and insurgencies always will be adversaries to all that Americans hold dear, and that they must be opposed with a resolute will and sound judgment. We likewise believe that terrorists, whether jihadist or otherwise, are intrinsically evil and that they must be strenuously opposed at every turn. They believe Communist states and insurgencies are just another form of societal organization, and that terrorism can be understood as a merely unfortunate response to the root causes of poverty or Western hegemony. They therefore believe that the best Western policy regarding both Communists and terrorists is to make more persuasive appeals to reason.

We bid welcome to newcomers to America, and to light their way to our shores we say, "I lift my lamp beside the golden door." We believe that those who come to America as immigrants planning to assimilate by learning our language and adopting our culture are a bedrock foundation who have helped make America great, but we would deny entrance to those who refuse, or who attempt to come here illegally. They believe it is the greatest insult to suggest that newcomers learn English and be proud of their heritage as a part of their past not their future, and they would grant amnesty and even citizenship to those who break our laws to enter our country.

We welcome as dear friends and allies, all people, of all nationalities, languages, religions and beliefs who cherish and are willing to defend against all enemies, foreign and domestic, the ideals of ordered liberty, as expressed in the Constitution of the United States. We especially appreciate the friendship, citizenship and leadership of peoples who have emerged from the yokes of Communism or other forms of tyranny. The American

Left, though, considers most formerly captive nations to be insufficiently progressive, or even reactionary, in their fierce embrace of Western values and only salutes those immigrants who refuse to embrace the American tradition, who reject the tradition of assimilation, of One Nation, Under God, indivisible.

We are proud to be Americans, because we know we are free. They are embarrassed by American prosperity and shun all talk of freedom. We feel blessed. They express only guilt. We think human life is a gift from God. They think human life and the quality of life are decisions for the legislature and the bureaucrats hired by our government.

We are right. They are oh so wrong.

We hold these truths to be self evident, and are proud to hold up America as the light of the world, and bequeath to our children, God's and our American founders' gift of freedom.

We act with resolute confidence in believing that the story of the ages will be that when they tried to socialize the very air we breathe, when they criticized, condemned and even killed our people, when they tried to destroy our freedom system, we put forth the greatest resistance that the world has ever known. For our enemies, foreign and domestic, are wrong, their vision of the future is dark, the outcome of their labor is evil, and their control of our government, or any government on earth, threatens and even dooms freedom, for us and our posterity.

We acknowledge that our cause has suffered defeats and will suffer more but we will never be discouraged and we will never slacken in our resolve but will always ride to the sound of the guns with renewed energy, hearing that bugle cry, *Retornare Al Segno*. Our cause is right and we must unite, as God gives us the sight.

We therefore express these beliefs and pledge our lives, our honor and our funds, with full determination, resolution and an urgent fury, to remove from our government and any influence on our government, these our opponents described herein who threaten the future of freedom in America and the world; and we will instead empower, through constitutional means, new officeholders to take their place, who will also hold these truths to be self evident, who will govern their conduct accordingly.

As adopted in conference, at Thurmont, Maryland, on Veterans Day, November 11, 2009, and to be hereinafter referred to as The THURMONT Statement. Latest revision scheduled for 11/11/11.

*\*Originally an article By Quin Hillyer. Later revised, expanded & co-authored with a former Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) alumni chairman and approved by the Committee for the Thurmont Statement, advised by alumni of YAF, and adopted at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Freedom Leadership Conference.*

<http://FreedomLeadershipConference.org>

*Quin Hillyer, the author of the original article from which this statement is derived & co-author of this THURMONT Statement, is a senior editorial writer at the Washington Times & senior editor of The American Spectator. An Alumnus of Young Americans for Freedom, his father, Haywood Hillyer, III was at the founding conference of YAF where The Sharon Statement was adopted, 1960. He read this Statement as the Keynote Speaker at the Freedom Leadership Conference where it was adopted as The THURMONT Statement.*

*With Hillyer's article as the starting point, a former YAF Alumni Chairman and other alumni of 30 or more years standing then edited (amplified and expanded) the original article into this Statement, which since its original adoption on November 11, 2009, has been subjected to annual editing and adoption at each annual Freedom Leadership Conference, which has been hosted and/or co-sponsored by a variety of conservative cause non-profit organizations, always concluding with the formal reading of this statement. The first reading was done by Quin Hillyer in 2009 in Thurmont, MD.*

<http://THURMONTstatement.org>

*To comment or make suggestions: Editor@THURMONTstatement.org.*