

“We the People” Competition for Districts 1, 3, and 5
Lake Oswego High School
January 11, 2011

Thank you to the Classroom Law Project, Susan Marcus, and Marilyn Cover for inviting me to join you tonight, and to Lake Oswego High for hosting this event.

And congratulations to all the students who participated in this competition. You are all **winners** in my book.

Last year, I spent a few minutes talking about the value of public service. Tonight, I'd like to talk to you about what I **learned** during my first term in office. And how those **lessons relate** to this competition.

I was elected to fill a vacancy on the Portland City Council in May of 2008, and took office in June of 2008.

My first 2 ½ years in office was marked by the worst recession in a generation, a political scandal in City Hall, and the challenge of maintaining services for our most vulnerable residents while cutting budgets.

But nothing compares to my experience at the end of my first term.

On Friday, November 26, in my capacity as Parks Commissioner, I hosted 20,000 people at a tree lighting ceremony at Pioneer Courthouse Square.

It was a festive evening, highlighted by a performance by Pink Martini.

None of us knew then—and I only learned later—that a young man was allegedly planning to detonate a powerful bomb—designed to devastate the **heart** of our city.

While coordinated law enforcement work guaranteed that the bomb could not be detonated, the event triggered an **explosive debate** in our community as old as the founding of the Republic.

Simply stated: how do we balance our duty to maintain national security while protecting the constitutional liberties of our citizens?

The attempted bombing triggered deeply held beliefs across the political spectrum. **Fear** of terrorism. **Fear** of government overreaching into our private lives. **Fear** of differences based on religion and national origin.

We have been here many times before during our nation's history.

From the Alien and Sedition Act under John Adams to the Japanese Internment under Franklin Roosevelt, balancing fear and security have driven great constitutional arguments and often resulted in acts of great injustice.

In the charged aftermath of the attempted bombing, one thing was **clear** to me.

We could not have a rational discussion until we drained some of the emotion out of the debate.

Each of you understands what I am talking about. The experience of acting on emotion or the passion of the moment—and, frankly, the satisfaction that often brings.

I too had a very strong, visceral reaction to what happened.

As the host of the tree-lighting ceremony, I put my friends and family in harm's way—and was angry and frustrated the next day as law enforcement briefed me on what happened.

But I quickly understood that what we needed was not a response based on the **passions** of the moment—but a thoughtful and deliberate discussion about how to **maintain public safety in an age of global terror**.

Over the next few months, we will debate whether the City should rejoin the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

I was not on the City Council in 2005 when Portland first reconsidered its membership in the Joint Terrorism Task Force—and have the advantage of approaching this issue from a **fresh perspective**.

One of the questions we will ask is whether Portland police officers can or should operate as part of a federal team with limited oversight by the elected members of Portland City Council.

We have scheduled briefings from law enforcement, civil libertarians and citizens about the legal, constitutional and historical issues.

My job is to listen to the many voices, to study the issues, and to follow my conscience.

Just as you have done so skillfully tonight, I will consider the meaning of the applicable constitutional texts, review state and federal law, and look to our history as a guide.

This is the essence of being a citizen in a constitutional democracy. And this is what **each of you** experienced through the We the People Program.

“We the People”, you and I, have the opportunity, and the duty, to breathe new life into a document over 200 years old – adding **our voice** to this great and continuing debate.

After judging tonight’s competition, I am confident we are in good hands. **Good luck** to each of you.

And as you leave this school, please don’t forget to **thank** the parent, and teacher, the volunteer supporter and the coach who supported you during this program.

They are great role models as you begin **your civic journey**.

Thank you.