Gov. Perry Encourages Texas Boy Scouts to Persevere

Address annual “Report to State” gathering at the Capitol

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Saturday, February 06, 2010

Thank you, Chase [Zreet, Eagle Scout, Troop 405, Georgetown, TX] and congratulations for the fine example you’re setting for all the Scouts in attendance here today.

The Report to State is like homecoming to me, and I am proud to be here with my Scouting brothers.

In the course of my life, I have joined many groups, and been shaped by their values, but none more so than the Boy Scouts of America.

Scouting introduced me to some of the most important and influential people in my life, showed a young farm kid from West Texas that there was a whole wide world out there to explore, and gave me the confidence to explore it.

I remember the Scouting Jamboree of 1964 like it was yesterday, when my troop traveled to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and also visited our nation’s capital, which is about a universe away from Paint Creek, Texas.

For me, seeing the monuments to our founding fathers, meeting our Congressman, and hearing a speech by the President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson in those days, were a little overwhelming…and definitely life-changing.

Those experiences linger with me today, but the effect that Scouting has had on me is much more profound…than a collection of cherished memories.

Directly or indirectly, Scouting guided me to Texas A&M, led me into the military, taught me the value of public service, and challenged me to dedicate my entire life to something...
Scouting has made me the man I am today.

I am one of many who can claim that influence, because no other organization has salvaged more lives, built more confidence or created more leaders, than the Boy Scouts of America.

The principles laid out in the Scout Law are more than just words, they are more than just an oath, they are the building blocks of a life well-lived.

_Trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent._ One could merit no finer epitaph.

Those twelve qualities are a roadmap to personal integrity, a guide to inner peace, the ingredients of a joy that makes it easier to get up in the morning, and easier to go to sleep at night. These qualities are not always easy to model, but they are infinitely worth the effort.

For those who have the courage to follow that path, and your presence here this morning is evidence that you do, the rewards are vast. The rewards can be found in a pure soul, one capable of the sort of true joy that the jaded and cynical can only imagine.

Unfortunately, it’s all too easy to become jaded and cynical these days, even at a young age. It seems like every day we hear about a public figure, a star athlete, a movie star, or a politician losing their way.

There's nothing particularly different or special about public figures, we just hear about their missteps on the news, or read about them in tabloids.

Every day, people from all walks of life make bad decisions, mistakes that cost them and their loved ones dearly, errors that shatter families and leave scars that last a lifetime.

The common thread to all of these people, famous or otherwise, is that they have lost sight of what’s truly important. We know what’s truly important, we are aware of the appropriate standard, because we’re reminded by the Scout law.

_Are you…trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent?_

Living by these principles takes dedication, and it takes an element that is common, but seemingly always in short supply: Courage.

You can find examples of courage everywhere, like in the Killeen police officers who ran toward the sound of gunfire when a gunman opened fire at Ft. Hood. We see courage in the Scouts helping the people of Haiti dig out from under tons of rubble, or tending to their critically-wounded brothers in the wake of an Iowa tornado.

Sometimes, though, the toughest courage to muster is the quietest courage, the courage to defend your values when others would tear them down, the courage to remain loyal to a true friend or a trusted ideal when everyone is filled with doubts about them, the courage to adhere to your faith when critics treat it with scorn.

Without the courage behind them, these principles lose their power, and quickly become nothing but words, and a reminder of opportunity lost. Without them, the easy path becomes more alluring, people abandon the concept of respect for those around them, and, more significantly, for themselves.

Without such values, morality becomes an abstract concept, and the line between right and wrong takes on shades of gray. It is in that gray area that people lose their way.
For far too long, our society has shied away from conceding there are absolute "rights" and absolute "wrongs." For far too long, our society has gone along with the misguided idea that living by a moral code is somehow "intolerant."

In return, our society has been saddled with teen pregnancies, broken homes, and a vicious cycle of crime, that sees young men joining their fathers in jail.

That’s why I spend so much time supporting and promoting Scouting, that’s why I take every opportunity to tell people of the profound and lasting good this organization creates. That’s why one of the proudest moments of my life was when my son, Griffin, attained his Eagle.

It’s a pride more and more people, particularly in Central Texas, are getting to experience. In 2009, more Scouts in this area earned the rank of Eagle than ever before. That’s fantastic news for a 100-year-old organization.

It says that the spirit of Scouting, the strength of fellowship, the love for the outdoors, the sense of self-reliance, dedication and perseverance, are all alive and well.

In an era when so many people dismiss decent, wholesome organizations like the BSA, more people are realizing the values inherent in it, and mustering the courage to become a part of it.

To everyone here today, to every person associated with Scouting, I congratulate you for everything you've done to promote Scouting and the values it represents.

When it feels like the world is against you, remember to keep the courage of our convictions, remain loyal to your beliefs, and know that millions of like-minded Texans admire and support your commitment.

If that courage endures, and I’m certain it will, Texas Scouts will be celebrating even greater success one hundred years from now.

Thank you, God bless you and, through you, may He continue to bless the great state of Texas.