Please let me thank Dartmouth for the invitation to speak. Unfortunately, pneumonia has kept me from being with you.

Let me begin by saying I believe American democracy is at a tipping point. Much debated at the founding of our country was the difference between a Republic and a Democracy.

Benjamin Franklin is rumored to have responded to a lady who asked him, “What have you given us?” “A Republic, if you can keep it”, he said.

A Republic is government limited by laws forbidding it to abridge individual rights. A Democracy means Majority WANTS rule. This is what Tocqueville was talking about when he worried over “the tyranny of the majority.”

It’s instructional to notice Franklin said Republic…not a Democracy.

Here in the US, our Republic has practiced Democracy, living out the tensions between Liberty and Popular Sovereignty.

We demand liberty, but increasingly have exercised our votes to place people in power who promise more and more government control over our lives.

Democracy only works if there is a strong vein of selflessness incorporated as a part of the culture.

Right now in Washington every old and outmoded subsidy has a constituency fighting fiercely to save it, and pouring money into the campaign coffers of elected officials AT EVERY LEVEL OF THE GOVERNMENT.

Let me give you an example: Senior citizens once gave a higher than average share of their taxes to schools…Not now…Senior lobbys demand ever more and organizations such as the AARP spend large amounts of money in Washington to ensure they can answer their members when they are met with the demand, ”What’s in it for ME”.

Think about this: If Medicare and Medicaid spending continue to grow, coupled with retiring baby-boomer Social Security, these big 3 will go from the current 44% of all Federal government expenditures to 65% by 2030, while government revenues will cover only ½ of this known upcoming expense.

Who will pay for this? Where will the Federal Government get the money?

Every time a new tax is levied, individuals lose some personal power.

The more socialist the economy of a country is, the greater the power of the government over its citizens.

Current economic conditions appear to mandate a recapitalization of US banking. One might be a bit concerned about nationalization of the banking system in what some have called a mass bankruptcy.

Nationalization will come either by takeover as in the Fannie and Freddie debacle or through de facto takeover by rules and regulations.
The free market has worked. Selflessness within markets hasn’t.

In a financial crisis, the average person sells something of value, but what does the US have to sell…and where are the nations and people who will buy?

This is a global economic slowdown. China has almost stopped investing here. They no longer buy our bonds and treasuries. The Middle East funds and Sovereign Wealth Funds are focusing on their immediate economic needs. Other nations are attending matters at home.

40% of US households pay no income tax. With the current economic crisis, even fewer probably will pay. It’s worth everyone’s concern.

Do you wonder where the Federal government will get the money to pay for everything promised?

Democracy is a complicated business and America is a complicated society. In this time of crisis, questions can be raised. Paths once trod, can be abandoned.

For one brief shining moment, while I was in Congress, the nation had a surplus.

It was frittered away on new and bigger programs by delighted lawmakers who were able to DELIVER for their personal interest groups. There was little in the way of honestly thinking about what was good for the country.

Where is the selflessness required for a successful Democracy going to come from? A national culture of SAVING Federal tax dollars needs to be put in place. A NATIONAL CULTURE OF LIBERTY MUST BE MET WITH SELFLESS RESPONSIBILITY.

Have you noticed how many in public office haven’t even bothered to fully pay their taxes?

Word is already coming back from the troop increase in Afghanistan that the same mistakes in US Government spending are being made there as in Iraq, and there is no careful oversight of where all the money goes.

The people and papers howl when government cuts are made.

Mayor Bloomberg’s budget cuts police; ambulance, fire departments, child welfare, teachers and child care programs mostly because of labor costs. Businesses are sending to the unemployment lines thousands, because of labor costs.

Labor and Senior citizens costs are likely to be the most important economic challenges we face, yet major Labor Unions are currently spending a great deal of money running ads in some Senate districts demanding THEY GET THEIRS.

Our Democracy and Freedom and Our Way OF Life depend on our willingness to PAY FOR IT.

Are we willing to pay more and more in taxes, yielding our personal economies and freedoms to our Federal Government to cover the demands of all the special interest groups.

I am a Senior Citizen and my husband runs a Union shop, yet I am absolutely unwilling to cede to Washington the power of my personal economy without some guarantee it will bring a better, more free life.
WHAT ABOUT HOPE?

We are in trouble, but facts show that we have a chance to not only survive this challenge, but to come out better on the other side.

Who else can match America?

Russia is a country filled with drunks and poorly educated people – the only major country in the world where the AGE AT DEATH is going DOWN.

China has major internal problems, a vast and poorly educated population and a huge territory to administer.

The Middle East is dependent on a finite supply of oil.

Times are tough now, but we can and should stop merely responding to the situation by shoring up the status quo and start to use metrics we know will build not only the economy, but invest in a better future.

Federal policies need better oversight to produce efficiencies that bear fruit in the long term.

As a former math teacher, I am alarmed by the decreasing math proficiency in the US.

This nation must be encouraged to VALUE LEARNING and put its money where its PR is.

The Federal Government can stop enacting policies that grow the size of government.

We MUST train teachers to TEACH, and then encourage everyone to keep at learning. Years ago, people read books and magazines where thoughtful ideas were discussed and information gleaned often produced fertile ideas. Michael Dell and Bill Gates read printed material.

Educating people to understand the precious structures of a government that creates the freedom for individuals which allows them the opportunity to create the wealth that produces the economy to support a free way of life is our HOPE.

We can do it.