

# “Stand Up For Free Enterprise Capitalism: The American Dream”

Speech to a Community Service Organization

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## EXCERPT 1: SPEECH OPENING

Each year, our National Park Service issues a “Top 10 List” of the Most Visited National Parks.

You can probably guess which ones are the most popular.

- Great Smoky Mountains and Grand Canyon.
- Rocky Mountain and Yosemite.
- Yellowstone and Zion.
- Olympic and Grand Teton.
- Acadia in Maine.
- And my all-time favorite – Glacier in Montana – because it’s so remote, and so untouched.

For as long as I can remember, our family has spent many vacations visiting the parks, monuments, military sites and historic places that make up America’s National Park System.

Last year, 307 million people visited the parks! And I’m betting we’ll break another record this year on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our National Park Service.

All year long, America has been celebrating our National Park System. That includes paying tribute to the people who made it possible. People like John D. Rockefeller Jr.

Now most of us know the Rockefellers as free enterprise capitalists who earned billions in the oil industry. But John Jr. was famous for something else.

You may not know it, but he bought and donated land for some of today's most popular National Parks: Great Smoky Mountains. Yosemite. Grand Teton. And Acadia.

He even helped fund Yellowstone – and many others.

If it weren't for a free enterprise capitalist like Rockefeller, cities might have sprung up in place of National Parks! And our treasured, national spaces may have become hidden, private places.

But instead, our National Parks were preserved for all of us to enjoy.

One writer put it this way:

*“The National Park System is a great example of philanthropy .... Without a rich industrial titan ... the expansion and preservation of our national parks may not have occurred. Perhaps we should not only celebrate the National Park System, but we should also celebrate capitalism.”*

**I loved hearing this good news story about Rockefeller's impact on our National Park Service, and the invitation for America to celebrate capitalism.**

As Rotary Club members in America, part of our purpose is to educate ourselves about topics of national importance, and then come together to create positive, lasting change.

That's why I really appreciated when Amy invited me to speak to you today about what's happening to free enterprise capitalism in America, and what we can do about it.

## **EXCERPT 2: SPEECH CLOSING**

**Last April, Jeff Immelt, the chairman and CEO of General Electric, took a bold stand for free enterprise capitalism in The Washington Post.**

He wrote:

*“GE has been in business for 124 years ...*

*“We take risks, invest, innovate and produce in ways that today sustain 125,000 U.S. jobs. ...*

*“We’re in the business of building real things and generating real growth for a nation that needs it now more than ever.”*

**By standing up for free enterprise capitalism, Jeff is inviting all of us to join him in celebrating free enterprise capitalism.**

I admire Jeff, a second-generation GE employee who grew up right down the road in Cincinnati.

Back in 1933, General Electric became one of the first tenants at Rockefeller Center in New York, which John Jr. built long after he’d begun his generous work to preserve our National Parks.

Today, inscribed on a tablet facing Rockefeller Center, is John Jr.’s famous life principle, which reads:

*“I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty.”*

This, I believe, is a fitting principle for every free enterprise capitalist today.

I also believe that principle inspired Rockefeller to support and defend our National Parks, just as it should inspire all of us to support and defend our right to pursue happiness – to earn our own success! – given to us by our Founders.

That's because free enterprise capitalism IS the American Dream – our national Spirit of Opportunity! – and a GIFT all of us must work to protect.

Every chance we get.

Thank you.