

Governor Mike Pence  
2014 NRA-ILA Leadership Forum Remarks  
As Prepared for Delivery  
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It gives me great pleasure to welcome the 2014 NRA National Convention to the great state of Indiana!

You have come to the Heart of the Heartland and the Crossroads of America, the 19<sup>th</sup> Star in old Glory.

Home to the motorsports capital of the world...Indy 500 and the Brickyard 400, the amateur sports capital of the world... home court of Hoosier hospitality high school basketball and the NCAA, the Indianapolis Colts, and the future NBA World champion Indiana Pacers!

And just in case you like the outdoors, you've come to the right state. For hunting, fishing, camping, hiking and trail riding, Indiana is the place to be.

The Indiana State Park System was created in 1916 as a Centennial gift to the citizens of Indiana. There was a national movement at that time to protect special places all across the country. The National Park Service was created in the same year. Our Indiana State Parks consist of 32 total properties, including 24 parks and 8 reservoirs. Our total acreage is 171,400. Our annual visitation is estimated at 16 million visitors per year.

Our Indiana State Park Inns system ranks first in the nation in occupancy rate when compared to the other lodging systems around the country.

In 2006, Indiana became one of the first state park systems in the country to allow concealed carry of handguns in the parks. Several years later the NPS followed our lead.

We also have many shooting ranges in the DNR system, including three high end ranges.

From the dunes up north along Lake Michigan, to the Hoosier National Forest to our south, and down on the Ohio River, our parks are great places to hunt and fish, hike and bike all over this beautiful frontier. We invite you to join us if you have a few extra days here, or come back soon!

On behalf of the good people of Indiana, including more than 100,000 NRA members, we are grateful you chose the Hoosier state and proud to have so many freedom-loving Americans in our capital city.

My wife is especially grateful that you brought Tom Selleck to Indiana.

Join me in welcoming the First Lady of Indiana Karen Pence to this opening ceremony.

When I met her, she had a handgun and a motorcycle—it was love at first sight.

The truth is Indiana is always a good decision because Indiana is a state that works.

Why do we unabashedly paper our city – and cities in neighboring states like Illinois or faraway states like New York – with posters and signs telling everyone that?

It's because it's true.

Here in Indiana, we have the lowest unemployment rate in the Midwest, and we have one of the fastest-growing labor forces in the country.

Our schoolchildren improved their math and reading skills at the 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest rate in the nation, and Indiana has the fastest-growing school choice program in America. And we will soon make career and vocational education a priority in every high school in this state.

Indiana is a state that works because in Indiana, we don't just talk about freedom. We live it. We breathe it. And we keep freedom at the center of who we are. It is what makes our state a success.

It's been that way from our earliest days.

Indiana has been a place of rugged individualism – men and women who believed in freedom and had the strength to brave the often harsh elements of the Midwest to make a life for themselves.

Among those forbearers was the family of Abraham Lincoln. When he was 9 years old in 1816, his father moved the family to Spencer County, Indiana. Lincoln spent 14 formative years in southern Indiana. It was here that Lincoln was introduced to the power of books and concepts of freedom, justice, and the law.

President Lincoln described his home as “a wild region, with many bears and wild animals in the woods.” It was here that Lincoln learned the values that would guide his life and service and lead our nation through the fiery trial of the Civil War.

As we like to say, “Lincoln made Illinois, but Indiana made Lincoln.”

We Hoosiers also make freedom the bedrock of policies, government, and our way of life.

And so here in Indiana we have a habit of not taking our freedom for granted. We work hard to preserve it in all we do.

We believe in freedom from debt, which is why we work hard to balance our budget and maintain reserves of \$2 billion – no doubt an important factor in making us just 1 of 11 states with a AAA credit rating from all three ratings agencies.

We believe in free enterprise, the freedom to keep more of what you earn. Here in Indiana, we will soon have the lowest taxes in the Midwest, and we have tax cuts scheduled every year through 2021 including a 5 percent cut to the personal income tax, lowering our corporate tax rate to 4.9 percent—making Indiana's the third lowest in the nation— and ending death taxes once and for all. We also cut new regulations by 55 percent last year to make it easier to start a business, to make a living, and to provide for our kids.

We believe in the freedom to run our schools the Indiana way without unnecessary federal intrusion. Here in the Hoosier state, we believe education is a state and local function, and decisions about standards and curriculum and schools should be made by the parents and communities that depend upon them.

As a freedom-loving people, we cherish all the freedoms enshrined in the Bill of Rights—freedom of speech, freedom of religion and the freedom of law-abiding citizens to keep and bear arms.

You see, here in Indiana, we know that when ordinary people are freed from the heavy hand of government to live their lives, follow their own paths, and dream their own dreams, they do extraordinary things.

You – all of you – are the champions of liberty that our nation so desperately needs.

You and tens of millions like you have defended limited government, personal responsibility, and liberty against the forces of expansive and paternalistic government, and against the efforts of those who want to regulate us into the dull uniformity of progressives' dreams.

Nowhere is the ongoing struggle for freedom more visible than when it occurs over the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment. We all know that firearms in the hands of law-abiding citizens don't threaten our families. They protect our families. Firearms in the hands of law-abiding citizens don't cause crime—they help in the fight against crime. They have always been an essential component of our most basic liberties.

Freedom is on the march because freedom-loving Americans like you are rising up, and I commend you for your stand.

But, as I close, allow me to encourage you to consider the importance of state-based reform and federalism in our struggle to renew this nation.

Some of you know I served 12 years in the Congress before being elected Governor of the great state of Indiana.

And I often say, if I only had twelve years left to live, I'd want to live it as a member of Congress—because that was the longest 12 years of my life.

The truth is, while Indiana and many other Republican-led states are working, Washington, D.C. is not only broke, it's broken.

The longer I serve as Governor of this great state, the more convinced I am that the cure for what ails this country will come more from our nation's state capitals than it ever will from our nation's capital.

We must never relent in our efforts to renew the national government.

But with equal vigor, redouble our efforts to advance freedom and American ideals in every state in the land.

Despite what Washington, D.C. may think, our state governments are not territorial outposts of the federal government.

The states are the wellspring of the American experiment. As Ronald Reagan said, "It's important to remember that the states created the federal government; the federal government didn't create the states."

It will not be enough for renewed majorities in Washington, D.C. to simply cut government spending. We must demand that the next generation of leaders permanently reduce the size and scope of the federal government by restoring to the states and to the people those resources and responsibilities that are rightfully theirs under the Constitution of the United States.

Defending freedom – in our states, schools, homes and businesses – is never easy. And at times, it seems that our success doesn't match the scope of the energy and resources we have to expend in our fight to preserve freedom in America.

But it has always been so.

As Thomas Paine wrote, "We have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its good, and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated."

So we are encouraged. And remember, our defense of liberty is a defense of our homes, our families, our communities. It is a defense of our children, born and unborn.

To every freedom-loving American in this place and to all those card-carrying members of the NRA across the land, we say, stay in the fight.

Hold the banner of freedom high.

Reaffirm the practice of principles of the American founding at every level, especially the states.

We must "not become weary in doing good; for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

In due time, your labors in freedom's vineyards will prevail.

Because where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So freedom always wins.

Thank you for the honor of addressing the 2014 NRA national convention.

God bless you all, and welcome to Indiana.