

Text of Andy Billig's remarks at his Campaign Kick-Off Event November 12, 2009

Over the past couple of weeks, I have received so many supportive comments from many of you, and from friends all over the country, and I am grateful for all of that support. One comment came from a high school friend, Karen. She wrote, "Andy, look at you....you're all grown up!" In a conversation with another friend recently I was referred to as a politician....I had to look around the room before I realized they were talking about me.

I don't want to fit into any pre-conceived notion of what a grown-up or a politician is supposed to be. As citizens, we deserve representatives who think independently and thoroughly and who truly represent us.

The first political campaign that I ever contributed money to was John Roskelley's run for county commissioner. John and I didn't always agree, but he always listened, and then formed his opinion, consistent with his values. John, you're a great example to me and I am honored that you are here tonight.

I developed my core values as a young child growing up in Washington, DC. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech in my city, on the mall, a spot my family often visited and enjoyed. Abraham Lincoln's memorial was always my favorite. The inscription over the entrance to the Supreme Court building impressed me whenever we drove by - "Equal justice under the law." I read the U.S. constitution in a book, but I would also go visit the actual document at the National Archives. Even at an early age, I felt I understood the values of our constitution and those advanced by Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Those values - equality, justice, freedom, responsibility and opportunity for all -shaped my philosophy while I was in high school and college.

And, those values continued to guide me when I moved to Spokane 17 years ago. I became a big brother and a volunteer for the Institute for Action Against Hate. I am now a board member of the YMCA, a member of the City of Spokane Human Services Advisory Board and a volunteer youth sports coach (and, I'm very pleased to see at least Five of the Mighty Pickles here tonight).

Those values are a part of how we run our business - the Spokane Indians- we are creating career opportunities, we put out a product that is wholesome, family-friendly, and enriches the community, and I am proud that we were the first, and unfortunately still the only, Indian-named professional sports team in the country to work with a local tribe to create a logo that is just, respectful and a source of pride for all members of our community.

While my values have been consistent, my view of the world changed significantly nine years ago...on January 26, 2000. That is the day Isabella was born. At 10:39 in the morning to be exact. And, that afternoon I had to stop by our house to pick some things for the night at the hospital. We lived right on the Spokane river at the time and I remember standing on the bank of the river on that bright winter afternoon and thinking about my daughter and her future....and I felt a shift in my outlook....I needed a broader vision. And, at that moment, I became committed to not only making this an even better community to live in now, but also for future generations.

And, that future must include an educational system that is excellent and equal. Right now we are lucky to have a public school system that is strong in so many ways, but it's not equal when almost forty percent of our students, a disproportionate share of them children of poverty, drop out of school.

That future must include a complete transportation system that is sustainable, responsible and efficient.

That future must include a healthy Spokane river and an aquifer beneath it that is safe and plentiful.

That future must include a health care and wellness system that is affordable, accessible and provides the opportunity of coverage to everyone.

That future must include a society that values equality and social justice.

And, that future must include a robust and prosperous local economy that provides living wage jobs and allows citizens to work with dignity and support their families.

That's the future I feel responsible to deliver to my daughter and to your sons and daughters. That's the future that I will work to secure when I am your state representative.

And, that is why, tonight - in front of so many friends and family - it gives me a great sense of purpose, and honor, to declare....I am a candidate for state representative from the third district of this great State of Washington.

As some of you know, I was fortunate enough to complete an Ironman triathlon a few years ago. During the training for the Ironman, which was grueling at times, I would get through it by visualizing the finish line on race-day....and, then on the day of the race, after swimming 2.4 miles, riding my bike 112 miles and running a marathon, I rounded the last corner onto Sherman avenue....and the crowd cheered. A block from the finish, Bella came running out from the curb to join me and I crossed the finish line holding her hand and with

a huge smile on my face as the announcer said, "you're an Ironman".....it was just as I had visualized in my training.

I have already started using that same technique during this campaign...I visualize election night next November and, it looks just like this....surrounded by friends, celebrating, excited about the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead.

But to arrive there on election night, and to make it to Olympia so I can get to work for our community, I need your help. I need you to talk with your friends about our message, I'll need volunteers, I need some financial support, moral support and, of course, I need your vote.

Thank you for helping me to start this journey. I am grateful for your presence here tonight and I look forward to continuing the journey with you.