

## REMARKS TO THE FORT SMITH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

On behalf of the U.S. Marshals Museum Foundation and the U.S. Marshals Museum Boards of Directors, thank you for allowing us to make this presentation. Our only request is that you allow voters the opportunity to vote on a temporary, 9 month, one penny sales tax, to complete the U.S. Marshals Museum, managed in every respect by private citizens of the city. Details are in the materials presented to you in the agenda and made public to the citizens of the community.

I wish to thank the donors who, despite difficult economic times, have allowed us to raise over \$35 million, including land. Because of our donors' generosity, we have begun construction of the building, including the Samuel M. Sicard Hall of Honor. Our educational programming over the past eight years has focused on the Constitution, the Rule of Law, and law enforcement. We have showcased the historic role played by Fort Smith and the U.S. Marshals in the narrative of freedom rooted in the Constitution and the Judiciary Act of 1789.

When Fort Smith was competing against Hollywood, Staunton, VA and others to secure the Museum for Fort Smith, this community rose up with a single voice to say "Bring it Home" to Fort Smith. On a cold, November day in 2006, a standing room only crowd over 1,000 gathered at noon at the Holiday Inn to greet the Marshals Service selection committee, complete with a marching band and

chants of “Bring It Home.” During a lull in the program, Paul Rainwater, the MC, spontaneously asked that if anyone had ancestors who were Marshals, to take the microphone and tell their stories. What followed was a remarkable succession of stories of Deputy Marshals and even outlaws from the storied history of the Western District of Arkansas. Before the end of Judge Parker’s judgeship, more marshals were killed in the line of duty out of the Western District of Arkansas than any other district in the country. That remains the case to this day. Our city’s frontier history and its deep and bloody connection to the U.S. Marshals Service is in our DNA. How could this Museum be anyplace other than Fort Smith?

Just after the New Year, 2007, the Director of the USMS, John Clark, answered that question—the U.S. Marshals Museum was coming home.

For the next two plus years, a citizen-conceived and executed effort began, organizing two 501(c)(3) non-profit corporations, populating them, selecting architects, creating a concept design, and much more. Fundraising began in earnest in late 2009 and early 2010, in the midst of the worst economy in 80 years. These efforts have raised over \$35 million, including land. We have reached the point that we cannot predict with certainty when we will reach our goal, complete our goal, and for the community to begin receiving the full benefits of the Museum.

Efforts made by people in this community have made the difference. But it is the future that beckons us to finish the project, with the help of the community, to honor the fallen, to teach the Constitution, to attract hundreds of thousands of visitors to our city, and to spur downtown revitalization and riverfront development.

The challenges facing Fort Smith threaten to strangle our community unless we all step forward with vision and true grit. The world around us is not static. Our growth to the east is vital to our economic future. A successful city, however, must have a thriving downtown instead of empty buildings. Again, citizen-led efforts now in progress in and around downtown confirm study after study that show that we value our downtown, our riverfront, and our unique heritage, unique in all of America. The Marshals Museum will build on the momentum of other citizen-led efforts. It will be a game-changer as have been Museums in Bentonville and Little Rock.

The Museum has already brought to Fort Smith an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court and, a Congressman and former prosecutor, who shared their beliefs in the Constitution, the Rule of Law, and Law Enforcement, with almost 3,000 citizens, including 1100 students. Our programming has reached out to 24 states and nearly 500 classrooms. Congress passed legislation that resulted in Fort Smith and the U.S. Marshals Service being honored by United States Mint

commemorative coins. The Marshals, the City, and the Museum have been featured in True West Magazine and the American Rifleman with a 2,000,000 circulation across the nation. Our historic relationship with the Five Civilized Tribes has received coast-to-coast press coverage.

The United States Marshals Museum is a once in a lifetime chance for Fort Smith to Bring Home a Museum that combines our past with our future, educates our national citizenry of the importance of the Constitution, the Rule of Law and Law Enforcement, and will spur downtown and riverfront development. It will be a tribute to the community's frontier spirit. Donors who have outstanding pledges will look to see if the community will continue to support the Museum.

In this year of our city's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we are not only celebrating our history and our heritage, but we are also writing our history for generations to come. We are respectfully asking the citizens of Fort Smith to help finish the job of bringing the Museum home. We ask you, our City Board, to let democracy work and give them the opportunity to do just that.