

Congressman Pence originally penned the following remarks in 2009 on the occasion of Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday, February 12, 2009:

**Abraham Lincoln was our nation's sixteenth President, and its greatest.**

**His vision and courage in our nation's darkest, most perilous moments were instrumental in unifying a fractured nation, and preserving its precious founding principles.**

**On this—what would have been his 200th birthday—we pause to remember Lincoln the Statesman, and as is befitting of such times, there will be many things said. There will be many aspects of Lincoln's legacy that will be remembered, many traits of Lincoln that will be exalted and many deeds of Lincoln admired.**

**While there are many who would lay claim to the mantle of Lincoln, I believe that an honest appraisal of Lincoln's legacy lays bare two critical distinctions of the Great Emancipator.**

**First, he was a Hoosier; secondly, he was a conservative.**

**Lincoln, though born in the heart of Kentucky, spent his formative years in southern Indiana. The Lincolns moved to Spencer County, Indiana when young Abe was 7 and for the next 14 years, lived in the Hoosier State. It was during this time as a Hoosier of humble circumstance, living in a log cabin on 160 acres near Little Pigeon Creek, that Lincoln developed his voracious appetite for reading and learning, once walking 20 miles to borrow a book.**

**He also learned the power and promise of the free market as a young entrepreneur. He crafted his own boat and started his own ferry service to and from the Ohio River. On one occasion, when two patrons each tossed him a silver half-dollar, Lincoln noted, "It was a most important incident in my life. The world seemed wider and fairer before me; I was a more hopeful and thoughtful boy from that time." Indeed, from then on, he was a staunch advocate for the free market and the equality of opportunity.**

**He also cultivated a real affinity for the ideas of the Founding Fathers as enshrined in the Declaration of Independence—natural rights, economic freedom and equality under the**

law. It was this commitment to the “first principles” of our nation that served as the fulcrum of Lincoln’s leadership during his most heroic—and ultimately heralded—moments.

When others looked forward at an unknowable and uncertain future, Lincoln looked back—he looked back to what sustained this nation through the birth pains of its Founding—and it was in this act of looking back that Lincoln serves as a model of true conservatism.

In 1859, in a speech given in Columbus, Ohio, Lincoln asserted that the “chief and real purpose of the Republican party is eminently conservative” and that the party’s sole aim should be to “restore this government to its original tone...and thereto maintain it, looking for no further change than that which the original framers of the government themselves expected and looked forward to.”

More to the point, to the question “what is conservatism?” Lincoln succinctly answered, “Is it not the adherence to the old and the tried, against the new and the untried?” Surely there are those who would do well to heed those words in these times.

It has been said in many ways and many places before, and it bears repeating, that the promise that all men are created equal—as written in the Declaration of the Independence—and the incredible potential that is inherent in the notion of equality under law—as established in the Constitution—are both realized in the person and Presidency of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln himself said that he “never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence.”

As the *Indianapolis Star* noted today, “An old Indiana farm boy still has many lessons to teach America.”

I close with the words of Lincoln that ring as true today as they did when they were first spoken nearly two centuries ago:

“Our republican robe is soiled, and trailed in the dust. Let us repurify it. Let us re-adopt the Declaration of Independence, and with it, the practices and policy, which harmonize with it. Let north and south—let all Americans—let all lovers of liberty everywhere—join in the great and good work. If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union; but we shall have so saved it, as to make, and to keep it, forever worthy of the saving. We shall have so saved it, that the succeeding millions of free happy people, the world over, shall rise up, and call us blessed, to the latest generation.”