



Dear America,

Happy 250th birthday.

This year, The State Chamber of Oklahoma marks a milestone of its own: 100 years of bringing Oklahoma's business and civic leaders together. Sharing an anniversary year with you gives us a reason to reflect on how closely the story of American enterprise and the story of America have been tied together from the start.

The men who signed the Declaration of Independence included merchants, planters, printers, and shipowners. John Hancock, whose signature is the most recognizable on the page, was one of Boston's leading merchants. Robert Morris, a Philadelphia merchant, put his own credit on the line to keep the Continental Army supplied and later served as the young nation's Superintendent of Finance. From the beginning, the people who built businesses understood that the freedom to govern ourselves and the freedom to work, trade, and build were part of the same promise.

That promise has been tested in every generation, and in every generation American enterprise has helped answer. Businesses built the railroads and power lines that connected the country. They retooled their factories to make the United States the arsenal of democracy. They turned research into medicines, machines, and technologies that changed how the world lives and works.

Oklahoma's story follows the same pattern. Before we were a state, towns rose out of the prairie almost overnight as settlers, merchants, and bankers staked their futures on this land. Wildcatters made Oklahoma an energy producer the nation depended on. Farmers and ranchers endured the Dust Bowl and rebuilt. When The State Chamber was founded in 1926, Oklahoma was not yet 20 years old. Our industries have changed many times since then, but the idea behind our work has not: Oklahoma is stronger when its people have the opportunity to build, create, innovate, and succeed.

That idea does not sustain itself. Free enterprise has always depended on people willing to make the case for it, in statehouses and in Congress, and to prove its value through what they build. The challenges in front of us are real. We have to prepare a workforce for jobs that are changing quickly, produce the energy a growing economy needs, keep pace with global competitors in technology and manufacturing, and make sure the next generation



inherits more opportunity than we did. Government has a role in each of these. None of them will be solved without the ingenuity, investment and willingness to take risks that private enterprise brings.

That is why the voices of business leaders in policy debates matter. The decisions being made today, in Oklahoma City and in Washington, will shape the opportunities available to Oklahomans for decades. The State Chamber will keep bringing those voices to the table, as we have for the past century.

Two hundred fifty years ago, a group of Americans, many of them people of business, pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to an idea. The responsibility that comes with that inheritance still belongs to us.

Happy birthday, America. Here's to the next 250 years, and to the people who will build them.

Sincerely,

Chad Warmington
President & CEO
The State Chamber of Oklahoma