

A MESSAGE FROM NVFC CHAIRMAN STEVE HIRSCH - March 19, 2020

So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is...fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and of vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. And I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

I wish those were my words, but they were, instead, the words of Franklin Roosevelt in his inaugural address in 1933. At that time unemployment was soaring, the stock & financial markets were a mess, and the economy was in shambles. This was a time in the life of our country that it could have easily tottered to a totally different form of government and way of life. But my grandparents - first generation Americans - were not about to give up. The Bill of Rights meant too much to them. Our way of life was far better than what their parents had left behind.

When I think back on our history and upon our recent circumstance, what we fear the most is the lack of or loss of control. We have elements of our life where we think we are in control - and now we have none. We cannot control the changes to our way of life, to the lack of basic supplies, or the uncertainty that exists. I will tell you, though, that my parents and grandparents had no control over the dust storms that invaded the rural areas in the dirty thirties, or the closing of the banks, or the grasshoppers that ate everything, or the lack of work - and yet they continued forward by God's grace. They continued forward because they knew what they had to in order to make this country survive and thrive. They also knew what mattered most is living life to its fullest because it is the most important thing you can do. They knew that might perhaps be without a job, perhaps without money and perhaps without even a roof over their heads. My mother was raised by a blind grandmother and I know there were times they had no idea where the next meal was coming from, but they survived and they grew as a family and a people. That is the task that is now one for OUR generation.

WE, with help of a providential hand, created this country. WE made sure that our people voted during the civil war. WE - our parents and grandparents - won the First and Second World Wars. WE survived the Great Depression. WE changed our society in terms of civil rights in the 60's. WE survived the attacks on our way of life on 9/11. All of these were accomplishments that WE made together.

This current circumstance is in many ways similar and in some ways different but it will pass because WE will overcome as Americans. These days on social media I see teachers stepping up to the plate to make sure our children are educated even as the schools are closed. Every day now I see first responders doing their job even though they are concerned about their personal safety. Every day I see ordinary citizens taking care of their fellow citizens because it is the right thing to do. LOOK AT ALL THE POSITIVES! Who better to lead this charge than the fire service in this great land. When our neighbors are in trouble, it is the fire service that responds. When their houses are on fire, we respond. When they have medical emergencies, we respond. When there's no one else to turn to, we respond. This is OUR time - this is a WE time. WE are better than fear. WE are SMARTER than fear. WE are first responders! WE are Americans! From one of my favorite songs by Bethel Music: "I raise a hallelujah, fear you lost your hold on me." This is my prayer for each of you. God bless our first responders and God bless America!