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Remarks on the fifth anniversary of R Street
(As prepared for delivery)

Eli Lehrer, President, R Street Institute
June 1, 2017

Let me start by saying “thank you” to Caroline Kitchens and Patricia Simon for their hard work in organizing this party. If you’re having a good time, thank them. If you aren’t, blame me.

On this, the occasion of our fifth anniversary, I ask you, our friends, to indulge me as I thank you and offer some brief reflections on what has brought R Street here.

We were founded by necessity and have, from the first, carried with us an abiding commitment to liberty. We have tempered this commitment with pragmatism and a passion to work with others. And we have grown on this basis: our staff has expanded eightfold, our budget nearly tenfold and our influence far more than that.

But the measure of what we will do and how we succeed is not a matter of dollars or people or strength. It is a matter of advancing ordered liberty. Quite simply, the idea that free men and free women, given a level place to stand and scope to exercise their powers of reason will make decisions better than those anointed to plan on their behalf.

We know that perfect knowledge is impossible; that schemes to improve the human condition often fail; and that, above all, we ought to accept the world as it is, rather than as we wish it might be.

The vision we embrace is not one that seeks to perfect humanity, nor is it one that looks backward toward a dimly remembered golden age. It is, instead, a philosophy of the right that embraces change, values diversity and works toward a society where all can flourish.

R Street’s work has changed the world already. If you came here by a fully legal Uber or Lyft; benefited from tax competition between states or nations; or have listened to a rock-ribbed conservative member of Congress discussing climate change, R Street can claim part of the credit. Our staff and our leadership will bring us into the next five years and the next 50 years. It is because of the people of R Street who I am honored to lead that we all are here today.

I could not be more grateful and more humbled to be here tonight at the head of this organization. I deeply and sincerely thank all of you.