

**Allstate/Atlantic Media Renewal Awards Presentation
Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa**

Tom Wilson, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Allstate

January 26, 2016

We live in a wonderful time. We live in the best country on earth at the best time in human history. But neither our country nor our time is perfect. We have problems. Poverty. Violence. Internal and external threats. We live in a free country, but not everyone in our country is free, and not everyone who is politically free is economically free.

Every single day, people walk down the street past things that need changing. Some people don't even see the problems – they look right past them unless it affects them personally. Others see them and say, “Well, *someone* should do something about that.” But thankfully, there is a third group that says, “*I* will do something about that.” I. Me. Myself. “I will take on that problem.” Those are the heroes we're celebrating here today.

We are delighted to partner with *The Atlantic* and Ron Brownstein to celebrate and recognize the winners of the first annual Renewal Awards:

- Champlain Housing Trust
- Platform to Employment
- P-TECH
- Girlstart
- Global Detroit
- B Lab

Allstate is here, co-sponsoring these awards, because we share your commitment to change and renewal. It's safe to say we are “all-in” on change. People change, institutions change, societies change. Everything changes. At one time in my life, my hair fell over my shoulders down to the middle of my back. Obviously, since then my hair style has changed – and that's a good thing. Change is relentless. It doesn't matter if we embrace it or fight it. It's still going to happen.

Recently, I heard a professor say that the “change we face today is the least amount of change we will face in our lifetimes.” It's a stunning observation – obviously true and yet shocking, because somewhere in the back of our minds most of us think that at some point, we'll get a breather. That's not even close to being right. We live in a world in which no tomorrow is ever going to be the same as today.

I believe change is mostly good, that it creates more opportunities than threats, and that it brings a better future for all of us. However, change comes at a cost. As the pace of change speeds up, it challenges the abilities of our institutions and ourselves to cope. This change can be devastating at the local and personal levels. Those who miss out on change are left behind, watching as opportunities dry up. Fortunately, there are those who are working to address these challenges, with solutions that are as innovative as the technological and economic changes that create them.

Today, we honor those heroes. The Renewal Awards provide encouragement and material support for innovators working to make change good for everyone.

Some of you here today may be a little surprised to see a corporation sponsoring these awards. It may surprise some that B Lab has found so many corporations interested in how to make the world a better place . . . because some people have a negative view of corporations. That's fair to some extent. U.S. corporations have accumulated massive amounts of resources and capabilities because of our success in the commercial marketplace. We have succeeded the world over.

However, just like our great country, success also comes with trade-offs, things that need to be changed. Corporations can be tough, pushing for the bottom line at the expense of empathy. Corporations don't always live up to what we expect of them. Corporations have many of the legal rights of a citizen, like the right to own property and speak freely. Yet citizenship comes with obligations and expectations. We don't require wealthy individuals to give back to the community, but we all expect them to.

Corporations don't have to give back, either, but we expect them to. Corporations provide around \$18 billion annually in philanthropy. Given our resources, we can and should do more, particularly given the magnitude of the problems we face.

It is time for corporations to change.

There are many areas where corporations can create positive change. The public sector needs help. Years of political compromise have resulted in inefficiency and gridlock, two things corporations are good at working through. Americans need help enhancing their skills to compete in a global market for labor. That's another thing corporations know a lot about – both about what's needed and how to train large numbers of people. Nonprofits need the skills and resources to adapt to a world that is changing at an accelerating rate. Corporations can help both by giving and by doing.

It is time for corporations to change. It is time for everyone in the corporate world to say "that was then, this is the future." It is time to define ourselves by what's needed in the 22nd century, not the 20th or 21st. Corporations played a vital role the Industrial and Information Ages. It's time to play just as great a role in the next, the Age of People.

Allstate is doing just that. We are working on creating a 22nd century corporation – one that from a business standpoint is defined by the platforms it provides to markets, not just products and services. One that helps its customers and employees realize their hopes and dreams. One where corporations are considered forces for good in society because we create positive change in our world, not just in the industries we compete in.

Just over a hundred years ago, for most people each day was the same – one of backbreaking labor and endless drudgery. But then brilliant individuals like Thomas Edison, George Westinghouse, Nikola Tesla and Alexander Graham Bell thought of ways to make lives better through technology. It was corporations that then took those innovations and made them available to the ordinary person at a reasonable cost.

Corporations helped rebuild Europe after two world wars. Corporations built the rockets which carried men to the moon and put telescopes in space. As challenges evolved, corporations evolved to help meet them.

It's time to evolve again. A corporation isn't some strange and uncontrollable force that exists outside of the fabric of society. They're entities created by us. They're tools particularly well-suited to taking on very big and complex challenges. As a society, we can use them to do anything we like. Let's make sure we use them well.

Today, we are proud to honor six organizations that share our commitment to positive change and renewal. One definition of renewal is "to restore to a former state." That is renewal with a small "r." Another definition is "make new, to begin again." That is Renewal with a big "R," and that is what the social and business innovators honored today are doing. They are creating new, more resilient communities, ones better able to embrace change and benefit from it. They are looking not to tomorrow, but generations down the road, to the 22nd Century and beyond.

The awards provide encouragement and support for these innovators as well as the other worthwhile social entrepreneurs working to make change good for everyone. We also hope that this recognition will help identify, elevate and share the most powerful ideas across communities.

As some of you may know, I focus much of my philanthropy on youth, either through Get IN Chicago, a public-private partnership working to reduce violence against youth in Chicago, or through Free the Children, which encourages community service through school programs and We Day. What I have learned is that our youth are part of the solution. They have good ideas. Boundless ideas. They welcome change, but they need our support to be successful.

For example, you have all heard about the violence in Chicago. Much of the violence is concentrated in a small set of inner city neighborhoods blighted by poverty, overcrowding, joblessness and drugs. Neighborhoods like this have gotten attention nationwide as "food deserts," because it's hard to get nutritious food at reasonable prices in them. But the bigger problem isn't food deserts, but hope deserts. Hope is drying up in these neighborhoods.

Our youth need hope. To fuel their enthusiasm. To inspire them. To sustain their dreams. Their neighborhoods need hope more than they need food. *You* are helping provide that hope.

Now, turning a desert back into lush green countryside takes time. You don't change it with one good rain. It takes years of planting, watering, replanting and cultivation. To our winners today, thank you for what you are doing to renew these deserts. We need others to follow your lead. We need 22nd century corporations to join in and bring their resources and talent to create hope. We need all of us to say – I. Me. We. – can and will restore hope in America. Let's embrace change together.