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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Former Wichita mayor assumes leadership role with D.C.-based education program

Wichita, Kansas—Bob Knight, former mayor of Wichita, Kansas, has agreed to become president of the nonprofit People of America Foundation. The Foundation is proposing to expand Americans All®, a program to improve the teaching of social studies.

“We consider ourselves very fortunate to be bringing Bob on board,” says Allan Kullen, the Foundation’s founder and current president. “His energy and talents will be a major boost to our efforts to bring our program to all K–12 public and private schools across America. His leadership will enable me to direct all my time to helping each state develop and implement its own Americans All® program.”

Knight’s appointment comes at a critical moment in the work of the Foundation, Kullen explains. Of particular concern is the newly enacted federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), which focuses exclusively on math, reading and science instruction. This approach could leave our young people with an inadequate understanding of our nation’s history and the importance of our democratic traditions, Kullen asserts.

“I agree with much of the intent of NCLB. It’s important to teach math, reading and science and essential to have qualified teachers and accountable schools. However, when this intent unwittingly poses a serious threat to the future of our democracy, it creates a serious problem.”

“By the end of the next decade, 25 million students, half of our current school-age population—many of them new citizens with no history of democracy to fall back on—will be at risk of being disenfranchised. They will not have received enough civics education to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society.”

“It doesn’t have to be this way. If students are tested in reading, they can read history and civics,” Kullen states. “Americans All® is an effective supplement to NCLB.”

Americans All® offers schools a comprehensive social studies program that aims to help students appreciate the social, economic and cultural value created by diversity. More than 2,000 schools and libraries are already using printed Americans All® National Education Program resources. In the next phase, the Foundation will provide funding so

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each state and the District of Columbia can create state-specific printed curriculum materials and electronic databases to incorporate the history of each state's population into its social studies instruction. The information will align with state content standards and assessments. All students within each state, regardless of the financial resources of their district, will have equal access to this information. Four new pilot sites have been identified for the next phase of the initiative.

As to the link between diversity and democracy, the key building blocks of the Americans All® program, Kullen points out that “democracies exist to guarantee and protect the rights of all citizens. With today's increasingly diverse population, we must ensure that our democracy is maintained.”

By creating the ultimate public-private partnership, the Foundation plans to make its program available at no cost to schools. As many as 50 million young people each year could ultimately benefit from Americans All®.

Americans All® has been successfully operating in Wichita schools for seven years. During this period, the program came to the attention of Bob Knight. Knight, who served seven terms as the city's mayor before leaving office in April 2003, is now working with the Foundation as a full-time senior consultant. He will assume his new position as soon as initial funding for the program's national implementation is secured.

Knight, a past president of the National League of Cities, notes that after he left office he decided to devote his attention to moving the nation toward racial reconciliation. “Reconciliation will require an unrelenting effort to help every American understand and respect the ties that connect us, regardless of our backgrounds,” he explains. “A program like Americans All® is a major step in that direction.”

The United States is growing increasingly diverse. By 2020 non-Hispanic whites will comprise only 49 percent of the total U.S. school population. “To succeed, we need to teach our children our nation's history and its system of government,” says Knight. “They must also learn to respect and appreciate the differences around them.”

Knight has spent 24 years in public service. During his years in office, he began Wichita's Promise, a community organization focusing on youth. He also launched the Campaign to Promote Racial Justice, which earned him a national reputation for his efforts on behalf of social equity. In March 2003 Knight was the first recipient of the Gloria Hobson Nordin Social Equity Award in honor of his lifetime commitment to diversity and public service.

For more information on Americans All®, visit www.americansall.com.