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### **THE LACK OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ) IN SOCIETY, IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND IN POLITICS**

Studies show that Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is one of the most important factors for success in life. EQ refers to how people relate to one another in society and how they deal with their differences in a respectful and caring manner.

In February 2003, film director George Lucas, who produced such enormously popular films as "Star Wars" and "Indiana Jones", was interviewed by Government Technology magazine. In the article "Bringing the Force to Education," Mr. Lucas was asked the following: "In your view, how might education be improved to better suit the emerging high-tech culture?" to which he replied, "Emotional intelligence is becoming a vital skill in this Digital Age, as important -- perhaps more so -- than a high degree of intellectual intelligence. As the workplace becomes more specialized, from offices to medical centers to factories, teams of people must accomplish their work by collaborating with each other. In filmmaking, we need talented individuals with technical skills, but their abilities to communicate and work with others are just as valuable."

I agree with Director Lucas. Not only do we need people who can work in teams and can communicate with one another in the film industry but also in our educational system and in the complex political world that we live in.

EQ is playing a more important factor in our education and, to some degree, even more than the Intelligent Quotient (IQ), but our society and our educational institutions are slow to recognize this. Teachers can be a powerful force in modeling and instructing youngsters how to deal with relationships, control anger, deal with conflict and interact more frequently and more easily.

Despite all our technological advances, this is something that only humans can teach. Computers and machines give us knowledge and tools. We have seen first-hand how effective these can be in our political system with the new social capital that has been developed through e-mail, websites and weblogs. But what I find more fascinating is that, despite all these virtual interactions, people still want to be some place physically, connecting with others and feeling "the human touch." Whether it is in education or in politics, nothing can replace the need to bond with others and to experience the warmth that everyone seeks in friendships and relationships.

During the last thirty years, many of our elected officials have lost the human touch. We have been electing people to office who are well versed on the issues but who have no understanding of human relations and therefore cannot connect with the average American citizen. This is a sign of low EQ.

Well educated people feel attracted to elected officials who have high IQs because they can discuss issues eloquently. And politics is a place where they can find debate and passion about issues. But I believe that if most people truly interacted for a week with many of our elected officials, they would probably wind up voting against them. And that's because, once they get past the serious discussions on the issues, many elected officials have a difficult time relating to the average person. Most citizens want elected officials who are smart and articulate, but they also want someone who can understand their feelings and concerns. In other words, someone who is simple and human.

I recall attending a meeting with a selected group of officials and other guests. The host told the attendees to keep their questions short because of the time constraints and to maximize the number of questions from the group. A former member of Congress got up and started making a speech instead of asking a question. As I was leaving the room, I told a friend that was the problem with elected officials – high IQs but poor EQs. The former public official did not “listen” to the host and did not care about those of us who wanted to ask a question. And as far as I recall, that's how the official conducted politics when representing us in Congress. Eventually the average person caught on to the member of Congress and the official was thrown out of office by the voters.

As we struggle to redefine our Democratic party with a new core of principles, we need to bring a different dynamic and excitement into it. At the same time, we need to change our educational system -- and not simply add another layer of reform. I believe that we should establish an EQ curriculum in our public schools, starting in the elementary grades. As youngsters move from elementary to junior high and high school, this curriculum should include workshops that involve parents, teachers, administrators and members of the community. It is a step to develop a new multi-cultural social capital and to identify and resolve conflicting viewpoints among ethnic communities.

We all have our strengths and weaknesses. Both shape the way we learn in school, in the community and in the workforce. There are people who inspire us in life and awaken our craving for knowledge. Sometimes this does not happen until later in our lives when we finally find the individual who gives us the motivation we need – usually a person with a high EQ.

Let us put our public officials to the EQ test in an unprepared and unpredictable environment where they must interact with everyone – not just a selected few. Let us propose that our educational system becomes team-oriented as opposed to individually-oriented. Let us develop social capital in a multi-ethnic setting – and build a new Democratic party and a new America.