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### Billings, Montana Chamber of Commerce

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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For the Billings, Montana Chamber of Commerce

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January 15, 1964

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

A Presidential election year is upon us. In the next few months a great deal will be said as to why the American people should choose a Democratic or Republican President. Much of the talk will concentrate on this one office. But lesser offices--federal, state and local--should not be overlooked. Every public office is important. The tone of the public life of the United States is determined by the quality of office-holders not only in Washington but in New York, Seattle, Helena and in the rural counties of North Dakota, Georgia or wherever.

"The Action Courses in Practical Politics" which you have taken constitute an outstanding example of private, non-partisan activity which can do much to improve the politics of the nation. I congratulate the Billings Chamber of Commerce and Tom Dolan, the Chairman of this project, on this undertaking. To the extent that it encourages direct participation in politics, it is a most significant achievement.

I do not know whether these courses will yield in the end more Republican or more Democratic voters next November. I have every confidence, however, that they will yield more informed choices. I have every confidence that they will stimulate intelligent discussion of the issues involved in the election and a more careful and discriminating decision as among available candidates for every office which is contested.

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And if this project does nothing else I hope that it will promote a higher sense of decency and mutual respect between the two parties. There is ample room for differences in viewpoint. The nation thrives on these differences. There is no room for the politics of hatred in an election year or any other. It is understandable and desirable that we should oppose one set of views against another. It is incomprehensible that we should come to hate one another in the process. It seems to me that we have reached a point of sufficient maturity as a nation to recognize that an election is not the simple matter of throwing one set of "rascals" out or putting another set of "rascals" in, as once it was supposed to be. Both Republicans and Democrats have contributed greatly to the leadership of the nation and to the development of the enduring institutions which we possess. Both Republicans and Democrats are essential to the continued operation of these institutions. We can oppose without losing a sense of mutual respect. We can differ without obliterating our sense of mutual tolerance.

This year above all others we need to be aware of the significance of decency in the politics of the nation. In the assassination of President Kennedy the nation lost not only an outstanding leader but a man who understood the meaning and significance of this factor of decency in political life and acted on its dictates. His death represented in a way the temporary triumph of hatred and extreme alienation in our society. We are all--Republican and Democrats alike--the lesser for it. For the sake of the nation's future it is essential that the coming election reveal that we can differ without seeking to destroy,

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that we can oppose while still maintaining in each other a full measure of respect and confidence as Americans. The two parties are not at war with each other. They are competitors, each seeking a solution to America's problems, each seeking to meet its needs, each seeking to bring about the realization of the dream and promise of American life for all of its citizens.