



February 11, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

The undersigned are honored to present Dr. Thomas Sowell as a nominee for the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Dr. Sowell is one of America's leading intellectuals, shaping how the nation thinks about global prosperity in economics, politics, and history. In his role as a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, he continues to work for economic liberty, equality before the law, and policy judged on its success or failure, not the intent of its proponents. His life reflects the American virtues of perseverance, hard work, and the pursuit of truth.

Thomas Sowell was born in 1930 and was raised by his great-aunt. At the age of nine, his family moved from North Carolina to Harlem, New York City, in search of greater opportunities. His academic promise was evident when he was accepted into the prestigious Stuyvesant High School, but financial difficulties forced him to drop out of high school. He was later drafted into the U.S. Marine Corps during the Korean War and served as a photographer at bases in the United States.

After his time in the Marines, Sowell resumed his education. He began taking night classes at Howard University before transferring to Harvard University, where he graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in economics. He went on to earn a master's degree from Columbia University and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. During his time at Columbia and Chicago, he was a distinguished student under the mentorship of renowned economists George Stigler and Milton Friedman, both Nobel laureates.

However, it was Dr. Sowell's time interning for the U.S. Department of Labor, not primarily the influence of Stigler and Friedman, that began to lead him away from his initial Marxist beliefs. While at Labor, he determined a way to test whether increased unemployment in the Puerto Rican sugar industry was the result of hurricanes or the minimum wage. When he realized the bureaucrats at Labor had no interest in actually investigating the question, Dr. Sowell, as he recounts in his memoir, "realize[d] that government agencies have their own self-interest to look after, regardless of the interests of those for whom a program has been set up." After all, the administration of the minimum wage law was a significant part of the work of Labor. "Whether or not minimum wages benefited the workers may have been my overriding question, but it was clearly not theirs. They had reasons to want to believe that it did, but no real incentive to probe too deeply to find out." That experience, he reports, "was the beginning of the erosion of my faith in government programs."

Dr. Sowell also worked to shed light on late-talking children, children who are intelligent and otherwise developing normally but have delayed speech. Dr. Sowell's son was such a child when there was little information available about that condition. Dr. Sowell ultimately wrote two books on the subject and personally helped connect parents with the doctors who could help their children.

Thomas Sowell has been a dedicated intellectual servant to the American people, advocating for economic liberty, equality before the law, and rigorous thinking that is focused on outcomes, not intentions and rhetoric. His service was recognized by President George W. Bush who awarded him the National Humanities Medal. Today, at the age of 94, Thomas Sowell continues to contribute to the advancement of economic and social thought.

Thomas Sowell's contributions to the American people are remarkable and merit the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Throughout his life, he has achieved great triumphs by working through numerous hardships. He has served his family, his country, the American people, and millions around the world through his profound economic insights.

Thank You,

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President  
Advancing American Freedom

Rick Santorum  
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