I am filled with gratitude as I prepare to step down as president of The Philanthropy Roundtable after nearly 19 years in the position.

I am thankful for the extraordinary dedication, judgment, and oversight of our Board of Directors, led by five exceptional chairmen during my tenure: Dan Peters, Mike Grebe, Betsy DeVos, Donn Weinberg, and now Rick Graber. Strong boards are the secret of strong nonprofit organizations, and conversely, all too many nonprofits are held back from achieving their potential by micromanagement from trustees or by division on the board about the organization’s purpose. At the Roundtable, by contrast, we have been blessed with a united, mission-driven board focused on our strategy, careful oversight of our finances, and measurement of our performance. I have also benefited greatly from the guidance of our chairmen during my weekly calls with them throughout my tenure, and I recommend this practice to other organizations.

Thank you to my predecessors as president, Kim Dennis and John Walters. They created and shaped the Roundtable’s culture of service, our guiding principles, and the tradition of excellence in our programs and publications. I have had the good fortune to follow in their footsteps and to draw on their legacy. And I am so enthusiastic that Elise Westhoff will be our next president and CEO. The Roundtable has ambitious growth plans for the future, and I am confident that under Elise’s leadership our best years are yet to come.

I am grateful to my staff colleagues. We have a fantastic team at the Roundtable, and I have frequently received the credit for their excellent work. Together they have organized and managed our world-class Annual meetings and other conferences. The best magazine in the business. The definitive almanac of the greatest achievements of philanthropy in American history. Outstanding programs, site visits, and guidebooks in K-12 education, workforce development, civic education, veterans, health care, and other areas of philanthropy. Later this spring we will publish the most comprehensive guidebook ever on how philanthropists can structure their giving entities in order to safeguard their donor intent. My Roundtable colleagues are well-known as leaders in the field, and it is no accident that 10 former Roundtable colleagues have gone on to high-level positions elsewhere in philanthropy, several as presidents or executive directors of major foundations.

Thank you, too, to our philanthropic freedom team. One of our core guiding principles at the Roundtable is that private philanthropy is essential for a free society. For 15 years, our Alliance for Charitable Reform and its strategy committee have protected philanthropic freedom against multiple legislative and regulatory threats coming from political leaders in both parties. Philanthropy is now under sustained assault from leading activists, presidential candidates, and their allies in the media who believe that problemsolving in our society should be centralized in government. The Roundtable is mobilizing to lead the defense of civil society and the tradition of voluntary charitable giving that has been so central to the American character.

Thank you, above all, to our more than 600 members. You fuel everything from charter school networks where low-income children excel, to apprenticeships and community colleges that connect people with midskill career opportunities, to mental health clinics for veterans. Members of The Philanthropy Roundtable are finding solutions for many of society’s greatest challenges, expanding opportunity and upward mobility for Americans of all racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. You are protecting the blessings of liberty for future generations.

You are also strengthening the resilience of communities in trouble. In the coming weeks and months, Roundtable members and other philanthropists will play a crucial role in addressing the coronavirus crisis. Your strategies may include funding the development of vaccines and diagnostic tests, the expansion of surge capacity at hospitals, helping schools and colleges convert to online instruction, and convening local problem-solvers to identify and quickly move resources into gaps in social services. One of your most important strategies will be to provide additional support for existing grantees facing special challenges, including the need to help sick employees and their families.

Every day as president of The Philanthropy Roundtable, our members have made me proud to be an American. Your creativity and can-do spirit are part of a great American tradition of charitable leadership, of active citizens stepping up to solve problems and improve their communities. It has been such a privilege for me to know and to serve you.

Adam Meyerson has been president of The Philanthropy Roundtable since 2001.