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Philanthropic Pledge
David Rockefeller

Philanthropists, at their best, try to address serious societal problems and occasionally come up with innovations that lead to enduring change. In the end, success requires much more than financial resources, although money is, of course, essential. Good ideas are just as important; otherwise one risks wasting both the funds and the opportunity. Effective philanthropy also requires patience — patience to deal with unexpected obstacles; patience to wait for the first, slight stirrings of change; and patience to listen to the insights and ideas of others.

For five generations, my family has experienced the real satisfaction and pleasure of philanthropy. Our engagement has helped to create a strong group of institutions, including the University of Chicago, The Rockefeller University, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The practice of philanthropy also has enabled many of us to become personally involved in efforts to address critical global challenges such as poverty, health, sustainable development, and environmental degradation. Our family continues to be united in the belief that those who have benefited the most from our nation’s economic system have a special responsibility to give back to our society in meaningful ways.

Warren Buffett and Bill and Melinda Gates share this belief and have challenged others to pledge half their assets to philanthropy during their lifetime or at their death. I am pleased to say this has long been my intent and my practice, and I am delighted to have been asked to participate in this important initiative. I hope that others will accept this challenge—and opportunity—and will join us in this worthwhile endeavor.

I also hope that our efforts to expand the scope of philanthropy as individuals, in collaboration with others, and in ways that include not only financial resources but innovative ideas and patience, will be part of the gift we all bequeath to the future.

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