



PAUL R. PORTNEY

A Fond, Final Farewell

This will be my last *Resources* letter as RFF's president. Such occasions typically revert to retrospectives, rehashes, perhaps even a little regret. That will not be the case here. During my tenure, RFF has been blessed with an outstanding staff of researchers, the wherewithal to analyze significant issues, and the means to inject our findings into the public policy process.

In another section of these pages, I reflect on how that process has changed during my career at RFF and how our research agenda has moved to encompass an ever-changing policy environment. I hope those musings will be of interest to the many thousands of readers that this magazine reaches.

As I move to exciting new opportunities as dean of the Eller College of Management at the University of Arizona, I probably will not have the chance to meet my successor in this job immediately. If I did, I would offer three guiding suggestions:

First, realize that what makes RFF unique among think tanks is that we do *original* research—rather than synthesize the work of others into new products. Our scholars come to RFF precisely because they want to do seminal research, and it is important to understand the challenges and rigor that such work entails.

Second, RFF has performed a valuable service to the United States and the world precisely because we do not advance any party line or ideological agenda. Anyone who knows RFF—including people who will disagree with us vigorously from time to time—will acknowledge that our conclusions follow from where the facts lead us. That is the *sine qua non* for our success and reputation.

Third, RFF is filled with top-notch people who take their *research* very seriously, but in general don't taken *themselves* too seriously. The typical RFF researcher is informal but hard working—the antithesis of the Washington stuffed shirt. People here relate to those in government and in other policymaking bodies as peers and colleagues who are working toward improving the common good. That makes RFF a fun and friendly place, and I hope we will never lose that prevailing attitude.

All in all, it has been a joy to be associated with such dedicated people who both carry out and support RFF's mission. I leave with utmost confidence that even greater accomplishments will be attained in years to come.

Paul R. Portney