ROBERT H. HINCKLEY

A man of vision and foresight, a 20th-century pioneer, a philanthropist, an entrepreneur, and an untiring builder of education and of the American political system—all are apt descriptions of Robert H. Hinckley, a Utah native and tireless public servant. Robert H. Hinckley began his political career as a state legislator from Sanpete County and a mayor of Mount Pleasant. Hinckley then rose to serve as the Utah director for the New Deal program under President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Hinckley went on to serve in various capacities in Washington, DC, from 1938 to 1946 and again in 1948. During those years he established and directed the Civilian Pilot Training Program, served as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Air, and directed the Office of Contract Settlement after WWII. In these positions, Hinckley proved himself to be, as one of his colleagues stated, "One of the real heroes of the Second World War." Also in 1946, Hinckley and Edward Noble jointly founded the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), and over the next two decades helped to build this company into the major television network it is today.

Spurred by the adverse political climate of the ‘40s, ‘50s, and ‘60s, Hinckley recognized the need to demonstrate that politics was "honorable, decent, and necessary," and to encourage young people to get involved in the political process. After viewing programs at Harvard, Rutgers, and the University of Mississippi, Hinckley believed the time was right for an institute of politics at the University of Utah. So in 1965, through a major contribution of his own and a generous bequest from the Noble Foundation, Robert H. Hinckley established the Hinckley Institute of Politics to promote respect for practical politics and to teach the principle of citizen involvement in government.

Hinckley’s dream was to make “every student a politician.” The Hinckley Institute of Politics strives to fulfill that dream by sponsoring internships, scholarships, forums, mentoring, and a minor in Campaign Management. Today, almost 50 years later, Hinckley’s dream is a reality. More than 5,500 students have participated in programs he made possible through the Hinckley Institute of Politics. Many of these students have gone on to serve as legislators, members of Congress, government staffers, local officials, and judges. All participants have, in some measure, become informed, active citizens. Reflecting on all of his accomplishments, Robert H. Hinckley said, "The Hinckley Institute is one of the most important things I will have ever done."