

U.S. Capitol Historical Society

2013 Freedom Award

6:05 through 7:20 p.m., EST  
Thursday, November 14, 2013

National Statuary Hall, U.S. Capitol

**RON SARASIN:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am Ron Sarasin, the President and CEO of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society and a former Member of Congress from Connecticut. On behalf of Speaker John Boehner, the Honorary Host of this event, and myself, I welcome you to the 20th presentation of the Freedom Award and the presentation of the Chairman's Award named after the Society's Founder, Fred Schwengel, Congressman Fred Schwengel.

We are honored this evening, or will be honored, to have the Democratic Leader, Nancy Pelosi, and when she arrives, we will bring her up. And so I would like to bring to the podium at this moment the former Congressman from Missouri, Chairman of the Board of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, Tom Coleman, who will present the Chairman's—because he is the Chairman—the Chairman's Fred Schwengel Award.

[Applause.]

**TOM COLEMAN:** Thank you, Ron.

This is a dangerous thing I'm going to do. I am going to ask the Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer and Norm Dicks to escort our honoree, Suzanne, also known as "Suzie Dicks," to the platform.

Suzie, you and I will take a place over here.

[Applause.]

**REP. STENY HOYER:** Tom, thank you for that effusive introduction.

[Laughter.]

**REP. STENY HOYER:** I was overwhelmed.

Mr. Secretary, Ms. Secretary, Senator, Congressman, Madam Speaker—I know you're the leader, but you're my Speaker, and for so many of you, I'm so pleased to be here. I have the opportunity to introduce a good friend of mine, someone whom I have known for over 30 years. She was 4 1/2 when I first met her—

[Laughter.]

**REP. STENY HOYER:** —and so that makes her 35 or 36 today. She is someone who has been, like her husband, committed not only to the people that they represented from the Congress, from Washington State in the Congress, but also committed to this institution, to the House of Representatives, and to the Capitol itself, both as a building, as a place, as an idea, as a center for all the world to look to as the symbol of democracy.

Suzie Dicks as the Secretary of the Capitol Historical Society has been a dynamic force. To that extent, she was, like her husband, an extraordinary participant in the Congress of the United States. She has enriched the lives of so many young people and their knowledge of the Capitol of the United States and made available to all the citizens so many opportunities to learn more about their Capitol building, learn about its history, learn about its principles, learn about its personalities. Suzie Dicks has been an extraordinary contributor to this institution and to this country. I'm not objective; I love Suzie Dicks.

[Applause.]

**REP. STENY HOYER:** Ladies and gentlemen, our honoree, Suzie Dicks.

[Applause.]

**REP. STENY HOYER:** And I apologize profusely for usurping her husband, Norm Dicks, my dear, dear friend. So, ladies and gentlemen, a great Member of the Congress of the United States, a great leader on national security for all the years he served in this Congress, and someone who reflected the best of this institution, my friend Norm Dicks.

[Applause.]

**NORM DICKS:** Thank you, Steny and Tom. It's great to be here with you and our distinguished recipients of the Freedom Award.

Suzie has served for two decades on the—working at the Capitol Historical Society, and she has really enjoyed this work. And educating the American people about the Capitol, about the Congress. This is what the Historical Society does, and Fred Schwengel was the congressman who founded this institution 50 years ago.

Now, one time, Suzie and I were invited to the White House during the Clinton administration for a state dinner, and as you know, the next day in the *Washington Post*, they print the names of the people who attended the state dinner. Many of you here, especially in the front row, have witnessed this. So I looked in the paper the next day, and it says "Norm Dicks, Sixth District, Washington State." Then it says

"Suzanne Callison Dicks, General Secretary of the United States Capitol Historical Society." It took about half the page.

[Laughter.]

**NORM DICKS:** And I thought, you know, the only General Secretary I've ever known is Mikhail Gorbachev. And anyway, Suzie has loved the work, she and Ron and Tom and the Board and Becky and all her colleagues at the Historical Society, and it was a very difficult decision for her to retire, but she chose that, and so now I'd like to present to you my wife of 47 years, Suzie Callison Dicks. Thank you.

[Applause.]

**TOM COLEMAN:** I told you it was dangerous to let these guys up here out of sequence here. I have to give the award first, and I'm going to read the inscription. The Chairman's Fred Schwengel Award presented to Suzanne Callison Dicks, General Secretary, 1995 to 2013, the United States Capitol Historical Society. The Chairman and Board of Trustees of the United States Capitol Historical Society are honored to present the second Fred Schwengel Award named after the Society's Founding President in grateful recognition of your two decades of service and leadership to the United States Capitol Historical Society, which have immeasurably shaped and furthered the organization's mission to bring the history and meaning of the United States Capitol and the principles of American representative government to an ever-expanding public audience. Statuary Hall, United States Capitol, November 14th, 2013. Suzie Dicks.

[Applause.]

**REP. NANCY PELOSI:** It is indeed an honor to join my colleague, Democratic Whip Hoyer, and sing the praises of Suzie—Suzie with the big long name and the description as an attendee, an important attendee at the state dinner. Norm Dicks and Suzie have been a team and an institution in the Congress for decades, and Suzie's contribution to making our participation in this Capitol more meaningful is a gift to all of us, for which we are deeply indebted to her. It is indeed appropriate that she receive this award named for the Founder of the Capitol Historical Society. Think of those words, the "Capitol." Capitol, most important building in the world, a beacon of democracy to the world, historical, so much history, this very room, this very—Statuary Hall but in every place in the Capitol, history made, laws made, policy formed to improve the lives of the American people and to honor the principles of our Constitution and of our Founders. And that's what Suzie did.

I know the emphasis today is on the Statue of Freedom, and those awards will be given to Norm Mineta and Secretary—Secretary Mineta and Secretary Cohen. We take special pride in their receiving these awards, because both of them served in the House of Representatives. I had the privilege of serving with Norm Mineta. I had the

privilege of serving in the House when Senator Cohen was serving in the Senate, and I'd seek his leader from across the building.

Senator Cohen, a leader in his party but a master of bipartisanship. In the House of Representatives, he was tasked as a very young congressman to work on an important matter in the Judiciary Committee, shall we say, and it was a sensitive issue, but he went by the facts and the law, no matter what the outcome, in a very nonpartisan way, made a real contribution to our country. Of course, in the Senate, we know his record, because it is more recent, but then to go from the Senate to serve under a Democratic President as the Secretary of Defense, once again, the universal admiration and respect that he commanded for his patriotism, his service to our country. Yes, as a proud Republican but as an American first. So that he is getting this Freedom Award is entirely, entirely appropriate. And aren't you honored to be getting it the same day as Suzie is getting her award?

[Laughter.]

**REP. NANCY PELOSI:** Norm Mineta, I had the privilege to serve with him. I first met him when he was Mayor of San Jose. Now how many years would that be ago? Forty or so? We just crawled out of the playpen and said hi. No.

In any event, what is really important about any of us who served were proud to call Norm Mineta a colleague was his history and the history that he brought to this Capitol, his family, internment, victims of the internment. Oh, it's just so—every time we get to this subject, it's a very emotional one for the rest of us. I can't even imagine what it is for you—and then have him be here to fight for so many things and leadership role, as Chair of the Transportation Infrastructure Committee and the rest, making a difference in the lives of the American people and building our infrastructure, to let people build commerce, protect the environment and the rest. But we had to serve with him when the reparations legislation came forward and hear his family's stories firsthand. It was just something quite remarkable, and so his service not once, but twice as it happened—not once, but twice. How about that? Service in the House of Representatives after being the Mayor of San Jose. If you go down there, you will go into Norman Mineta Airport when you do.

[Laughter.]

**REP. NANCY PELOSI:** So you know the esteem with which he is held here. I hope you know that he is held in that great high esteem at home as well, and both Senator Cohen and—Secretary Cohen and Secretary Mineta are in good company, and they are both receiving the awards tonight.

And with that, my husband Paul sends his regards. He's very sad he couldn't be here, because he considers himself a leader in the Suzie Fan Club. Everyone who knows her knows of her commitment and her love of this place and all that that implies.

So I'm happy to join my colleague, Mr. Hoyer, and so many others of you here in paying our respect, and thanks to the awardees. I thank Tom for his ongoing leadership. I thank all of you for your support for the Capitol Historical Society. Thank you.

[Applause.]

**TOM COLEMAN:** And now our third Secretary of the evening, Secretary Suzie Dicks.

[Laughter and applause.]

**SUZANNE CALLISON DICKS:** Well, thank you so much. I am so honored. I have to put my glasses on; otherwise, I can't see. It is hard to follow leadership. They're such pros at this, and I am not a public speaker. But I just want to thank you all for being here. It doesn't get any better than this in this beautiful Statuary Hall. I am beside myself with excitement. It's an enormous honor. It's humbling just to be here, and I am taking on an award tonight in the name of our Congressman Fred Schwengel, whose daughter is sitting right here with her husband, Neale Cosby. Dot is the daughter, and Neale is the Treasurer of the Society.

Former Member Schwengel from Iowa was a consummate historian and educator, and it was his lifelong passion to share his knowledge with others. Fifty-one years ago, he founded the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, and in 1978, it was chartered by the United States Congress and signed by Jimmy Carter and Speaker Tip O'Neill.

The Society's mission is to educate the public about the art and architecture of the Capitol and the history of the Congress. Although I regret that I never met Congressman Schwengel, I have so enjoyed working with his family over the years. His wife, Ethel, who never missed a Society event, passed away at the tender age of 102 in the year of 2011. His daughter, Dot, who I just mentioned, and her husband Neale are involved with the Society at all times, and their son, Scott Cosby, is now a new member of our Board of Trustees.

Fred left us all with an important legacy and many quotable quotes. While serving in Congress, he recognized the fact that thousands of visitors that arrive on Capitol Hill have little or no understanding of this nation's democratic form of government. His mission was to change that. The following quote has spoken to me through my years here on Capitol Hill. He noted that these visitors, adult and youth, somehow need to be helped when they are here to "catch something of the fire that burned in the hearts of those who walked and talked in these halls."

After 18 years with the Society, I have many people to think. In 1990, former Member Bud Brown from Ohio, who was President of the Society, asked me to come on board and work with the Board of Trustees. In 2000, former congressmen and Society Board Members both, Ron Sarasin and Tom Coleman, became President and Chairman of the Society, and it's been my pleasure to work with them for the last 13 years.

As well, I want to thank the many dedicated Board Members who have supported the society. Actually, before this event, they had their Board meeting. It was the first time I hadn't been there in 18 years, but it all went well. But they didn't get any chocolate chip cookies.

[Laughter.]

**SUZANNE CALLISON DICKS:** Their interest, their direction, and their friendship made my job really most rewarding.

A good example of that is the gentleman sitting directly in front of me, our favorite congressman and Secretary, Norm Mineta. He, in a few minutes, will receive the Freedom Award, but I want you to know he, along with many other people in this room, have served on the Board for two or more terms, and the Board is a 4-year term. So we thank you, Norm, for your commitment to the Society.

On the Board now, currently sitting members are Senator Burr, Senator Tom Udall, Congressman Tiberi, and Congressman David Price. I don't know if I've seen David, but he's just finishing his second term as well on the Board.

Also with us tonight are many of the Society's supporters, volunteers. They are most appreciated. Everyone knows a 501(c)(3) needs all the help it can get, and the U.S. Capitol Historical Society is no exception to that.

In closing, I have been surrounded for most of my 18 years by the Society's four Vice Presidents: Becky Evans, Don Kennon, Paul McGuire, and Diana Wailes. They, along with their incredibly capable staffs, are the behind-the-scenes workhorses of the Society. I want to personally thank them for all of their long hours, their expertise, their support of my work, and last and not least, their friendship and their sense of humor. It's been a great run, and I will forever cherish this award. And thank you for being here.

[Applause.]

**RON SARASIN:** Chairman Coleman and Congressman Dicks, Congressman Hoyer, and Madam Leader, thank you very much for participating in the award to go to Suzie Dicks, our General Secretary, as Norm pointed out. We did have our annual Board meeting today, as we usually do just preceding the Freedom Award, and it was the first time in all the years that I've been involved with the Society that we did not have chocolate chip cookies at the meeting, and they were missed. I will tell you that. Suzie was responsible not only for all of the work she did for the Society, but for some reason, she thought it was her mission to take care of the care and feeding of the staff of the Society and birthdays to be honored and so forth. And she would always be sure that there were chocolate chip cookies at our Board meetings and the

Executive Committee meetings and all of the other meetings we had, and so we really are going to miss you, Suzie. It's been a long, long ride.

**SUZANNE CALLISON DICKS:** I'll bring the cookies.

**RON SARASIN:** Yes. Stop by and bring some cookies. Actually, she did. She stopped by last week after having been out in Washington State for a while and brought a delicious chocolate cake, so she hasn't forgotten her major responsibility. We thank you for that.

Each year, the Society engages in a very thoughtful and a very deliberate process to select recipients of the Freedom Award, the Freedom Award named after the statue that celebrates its 150th anniversary this year, the Statue of Freedom that's on the Dome of the Capitol. And this year, we honor two statesmen, William Cohen and Norman Mineta. Both of these leaders set aside partisan affiliations to devote their considerable talents to accomplishing what was best for the country, and in that vein, I want to share with you a letter from the former President Bill Clinton about the men we honor this evening.

[Letter by President Bill Clinton not transcribed.]

**RON SARASIN:** What an amazing and a tremendous tribute to both of you, Bill and Norm.

And now I have the great honor of asking Senator Susan Collins from Maine to assist me in presenting the Freedom Award to Secretary Cohen. Mr. Secretary, as Senator Collins comes up here, I will share with you a little bit of her bio. She began her political career as a staff assistant to then-Senator Cohen and later was named Staff Director of the Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee he chaired. She was elected to succeed her mentor in 1997, when Senator Cohen chose not to run for reelection.

Senator Collins, we're pleased you could be with us to say a few words about Senator Cohen.

[Applause.]

**SENATOR SUSAN COLLINS:** Thank you. Thank you. There's been so much said already about Senator Secretary Bill Cohen that I am tempted to do what you would do in the House, which is revise and extend my remarks, or if I were on the Senate floor, I would submit the statement for the record as if read, but the fact is that Bill Cohen is far too special to me personally for me to do either of those options.

The Freedom Award recognizes the outstanding contributions to American democracy, and I can think of no more worthy recipient of this prestigious honor than Secretary William S. Cohen. Certainly, during his many years of public service, as Secretary of

Defense, as a United States Senator, as a Member of the House of Representatives, Bill Cohen has strengthened our nation's core values through his intelligence, integrity, and imagination.

We celebrate Bill Cohen tonight as a leader of courage and commitment. Let me offer also a few thoughts about him as an inspiration, a mentor, and a friend. In these observations, you will see that his contributions to our democratic institutions reach beyond his public service to his entire life story. Bill was born in Bangor, Maine. His parents owned a bakery, and their son shared in its hard work and its early hours. Young Bill Cohen was a great athlete and a stellar student. After law school, he became an Assistant County Attorney, and before he was 30 years old, he was a member of the Bangor City Council. Two years later, he was elected as mayor—by acclamation, I believed. There is no better contribution to America's democracy than to demonstrate such community service.

Then in 1972 came a defining moment when Bill Cohen decided to run for Congress from Maine's Second District. It would be more accurate to say that he walked for Congress more than 600 miles through the largest congressional district east of the Mississippi.

As a young woman who had just finished my first year in college, I remember being so inspired when I heard Bill Cohen speak that I volunteered for his first campaign. The incredible effort, as he put it, to find out what was on people's minds by walking through the communities of the entire Second District was the very essence of democracy.

In the summer of 1974, before my senior year in college, I had the opportunity to serve in Bill's Washington office. I had a front-row seat into history as then-Congressman Bill Cohen served on the House Judiciary Committee during those historic impeachment hearings against President Nixon. His thoughtful, deliberative, and fair approach in evaluating the evidence won him respect nationwide. His vote as the freshman Republican to impeach a President of his own party was an act of great political courage.

Elected to the Senate in 1978, he served with great distinction and eloquence for three terms in the United States Senate. As Secretary of Defense under President Clinton, he again did the right thing. He crossed party lines to serve our nation, demonstrating his unwavering belief that American democracy always requires putting what is right above partisan politics.

And just last week, Secretary Cohen did something else that is essential to the continuation of our democracy. He helped young people in his native state become more informed and engaged in public policy. The William S. Cohen Lecture Series at the University of Maine is the highlight of the academic year and a testament to his ongoing commitment to the next generation of American leaders, and I have no doubt



that the young people who heard Bill last week at the University of Maine were inspired to public service, just as Bill inspired me so many years ago.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a great honor to join in presenting this well-described award and in introducing the Honorable William S. Cohen.

[Applause.]

**SECRETARY WILLIAM S. COHEN:** Thank you so much, Senator Collins. I am really thankful that I was able to inspire you, and I am even more thankful you were able to continue service in the Senate following my departure.

Speaker Pelosi, thank you for your very kind words. They were more than generous, and I wish my wife Janet could be here now, but she has to extend her apologies because she's meeting with a film director as I speak, making a film of the play she called "Anne and Emmett," which is an imagination conversation between Anne Frank and Emmett Till. And she would be more than thrilled to be standing next to Rosa Parks, because she interviewed her many years ago. Of course, Rosa Parks sat on that bus and refused to give up her seat, not because she was tired and not because her feet hurt, but she was thinking of Emmett Till and what had happened to him in Mississippi. In any event, she sends her regards.

Congressman Hoyer, she would be happy to see you. You're one of her favorites, as is Speaker Pelosi.

Norm Dicks, you have been diminished slightly today. We now have to refer to Suzie as either "General Dicks" or "Secretary Dicks."

[Laughter.]

**SECRETARY WILLIAM S. COHEN:** And, Tom Coleman, great to see you again, and of course, Angus King, former Governor of Maine and now Senator King, and my friend Norm Mineta.

I am truly honored to receive this award. I am mystified as to why you would extend it to me, but I am gratified nonetheless. I must tell you that being associated with Norm Mineta is honor enough to be on the same platform and to receive the same award, because he is someone that I have admired for a very long time. When you think of Norman's background—and I'll talk about it just for a few minutes—and I was told, by the way, that I have only 10 minutes or less to speak, and to tell that to a former United States Senator, that's almost cruel and unusual punishment.

[Laughter.]

**SECRETARY WILLIAM S. COHEN:** But perhaps I'll get to the point where I ask for unanimous consent if I be allowed to proceed for an additional minute or so. Hopefully, I will conclude before then.

President Clinton, I owe a great deal to. He and I did not know each other before I agreed to serve and he offered me the position as Secretary of Defense. We had met several—several occasions to shake hands, but he didn't know me and I didn't know him. And after two meetings, he finally agreed to offer me this position. I said on one condition. We both had one condition. I said, "You should understand if I agree to serve on your team, if you offer me this position, you will never have to second-guess me as to whether my loyalty lies to you or not. You will not have to worry that I'll go in the back room and call up my former colleague and say, 'Guess what these guys are doing?' And by the same token, you have that pledge from me, but I need a pledge from you, and that is that you never ask me to engage in a political discussion as long as I am trying to run the Department," and he said, "You absolutely have it." And he was true to his word, and I must tell you, out of the 31 years of public service, the 4 years serving with Bill Clinton were the finest of my life. And I am always grateful to him and to this day, and so it was great to hear his words of praise for me and especially of Secretary Mineta.

I think, as I receive this award, of an event in 2008. It was a week before the elections in 2008, and I was sitting in South Korea, in Seoul, and I was at a meeting with some former heads of state, and they had invited me. I think they thought I was Joe Biden, but in any event—

[Laughter.]

**SECRETARY WILLIAM S. COHEN:** —they invited me, and I sat in one of these roundtables. And a member of the Cabinet of the South Korean Government looked over at me. He said, "You know"—he said, "If Barack Obama gets elected, it will mean"—and he used these exact words—"the ratification of the American dream." I said, "Wow!" I said, "Why do you say that?" He said, "Because if you can take a first-generation African American and he can be elected President of the United States, that's the American dream," and I thought about that. I said, "Well, it's not only the American dream; it's everybody's dream." But it's especially true in this country, and that's what this Freedom Statue stands for. That's what this Capitol stands for, people looking to the United States and say, "Wow!" You can come from the humblest beginnings without regard to race or religion or ethnicity or gender or lifestyle or preference, and you can rise to the highest levels of government and position in your country. What an extraordinary statement that is about us! That is why we are so still admired throughout the world.

And I think about it in terms of Norman Mineta. If you could think about his life and his young years being in an internment camp in Wyoming, I think it was Camp 24, close to it, but to have been in an internment camp and yet to be released, to join the Army, to serve in Japan and Korea, to go back home, be elected mayor of your

community, your town, and then become a congressman and then the Secretary of Commerce and then Secretary of Transportation, where else could that happen? And not—and to come from that and not to have anger or resentment or in any way to feel how you have been treated?

And my wife asked him one time. She said, "How do you deal with it?" He said—and this is a Japanese expression, which I cannot repeat. He said, "It happened. It's over. Move on," and that has been his life and an inspiration to all of us. And it says something about you in particular, but it says something about this country as well.

And then I think of John Boehner, one of 12 children, and the stories about how his parents having to sleep on a pull-out couch, and he as a young boy having to sleep up in the bar, his father's bar, to become Speaker of the—of the Leader at least, one day—and even higher than that, maybe go beyond being Speaker. But to think of how he was able to come from that to be the head of the party, amazing, just absolutely amazing how that is possible, that the fact that he could achieve that.

And it goes for every one of us. Think about all the people that we know. It is only in America I think that we can—because your birthplace has no ceiling on it. There is no ceiling on your talent. There is no ceiling on your aspirations that you can become the very best that you are.

Unfortunately, that image of the United States has been dimmed somewhat. Today, we look at the Congress and with its gridlock and with its paralysis and dysfunction, and I think it's unfortunate. For my life at least, it's very unfortunate. To think I have devoted 24 years to walking these halls up here and to say that the people now look at the Capitol with less admiration, the American people are angry, our allies are confounded and confused.

One of the first books I read in 1970 was by John Gardner, and it was called *The Recovery of Confidence*, that the first order of business is for us to recover the confidence that we have, the capacity to engage in self-governance. We have that obligation, and he said something that's always stayed with me. It's purely poetic, in a way. He said, "Our institutions have become caught in a savage crossfire between unloving critics and uncritical lovers." It's a wonderful expression, because he said at one end of the extreme, you have unloving critics, people who are so willing to engage in tearing down our institutions and our organizations, with nothing positive to recommend in their place. At the other end of the spectrum, you have the so-called "uncritical lovers," people who were so enamored with the status quo that they refuse to embrace and change, no matter how positive. And so he said basically, if you have a criticism without love, you will have destruction. If you have love without criticism, you will have stagnation. And so what we have to have are loving critics. We need to be loving critics, loving this institution, loving the freedom that is ours to promote and not only in this country, but throughout the world. Knock, knock. Here is what can happen if you have freedom. And so becoming loving critics and getting back to that position where you can have people—and Speaker Pelosi, I know that you are

dedicated to this as well and to all who are here today—to think about the Tom Foleys and the Mike Mansfields and the Bob Michels and Bob Doles, George Mitchells and so many others who were willing to stand for very strong principles, but ultimate to work across party lines in order to make ends work. That is really what we have to do. We cannot have a sign hanging from the Statue of Freedom that says "Closed for Business. No Longer Open." That is impermissible. That is unacceptable. That is an embarrassment for our country when that happens.

There are too many people in the world. This beacon of freedom that we hold up in a world that is filled with so much darkness, how can we possibly bring ourselves, allow ourselves to engage in an unwillingness to reach across the aisle to find a way to move forward? I think it's really unacceptable, and I think everybody in this room understands it, and most of the people in the country—most of the people in the country want to know why we can't do that.

And I'll close, because I'm warming up to a Secretarial end speech, but I will close with the comments or some words from one of my favorite poets, who is John Ciardi. I read this years ago, and he said, "Real emeralds are hard to distinguish from synthetic ones, but if you heat them both up and then you tap, one of them will shatter. The real emerald will shatter." He said, "I have no emeralds. A woman told me this. She had no emeralds, but someone had told her this." He said, "But I have held in my palm the bright breakage of a truth told too late. I know the principle." And, ladies and gentlemen, those of you who are dedicated to certainly this historical Capitol, to freedom and democracy, we don't have to wait to hold the breakage of a truth told too late. We know the principle, and we have to rededicate ourselves to that principle, that we have to find a way to work together. We can be strong-willed. We can be strong-principled, but we have to find a way to say that we are working together to preserve democracy, the American dream for the American people and those who come here. Thank you.

[Applause.]

**RON SARASIN:** Now, who knew? In 1972 when Bill Cohen and I were both elected to the 93rd Congress, who knew that this star was going to arise out of that group? I knew. I knew he was going to be the star. He was really great then in 1973 and '4, during those trying times, very trying times when he served on the Judiciary Committee, a very thankless job at that time.

Now I have the pleasure of bringing Mike Honda to the podium, and as he comes to the stage, he is going to help me present the award to Secretary Mineta. Congressman Honda began his public service career when Norm Mineta, then-Mayor of San Jose, California, appointed him to the City Planning Commission. Subsequently, Congressman Honda was elected to other local offices and to the California State Assembly. In 2000, Congressman Honda was elected to Congress, representing the district that was represented by Congressman Mineta.

Mike, thank you very much for being with us this evening to say a few words about Secretary Mineta.

[Applause.]

**REP. MIKE HONDA:** Well, thank you very much, and it's a great honor for me to be here to share this evening with you underneath the Dome of Freedom and to the Capitol Society. Thank you very much for recording all that has gone on at this Capitol and all the things that will go on, for Congress is a living organism responsible for its past, responsible for its present and its future.

I think Norm knew that when he came to Congress, the 94th Congress in 1974. We woke him up six o'clock in the morning, Sunday morning, and he said, "What"—well, he didn't say it that way.

[Laughter.]

**REP. MIKE HONDA:** "Why are you calling me so early in the morning?" We said, "Did you see the papers?" He said, "I'm still in bed." I said, "Look at the papers." "I'll call you back." He calls back and said, "Okay. What?" The headlines said that Congressman Gubser was retiring, and he didn't even think about himself. Some friends of his said, "It's time for him to go." Norm had built a career in the City of San Jose as a city councilman, a mayor running for reelection, and he had to choose between reelection as a mayor and/or run for Congress, uncharted grounds. He took about a week, and finally, he decided. He was determined, studied, and prepared.

I think one of the things that perhaps urged him to go on was probably his dad, who was as adventurous. His dad came to the United States when he was about 14 and made his way to the West Coast and ended up in San Jose. He started family in San Jose. Socially, Japanese were not well accepted. So we had a place we called "Nihonmachi," Japan town, where the Japanese have their businesses, their churches, Christian church, Buddhist church, their schools, language schools, and our neighborhoods, and that community still exists. It exists today because we're proud of that place. It exists today because it is a centerpiece where Norm Mineta was born. It's still there today because there's a pride in San Jose.

We used to say that, you know, when you really lift a person up and say he's truly the son of this area, well, I think that there would be very few people in my area that would say he is not the son of San Jose. He is. In fact, he has such a love for that place and such a dedication for that city, he made that city better. He helped people become part of the political scenery in San Jose. Latinos were outside. African Americans were outside. And Norm happened to be appointed to City Council, and he saw that there were some discrepancies, and he engaged them into the process of the city. And soon people decided to feel like they were part of the city and they had a handle on it and they had a legacy in that city, and Norm led the way. He never

asked for attention or accolades for doing that. He just did it because it was the right thing to do.

In '74, he decided to run for Congress. I was glad, because I get to be involved in the first congressional race with an Asian American running for office, and I was proud. And I learned a lot of things in those campaigns. I learned that it's a lot of work. It's a lot of pounding of pavement that you have done. I learned that you had to talk to people you hadn't met before, perhaps, and to convince them that you can represent them. But he had a face that was different than most people. When you look in his hall, you could look around this hall and very few women. And so he also exemplifies change. He exemplifies the change that this country had not had since the early '30s to the '40s up to today, but he had a position of leadership, a position of leadership that would not leave him alone, because he knew that the responsibilities of a family, responsibilities that he learned from his father, his siblings, that he had responsibilities to the community, not only to Japanese Americans but the community in general.

He took that responsibility seriously, because in 1988, President Reagan signed H.R. 442. It was the apology of the U.S. Congress for something they did in 1942. It took a few years, but determination, education, and a sense of doing the right thing urged him on. It was not popular in our community at first, but we always have to realize that civil rights is as important as any other rights, and that we deserved an apology from this country, from this Congress, and Norm set out to make that correction. And when we learned after a commission study those three things that initiated the camps, camps that Norm Mineta served in—served in—was sent to, Heart Mountain, Wyoming, myself, Amache, Colorado, and 120,000 other Japanese, two-thirds of whom were citizens of this country, we learned through the commission report, there were three things that put us in camp, racial prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership. And I'm sure that was because for the third one, the failure of political leadership was not going to be part of his legacy, and so throughout his term as Congressman, we saw him take that mantle of leadership and lead this country to finally be understood what was done that was wrong. It was the will of his leadership and the mantle of being Secretary of Transportation under President Bush that an announcement over the TV nationwide—not global, but he said that the Transportation Secretary of this country in any airport will not put up with racial profiling. That shocked the world, but it gave those of us who understood what he said confidence in this government, confidence in his leadership, and confidence again in the protection of the Constitution.

Norm has been first in many things being a Japanese American, but his character says to him, "I shall not be the last." So he always makes sure other people can go on, keeping that door open behind him, so other people can pass through and take advantage of many opportunities in this country, including in the halls of Congress. Norm is determined and educated and prepared, and so I just feel very honored to be able to stand here in front of you to share a few thoughts in front of his family, his friends, his past colleagues, many I have known for many years, to share the thought

that in the halls of Congress, in the Congressional Records, leadership of this country, perhaps even in the pages of the Capitol Historical Society, Norm Mineta, his name will be prominent, and many things happened while he was serving this great nation.

So please join me in bringing up my good friend, Secretary Norman Mineta.

[Applause.]

**SECRETARY NORMAN MINETA:** I thank you very, very much for that very generous and warm introduction, and to President Ron, to the members of the Board, and General Dicks. Again, thanks to everybody for this tremendous honor.

And if I might, I'd like to introduce my family that's here. First of all, my wife Deni.

[Applause.]

**SECRETARY NORMAN MINETA:** Two of our four weren't able to make it here. David Mineta and Bob—

[Applause.]

**SECRETARY NORMAN MINETA:** I see Jimmy Hayes sitting next to my family, but I'm not claiming him.

[Laughter.]

**SECRETARY NORMAN MINETA:** Mike and Bill have spoken already about my background, but I hope you don't mind if I don't personalize this presentation in this evening. We were having dinner with some friends, and the friend said, "Norm, what were the three seminal—or two seminal moments in your life?" And I said, "Well, give me three." He said, "No, no. Only two." So I said, well, the first was that I chose a family that I was born into very carefully. I had a great father, great mother, three older sisters, older brother, and myself, youngest of five, and it was a great family, and I loved them all and miss them all. The second was probably December 7th, 1941, because it impacted on lives everywhere and especially in our family.

My dad was an immigrant from Japan, came over as a 14-year-old by himself. Now, if I were ever to say to David, "Yes, David, you could go to Germany, Brazil," somewhere at the age of 14, not knowing the language, not knowing anyone, would you—would you do that? And yet my dad came over a 14-year-old by himself. He said he boarded the ship in Yokohama with his destination San Francisco, but not knowing that much about U.S. Geography, got off the ship in Seattle, some 900 miles away from where he should be, and eventually, he worked himself down from one lumber camp to another, finally got to San Jose—or to Salinas, California, and there, his uncle told him he had to learn English. He told him he had to start first grade. So here he is a 16-year-old in a first grade class. He said that was the most humiliating thing he ever did, not

because he didn't know English, but he was 5'3", and some of those kids in that school were getting to be his height.

[Laughter.]

**SECRETARY NORMAN MINETA:** So he says that it gives you a lot of incentive to learn English very quickly.

[Laughter.]

**SECRETARY NORMAN MINETA:** So he thought maybe by the second grade, he had learned enough, and he graduated himself from school. And Spreckels Sugar gave him a job. So from that point, here was this loving family, and then December 7th occurred. My dad had started an insurance agency in 1920, and that was the business he was in. San Jose's Asian American population, Japanese American population total—Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese—was about 2.5 percent of the population of San Jose, and so I saw my dad cry three times in his lifetime. First time was December 7th, 1941, because he couldn't understand why the land of his birth was now attacking the land of his heart. He loved the United States of America, and so things were happening around there so quickly, we weren't sure what was going on, and yet he was—because he knew English, he was sort of the liaison between the Japanese community and the adjoining community. And the FBI came in and scooped into San Jose and picked up certain people who they thought were sympathetic to the Japanese efforts.

Most of them were Buddhist priests, Shinto priests, and community leaders. So when my dad asked the city manager what was going on, he said he didn't know anything about it. But he said, "Why don't you call the chief of police?" The chief of police said, "I don't know anything about what you're talking about. Why don't you call the Sheriff Hendrick?" So he called Sheriff Hendrick, and then Sheriff Hendrick said, "Mr. Mineta, I know about this operation, but it's not mine. It's the FBI, and I'll call the FBI and have them give you a call." Well, about four o'clock that afternoon, the FBI agent in charge of the San Jose office came and said that they were picking up people who they thought were very sympathetic to the Japanese cause and community leaders. Well, my dad thought, "I'm a community leader. Why am I not being picked up?"

[Laughter.]

**SECRETARY NORMAN MINETA:** And actually, he was not picked up, although he did pack his suitcase in case they ever came back that day.

By February of 1942, President Roosevelt had signed Executive Order 9066 to a delegation to the Commanding General of the Western Civil Defense Command, ability to evacuate and intern prisoners. It didn't say Japanese or Italian. It just said "persons," and he used that to then evacuate from the West Coast in the States of Washington, Oregon, and California, those of Japanese ancestry, and commandeered



fair grounds and racetracks, because they can build in—namely horse fields, and started putting up these forts around where people of Japanese ancestry were living. And it said—the big placards, and it said "Attention: All Those of Japanese ancestry, alien and non-alien." Well, as a 10-year-old kid, I read that, and I was wondering what's a non-alien. I know what an alien is. That's my dad, but what's a non-alien? So they weren't even treating us as citizens, and yet when was the last time that any of you stood up, beat your chest and said, "I'm a proud non-alien of the United States of America"? I don't think you have, and that's why to this day, I cherish the word "citizen," because my own government wasn't looking to call me a "citizen."

I shared a bedroom with my brother. He was 9 years older than me. He had a draft card, and he was crying one day. I said, "What's the matter, Al?" He showed me his draft card. It said 1A. I said, "Aren't you able to serve?" and that day, he had gotten the new one, a new draft card, and it said 4C. So he didn't know what 4C meant. So he called the draft board and said, "What is this 4C?" and they said, "It means enemy alien." Well, my brother was born and raised in San Jose, now a sophomore in San Jose State University, preparing to become a doctor, which he eventually did, but he was really broken up by the fact that, again, his own government would refer to him as an "enemy alien."

The second time I saw my dad cry was on May 29th, 1942, when we boarded the trains to leave San Jose to go to camp, to Santa Anita, the racetrack near Los Angeles, and I saw him. And I turned around and looked at him, and all these tears were coming down. I didn't have to ask him why he was crying. He had lost his business already. Our home was all right, and so here we were now in camps for the duration of World War II. Because of the love my dad had for this country, even as an alien, he wanted to help in the war effort. So he became a teacher under the Army Specialized Training Program, ASTP, teaching Japanese to U.S. Army personnel at the University of Chicago. And while we were in camp in Heart Mountain, Wyoming, and he got accepted at the ASTP program at the University of Chicago and was preparing to leave the camp to go to Illinois—he had to ask permission from the Army for my mother and me to leave with him, the Army said no.

And then the third time I saw my dad cry was when my mother died in 1956. So the words "freedom," "liberty," "democracy" since are all words that are very, very dear to me, and so to be able to receive the Freedom Award tonight is very touching and very moving, and to be associated with someone like Bill Cohen—in fact, I was trying to think, Bill. You had a staff person who I recruited from your office in my first term. Janie. I can't think of Janie's last name. I think it was Pettibone, but I don't recall. I remember recruiting her, Janie, from your office in that first term. Two came from Paul Sarbanes' office, I remember.

But in any event, this honor, I deeply appreciate from the Capitol Historical Society, and I accept this not just for myself, but for all those who have worked over the years to try to bring equality and justice to this country. And for that, I am very indebted

to all of you for your taking time to be here this evening as well as this honor. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

**RON SARASIN:** Wow! Thank you, Norm and Bill. Thank you very much. We honor these two gentlemen this evening as Secretaries who answered the call of a President of an opposite party, the first people in modern times to do that. There were others, but these are the first two in modern times, and we certainly, this evening, can see why they were chosen, why they were asked to serve. And we know how well they did serve.

On that note, I'd like to read to you a letter we received from the White House.

[Letter from President Obama not transcribed.]

**RON SARASIN:** Secretaries Cohen and Mineta will be joining us in the Reception, so please take the time at that moment to personally congratulate them.

I would like to thank the donors who have made this evening in large part possible, Norfolk Southern Corporation; AbbVie; the Baker, Donelson, Bearman, and Caldwell, PC; the Boeing Company; and Hill+Knowlton Strategies.

This concludes our program. Thank you for making this a memorable evening. Please enjoy the Reception. As you leave, please pick up one of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society mugs, which commemorates the close of our 50th anniversary, which we've been celebrating for the last 10 or 15 years.

[Laughter.]

**RON SARASIN:** We look forward to another 50 years. Thank you very, very much.

[Applause.]