

Remarks by Patrick Maines at the 2010 Friends & Benefactors Awards Banquet October 6, 2010

Thank you, Dick, and thanks too to all of you. Tonight marks the 19th consecutive year that we've hosted this banquet. Happy to report, it's gotten better every year.

Because I know we're all eager to hear tonight's honorees, and our special guest speaker, I won't take up any of your time other than to make this one observation: As has been the case for six years now, this month marks the observance of National Freedom of Speech Week (NFSW) – and it's a good thing.

As everyone knows, for all its strengths and virtues this democracy business can be brutal. Benjamin Franklin, for instance, once characterized democracy as two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. Which is why we can all be grateful that our own democracy is reined in a bit by aspects of our written Constitution. If, as is said, hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays to virtue, the Bill of Rights is the concession that government pays to the people, and the majority to minorities.

Of those ten amendments to the Constitution, it's the first one, and its Speech Clause specifically, that is most dear to our national life and well being. And it is these, freedom of speech and of the press, that we salute during National Freedom of Speech Week.

This year some 28 organizations will be observing NFSW in some way. Better still, because NFSW is not an invitation-only celebration, everyone is welcome to mark the occasion, and to do so as grandly or modestly as they wish. The main thing is just to take, every year, a few days to recognize the enormous contribution that the First Amendment plays in our civic life.

For more information about NFSW please go to freespeechweek.org, and remember, as we've said since the inception of this commemorative event: Free speech is the language of America.

Finally, I want to add my own congratulations to tonight's honorees, Kyle McSlarrow and Rupert Murdoch. Truly, it honors us to be able to recognize your accomplishments in this way.

Thank you.