

Remarks by Patrick Maines
2012 Friends & Benefactors Awards Banquet
Washington, D.C.
November 14, 2012

Thanks, Dick, and my sincerest thanks to all of you. Before we hear from tonight's speakers and honorees, I'd like to talk very briefly about a program that is dear to our heart. I speak, of course, about Free Speech Week, a national celebration that grew out of an earlier Institute program called the Cornerstone Project.

As some of you have noted, this is the first year since the launch of Free Speech Week, seven years ago, that we have hosted this banquet at a date later than FSW itself. Rest assured that that came about this year just because of scheduling issues, and not because of any diminished interest on our part. Indeed, the precise opposite is the case. Never have we been more committed to, or optimistic about the future of, this program.

To a significant degree, our optimism about Free Speech Week reflects the positive developments that marked this year's celebration, the most noteworthy of which were the efforts mounted by one of tonight's honorees, Bob Pittman. I know that Senator Wicker is going to tell you more about the gentleman, but I'd like just to thank him publicly for his many contributions, included among which are the FSW PSAs produced by and broadcast on Clear Channel radio stations this year, and perhaps even more important, by Bob's creation and chairing of a Free Speech Week Advisory Council. It's our hope that this advisory council will grow in numbers and influence, such that this event may truly become the country's premier annual celebration of free speech generally.

I'd be remiss if I didn't also give a shout-out to Mike Gallagher of the Entertainment Software Association. It was Mike who first introduced us to Electronic Arts and John Riccitiello. I had a chance to visit EA's facilities in Vancouver and their headquarters in the Bay Area, and what an eye opener that was! If you've ever marveled at the things they can do these days with video games, believe me it's the culmination of an extraordinary amount of talent and hard work, and we are very happy to salute those qualities in our award tonight to John Riccitiello.

In closing, I'd like to say that for the better part of 30 years The Media Institute has advocated a strong First Amendment, sound communications policies, and journalistic excellence. And with your help and continued support we'll keep on doing it for another 30.

Thanks very much.