Remarks by Mo Elleithee
Presenting The Media Institute's
2026 American Horizon Award
To Jack Abernethy
October 27, 2026

Shawn, thank you so much for the kind introduction.

And to Mike and the team at The Media Institute, congratulations and thank you. Your mission of promoting freedom of speech, encouraging a competitive media environment, and recognizing excellence in journalism has never been more important.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a historic night! Because you are about to witness a former DNC spokesman and Hillary Clinton staffer present an award to one of the people who launched FOX News!

You may want to hold off on leaving tonight until Hell has fully thawed out. I'm sure FOX 5 is on it and will let us know, right Jack?

But in all seriousness, I am so honored to be here tonight, because there are few people I respect more than my friend Jack Abernethy. And I am so proud to honor him tonight.

I first met Jack almost a decade ago, not long after I took the job running the Georgetown Institute of Politics. And I met him in the way that guys like me often meet guys like him – I was asking for money.

Since then, Jack has become someone whose friendship and counsel I have treasured dearly. In the time we've known each other, I've seen up close someone whose vision and commitment are fitting of this American Horizon Award.

Jack is a builder.

After graduating from Georgetown, he started out on a path to Wall Street. He went to NYU's business school, took a good look at how the Street worked, and decided it was boring. So in 1980, he took a job on the finance side of NBC's local stations, and by his own account he fell in love with the business about a week in.

He has been building ever since. He was at CNBC in its first year. In 1996, he helped launch Fox News. And for more than 20 years, he has led the FOX Television Stations, adding new businesses along the way, from streaming channels to a local news app. Some executives inherit an institution and manage it. Jack keeps building new ones.

But that's not why I wanted to be here tonight.

Jack believes in local news and its role in democracy.

For years, while much of the industry was cutting back, Jack was adding newscasts. In 2004, his stations were producing close to 600 hours of local news per week. Now, between linear and streaming, they are producing close to 1,800 hours.

That's 1,800 hours of city council meetings, school board fights, hurricanes, and high school football. It's how people learn who's running for mayor and why the road out front is closed. At a time when everything seems to be nationalized, and the industry is worried about news deserts, Jack is providing people *more* local content. As so much of the news ecosystem gets louder, he's turning down the volume by providing people the facts. And as so much of the industry gets as tribal and polarized as our politics, he offers diverse voices who are focused on the information that ties communities together.

But that's not why I wanted to be here tonight.

Jack bets on the future.

One of my favorite Jack stories starts on a drive to dinner in upstate New York. He passes a small radio station with a window, and inside, one guy is running the whole show by himself. Jack thinks, if you can do radio with one person, why not television? He takes the idea to his engineers. As Jack tells it, 90 percent of them looked at him like he was insane. But one said okay. And that's all it took.

The equipment wasn't the hard part. The hard part was finding someone willing to do eight jobs at once. So Jack hired young people right out of college, people who, as he put it, didn't know what they didn't know. But he trusted them to figure it out.

That experiment became LiveNOW from FOX. In just three months last year, it drew more YouTube views than NBC News, ABC News, and CBS News, and this summer it went to 24 hours a day.

It was built on Jack's faith in young people.

And THAT's why I really wanted to be here tonight.

When I asked Jack to join my Institute's Advisory Board, I told him I didn't want him just to be a name on our website. I wanted him to be involved. And he took that to heart.

Jack became a mentor to our students. Anytime he came through D.C., he'd have dinner with groups of students to give career advice. He ran clinics and workshops for our student podcasters, giving them tips on everything from interview research and crafting questions to how they could grow their audience. And after every single one of those conversations, Jack – without fail – said the same thing to me: "I think I got more out of that than they did."

I can think of no one more fitting of this American Horizon Award than Jack Abernethy – not just because of his ability to look around the corner and see the horizon, but because of his commitment to tomorrow's leaders who will chart its path.

Please join me in honoring the recipient of The Media Institute's 2026 American Horizon Award, Jack Abernethy.