

Wilson Center Remarks

Thank you everyone, it is wonderful to be with you virtually this evening, and I'd like to thank Former Governor Bill Haslam for the introduction.

I also want to thank my friend and former congressional colleague from Wisconsin – Ambassador Mark Green – for this award and great honor.

For many years I worked closely with Jane Harman as a colleague in Congress and it was a pleasure to work with her as she led the Wilson Center.

Now, I look forward to working with Mark to support and sustain the important work of this valuable institution.

My values, which I bring with me to my job as a legislator, are rooted in the community I grew up in – South St. Paul, Minnesota.

It is a community where neighbors invested in the schools, the parks, the libraries, the city infrastructure in order to give me – and all their children – a better future.

Going to elementary school in South St. Paul I never could image that I would be the second women elected to Congress from Minnesota or that I would be in a position to work with others to help create a brighter future for children in Minnesota, the U.S., and all around the world.

Now, as the Chair of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I am committed to ensuring our nation has the capacity to keep the American people safe, deter adversaries, and give the men and women of our Armed Forces and the Intelligence Community the necessary resources to do their jobs and come home safe.

But I am also focused on the power of American leadership to make lives better.

One of my proudest accomplishments in Congress occurred early in my career as a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee under the leadership of Chairman Henry Hyde.

While serving on that committee with Mark Green – I worked with the Chairman to secure a 10% set aside for orphans and vulnerable children in the original PEPFAR authorization.

That provision exemplifies the enormous generosity of the American people – providing billions of dollars to meet the needs of millions of AIDS orphans – and allowing them to go to school, access healthcare, and be welcomed in their villages.

And now I'm working with my colleague Congressman Fortenberry to reauthorize the Feed the Future program and improve our nation's response to global food insecurity and improving nutrition around the world.

These two pieces of legislation I have authored have saved and changed lives.

That's an accomplishment I feel aligns with Woodrow Wilson's philosophy when he said, "You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world."

We live in a world filled with enormous challenges.
Challenges right here at home that feel very threatening.
And I believe we all need to find a finer spirit of hope and achievement and action.

I have taken the path of legislator – not an activist, agitator or authoritarian – but collaborator and partner with my congressional colleagues, my fellow citizens, and people of good will from around the world.

In my previous role as Chair of the House Interior-Environment Appropriations Subcommittee, I had the privilege to secure funding for the Wilson Center and spent years defending it from some very intense fiscal attacks.

It was worth the effort - because I feel strongly about this institution and the work that you do.

The leadership and professional staff of the Wilson Center work to provide us all with "a greater vision ... to enrich the world", to paraphrase President Wilson.

That is why I am honored to receive this award because I so value the work of the Woodrow Wilson Center.

Thank you for allowing me to join you this evening.