

# SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on March 24, 2014

Location: Barbara Jordan Conference Center, Washington DC

Remarks: Chancellor's Remarks at the 2014 Robin Toner Awards Including Introduction of Keynote Speaker and Vice President Joe Biden

*The Chancellor was introduced by Lorraine Branham,  
Dean of the Newhouse School of Public Communications.*

Thank you, Dean Branham, and a special thanks to you and to the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications for sponsoring the Toner Prize and this wonderful event.

I also would like to thank those individuals who helped make this event possible:

- Our host, Drew Altman, president and CEO of the Kaiser Family Foundation, who provided this beautiful venue.
- Peter Gosselin, for providing invaluable assistance and arranging for our guest speaker, and for allowing Syracuse University to honor the memory of his wife, Robin, in this way. We are so glad Peter and Robin's children, Jacob and Nora, were also able to join us this evening.
- Thanks also to John Chapple, SU trustee and former classmate of Robin's, who—along with Peter—created the endowment for the Toner Program.
- And Professor Charlotte Grimes, SU's Knight Chair in Political Reporting and administrator of the Robin Toner Program, coordinator for the Toner Prize and tonight's celebration.

It is an honor and privilege for me to be with all of you this evening for this very special awards ceremony. It is a ceremony that not only honors the life and work of one of Syracuse University's own but also recognizes those who aspire to achieve the highest levels of journalistic excellence.

The Toner Prize was created specifically to honor excellence in political reporting, as Robin Toner epitomized throughout her career as national political correspondent for *The New York Times*. But it also highlights the critical need for dedicated journalists

who understand the role of an independent and free press, and fulfill that role with integrity and a passion for the truth.

This is all the more important at a time when the rapidly expanding media landscape makes it more and more difficult for us to sort out the truth. With the proliferation of media and a 24/7 news cycle, we need reporters who know how to cut through the noise and give us the information we need to practice good citizenship and hold our leaders and institutions accountable.

Robin Toner did that, and our Toner Prize honorees are doing the same. Their work consistently demonstrates the importance of thoughtful journalism to safeguard the highest and best ideals of democratic society.

I am especially pleased that our program tonight recognizes the life and work of two outstanding alumni—Robin Toner, of course, who graduated from the Newhouse School and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs in 1976, and Vice President Joe Biden, who graduated from SU's College of Law in 1968.

Their paths crossed often in the world of politics, as Robin covered the Vice President's important work in the Senate and the campaign leading up to the 2008 presidential election.

These two high-achieving alumni are vivid examples of Syracuse University's goal to educate and inspire students to make a difference in their professions, in their communities, and in the world.

Vice President Biden has done that and more over his four-plus decades in public office. Elected to the U.S. Senate at the age of 29, he went on to serve as senator from Delaware for 36 years.

- During that time, he established himself as a leader on critical domestic and international challenges and chaired both the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.
- He was recognized for his work on the 1994 Crime Bill and the Violence Against Women Act and was a leading force on legislation related to such critical challenges as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and the Middle East.

When freshman Senator Barack Obama tapped Senator Biden to be his running mate for the presidency in 2008, he gained a partner with a vast knowledge of foreign policy and security issues and a deep understanding of how Washington “works.”

- As the nation’s 47<sup>th</sup> Vice President, Joe Biden has drawn on his deep experience and knowledge to advance efforts to rebuild and stabilize the economy, raise the living standards for middle-class citizens, promote college affordability, and bolster U.S. manufacturing growth.
- He has represented the U.S. in every region of the world, addressing such issues as Israeli security, missile defense, drug trafficking, and international crime.

By turns, he has served the president as troubleshooter, sounding board, and wise counsel. Always, he acts with integrity and out of a deep love for and loyalty to his nation and its citizens.

He has been a loyal friend and passionate supporter of Syracuse University for six decades. He has delivered commencement addresses to thousands of our graduates. He brought the White House Task Force on Middle-Class Families to our campus for a national conversation on college access and affordability.

Just recently, on the eve of the now epic February 1st showdown basketball game in the Carrier Dome, the Vice President of the United States of America tweeted across the globe a fist-pumping image of himself in his White House office sporting a bright, fluorescent Orange “Beat Duke” T-shirt. In every way and every place he goes, he has been an enthusiastic and valued global ambassador for Syracuse University.

We are proud and deeply honored to call him one of our own. Please join me in welcoming the 47<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States, Joseph R. Biden Jr.

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