

Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on March 27, 2017

Location: Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C.

Remarks: Robin Toner Prize Award Event

Chancellor Syverud was introduced by Bob Dotson, Former National Correspondent

On behalf of Syracuse University, I welcome you all tonight for the presentation of the Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting.

I want to thank and recognize:

- Peter, Jacob and Nora Gosselin, and Trustee John Chapple, for their vision in establishing this award;
- Dean of the Newhouse School of Public Communications, Lorraine Branham;
- Adam Clymer—for securing this year’s keynote speaker;
- And Charlotte Grimes, longtime administrator of the Robin Toner Program in Political Reporting.

Robin Toner was a great journalist with dual degrees from Syracuse. She exemplified the high ideals of our Newhouse School of Communications. And she lived out the passion for citizenship that represents the spirit of our Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

Robin was lost all too young. The Toner Prize is a testament to her ideals.

With us tonight are a group of students from the Newhouse school. They are the ones charged with carrying Robin’s vision forward. We’d ask them to stand and be recognized.

At Syracuse University, our vision is to prepare our students to become engaged citizens, scholars and leaders in a rapidly changing global society.

Robin Toner lived these ideals. She saw journalism as true public service.

She created change as the first woman to be a national political correspondent for the *New York Times*.

And she raised the bar with her courage to hold the powerful accountable.

Her reporting was both meticulous and illuminating.

In her obituary, the *New York Times* said Robin authored more than 1,900 articles while on staff there. Less than 10 required any kind of public correction.

Robin devised her own method for checking and re-checking names, dates, facts and figures before her stories were published.

When she passed away the editor-in-chief of *The Atlantic* paid her tribute, saying: “Robin was a genius of reporting; in fact, she almost never got anything wrong.”

It’s hard not to wonder tonight how Robin would have covered this last presidential campaign.

How she would have reacted to the attacks on the media.....and what she would have thought about the ubiquitous term “fake news.”

Certainly, she would have appreciated the recent words of our keynote speaker, Governor John Kasich, when he appeared last month on CNN and told the press: “Thank God you’re there to hold people accountable.”

Our speaker John Kasich this week was named by Fortune Magazine as #12 on the list of the world’s top leaders. He has been a dynamic leader of Ohio and,

of course, Governor Kasich endured many months on the 2016 campaign trail under the watchful eye of journalists. He hung in there longer than all the other candidates in a crowded Republican primary field.

Governor Kasich remained grounded in his convictions. He promises to talk about that experience in a new book due out next month, titled “Two Paths: America Divided or United.” In it, Governor Kasich takes aim at news media bias, the race for ratings and the proliferation of fake news.

Governor Kasich is the father of twin 17 year old daughters who are looking at colleges now. I have urged him to think Syracuse.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the Governor of the State of Ohio, John Kasich.

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