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Remarks to the National Association of Broadcasters Convention

April 15, 1991

The President. Thank you, Eddie, and Lowry. And it's great to join America's broadcasters in Las Vegas, if only through the wizardry of satellite communications.

In the last few months, all of America and, indeed, most of the world saw the events of the Persian Gulf unfold through the miracle of satellite communications. And they saw it unfold in a uniquely American way. Not only did you cover the military and political aspects of the war, but you did much more. In every ADI [area of dominant influence] across the country, broadcasters did their part to support the brave men and women of our Armed Forces. Community by community, broadcasters organized blood drives, provided critical support for the family members left behind, sent thousands of radios to our troops overseas, and were the first to bring home news about local service men and women.

Now that the war is over, we must return to and, in fact, redouble our service to the community in the more traditional way of the local broadcaster. In this regard, it is fitting that today marks the kickoff of a Points of Light National Celebration of Community Service, honoring those who are engaged in direct and consequential service focused on serious social problems here at home. This unprecedented 12-day celebration will challenge every American to reach out and serve another in need in 1991.

During the Gulf war, broadcasters demonstrated the unique ability to help people see how each of us can make a difference. As your convention theme for 1991 is ''Always There,'' I hope that you will find a way to shine your powerful spotlight on those whose selfless acts of community service, if multiplied manyfold, would transform the Nation.

The Nation needs, from all broadcasters, the kind of service that many of you are already giving your communities. Some of you have education initiatives that inspire community and parental involvement in education and provide your own employees with tutoring opportunities. Others have outstanding health campaigns that educate the public about the prenatal care necessary to have a healthy baby, while many of your employees have become mentors to young mothers, teaching them necessary nutrition habits and parenting skills. And many of you have focused on housing, helping your community renovate or build homes for families without a place to live. Across the country, your stations are lighting up America.

I understand that today you're honoring someone who is very special. I'm taking about ABC's Tom Murphy. Tom: Barbara and I can't thank you enough for all you've done to promote literacy across America. Your efforts have helped countless Americans find new meaning in their lives by the simple but powerful act of reading. Congratulations on an award that's well deserved.

And I also understand that you'll be hearing shortly from Al Sikes, the Chairman of the FCC. Al has a long history in broadcasting, starting with his own radio station in Missouri.

And in closing, let me again say that I'm delighted to be with the broadcasters. But Eddie, Lowry, it wouldn't feel like I was talking with broadcasters if I didn't take a couple of questions. So, fire away.

Free Media

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. As you know, broadcasting is the only free media available to everyone in the United States. There are some today who question the future of free radio and television, and I'd like to ask you what your thoughts are about the future of free, over-the-air broadcasting.

The President. That's what we call a ''slow ball'' in the trade. I am pleased that Americans are able to enjoy the benefits of the world's most dynamic and competitive telecommunications industry. Furthermore, I'm convinced that free broadcasting is a cor-

nerstone of our democracy.

You know, last year when Vaclav Havel, the President of Czechoslovakia, came to the White House, he told me that he and others used to listen to Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America. And President Havel credited those broadcasts with helping to launch the Velvet Revolution and turn a totalitarian society into a democratic one. It's clear, then, that a free and accessible media strengthens and helps to build democracy.

Closer to home, I think that broadcasters help unite our communities. The future of broadcasting lies in your ability to remain close to your communities. So, I'm for it.

Domestic Agenda

Q. Mr. President, one more question. With the great victory of our troops in the Persian Gulf, much interest is focused on international affairs. Tell us about your domestic priorities for the near future.

The President. Well, our number one priority is, and will remain, restoring strong economic growth because economic growth creates jobs and opportunities for all Americans. One key to long-term prosperity is an educated, innovative work force. I saluted Tom a minute ago for his interest in promoting literacy, a part of education.

Later this week we're unveiling a strategy to improve America's education system. Now, let me list a few other key domestic proposals. Our national energy strategy will help make us a more self-reliant country. We have a strong anticrime package that's going to help us free our streets. And I need the support in the Congress. It will help in the antidrug fight as well.

We have a financial reform plan. And that's going to be of great benefit to our economy. We've got to modernize our banking system, reform the regulatory system. We have a package of housing and education proposals that will expand choice and opportunity for individuals. We are for homeownership and tenant management. Families and communities are going to benefit from this. And then, our proposal to turn back many programs to the States, where people can best apply the money to their own most pressing needs. You know, we hear over and over from the Governors, again: Do not send out more mandated programs to the States. Let us use our initiative at the local level, at the State level, at the community level. And we're for that.

As local broadcasters, you know better than most that this nation's domestic challenges can't be solved by government initiatives and legislation alone. The reason I spend as much of my time on Points of Light is to make it clear that every American has a role to play in solving these serious domestic problems. It's not a copout. We're not trying to shift away from our responsibility, but in the hands of the individual is where the power is to make something happen.

So, whether it's educating our children or housing the homeless, feeding the hungry, or caring for the sick and elderly, these problems will never be solved without community action. So, please keep up the important work.

Well, hey, look, thank you for including me in your convention. And with Eddie and Lowry running the show, I'm sure that you'll get an awful lot accomplished. So, thanks again. And God bless you all.

Note: The President spoke at 3:14 p.m. from Room 459 of the Old Executive Office Building, and his remarks were broadcast via satellite to the convention, which was held in Las Vegas, NV. In his remarks, he referred to Edward Fritts, president and chief executive officer of the National Association of Broadcasters; L. Lowry Mays, chairman of the board of the association; Tom Murphy, chairman of Capital Cities-ABC; Alfred C. Sikes, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission; and President Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia.