

# **U.S. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COALITION**

**TRIBUTE DINNER  
FEBRUARY 2, 2011**

## **REMARKS OF FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE MADELEINE ALBRIGHT**

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT: Thank you very much, Helene, for your kind words. And thank you very much for the award. And Happy Groundhog Day to you all. (Laughter.)

It's great to see so many friends. I have to say that I loved the message from President Clinton. And I have to tell you this, is that whenever we had to argue for our budget, we first went to the director of OMB. And we would all sit there and make our arguments to him. And then, we would have a special meeting with the president to make our arguments to him. And then, I would always call him on Christmas Eve and say, could you just add a little bit more? It is Christmas and he did. (Laughter.) So we had a special relationship. (Applause.)

My message this evening is simple. And I'm very proud to be a member of the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition where we were bipartisan even before it was cool. (Laughter.) And not only are we bipartisan, we also come from so many different sectors of society. And we include people who have served both in and outside the government. And we have young members mixed in with all the gray hair and a couple of bald heads. And yet we are united by a common set of principles.

First, despite the many prophets of doom and decline, American leadership remains today a pillar of international security, justice and peace. Second – (applause). Second, I believe we will only be able to maintain our leadership if we have adequate resources. And third, we are determined that America remains strong and respected.

And if you don't believe us, we can always speak a little bit louder. And tonight, with George Rupp and Nancy Schlegel and Cokie Roberts and Helene Gayle and Dan Glickman, and my very distinguished co-chair and co-honoree, Tom Ridge, and the one and only Bill Gates, you can bet that we're going to make an awful lot of more noise. (Applause.)

I am truly happy to be honored with secretary – Governor Ridge because he has done so much. And something that people don't know: We are both of Czech background. So we have many things in common.

We all know that there are still some in this city and around our country who think of America as an island. And they believe that we are unaffected by events across the borders or on the far side of the sea. And they refuse to accept that America's interests are linked to the security and prosperity of allies and friends. And they don't understand that leadership comes with a price.

The truth is that we won't be able to rely on other countries to help fight the extraordinary dangers that most threaten us unless we help the global majority to fight the chronic problems that can frighten them each and every day. So we have to do – have some educating to do.

And let me be clear that our purpose is not simply to defend public spending for its own sake. Some of you may remember Senator Edmund Muskie, my first boss in Washington. Now, I can tell you from experience that he was a man with a down-to-earth way of talking, a first-rate intellect and a world-class temper. (Laughter.) He was also the father of the congressional budget process. And for want of a better term, he was a tightwad.

And he didn't think that there was anything inherently liberal or progressive about spending money. In fact, he wouldn't give you a dime unless it was justified. But he also understood that there is nothing free about freedom. He came from a family of Polish immigrants, and he was a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy during World War II. And he knew the value of American leadership because he had seen it make all the difference in his own life.

And I don't know about you, but I can definitely relate to that. And yet, America today is embattled. And our troops are fighting a war in Afghanistan that cannot be won by military means alone. We're under assault by terrorists who cannot be tracked down and defeated without the cooperation of other countries, and we worry that the world's most dangerous weapons might fall into the hands of the world's most dangerous people. Yet preventing that can only be a multinational enterprise.

We have a struggling economy that can grow only if our exports expand, which means that foreign populations must have the means to buy what we sell. And we're in a battle of ideas with dictators and demagogues who spread lies about what we do and what we intend.

We have to push back, but we won't be able to do that if at the same time we're cutting back on embassies, cutting back on public diplomacy, cutting back on student exchanges, cutting back on assistance and severing our connections to the world. (Applause.)

We have good reason to be concerned about the federal budget deficit. But as we have learned through history, the best route to fiscal stability is to prevent war. And the quickest path to catastrophe is to allow small problems to grow into big ones. There is no easy path to leadership.

Consider the turbulence that we now see in the Middle East. The issues there are as complex as the stakes are high. The United States cannot dictate specific outcomes in countries such as Egypt or Tunisia. But we are in a far better position than we might have been had we not raised our voice at key moments on behalf of democratic reform and human rights.

And we will be – (applause) – and we will be in a far better position in the future if we remain engaged in support of the legitimate aspirations of the region's people. The truth is that no country has a more compelling interest than ours in an international system that truly works to

keep the peace, foster development, build free institutions and establish and enforce the rule of law.

And no country has a greater reason for pride in its tradition of leadership. I didn't always agree with President George W. Bush, but he was a champion in the global fight against HIV and AIDS, and all Americans should be proud of that. (Applause.)

Bill Clinton led the campaign to halt ethnic cleansing and terror in the Balkans. And John Kennedy sent forth the finest group of ambassadors America has ever had, Sarge Shriver and the Peace Corps. (Applause.)

And 30 years ago, Ronald Reagan launched what everyone now describes as a revolution against big government. He also increased the level of U.S. foreign aid, and with Democratic partners, established the National Endowment for Democracy.

This evening, I have to tell you that even after many years of being exposed to cynics and naysayers, I still believe that the United States is much more than just another country. I want America to be strong and admired. And I want the respect to continue to be earned throughout the coming decade, and into the next, and into the next.

And as supporters of the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, I know you share that desire. And so tonight, let us make a beautiful noise together as we rededicate ourselves to that goal. Thank you very, very much for this great honor. (Applause.)

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