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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONIES FOR THE  
F. EDWARD HEBERT LIBRARY

10:50 A.M. CDT

Thank you very much, my close and dear friend,  
your Congressman, Eddie Hebert.

Mrs. Hebert, Governor Edwards, Lt. Governor  
Fitzmorris, Senator Johnston, my former colleagues in  
the House of Representatives, Lindy Boggs and Dave Treen,  
Mayor Landrieu, Bishop Hannan, distinguished guests,  
ladies and gentlemen:

I don't believe that I have ever had a more  
complimentary introduction. And I hope and trust, Eddie,  
that what you have said I can live up to. It certainly  
is what we, as a people, must do. And to the extent  
that I can, you can be assured that I will try to the  
maximum.

I am here in the great area of New Orleans. It  
is a privilege and a pleasure for me to participate in  
the groundbreaking ceremony for the Hebert Library.

There are few men in the United States Congress  
that I have known longer or respected more than the man  
that all of us honor here on this occasion today.

Eddie Hebert and I have many views in common.  
We have had some areas of disagreement, but the main  
relationship that I have had with your great Congressman  
is the personal one. And that personal relationship has  
meant a great deal to me over the time that we have known  
one another.

I compliment all of you in this great part of  
our country for showing the superb judgment in seeing  
to it that you are represented by Eddie Hebert.

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Eddie Hebert was a legislative veteran when I entered the Congress in January of 1949. Eddie Hebert is a leading member of the Congress today, 26 years after I first met him, and 34 years after he first entered the Congress of the United States.

But we are not paying tribute today to Eddie Hebert because of his stamina and Eddie's power, remarkable as those attributes are, we are here today because of the service Eddie Hebert has rendered to all of you and many before you and hopefully many that will follow you.

He has rendered an unbelievable service on behalf of his people, his State, and his country.

Now, even though Eddie and I have served on different sides of the political aisle in the House of Representatives, I have especially respected his total dedication to a stronger America. I guess so many of us feel very close to Eddie Hebert and I especially, and let me tell you a story. if I might.

When I was the Republican Leader in the House of Representatives, Eddie Hebert, a very staunch Democrat, was sent an invitation to a Republican leadership breakfast by mistake. Well, Eddie had enough of that wonderful sense of humor to let that one go by. He didn't say a word. He just sent the invitation back to me with a clipping of an ad for cigarettes and it said, "I would rather fight than switch." (Laughter)

I worked with Eddie for more than a quarter of a century as a colleague and now as President and I can plainly and categorically tell you that one of the reasons America is strong, free, and secure as a Nation is because of men like Eddie Hebert in the Congress of the United States.

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Congressman Hebert's skill as a negotiator is well known in Washington. The tangible evidence of it is apparent here in the great State of Louisiana.

Eddie Hebert is such a great negotiator that if he had arranged the Louisiana Purchase, not only would he have purchased that huge amount of land for only \$15 million, but I have the feeling that Eddie would have gotten some green stamps, too. (Laughter)

You know, of course, that Eddie was one of the outstanding crusading newspaper people in Louisiana prior to his service in the Congress. He had a reputation as an individual who was hard working in that field of journalism, and a nose for news, and was highly recognized in his profession.

But, Eddie has a slight credibility gap, as I discovered in reading his biography. It goes back to 1940, during his first campaign. Eddie said, if elected, he would serve only one term. He said he was just taking a sabbatical from his newspaper occupation.

I think it is fair to say that even if he has extended his sabbatical a few extra years -- 32, to be exact -- Eddie has paid his dues both as a journalist and a Congressman.

It seems highly appropriate to me that his literally thousands and thousands of friends here in New Orleans and elsewhere would pay tribute to his record and to him as a person by the establishment of this library.

I consider it a great privilege and a very high honor to participate. There is no finer way, in my judgment, to make Congressman Hebert's record indelible in this community than to have this building and its contents in this wonderful place in this area.

Of course, Eddie's best monument will be his achievements, his own record as a public servant, but the mementoes in this building, in this library, will help to tell the story of those great achievements, will help to keep them alive for the generations to follow.

It occurs to me that everything I have said so far reeks a little too much of the past, of a story that is already ended, and that is not the way his friends, and particularly myself, feel about Eddie Hebert.

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We honor him today, not only for what he has achieved, but for what he continues to achieve. He is a courageous, untiring patriot, and on a personal basis I think a great guy.

May he keep serving his country. May he keep serving his country, warming all our hearts for many, many long years to come.

If I may, may I add a personal note. May Eddie's wonderful sense of humor stay with us, too, lightening the burdens when things seem heaviest, and reminding us all that in serious times -- and we have some serious times right now -- we must never lose our gift of laughter.

Another quality which Eddie possesses was once described by Robert E. Lee, in very simple and very moving words. "Duty," said Lee, "is the sublimest word in our language. Do your duty in all things. You cannot do more; should never wish to do less."

Eddie Hebert lives by that code. I have never known him to do any less than his very best.

Louisiana is a better State and America is a better country because of our friend, Eddie Hebert.

I am proud. I cherish the many times I have been with him on the floor of the House, in meetings concerning our national security. I cherish that relationship and the opportunity to have served with him.

As I said earlier, I am even prouder to call him my friend, and I think this is really the feeling that all of us have here today, and we are fortunate to be sharing with one another.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 11:03 A.M. CDT)