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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
TO BE DELIVERED AT THE  
GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONIES FOR THE  
F. EDWARD HEBERT LIBRARY

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

It is a pleasure, and a privilege, for me to participate in the ground-breaking ceremony for the Hebert Library. There are few men in the United States Congress I have known longer or respected more than the man we honor here today.

Eddie Hebert was already a legislative veteran when I entered the Congress in 1949. And he is still one of its leading Members today, 26 years after I first met him, and 34 years after his own arrival on Capitol Hill.

But we are not paying tribute to Eddie Hebert today because of his stamina and his staying power, remarkable as they are. We are here because of the service Eddie has rendered -- and continues to render -- to his country.

I have worked with Eddie for more than a quarter of a century -- as a colleague and now as President. And I can state that one of the reasons America is a strong, free and secure Nation today is because of men in the Congress like him.

You know, of course, that Eddie was one of the first crusading journalists in Louisiana. He was an honest, hard-working newsman.

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

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

That is why I was so glad to learn about this library -- and why I am so pleased and honored to be here today for the groundbreaking. You could not have thought of a better way to pay tribute to this fine man than by building a library.

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

(MORE)

It occurs to me that everything I have said so far reeks a little too much of the past--of a story that has already ended. And that is not the way Eddie Hebert's friends feel about him.

We honor him today not only for what he has achieved, but for what he continues to achieve. He is a courageous and untiring patriot, and a very great guy. May he keep on serving his country, and warming our hearts, for many long years to come.

And, if I may add a personal note, may his wonderful sense of humor stay with us too, lightening the burden when things seem heaviest, and reminding us all that, even in serious times, we must never lose our gift of laughter.

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

Eddie Hebert lives by that code. I have never known him to do any less than his best. And Louisiana is a better state, and America is a better country, because of him.

I am proud to have served with him. I am even prouder to call him my friend. And I think this is a feeling that all of us here today are fortunate in sharing.

Thank you very much.

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