Thank you.

It is a great honor to be here tonight and to receive this award, one named for one of the great presidents of our history. I stand here as the descendant of parents who revered Franklin Roosevelt’s name. As my father often said, “FDR saved the constitution, saved the nation, and in so doing eventually played a lead role in saving western civilization.”

I have often said that I am a reporter who got lucky, very lucky. So I accept this award, not in my name, but in the service of all the brave men and women who today are struggling to report the truth in what is arguably one of the most consequential and fraught moments for the press in American history.

This institution enshrined in the very first amendment to the Constitution, this check on power envisioned by our founding fathers—and championed so nobly by Franklin Roosevelt—as an insurance policy on our democracy is now under withering attack. It is facing headwinds from many directions: crumbling business models, the proliferation of propaganda fanned by social media that purports to be news, and sustained assaults from many of those in power who throw about the epithet of “fake news” as a means to undercut our credibility.

The damage being done is not only to our reputation and livelihoods. It is a direct threat to the sustainability of our republic. Without truth and facts, how are we going to give the American citizenry the tools it needs to participate in our electoral process? Presidents have always complained of their press coverage. Franklin Roosevelt was no exception, but he on the whole got along with the press exceptionally well; he understood journalists and valued their role. Presidents generally have understood that the Fourth Estate is as central to our strength as our military and economic might and good political leadership.

What heartens me is that in the face of the unprecedented challenges today, reporters and the best of our journalistic institutions are refusing to bend let alone break. Journalists can be a stubborn species, and our instinct is to fight back with more determination to uncover that which the powerful wish to remain hidden. As a result, the quality of investigative reporting today is at the highest level I have seen in some time.

Imagine where we would be at this moment of our history without a free press. It is incumbent on everyone who believes in a government of accountability, bound by reality, to stand in support of the First Amendment like you do tonight. Thank you.