

# First Citizen Awards: 2013

Remarks by

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President Miller, members of the Senate, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It is my privilege to be here again today to present, on your behalf, the *First Citizen* Awards of the Maryland Senate. This is the 20th year that I have had the honor of explaining the reasons for the award, and to prepare brief summaries of the many contributions the awardees have made in their lifetime of public service.

The text of the award says best what it means to be a *First Citizen*:

*First Citizen* is the name that Charles Carroll of Carrollton chose to sign a series of articles published by Anne Catharine Green in the Annapolis *Maryland Gazette* in 1773. They form a strong defense of an independent legislature and were among the earliest arguments for a new concept of government based upon traditional community rights and liberties that protected its citizens from arbitrary rule.

At the time, Carroll, as a Roman Catholic, could neither vote nor hold public office because of his faith. With the publication of these articles, Carroll launched a career of public service that began with his active participation in the Revolution gaining him a vote with the right to run for public office, and did not end until his death at the age of 95 in 1832, as the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence. In addition to helping draft Maryland's first Constitution and adding his signature to the Declaration of Independence in 1776, Carroll served as President of the Maryland Senate, of which he was a member from 1777 to 1800, and as one of the first United States Senators from Maryland (1789-1792).

To be a First Citizen is to be a dedicated and effective participant in the process of making government work for the benefit of all.

Although not yet fully articulated in the First Citizen letters, Charles Carroll was challenging all citizens to think about much needed changes in government, changes that would allow people like him "freedom of speech and thought," changes that would separate the powers of the Executive and the Legislature, and that would ensure that taxation could not be imposed by anyone not subject to the laws passed by the Legislature. Carroll was among the first people in the colonies to advance a new concept of government based on the advice and consent of the people. This led to one of the most creative experiments in defining self-government that the world has ever witnessed.

To Carroll, and to others such as his distant cousin, Charles Carroll the Barrister, Samuel Chase, and William Paca, all of whom served in the Maryland Senate, making government work for the good of the whole meant a thoughtful reworking of the structure of government by writing it all down, debating the results, and crafting the final product in committees separately and of the whole. Carroll as *First Citizen*, saw government much as every citizen should see it today, in constant need of attention and thoughtful legislative action.

Standing at the ready to assist in his first public debate over legislative rights with a seasoned politician who was widely known for his ability to win an argument, was the printer to the colony and publisher of the local newspaper, Anne Catharine Green. While women would not reach full citizenship until the 20th century, Maryland has been fortunate to have a number of women printers and editors like Anne Catharine Green who pushed the envelope of public debate through the printed word, and in doing so, advanced reasoned democracy.

Over seven months beginning in January of 1773 and ending with Carroll having the last published word on July 1, 1773, the debate between Charles Carroll and Daniel Dulany raged in print over whether or not the Governor had the right to set fees for government services without the consent of the legislature. In the end Carroll won the argument, but not until a new government was formed and George Washington had achieved a military victory over the King's army.

Anne Catharine Green would be pleased with the three awards to be given today, all to women of distinction who have deployed the privileges of citizenship to the betterment of us all through public service.

Today the Maryland Senate honors three individuals who through their chosen public careers that began in the law and in the fourth estate, have helped forge meaningful public policy and municipal progress in the face of daunting fiscal constraint and accelerating political shrillness.

The first award is to a person well known to state house insiders, but who deserves a wider press for her skills at getting legislation passed and brokering compromise where compromise is needed. Victoria L. Gruber has been a member of the Maryland Bar since 1997 and has recently been recognized by the *Daily Record* as one of 100 most influential women in Maryland. She came to her current post having been president of the Student Government Association at the University of Maryland College Park, a

lobbyist with a well-known firm while studying for a law degree that placed her first in her class, a budget analyst, and counsel to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee. As one admirer puts it, Vicki “learned areas of the budget that others found too challenging or arcane, and that knowledge proved invaluable as the legislature confronted difficult decisions about budget cuts, revenue, and entitlement reform.... She is an extremely dedicated public servant who has achieved tremendous professional success while building and maintaining a reputation that is beyond reproach.”

The second honoree follows in the footsteps of her father who the Senate honored with the First Citizen Award posthumously in 2004, but stands in her own right as a dedicated leader in her efforts to keep Baltimore on the path to municipal survival and success. Trained as a lawyer, Stephanie Rawlings Blake was the youngest person ever elected to the City Council of Baltimore. She survived *Outward Bound*, and some grueling political campaigns and is known for her ability to bring all elements of the community together to seek solutions to the challenges of rebuilding the infrastructure of city services and reversing decades of urban decay. Her skills as a manager and communicator have recently been recognized by her appointment as secretary of the Democratic National Committee. She brings passion, determination, advocacy, and commitment to every aspect of her public service. In her third message on the State of the City, Mayor Rawlings-Blake quoted Abraham Lincoln, *the best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time*. Lincoln also said *You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today*. Mayor Rawlings-Blake has shown the courage to face the challenges of the day, one day at a time.

The third honoree today, needs little introduction to those who know anything about the importance of the port of Baltimore to the economic health and well-being of the Old Line State. Helen Delich Bentley, fondly known as *Tugboat Helen* from her biography in *Women of Achievement in Maryland History*, has served the Port of Baltimore and the people of Maryland well over a long career that began fresh out of college in 1945 as reporter for the *Baltimore Sun* covering the maritime industry, labor, and transportation. In 1969 she entered public service as the first woman to head the Federal Maritime Commission. As she rightfully put it “I am very proud to have broken the glass ceiling for women in the federal government by demanding to be the first woman chair of the Federal Maritime Commission, rather than just accepting a commission seat. I was able to make major contributions to the shipping industry, and the appointment resulted in my being the fourth-highest ranking woman in U.S. government history.” Her five terms in Congress are distinguished in part by her *reputation as a relentless fighter for economic opportunity* and as a *formidable mediator between labor and management*. In the words of one of her biographers, she exemplifies some of the best qualities of a public servant. She is “*determined, diligent, tenacious*.”