

**Welcoming Remarks of Kenneth Wollack
President, National Democratic Institute**

**The W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award and
Madeleine K. Albright Grant Luncheon**

**Washington, D.C.
October 24, 2007**

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am Ken Wollack, the President of the National Democratic Institute. Welcome to our luncheon featuring the 2007 W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award and the Madeleine K. Albright Grant.

Today we recognize political leadership, women's leadership at the national level and at the grass roots. Our recipients represent the celebratory side of the democracy story. But the news and pictures that recently came out of Burma are a stark reminder of a different side of the story: the hard reality that the democratic struggle continues in far too many places.

At NDI's inception almost 25 years ago, I don't think that anyone could have anticipated how much the world would change. Fortunately, wherever we looked, there were believers in the power for change.

It was bipartisan optimism that led to the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy and its four affiliated institutes, all proud members of the NED family – NDI, the International Republican Institute, the Labor movement's Solidarity Center, and the Center for International Private Enterprise.

We are honored by the presence of members and staff of the U.S. Congress. The legislative branch of the U.S. is an inspiration for democratic activists around the world, and for NDI.

NDI has enjoyed the continuous support of four administrations. Each recognized that a more democratic world is a more peaceful and prosperous place.

We are pleased that officials from the White House, State Department, the Agency for International Development, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation have joined us today.

At its heart, NDI is a public/private partnership.

So I especially want to single out for appreciation those who made this event possible, the sponsors listed in the program: the corporations, trade unions, foundations, and individual donors.

A special note of thanks to the Gates Foundation, which is not listed in your program.

I want to welcome the diplomatic corps and political leaders from abroad. And I would like to express our gratitude to those practitioners in this room and thousands of others from around the globe who volunteer their time to assist NDI's efforts in more than sixty countries – to strengthen political parties, parliaments and civil society; to safeguard elections; and to support citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

NDI is not alone in carrying out its democratic development mission. We are part of a global network that includes governments, intergovernmental bodies and other nongovernmental groups.

The growth of that network over the past two decades is a demonstration that democratic practice has become inseparable from democratic cooperation.

Those that are with us today include: IFES, Freedom House, the American Bar Association, the UNDP, the OAS, the Inter parliamentary Union, the Club of Madrid, Internews, Vital Voices, the Westminster Foundation, the Open Society Institute, and the German party foundations.

Finally, I want to recognize NDI's staff. Working in challenging and sometimes dangerous environments, they are the most talented and dedicated group of people I have known.

And today we remember and honor Amy Biehl and Andi Parhamovich.

A special word about NDI's Vice President, Jean Dunn. For 18 years Jean has not only organized events like this but, in her spare time, has run the day-to-day operations of the Institute. Put simply, her leadership has kept a sometimes unruly and always eclectic group together.

She has done so with great effectiveness -- in a way that has built the relationships of trust that are at the heart of our mission and has enabled us to carry out our work.

President Bush may be the "decider" but Jean is our "enabler."

As the president of NDI, I am guided by a dedicated board of directors. And in so many ways, we are fortunate to benefit from the leadership of our chairman. She was our founding vice chair, left briefly for some mundane government work, and came back in 2001.

We at NDI have always rejected the notion that liberty is an end-stage, a luxury. That people want bread first, or physical security, or just stability.

NDI has learned first hand that governments have a responsibility to people's aspirations, that sovereignty derives from the people and that people are in a demanding mood. Food and safety, yes; but no less, a say about what happens in their lives.

Our chairman often speaks of this precisely because she has been a practitioner of *realpolitik*. As such, she has always understood that democracy is about values, principles and relationships, and that national security advances when these things intertwine.

And she is an articulate and forceful advocate for these values and principles because they have concrete meaning in her own life.

She escaped her country of birth to secure not only physical safety but personal freedom. This is the real hard-eyed view of the world, and it is more needed today than ever before. So it gives me great pleasure to introduce our next speaker – Dr., Professor, Ambassador, Secretary, and, most important to us, Chairman Madeleine Korbelt Albright.