Below are the remarks of President Barack Obama in his speech, “What the People Need Done,” delivered on the occasion of the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln celebrated at a banquet at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield, Illinois, on the evening of February 12, 2009.

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much. Please everybody have a seat. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Well, it is wonderful to be back in Springfield, and I see so many familiar faces. To Mr. (Richard) Hart, to Marilyn (Kushak), to my secretary of transportation, Ray LaHood, to two of the finest governors that we’ve had in the past, Jim Thompson and Jim Edgar.

To Lura Lynn Ryan, and to our new governor, who’s going to be doing outstanding work for us in the future, Pat Quinn.

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(Continued from page 1)

To Reverend McCants, and to my dear friend, Loretta Durbin, I do feel guilty because Dick was the one who brought this event to my attention. I’m here and he’s there. But part of the reason that Dick Durbin has been such a great friend, not just to me but to the people of Illinois, is because his work always comes first, and he has been unbelievable in providing leadership in the Senate through thick and thin. And I’m very, very grateful to him. He is one of my greatest friends. And I would not be standing here if it were not for Dick Durbin. So please give Dick Durbin a big round of applause.

So, it is wonderful to be back in Springfield, the city where I got my start in elective office, and where I served for nearly a decade. I see some of my colleagues, your attorney general, Lisa Madigan, in the house.

And you’ve got some constitutional officers there. I think that’s Alexi (Giannoulis), your treasurer, who’s going to be playing basketball with me at some point.

Dan Hynes, a comptroller and just an incredible supporter during this past race.

And your new Senate president, John Cullerton, one of the sharpest legislators that we’ve ever had.

Is the Speaker around? He’s over there. Mr. Speaker (Mike Madigan), it’s good to see you. Thank you.

So I’ve got a lot of friends here. I’ve got to stop there. Otherwise, I’m going to be using up all my time.

So I served here for nearly a decade. And as has already been mentioned, this is where I launched my candidacy for President two years ago, this week - on the steps, on the steps of the Old State Capitol where Abraham Lincoln served and prepared for the presidency.

It was here, nearly one hundred and fifty years ago, that the man whose life we are celebrating today, who you’ve been celebrating all week, bid farewell to this city that he had come to call his own. And as already been mentioned, on a platform at a train station not far from where we’re gathered, Lincoln turned to the crowd that had come to see him off, and said, “To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything.” And being here tonight, surrounded by all of you, I share his sentiment.

But looking out at this room, full of so many who did so much for me, I’m also reminded of what Lincoln once said to a favor-seeker who claimed it was his efforts that made the difference in the election. Lincoln asked him, “So you think you made me President?” “Yes,” the man replied, “under Providence, I think I did.” “Well,” said Lincoln, “it’s a pretty mess you’ve got me into. But I forgive you.”

So whoever of you think you are responsible for this, we’re takin’ names.

It’s a humbling task, marking the bicentennial of our 16th President’s birth - humbling for me in particular, because it’s fair to say that the presidency of this singular figure who we celebrate, in so many ways made my own story possible.

Here in Springfield, it’s easier, though, to reflect on Lincoln the man rather than the marble giant. Before Gettysburg, before Antietam, before Fredericksburg and Bull Run, before emancipation was proclaimed and the captives were set free. In 1854, Lincoln was simply a Springfield lawyer who’d served just a single term in Congress. Possibly in his law office, his feet on a cluttered desk, his sons playing around him, his clothes a bit too small to fit his uncommon frame, uh, maybe wondering if somebody might call him up and ask him to be commerce secretary, (Obama laughs with crowd) he put some thoughts on paper, and for what purpose we do not know:

“The legitimate object of government,” he wrote, “is to do for the people what needs to be done, but which they cannot, by individual effort, do at all, or do so well, by themselves.” To do for the people what needs to be done but which they cannot do on their own. It’s a simple statement. But it answers a central question of Abraham Lincoln’s life. Why did he land on the side of union? What was it that made him so unrelenting in pursuit of victory that he was willing to test the Constitution he ultimately preserved? What was it that led this man to give his last full measure of devotion so that our nation might endure?

These are not easy questions to answer, and I cannot know if I am right. But I suspect that his devotion to the idea of union came not from a belief that government always had the answer. It came not from a failure to understand our individual rights and responsibilities. This rugged rail-splitter, born in a log cabin of pioneer stock; who cleared a path through the woods as a boy; who lost a mother and a sister to the rigors of frontier life; who taught himself all that he knew. And everything that he had was because of his hard work. This man, our first Republican President, knew better than anybody what it meant to pull yourself up by your bootstraps. He understood that strain of personal liberty and self-reliance, that fierce independence, at the heart of the American experience.

But he also understood something else. He recognized that while each of us must do our part, work as hard as we can, and be as responsible as we can - although we are responsible for our own fates, in the end, there are certain things we cannot do on our own. There are certain things we can only do together. There are certain things only a union can do.

Only a union could harness the courage of our pioneers to settle the American west, which is why Lincoln passed a Homestead Act giving a tract of land to anyone seeking a stake in our growing economy.

Only a union could foster the ingenuity of our farmers, which is why he set up land-grant colleges that taught them how to make the most of their land while giving their children an education that let them dream the American dream.

Only a union could speed our expansion and connect our coasts with a transcontinental railroad, and so, even in the midst of civil war, Lincoln built one. He fueled new enterprises with a national currency, and spurred innovation, and ignited America’s imagination with a national academy of sciences, believing we must, as he put it, add “the fuel of interest to the fire of genius in the discovery...of new and useful things.” And on this day, that is also the bicentennial of Charles Darwin’s birth, it’s worth a moment to pause and renew that commitment to science and innovation and discovery that Lincoln understood so well.

Only a union could serve the hopes of every citizen - to knock down the barriers to opportunity and give each and every person the chance to pursue the American dream. Lin-
For the People

(Continued from page 2)

Lincoln understood what Washington understood when he led farmers and craftsmen and shopkeepers to rise up against an empire. What Roosevelt understood when he lifted us from Depression, built an arsenal of democracy, created the largest middle-class in history with the GI Bill. It’s what Kennedy understood when he sent us to the moon.

All these presidents recognized that America is - and always has been - more than a band of thirteen colonies or 50 states, more than a bunch of Yankees and Confederates, more than a collection of Red States and Blue States. That we are the United States. There isn’t any dream beyond our reach … any obstacle that can stand in our way, when we recognize that our individual liberty is served, not negated, by a recognition of the common good.

That is the spirit we are called to show once more. The challenges we face are very different now. Two wars, an economic crisis unlike any we’ve seen in our lifetime. Jobs have been lost. Pensions are gone. Families’ dreams have been endangered. Health care costs are exploding. Schools are falling short. We have an energy crisis that’s hammering our economy, and threatening our planet, and enriching our adversaries.

And yet, while our challenges may be new, they did not come over night. Ultimately, they result from a failure to meet the test that Lincoln set. Now understand, there have been times in our history when our government has misjudged what we can do by individual effort alone, and what we could only do together; when we didn’t draw the line as effectively as we should have. When government has done things that people can - and should - do for themselves. Our welfare system, before reform, too often dampened individual initiative, discouraging people from taking responsibility for their own upward mobility. In education, sometimes we’ve lost sight of the role of parents, rather than government, in cultivating a thirst for knowledge and instilling those qualities of good character - hard work and discipline and integrity - that are so important to educational achievement and professional success.

But in recent years, we’ve seen the pendulum swing too far in the opposite direction. What’s dominated is a philosophy that says every problem can be solved if only government would step out of the way; that if government were just dismantled and divvied up into tax breaks, that it would somehow benefit us all. Such knee-jerk disdain for government - this constant rejection of any common endeavor - cannot rebuild our levees or our roads or our bridges. It can’t refurbish our schools or modernize our health care system; it can’t lead to the next medical discovery or yield the research and technology that will spark a clean energy economy.

Only a nation can do those things. Only by coming together, all of us, in union, and expressing that sense of shared sacrifice and responsibility - for ourselves, yes, but also for one another - can we do the work that must be done in this country. That is part of the definition of being American.

It’s only by rebuilding our economy and fostering the conditions of growth that willing workers can find a job, and companies can find capital, and the entrepreneurial spirit that is the key to our competitiveness can flourish. It’s only by unleashing the potential of alternative fuels that we will lower our energy bills and raise our industries’ sights, and make our nation safer and our planet cleaner. It’s only by remaking our schools for the 21st century that our children will get those good jobs so they can make of their lives what they will. It’s only by coming together to do what people need done that we will, in Lincoln’s words, “lift artificial weights from all shoulders [and give] an unfettered start, and a fair chance, in the race of life.” That’s all people are lookin’ for, a fair chance in the race of life.

That’s what’s required of us - now and in the years ahead. We will be remembered for what we choose to make of this moment. And when posterity looks back on our time, as we are looking back on Lincoln’s, I don’t want it said that we saw an economic crisis, but we did not stem it. That we saw our schools decline and our bridges crumble, but we did not rebuild them. That the world changed in the 21st century, but America did not lead it. That we were consumed with small things, petty things, when we were called to do great things. Instead, let them say that this generation - our generation - of Americans rose to the moment and gave America a new birth of freedom and opportunity in our time.

These are trying days and they will grow tougher in the months to come. And there will be moments when our doubts rise and our hopes recede. But let’s always remember that we, as a people, have been here before. There were times when our revolution itself seemed altogether improbable, when the union was all but lost, when fascism seemed set to prevail around the world.

And yet, what earlier generations discovered - and what we must rediscover right now - is that it is precisely when we are in the deepest valley, when the climb is steepest, that Americans learn how to take the mountaintop. Together. As one nation. As one people. … That’s how we will beat back our present dangers. That is how we will surpass what trials may come. That’s how we will do what Lincoln called on us all to do: and “nobly save…the last best hope of earth.” That’s what this is. The last best hope on earth. Lincoln has passed that legacy on to us. It is now our responsibility to pass it on to the next generation.

Thank you, God Bless you, and may God Bless the United States of America.
MICHAEL BURLINGAME SPEAKS AT LINCOLN’S 200TH BIRTHDAY GALA

Michael Burlingame would be a star speaker at any Lincoln Day banquet. The ALA is greatly indebted to him for graciously accepting our invitation to be the featured speaker at our 2009 Lincoln Bicentennial banquet under the toughest of conditions. If the highly improbable should occur — for example, someone like the President of the United States accepting an invitation to speak at our 2009 Lincoln banquet — would he agree to step back and allow the President to replace him as the featured speaker? Michael readily agreed to the conditional invitation.

When we received word that President Obama would speak at our banquet, I called Michael to give him the news. I wasn’t certain if Michael would find it to be good or bad news. In his usual good humored manner, Michael said that he would be happy to allow the President to warm up the audience for his after dinner speech. In fact he said that the President would just be reciprocating what Michael had done for him the previous week. I asked what he meant. He quickly explained that the previous week he had spoken to the Democrat Unites States Senators at their retreat in Williamsburg, Virginia. His speech there preceded the President’s. By the President preceding Michael at our banquet, he would merely be reciprocating Michael’s warm up of the previous week. Michael gave a splendid speech.

Burlingame is the author or editor of a number of books about Lincoln, including *Lincoln Observed: Civil War Dispatches of Noah Brooks* and *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln*. His newly published two-volume biography, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, has received most favorable reviews. *Time* magazine said this, “Burlingame is a towering figure in Lincoln scholarship... [he] may know more about Lincoln and his era than anyone in the world... *Abraham Lincoln* comes as close to being the definitive biography as anything the world has seen in decades.”

Each guest was served an individual 3-inch white chocolate-raspberry cheesecake, made and donated by The Eli’s Cheesecake Company of Chicago. The mini cakes were each covered in bittersweet chocolate ganache, and topped with a chocolate replica of a 1909 Lincoln penny. The penny was dusted with copper-colored “luster dust” to give it patina.
Banquet Thank You’s

The success of the ALA’s 2009 Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Banquet was the result of the generosity, hard work and planning of many. We thank all of you. Here are a few who deserve special thanks.

Senator Richard Durbin and his staff
Mayor Davlin and the City of Springfield
City of Springfield Police Department
State of Illinois Department of Transportation
State of Illinois Secretary of State
State of Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
Illinois Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum Volunteers
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation
Williamsville High School Choir
The Eli Cheesecake Company, Chicago

Ron Schramm
Leroy Neiman
Giovanni Bucci
Joel Iskowitz
Steve Hartman, Creativille, Inc.
Karen Jewell and the staff at the Crowne Plaza Hotel
Jim and Linda Fulgenzi
True Colors, Springfield
Petals and Company, Rochester
CID Floral, Sherman
Frye-Williamson Press

The official 2009 banquet photograph, taken by photographer Ron Schramm on the evening of February 12, 2009.
NEW MEMBERS WELCOMED

Randall Abbott
Springfield, Illinois

Henry Anthony
Roswell, Georgia

Aaron R. Bachstein
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Ken Bagan
Highland Park, Illinois

Elizabeth K. Barber
Winfield, Illinois

Vernon Burton
Ninety Six, South Carolina

Gordon H. Butler
Jefferson City, Missouri

Marlene Campbell
Peoria, Illinois

Allan Campbell
Peoria, Illinois

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Chambersburg, Pennsylvania

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Stephen Kaufmann
West End, North Carolina

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Springfield, Illinois

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Sterling Heights, Michigan

Charles J. Northrup
Springfield, Illinois

Judith Northrup
Western Springs, Illinois

Philip R. O’Connor
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Keith Olbermann
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Scott Petty
Lake Bluff, Illinois

Mallory Price
Timely Park, Illinois

David Price
Lawrenceville, New Jersey

William Read
Bradford, Ontario Canada

Vincent Reed, Jr.
Shapleigh, Maine

Dr. Richard Riley
El Paso, Illinois

Leslie Rosenbaum
Alexandria, Virginia

Grace Runge
Mexico, Missouri

Jeffrey Seymour
Westlake, California

Thomas & Suzann Spada
 Rochester, Illinois

Ronald Spears
Taylorville, Illinois

Katie Spindell
Springfield, Illinois

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Monroe, Louisiana

Pat A. Swaney
Manchester, Michigan

Marcus Talerico, M.D.
Gurnee, Illinois

Bob & Jackie Tropp
Skokie, Illinois

Russell Troutman
Winter Park, Florida

Carol Ward
Lansing, Illinois

Michael Wardinski
Alexandria, Virginia

John C. Waugh
Pantego, Texas

Lucy Woolshlager
Westford, Pennsylvania

Rev. Jon L. Yost
Chicago, Illinois

Robert P. Young
Providence, Utah

Mike ZIELKE
La Salle, Illinois

The Board of Directors of The Abraham Lincoln Association taken at the annual meeting held on February 11, 2009 in the Great Hall of the Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois.

First Row Left to Right: Richard W. Maroc, Daniel D. Stowell, William G. Shepherd, Robert A. Stuart, Jr., Richard E. Hart, Louise Taper, Kathryn M. Harris, Robert S. Willard, Mark Plummer and Mary Shepherd.


Third Row Left to Right: Andy Van Meter, James W. Patton III, Michael Burlingame, Kenneth L. Anderson, David Joens, Donald R. Tracy, Rodney J. Davis and Ron J. Keller.

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ALA Partners With Chicago History Museum

Wet with Blood:
The Investigation of Mary Todd Lincoln’s Cloak

Tuesday, April 21, 2009  6:30 p.m.
Chicago History Museum
1601 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois

One of the most powerful artifacts in the Chicago History Museum’s collection is the cloak allegedly worn by Mary Todd Lincoln on the night of Abraham Lincoln’s assassination on April 15, 1865. Chicago History Museum Chief Historian Russell Lewis will take an investigative look at the evidence, myths, and facts used to uncover the truth behind this fascinating object. This program is presented by the Chicago History Museum in partnership with The Abraham Lincoln Association.

ALA members will receive free admission to this program, however advance reservations are recommended; all seating, including with a reservation, is first-come, first-served. Tickets can be reserved over the phone (312-642-4600), online (http://www.chicagohistory.org), or in person at the Chicago History Museum Front Desk.

HARLINGTON WOOD, JR.
1920-2008

The recent death of Harlington Wood, Jr. on December 29, 2008, ended the career of a distinguished jurist. Judge Wood grew up in Petersburg, Illinois and followed in his father’s footsteps by joining the family legal practice. His resemblance to the tall, lanky Abraham Lincoln led to his being cast as Lincoln in “Forever This Land” and other historic plays performed in Kelso Hollow Theatre at Lincoln’s New Salem State Park. In 1973, Wood was assistant attorney general for the Civil Division in the United States Justice Department and helped end the standoff between members of the American Indian Movement and the federal government at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. Wood served as United States attorney for the Southern District of Illinois; in the Justice Department during the Nixon administration; as judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit; and finally as judge for the United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois. As president of the Abraham Lincoln Association 1984-1986, Wood championed the support of the Lincoln Legal Papers and established the Association’s own “Lincoln the Lawyer Award,” to highlight this important and unstudied aspect of Lincoln’s own life. An accomplished photographer and writer, Wood’s color images of Lincoln sites and public sculptures graced the covers of the annual banquet program for many years and were individually initialed and numbered by him. A delightful and engaging memoir of his life, An Unmarked Trail: The Odyssey of a Federal Judge (2008), was published just months before his death.
Dear ALA Members,

The Abraham Lincoln Association was honored by President Obama’s presence at Lincoln’s 200th birthday banquet in Springfield, on February 12th. For those of you who attended, I am sure that you have many special memories of that historic evening.

The ALA had extended an invitation to then Senator Obama in mid-summer 2008. On February 2, 2009, Senator Durbin, who began working with the Obama transition team on this invitation just days after the election last November, announced that the President would celebrate the 200th Anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s birth by attending the ALA’s annual Lincoln birthday banquet. The next 10 days were spent in preparation for his visit—many hours with the White House advance team and the Secret Service. The entire banquet program as planned was changed to accommodate the President’s schedule and security requirements.

The picture of President Obama to the right brings to mind one of the most amusing security requirements of the White House and Secret Service. Both preferred that the beautiful birthday cake donated by Eli’s Cheesecake Company not be in the banquet hall while the President was in the room.

Strangely, however, the cake was allowed in the service hallway in back of the banquet room where the President met and greeted those sitting at the head table and had his photograph taken with the beautiful cake. The photograph appears above.

This is but one of many stories about the remarkable event. We would like to hear your special stories. Please send them to our address or email to rhart1213@aol.com. We hope to print some of those stories in future editions of For the People.

Richard E. Hart
President
The Abraham Lincoln Association