

I wish to thank each and every one of you for your presence this evening, and for your support of the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI).

Muchas gracias a cada uno de ustedes, por su presencia y por su apoyo a CHLI.

CHLI is the premier organization founded by Members of Congress to advance the 60 million strong U.S. Hispanic Community's Economic Progress with a focus on Social Responsibility and Global Competitiveness.

We are proud of our staff, led by Mary Ann Gomez Orta.

We are proud of our Board of Directors and our Advisory Council.

We are proud of our interns, our former interns, and our leadership programs.

We are proud of our honorees.

Over 200 young people's lives have been forever changed by CHLI. Keeping our focus on our interns, our future leaders, is the primary reason why CHLI has been able to become a genuinely diverse reality in Washington, DC. I challenge you to search for another truly bi-partisan reality in Washington.

We do not deny that there are deep differences of opinion within American society – of course there are – but CHLI represents a meeting place for the reverence for freedom. We know that, for democracy to exist, respect for the minority is as necessary as is Rule by the majority.

As is evident in this room tonight, an awareness of the international is also a distinguishing characteristic of CHLI.

Whenever you can, I recommend that you visit the Jefferson Memorial, it is very close to where we are tonight, and on the wall, you will see his phrase, “I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.”

Tyrants are our enemies. When a tyrant violently attacks an innocent people, our hearts bleed for the victims of the tyrant’s aggression. That’s why, today, we are all Ukrainians.

In this hemisphere, there are three tyrants, three regimes that commit state terrorism against their peoples. The puppet of the Castro family with blood-stained hands in Cuba, and the also murderous dictatorships in Venezuela and Nicaragua. We do not waiver in our insistence that the oppressed of this hemisphere must be free.

We also recognize the difference between our enemies and our friends.

Our friends, we cherish.

When that small, yet great country in Eastern Europe, Lithuania, is the only country in the European Union to not sign the condemnable recent EU agreement with the Cuban dictatorship, we say thank you, Lithuania.

As my admirable Lithuanian friend Emanuelis Zingeris has said, all the other EU states should withdraw their signatures from that embarrassing pact.

When Lithuania respects the dignity of the people of Taiwan in its foreign policy despite unconscionable pressures against it, we say thank you, Lithuania.

Our friends, throughout the world, we cherish.

Despite, in spite of, the grave differences of opinion on many important issues in the United States today, CHLI is a meeting ground for reverence for freedom. We are a point of convergence in solidarity with the oppressed.

We are proud of being that point of convergence.

We are cognizant of the strength of the genuine diversity of thought that CHLI represents.

Thank you for being an important part of it.