



Acceptance Notes

**The Honorable
Ambassador Constance A. Morella
U.S. Mission to the OECD**

“The Ronald H. Brown Standards Leadership Award”

**Ronald Reagan Building
October 11, 2006
Washington, D.C.**

Thank you, Michael Brown, for that generous introduction. It reminds me of Mae West's exclamation, "Too much of a good thing can be downright enjoyable." This award tonight from ANSI (Joe Bhatia), NIST (Jim Hill, Mary Saunders), and SES (Glenn Ziegenfuss)¹ in recognition of a man I admired, our late Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown, is not only enjoyable, but to me it is exceedingly moving. Thank you.

Michael Brown, thank you for carrying on Ron Brown's legacy of public service and opportunity. In fact, congratulations on the 10th anniversary of the Ron Brown Foundation.

I am honored to celebrate U.S. World Standards Day with you who have contributed so much to furthering consensus standards.

Standards are in everything we do—we rely on them to make certain things meet specifications. As an engineer described the situation, "Standards are like toothbrushes—everyone agrees they are a good thing, but no one wants to use somebody else's." You are breaking down those barriers, working together with an appropriate theme: "Standards Build Partnerships." And they do, as seen in the program and exhibits here; they build networks, build opportunities, and build prosperity.

When I was in Congress...you know the place Will Rogers described as "Congress starts each day with a prayer and ends with an investigation." I was told that, before the National Technology Transfer and Advancement

¹ Thanks are extended also to Jim Walters of ARI and James Matthews of IEC

Act, Congress had no standards. I believe what they meant was that Congress had no standard laws...or at least, I think that's what they meant.

But finally, with the NTTAA, the federal government was required to promote and embrace voluntary, industry-led, consensus standards. In ten years, this simple statutory requirement has had such far-reaching benefits that, quite frankly, I couldn't have even imagined.

In addition to the billions of procurement dollars I am told have been saved, I'm most proud of the fact that the law has ushered in a new era of standards cooperation with the Federal Government, the standards community, and industry.

As a result of this strengthened tripartite U.S. standards partnership, federal agencies are now appropriately reliant on the use of private sector voluntary standards for acquisition, regulatory reform, and conformity assessment.

What this standards partnership has accomplished in a mere decade in critical areas such as health and safety, security and defense, protection of the new environment, and technology advancements has been remarkably significant.

In looking back ten years ago to the evolution of the NTTAA into law, its success in the legislative sausage-making process was founded upon the principle of strong and effective partnerships. Credit goes to the leadership on the Science Committee as far back as the late George Brown, Bob Walker, and others. My primary counsel during enactment of the NTTAA

was Ben Wu, who is here tonight. Ben's policy expertise and adroit shepherding of the bill through both Houses were invaluable.

Also here tonight are two strong advocates of standards who helped achieve our goal: Jim Turner and Jeff Grove (who is now promoting standards with ASTM.)

When I left Congress I soon learned the accuracy of the expression, "you get into the back seat of your car and it doesn't move." Well, I have been proud and privileged to be our U.S. Ambassador to the OECD and when I get into the back seat of my car it does move.

We all know that the international language of commerce is standards, but we're also troubled by standards being used as a trade barrier in some countries. This is evident to me where I sit at the OECD.

At OECD my standards advocacy continues "writ big." While most of you here tonight understand standards well, I'm guessing what some do not know is that the OECD is itself a standards-setting body. Our aim is to use "peer review" of our 30 most developed member countries so that we can establish a set of global standards, used by all, which have the ultimate effect of leveling the playing field around the world and thereby promoting economic development.

Of particular importance is our outreach work with more than 70 non-member countries, including those referred to as the BRICS—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. We are working closely with these countries

so that we can share our “best practices” and encourage them to adopt OECD best standards within their respective countries.

The economic output of four of these countries alone—China, Brazil, Russia and India—is expected to overtake most of the world’s established economic powers by mid-century, including the United States. Standards are the best mechanism of ensuring the most appropriate operating rules between all countries, promoting competition and spurring innovation. Standardization helps ensure that we all have an equal chance to foster economic development and growth, and ultimately to protect the well-being of our citizens.

Since our China program began 11 years ago, our efforts have been based on peer review and mutual benefit. Very much in the spirit of the United States’ own work on standardization, our work with China is voluntary, in the sense that the OECD does not try and tell China what to do; rather, the OECD recommends best practices that China would do well to consider. And while much remains to be done, much has been accomplished, not least of which is the opening of a dialogue that continues to widen. From its modest beginnings, our activities with China now encompass 19 policy areas: in 2005 alone, three OECD reviews of China were conducted: agriculture, macroeconomic policy, and governance. Others are underway right now, including a regulatory policy review, a national innovation system review, and an environmental review to be released next month in Beijing.

As we celebrate World Standards Day and what we have accomplished, let’s continue to work together and not only to continue nurturing the U.S.

standards partnership but also to create effective partnerships around the globe, to seek out new opportunities for cooperation, collaboration, and harmonization that will lead to standards-based solutions for the benefit of our nation and our world.

I leave you with two quotes—one from the book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*: “So when you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together”; another to express my thanks, from another author—the Bard of Avon: “I give thee thanks in part of thy desserts, and will with deeds requite thy gentleness.”

Thank you, dear friends.