



Office of Public Affairs  
U.S. Embassy, Wellington

## **AMBASSADOR BILL MCCORMICK REMARKS FOR 4<sup>TH</sup> JULY**

### **Great Hall Massey University**

Welcome everyone to the 231<sup>st</sup> Anniversary celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America.

From its signing on July 4 1776 in Philadelphia the Declaration of Independence became the well spring of America's spirit; determining its direction and destiny.

Reflecting on this occasion reminded me that even though my country's independence was declared in 1776 it was 13 years before we had finally agreed enough among ourselves to create a constitution.

It causes me to reflect that the 'thought' of democracy is easy - the implementation is a hard job.

The celebration of our independence is now a well known family summer holiday that is famous for its street parades and fireworks displays. At its simplest it is time for family and friends to get together.

So here in New Zealand it's wonderful for me to celebrate this 4<sup>th</sup> July among friends. Thank you for coming to share our birthday with us.

You will have seen from your invitation cards that the theme of tonight's function is "Voices of America". Even though there are many American regional accents people from outside the United States can generally pick – an *American* voice.

The people that make up America today are different again from those of a generation or so ago. Our nation has continued to bring together people from all over the world, we have many diverse cultures, faiths and aspirations. Many 'voices' you might say.

We don't always sing with one harmonious voice – like the wonderful 'Wellington City Chorus' - the ladies who have sung our national anthems tonight. They are the female version of 'male Barbershop' singing – a style which began in the U.S. but now has enthusiasts the world over.

These women recently won the New Zealand championships – they are the best in New Zealand! – Please join me to give them a round of applause.

It has been an extraordinary year since our last 4<sup>th</sup> July celebration. Gail and I have traveled and met many people and I'm continually impressed by those I meet who, like us, want to find more ways for New Zealand and The United States to deepen our bonds of friendship.

This is often done at a community grass roots level.

I attended the national sister cities conference in Te Anau and I'm impressed by the "people to people" experiences and exchanges that happen between our two countries.

Exchanges are taking place between people involved with sport, business, art and education all over. Lower Hutt has a great sister city relationship with Tempe Arizona and I'd like to thank the Lower Hutt parents who are currently hosting Tempe high school students in your homes.

The Tempe visitors and Lower Hutt host parents are here tonight so I hope you'll find them and make them welcome.

On our Memorial Day Prime Minister Clark honored us by opening a wonderful new exhibition in Old St Paul's.

In this exhibition are heard the voices of New Zealanders who remember the time during World War II when thousands of US Marines and other service personnel were stationed in New Zealand before heading to the terrible campaigns in the Pacific.

Dark times in our combined history were illuminated by kiwi hospitality and care for our boys. I am so deeply impressed by how the delightful kiwi women and men interviewed for this exhibition speak volumes for New Zealand and American friendship.

I'm indebted to the good people of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and their designers who enabled us to hear these stories, and I hope you'll all go along and experience it.

Being a public voice of friendship for Americans and New Zealanders has not always been easy however there is one community group that I would like to highlight for being a consistent voice of friendship and an advocate for mutual understanding. It's the New Zealand American Association.

For the last four or five years it has been led by a man who's been a passionate advocate of U.S. - New Zealand friendship and mutual understanding. He retired as the association's Chairman last week and I want to express our sincere

appreciation to The Honorable Robert Talbot. Come on up Rob I have something for you.

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This is a 'Certificate of Appreciation' - and so everyone gets to know what it's for I will read the citation.

*"To the Honorable Rob Talbot; for exemplary personal effort in building closer relations between the people of the United States of America and New Zealand.*

*He has led the revitalization of the New Zealand American Association, which has sponsored events and cultural exchanges that enable New Zealanders and Americans to understand one another better and become friends".*

*Signed by Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill.*

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Like the New Zealand American Association there are other people who convey the message of 'Voices of America' better than any words I could choose.

I want you to have the opportunity to hear from them, tonight by way of some video interviews.

Because US embassies and consulates around the world are staffed mainly by locally hired staff (along side Americans) we have put together a cross section of our staff - sharing their thoughts

Let's take a moment to hear some Voices of America.

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I'm so very pleased to have been able to bring you these clips from three valued members of our team.

I'd like to use my voice for just a few more words, for what is the most enjoyable symbolic act I have the pleasure of undertaking this year.

I ask each and every one of you to join with me in a toast: to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, Queen of New Zealand.