

Thank you so much Ken for that kind and much too flattering introduction. Before my brief remarks, I must give a big “shot out” to my best friend and husband, Charlie, knowing he is my partner in all that I do in the fight for democracy. Thanks, Charlie.

Hard to believe that almost 25 years have passed since our friend, Chuck Manatt, began telling me about the important work of the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES) and encouraging me to become involved with the board. We honor Chuck tonight.

As I prepared myself for this moment, I thought about political officials who left an everlasting impression with regards to elections and Senator John McCain came to mind. I have heard him say over and over “Elections have consequences”. And another hero of mine, Abraham Lincoln, who once said, “Elections belong to the people. It's their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters.”

On this 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the IFES organization, I humbly accept The 2017 Democracy Award. But I do so only on behalf of all the IFES employees and members of the board of directors who have labored throughout the world to extend an important and most valuable underpinning of basic human freedom: the freedom to select ones leaders. Since 1987, IFES people have worked in over 145 countries to advance good governance and Democratic rights. They are the Global experts utilizing local solutions to expand sustainable Democratic principles that citizens should have rights for free and fair elections. I have witnessed these passionate advocates as they work in emerging democracies as well as mature democracies, ensuring electoral integrity, accountability, participation and inclusion.

Our survey and research work has opened eyes on issues in dangerous and challenging countries like Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq and most recently in a case study in Africa entitled: "Elections Worth Dying For?"

And of course I am very proud of the work over the years on women's empowerment where IFES has always had a keen eye set on fortifying

women in all areas of democracy and governance. We continue to be vigilant in ensuring that gender equality and women's inclusive in the electoral process has an impact throughout the world.

This work has been the passion of so many over the years because we all believe in Freedom. And elections are the pillar of freedom. Ballots are better than bullets to keep freedom. So on behalf of all of the IFES family, I thank you again for this meaningful award and I thank you for all the work yet to be done.