

Jan. 5th, 2017
Washington, D.C.

Governor Nikki R. Haley
Office of the Governor
State of South Carolina
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor;

I am sure this letter reaches you at a time of immense transition, as you turn your focus from your state to the United Nations. I hope you will consider the invitation it extends as one of the upsides of your new position. I am writing in hopes you will agree to deliver the keynote address at the Toner Prize Celebration on Monday, March 27th in Washington.

The prize and the celebration honor my late wife and the mother of our twins, Robin Toner of *The New York Times*. Robin was the first, and thus far only, woman to be the *Times*' chief political correspondent, and helped direct the newspaper's political coverage for a quarter century before her death to cancer in 2008 at the age of 54.

The prize has become one of the most prestigious in political journalism, and seeks to recognize the best in fact-based political coverage from the previous year. Among recent winners: separately Karen Tumulty and Dan Balz of *The Washington Post*, Molly Ball of *The Atlantic* and Jane Mayer of *The New Yorker*.

The annual event at which the prize is awarded has grown into something quite unique in Washington. It's a gathering that brings together several hundred of the nation's top journalists and news executives from across all platforms. But because so many of them knew Robin, it does so in an informal and serious atmosphere that avoids the city's usual grab-and-gab culture. Last year's keynoter was President Obama.

I will include a fact sheet that provides details about the event and the academic program it helps to support at Robin's alma mater, Syracuse University. In addition, you and your staff can learn more through the program's website at: <http://tonerprogram.syr.edu/>. Here, I want to make the case for your choosing this venue at which to speak.

I realize that, as I write, your life is being turned upside down as a result of the election of President-elect Trump and his nomination of you to the UN ambassadorship. The demands on your time must be tremendous and mounting. Everybody wants your attention. So why address journalists, and why at this event?

The first reason has to do with timing. By late March, the new administration will be well past the mid-point of the first 100 days. The Congress presumably already will have enacted major legislation. The outlines of the new international coalitions and conflicts

that will drive the next several years will be coming into focus. The first frantic interaction with the media will be over. Easter recess will be just around the corner. What better time to stand back and take a first sounding?

The second has to do with audience. While I'm painfully aware that the news business has taken a financial drubbing and come in for its share of criticism, it is hard for me to imagine American democracy without the kind of non-partisan, fact-based political reporting that the Toner Program seeks to honor and encourage. Reporters are the first audience for any administration's actions and, I continue to hope, fair chroniclers and interpreters of them. That makes them informed, engaged listeners.

The final reason has to do with setting. If you, as the new UN ambassador, conclude that journalists do indeed make a good audience for a first assessment, you have a number of Washington events to choose from, including the Congressional Dinner, the Grid Iron and the White House Correspondents Dinner. But, with all due respect, none is as intimate and serious as the Toner event. And that may be especially so this coming year, because in addition to honoring Robin, we tentatively plan to honor one of Robin's good friends and a generous supporter of the Toner Program, the late Gwen Ifill of **PBS**.

I have yet to work out all of the details of the coming year's event. But I expect it to be in the elegant banquet space of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at 1616 Rhode Island Avenue NW in downtown Washington.

The event usually runs from 6 to about 9 p.m. But you need only be present for an hour or so from about 7 to 8 p.m. We would start with a short, private meet-and-greet with University officials, honored guests and my children, now 19, who speak on behalf of the family and present the prize. And then you would speak. Of course, we would be deeply honored if you would stay for the subsequent award portion of the program, but we understand that you are likely to have many other commitments. I am prepared to move your arrival time and/or shorten the period of your involvement if these changes will help raise the odds of your participating.

If you or your staff have *any* questions, I am available essentially 24/7 via the email that will bring you this letter, or by phone at C: 202-251-3945 or H: 202-363-6903. If you and your staff decide that this is a worthy event, I would appreciate you having staff notify me. I will then have Syracuse University Chancellor Kent Syverud and Newhouse School of Public Communications Dean Lorraine Branham extend a formal invitation.

Sincerely,



Peter Gosselin