

Remarks

Bernardo de Galvez Award

Remarks by Senator Robert Menendez

Residence of the Ambassador of Spain – March 2, 2015

I am honored to be here, at the Ambassador's residence, in the presence of His Majesty King Juan Carlos to accept the Bernardo de Galvez Award... Thank you, Your Majesty, for being here and presenting me with Spain's most coveted honor for any American.

...Let me also thank Ambassador Ramon Gil-Casares for his warm hospitality in opening the residence on this very special occasion, and President Aznar and Chairman Juan Maria Nin for their leadership.

As an American – a Hispanic-American – it is truly a great honor to be recognized for having promoted cooperation between our two nations -- and for having developed initiatives to improve U.S.-Spain relations in the spirit of Bernardo de Galvez.

Not long ago, in the Foreign Relations Committee room of the United States Capitol, we unveiled the portrait of de Galvez, an extraordinary Spaniard who helped give birth to America -- symbolizing the strong bond between our nations.

Today is an extension of that relationship and a strengthening of that bond.

When we look at the contribution of Hispanics to American history, we need look no further than Bernardo de Galvez in helping the Thirteen Colonies achieve independence.

All of you know the story: Bernardo de Galvez raised an army in New Orleans... Drove the British out of the Gulf of Mexico... Captured five British forts in the Lower Mississippi Valley, eventually taking Mobile and Pensacola...

...As a young governor of the Spanish colony of Louisiana, he sent money, rifles, ammunition, blankets, medicine, and other supplies to the armies of Generals George Washington and George Rogers Clark, and his victories against the British were rightfully recognized by George Washington as a deciding factor in the outcome of the Revolutionary War.

He even drafted the terms of the treaty that ended the Revolutionary War.

In fact, there is a statue behind the State Department here in Washington honoring Bernardo de Galvez...

The day the statue was dedicated, it was His Majesty King Juan Carlos who said: "May this statue of Bernardo de Galvez serve as a reminder that Spain offered the blood of her soldiers for the cause of American independence..."

...And just a few months ago, Congress recognized Bernardo de Galvez for his contribution to American independence with honorary American citizenship.

He joins the pantheon of honorary citizens – Lafayette, Mother Teresa, Winston Churchill, among others – who have been given that honor by virtue of the profound impact they had on American history and on the idea and ideal that is the essence of America

In accepting this award from His Majesty King Juan Carlos and the people of Spain, I am honored to have my name mentioned alongside the great Bernardo de Galvez and in solidarity with the people of both our nations and the long history of U.S.-Spain relations.

The United States and Spain have been close friends for hundreds of years.

Today, our partnership thrives as we work together to face common security threats, promote international peace, support democracy and advance our common economic interests.

Our troops have served together in Afghanistan through NATO, and our navies actively work together to conduct anti-piracy operations. Spain provides much needed humanitarian assistance to those affected by the Syria crisis. And Spain is a valuable ally in the fight against ISIS and promoting stability across North Africa.

Throughout history and to the current day, Spain and the United States have stood should to shoulder to promote our shared values and confront common threats.

Our bilateral trade relationship is also thriving.

Spain is one of the fastest-growing investors in the United States, and American companies employ thousands of Spanish citizens.

I hope that we will work together to ensure that this strong economic relationship continues to grow in the coming years.

I would like to offer a toast to His Majesty King Juan Carlos...

...In 1981, at a State Dinner honoring His Majesty, President Reagan said, “Over the centuries, Spain has contributed so much. In America we recognize that even with the proper leadership a nation must have great people to maintain liberty...”

Let me say tonight, in accepting the Bernardo de Galvez Award from His Majesty King Juan Carlos and the people of Spain, may they always live in peace and freedom that benefits a “great people.”

Ladies and gentlemen, let us raise our glasses to long friendships and shared values.

Salud!