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Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting Award Ceremony

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Recommended Citation

Syverud, Kent, "Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting Award Ceremony" (2018). *Chancellor's Office (2004 - 2013)*. 180.

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Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on Monday, March 26, 2018

Location: Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C.

Remarks: Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting Award Ceremony

*The Chancellor was introduced Dean of the Newhouse School,
Lorraine Branham*

On behalf of Syracuse University, I welcome you all tonight for the presentation of the Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting.

Robin Toner was a great journalist with dual degrees from Syracuse. As a graduate of our Newhouse School of Communications and our Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, she saw how political reporting could serve the public good and be a powerful tool in strengthening communities.

Robin was lost all too young, but her ideals remain alive in the Toner Prize and in the passion of our students in Newhouse who learn how to responsibly wield the power of the press.

At Syracuse University, our vision is to prepare our students to become engaged citizens, scholars and leaders in a rapidly changing global society.

We are teaching them the value of open discourse...and the increasing need for diligence to find and speak the truth.

With Robin's well-known passion for meticulous research and accuracy in reporting, we can only imagine how disheartened she would be with the constant bombardment of fake news.

What would have been her take on the infiltration and abuse of social media by foreign entities attempting to influence political opinion?

Certainly, she would have supported the efforts by our keynote speaker to improve transparency in political advertising, to develop new technologies to battle fake news and altered video, and to strengthen cybersecurity.

Senator Mark Warner has been vocal about the need to balance First Amendment rights with efforts to strengthen national security, acknowledging the public's right to know whether viewpoints are being expressed by foreign agents posing as Americans.

He has asked the nation's tech giants to do more to strengthen cybersecurity and has continued to work across the political aisle on this issue, believing the nation is woefully unprepared for cyber threats. The Senate Intelligence Committee, of which Senator Warner is Vice Chair, is a bastion of bipartisanship in a city in desperate need of more of it.

Syracuse University and Newhouse and the Toner Program take bipartisanship very seriously and praise Senator Warner's and Chair Senator Richard Burr's efforts. Syracuse University also has invested heavily in new programs to train future cybersecurity experts – and I am proud to say that Syracuse University ranks #1 in the country in cybersecurity programs for veterans and military-connected students.

Senator Warner, I promise that we will continue to do our part to prepare the next generation of journalists, cybersecurity experts, and political leaders who will work alongside you to protect the free press, free speech and freedom of thought.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the Senator Mark Warner.

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