Thank you, Mike. I am grateful to the Bradley Foundation and the Selection Committee for awarding me a Bradley Prize. To be selected along with such distinguished conservatives as Chip Mellor, Nick Eberstadt, and Ed Feulner is a high honor indeed. I note the perfect balance of this year's honorees -- two economists and two lawyers.

I want to express my appreciation to the Bradley Foundation, not only for this award, but for the tremendous support that Mike Grebe and the Foundation give to the Conservative Movement and to so many organizations and activities that are dedicated to liberty and constitutional government.

Above anything else, I want to thank God for the blessings and opportunities that I have received throughout my lifetime. The greatest of these blessings has been my wife and my family. My wife, Ursula, has been my life partner and best friend for now over 52 years. She is an essential teammate in whatever I have been able to accomplish and I want to thank her for all she means to me. And together we have been blessed by our children, the spouses they have married, and our five grandchildren. We are grateful for them as well.

I am also indebted to so many others who have inspired, taught, and guided me over the years. This began with my parents, whose love and example were a profound influence on my life. My mother was nothing less than a saint. She and my father raised four boys, born within a space of five years, and yet she always had time for church work, community activities, and helping others.
My father had a distinguished career in public service, including elective office. He retired from that role and at the age of 74, began a second career in private business. He subsequently pursued a third career in volunteer religious work. It was his example of integrity, kindness, and service to others that has been the model that I have tried to follow.

I am also grateful to many mentors -- several leaders in the Army, high school and college teachers and coaches, pastors, and my bosses in the workplace. They, along with so many friends and colleagues, have been instrumental in my life and career. I am particularly grateful to Ed Feulner and The Heritage Foundation for the privilege of being part of that great organization over the past 23 years.

But what became perhaps the greatest influence on my work life occurred in December 1966.

Let me back up a minute. After graduating from college, serving on active duty in the Army, and completing law school, I entered law practice as a Deputy District Attorney in my native city of Oakland, California. I remember my starting salary was $400 a month, which enabled me to marry Ursula, after a whirlwind courtship of 11 years. It took that long to convince her to take a chance on me.

In the District Attorney’s Office, I was busily engaged in the work of law enforcement and trying cases. So on that December afternoon in 1966, I was surprised to receive a call from the State Capitol in Sacramento, in which I was asked to come up the next week to meet the new Governor of California who had just been elected.

I enjoyed the work I was doing, and was not looking for a new job. I had not been active in partisan politics, because the District Attorney’s Office was decidedly non-partisan. I had never met Ronald Reagan. So my surprise continued when the Governor-elect’s transition team talked to me about becoming the legal officer on the gubernatorial staff. I was undecided until I talked personally with the Governor.

In a half-hour private meeting, Ronald Reagan discussed his plans for California and particularly how he wanted to strengthen law enforcement and to restore order on the college campuses that were then beginning to erupt. I was so impressed by the man himself, and his ideas, that when he offered me the job, I accepted on the spot -- and then drove home thinking how to explain to Ursula that we would be moving to Sacramento. There wasn’t a doubt in my mind this was a leader that I wanted to work for.

I wound up working for Ronald Reagan for the next 30 years in a variety of roles: first as his legal affairs secretary and then Chief of Staff while he was Governor. I later served as a leader in the 1980 campaign, then as head of the presidential transition team, Counselor to the President, and finally as Attorney General. Even after government service, I have been honored to work with the Reagan Presidential Library and the Reagan Ranch Project of the Young America’s Foundation.

I am talking about Ronald Reagan tonight not only because of his importance in my life, but because of his leadership and influence on the modern Conservative Movement and on our Nation.

The Conservative Movement, since World War II, has gone through three phases.
Initially, through such pioneers as Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Russell Kirk, and later Bill Buckley, it was an intellectual movement.

Barry Goldwater, running for President in 1964, made conservatism a political movement.

And Ronald Reagan, as a successful Governor and President, made it a governing movement. As our Chief Executive, he was a transformational leader who moved the government and the nation in a conservative direction.

Ronald Reagan had carefully studied the work of our Nation’s Founders. He admired their concept of ordered liberty, the prudential blending of individual freedom and political order. And he was a vigorous defender of the Constitution and the Rule of Law.

That was why he and many other conservatives were greatly concerned about how judges -- particularly federal judges -- were engaging in judicial activism, where they substituted their own personal views, policy preferences, and political prejudices for what the Constitution, and the laws made pursuant to it, actually read. For years, too many in the legal profession, the law schools, and the judiciary accepted this type of jurisprudence.

Following the President’s lead, we in the Justice Department decided to challenge the legal orthodoxy of the day. It began with a speech to the American Bar Association in July 1985, in which I said that the Supreme Court had usurped the role of the elected branches and had engaged in too much policymaking -- rather than judicial interpretation -- in its then latest term. Further, it had showed too little deference to what the Constitution itself required. I suggested that the High Court should return to the Founders’ concept of a jurisprudence of original understanding in its Constitutional interpretation.

My speech might have quickly faded away if Supreme Court Associate Justice William Brennan had not immediately attacked it. Justice Brennan vigorously defended the judicial activism he practiced and claimed that Constitutional meaning should be changed “to cope with current problems and current needs.”

I gratefully welcomed Justice Brennan to the Great Debate over the Constitution and its present-day application. One law professor commented, “There is a sense that a sea change [concerning Constitutional interpretation] is upon us.” And so it was.

Today, the idea of Originalism, as the guide to interpreting the Constitution, is recognized in almost every law school and acknowledged by many law professors as a valid and important part of constitutional jurisprudence.

It was an idea whose time had come -- that judges should respect the text of the Constitution and the intent of the Founders who wrote it. But there is still much work to be done.

That is why today the legal resources of the Conservative Movement, including our work at The Heritage Foundation, and by The Federalist Society and freedom-based public-interest law groups like the Institute of Justice, must be dedicated to preserving and protecting our Constitution and the Rule of Law for which it stands.

Finally, again let me express my deepest gratitude for this great honor tonight.