Remarks by Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Gilbert B. Kaplan at the President’s Export Awards Ceremony in Washington, D.C.

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Introduced by Ian Steff, Performing the Non-Exclusive Functions and Duties of the Assistant Secretary for Global Markets.

Thank you, Ian, for the welcome and kind introduction, and thank you for your leadership of the Commercial Service. I am honored today to recognize the great work done by our “E” Award winners. You represent the opportunity that we want to ensure all Americans have; to seek prosperity not just in their own backyard, but across oceans and continents.

For the past two years, this Administration has demonstrated our commitment to increasing opportunity for U.S. companies, like yourselves, who want to do business in foreign countries but sometimes face unfair barriers to entering some of those potentially profitable new markets.

Many of the honorees today have worked with our Department of Commerce staff. These dedicated public servants work here in Washington DC, in our offices across the country, and our offices in embassies and consulates worldwide.

They help U.S. firms connect with potential buyers and business partners, provide promotional services to help speed market entry, offer research and due diligence services, and provide counseling on everything from selling auto parts in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to selling zippers in Zagreb, Croatia, and everywhere in between. And yes, we do have offices in both those locations.
The companies here today achieved the success recognized by the President’s “E” Award through persistence, innovation, a plan to succeed, and often with a little help from our international trade specialists at the Department of Commerce.

I want to recognize some of our international trade specialists here today who have been advisors, confidantes, matchmakers, and coaches to many of these high achieving exporters. Will they please stand?

Secretary Ross will talk about some of the exporters that we will be honoring today, like Air Innovations which manufactures environmental control units --- I had the pleasure of visiting their facility last year in North Syracuse, New York; but I want to also acknowledge the valuable role of those “E” Award winners who don’t export but provide the services and expertise to help others export.

We work closely with State and local governments and organizations that operate through public-private partnerships increase sales of American goods and services around the world.

Organizations like the Arizona Commerce Authority and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina.

In Arizona, the State, Federal, and municipal governments work together to bring all their resources to bear for Arizona businesses. They help companies become successful around the world through trade missions, trade fairs, matchmaking, exporter training, and other services.

In North Carolina, they have taken companies to more than 120 trade shows over the past four years and recorded export values topping $958 million last year alone.
As I conclude here today, I’d like to thank you for all you’ve done and will continue to do to grow the exports from the United States.

Through your work to develop your own businesses, you have gained valuable expertise that I encourage you to pass along within your communities. Consider applying for your local District Export Council and becoming a mentor to other businesses within your communities; Or perhaps you might be interested in participating on an Industry Trade Advisory Committee to help craft trade deals that work for U.S. companies first.

Now, I am extremely pleased to introduce Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross. The Secretary firmly believes that the Department of Commerce is charged with representing the voice of American business in government.

You all know that the Secretary is one of the core members of the President’s economic team. In this context, he is working tirelessly and vociferously to promote American industry, American workers and the necessity for free, fair and reciprocal trade.

The Secretary is an expert in global economic commerce and the struggles our industries face against foreign countries that are not playing by the rules of trade. Secretary Ross is willing and has constantly stepped up to defend and promote American industries throughout the globe. And for that we are grateful.

He has had an exceptional government career in the two and a half years he has been at Commerce, as well as an exceptional private sector career.

It is our honor and privilege to have Secretary Ross here today to talk about trade and present the President’s E Awards. Welcome, Secretary Ross.