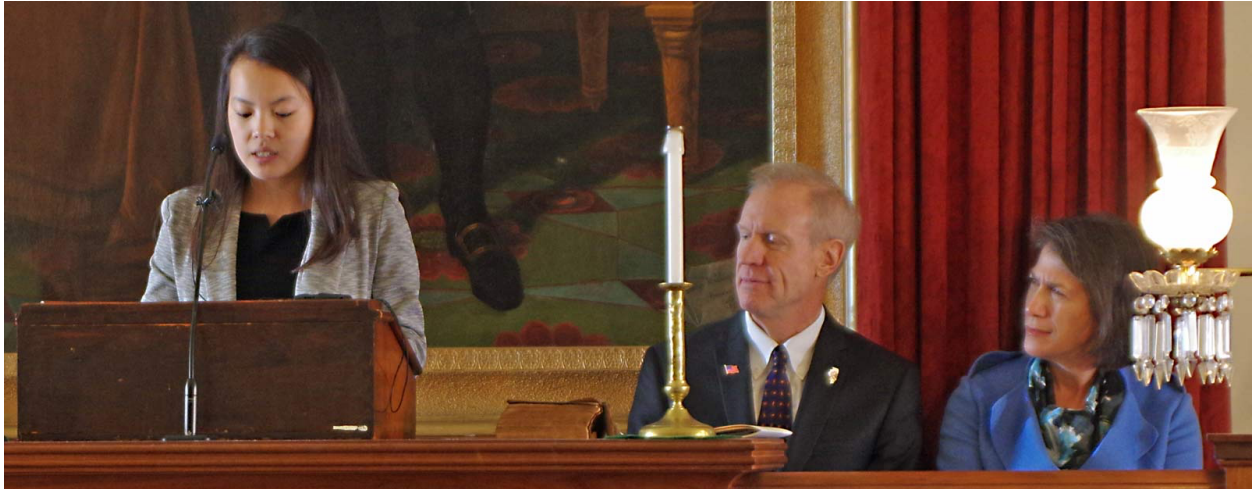


Bailey Martin-Giacalone student speaker, Gov. and Mrs. Rauner



Bailey Martin-Giacalone student speaker



Good morning,

It is truly humbling to be able to accept this award and speak on behalf of the 2017 class of Student Laureates. To my fellow Student Laureate award recipients, it is an honor to be in your company.

When I think about my first learnings of President Lincoln, I see myself as a young child, walking down the street, when unexpectedly, the glimmer of a copper-plated coin catches my eye. I crouch down to get a better look and one of two things happens next:

- 1) I see the gentle profile of President Lincoln and say to myself, “ See a penny, pick it up; all day long, you’ll have good luck .” Delight spreads across my face, and I pocket the coin.
- 2) My eyes scan the towering columns of the Lincoln Memorial and though I wish that the reverse side was up, I turn the penny over and walk away, hoping that the next person who comes along will find good fortune with our 16th president.

President Lincoln’s memory and legacy are often associated with hope and prosperity, yet he himself knew many setbacks and much loss. His mother died when he was nine, he failed in his first business, and he lost the campaigns for the Illinois State Legislature, Illinois House Speaker, U.S. Congress, twice the U.S. Senate, and the Vice Presidency. When he was finally elected as the President of the United States, he was faced with a nation that was falling apart.

Though his hardships caused him a great deal of pain and struggle, Lincoln persevered. His persistence, fortitude, and courage caused him to have much success. When I reflect on his grit, I think of his unexpected kismet. As graduating seniors, we often think of what the future will bring, what our destiny is, what our fate will look like, and the legacy we will leave behind. President Lincoln once said, “The best way to predict the future is to create it,” and we have already begun to follow his advice.

We as Student Laureates, are being recognized today for our resiliency in the face of adversity. We are here because we have the spirit of Lincoln – humble, kind-hearted, generous, compassionate, and service-focused. We care about making an impact – big and small, facilitating change, and leading others in the pursuit to do good wherever they are.

We will be faced with some of the world’s largest problems and complex conditions. As the Lincoln Academy states, we are leaders of tomorrow and will be agents of change in bettering the world for our own and future generations. We are challenged with taking our label as millennials and turning it into an unforgettable legacy, and as Stanford’s Phil Knight would say, one where we out-think, out-work, and out-care others.

Thank you to all family, friends, and mentors, especially those here with us today. It is with your unending encouragement and guidance that we attribute much of our success, and we are proud to call you our biggest supporters. We would not be receiving this recognition without you. Thank you to the Academy, to all chancellors, regents, and trustees, and all past laureates for your dedication to this honor. We, the 2017 class of Student Laureates will aspire to continue to deserve this privilege and keep the spirit of Lincoln present in our minds in everything we do.

Bailey Martin-Giacalone, Eastern Illinois University