

**Remarks of Speaker Joe Straus
Texas Medal of Arts VIP Legislative Reception
February 28, 2011**

Thank you, Governor Dewhurst, for that kind introduction.

The honorees here tonight represent outstanding achievements that span an astonishing breadth of artistic talent and encompass an abiding, monumental support for the arts.

The famous British poet, Shelley, once suggested that “poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” That may be why, through the ages, artists and writers have been revered and reviled. They often disturb the peace, stir passions and force us to see things differently.

Many of us watched last night’s Academy Awards. If I had my way, a couple of my colleagues in the House would be nominated for best actor!

Tonight’s Texas Medal of the Arts ceremony is a much-needed reprieve – an oasis, you might say – for those of us engaged in the sausage-making business downtown. We are here to honor talents the best talent that Texas has to offer.

Some might say the arts are a luxury. If so, they are a luxury we cannot do without.

Investment in the arts community is critical to developing unique talents in our state – in music, dance, theatre, and the visual and literary arts.

We are facing difficult budget challenges this session, that’s true. But we will work to support the arts because doing so pays great dividends for our state.

Appreciation of the arts is personal for me. My Mom and Dad taught me that the arts are vitally important. They believed a community that welcomed artistic expression was always richer for it. And by their example, they showed me that we must teach, fund and patronize the arts faithfully.

I want to thank the members of the Texas Cultural Trust for the work you do to encourage investment in the arts – especially, the work of your Texas Young Masters program, which focuses on developing the next generation of artists.

Thank you for hosting this Medal of Arts program and honoring these timeless legends of Texas.

Each of the honorees we spotlight tonight is a shining star in the history of Texas. Each of them brings honor and tremendous credit to our state. Earlier today, the Texas House passed a resolution – authored by Representative Ryan Guillen – memorializing your contributions to this great state, and the great pride we feel in your accomplishments.

Congratulations to every honoree of the 2011 Texas Medal of the Arts program. Your artistry entertains us, inspires us and renews us.

Personally, I offer my heartfelt appreciation – not only to you, but to every individual, business and organization that has faithfully and generously supported the arts in Texas.

I know of no one who has been a stronger supporter of the arts in the San Antonio community than Alice Carrington Foulz, a long-time family friend and the Co-Chair of TMAA. Alice exemplifies the kind of enduring stewardship and indomitable spirit that has kept Texas at the forefront of artistic achievement for decades.

Thank you for inviting me to speak with you tonight.

It is my great pleasure and honor to introduce Alice Carrington Foulz.