Thank you, Anita.

Through your grace, your strength and your compassion, you have consistently demonstrated all that's exceptional about Texas women.

You're also an important voice in many issues that are vital to the women of Texas, and throughout your time as First Lady, you've truly made a difference in women's lives across our state.

It's a pleasure and an honor to be with you today, as we welcome a new class of outstanding women to the Texas Women's Hall of Fame.

I'd like to take a brief moment to echo Anita's gratitude to everyone involved with this venture, especially to the administration and staff at Texas Woman's University, which has been such an eager and capable partner in the creation and promotion of this Hall.

Through these doors, you'll find some of the most engaging, innovative, bold, outspoken and capable women in the history of our great state.

Many of their stories are well known, some of them not as much.

But each of the women honored beyond these doors have brought something of value to the people of Texas, the United States, and the world beyond.

Whether in the arts, education, leadership, or health and social service, these women have made their marks, and those who join them today certainly fit the bill.

More important than their individual accomplishments, however, is the inspiration they've collectively given to the girls and young women of tomorrow.

It's no surprise that Texas women are well-known for blazing trails, as they're an integral part of Texas' rich history of self-determination, and reflect the pioneer spirit that has made our state great.

Where the women in this Hall had to overcome varying degrees of social and traditional obstacles during generations past, the young women of today, certainly the students with us today, have the benefit of seeing not only that these things can be done, but how they've been done.

That might be these honorees' greatest gift to Texas.

You can see their legacy in every classroom, in every home, and in every workplace in Texas.

More than ever, young Texas women are taking the first, most vital step toward making their own marks on the world, they're going to college.

Since 2000, female enrollment in our public institutions of higher education,
ranging from four-year universities to community and technical colleges, has soared 55 percent.

They're not just going, too, they're excelling.

The 6-year graduation rate among women, for example, is 9 points higher than among men.

And expect more from the generations to come.

Recently, we got the welcome news that participation in the SATs, among all students, has soared over the last five years, particularly among our state's minority populations.

We saw a 65 percent increase among Hispanic students, and a 42 percent increase among African-Americans.

It's worth noting, too, that nearly nine percent of African-American women are enrolled in higher education in our state, the highest participation rate of any group.

I think you can trace a lot of the enthusiasm about college, and about finding a way to contribute, to the examples of those honored in this Hall, and those joining their ranks today.

I encourage anyone here, of either gender, to take the time to tour this inspiring exhibit.

Read about these women, these Texas women, who have succeeded in their fields, and in their lives, through hard work and sacrifice. Read their stories, and take their lessons to heart.

They're each proof that no obstacle is ever too big, no dream is ever too distant, if you're willing to work hard for it, to persevere, and to believe in yourself and those around you.

May God bless you and, through you, may He continue to bless the great state of Texas.