

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks on Presenting the 2025 Kennedy Center Honoree Medals
December 6, 2025

The President. Thank you very much, everybody. This is a great evening. It's a great honor. And I'm delighted to welcome to the Oval Office—the world-famous, most famous office in the world, most powerful office in the world—our truly exceptional 2025 Kennedy Center Honorees.

As President of the United States and the Chairman of the Board of the Kennedy Center, it's a privilege to pay tribute to the very best in American arts and culture, and that's what you have beside me. They are incredible people. I know most of them, and I've been a fan of all of them, and it's been a real honor to get to know them during this little period of time.

This is a group of icons whose work and accomplishments have inspired, uplifted, and unified millions and millions of Americans. This is perhaps the most accomplished and renowned class of Kennedy Center Honorees ever assembled.

We have country music legend George—got it?

[At this point, the President pointed to a video camera.]

It turned off. Got it? We have country music legend George Strait. George, thank you very much. I think you can leave this on now, George. If you want to leave it on, you can. I think we can get it through.

[Mr. Strait removed his hat. The President presented the medal.]

Oh, he's got good hair.

Musician George Strait. A little bit. I've still got a little bit. *[Laughter]*

The President. I'm surprised. Sometimes they take it off, and there's not a lot.

Mr. Strait. There's not a lot.

The President. Thank you.

We have a great star of Broadway. I've seen the show many times and other shows of his. Michael Crawford. Michael, thank you.

[The President presented the medal.]

Thank you, Michael. Let me do that. Very good. Thank you, Michael. Congratulations.

Actor Michael Crawford. Thank you.

The President. Beautiful.

We have the disco queen, and she was indeed. And nobody did it like Gloria Gaynor. Gloria, thank you very much.

Now, that's a good head of hair. That's beautiful. Thank you, Gloria.

[The President presented the medal.]

Musician Gloria Gaynor. Thank you.

The President. Thank you, darling.

A friend of mine, a wonderful person, a really—a spectacular person. One of the true great movie stars. There aren't many—there used to be a lot. There aren't many now. But he's one of

the great legends and had some of the greatest movies ever, including the top-grossing movies ever. Sylvester "Sly" Stallone. Sly.

This is great, Sly. It's an honor.

[*The President presented the medal.*]

Actor Sylvester Stallone. Ah, thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate it. Should I go over here?

The President. Thank you. Yes. Sounds good. Thank you, Sly.

And the members of the incredible rock band KISS: Paul Stanley, Gene Simmons, Peter Criss, and Ace Frehley, who now is resting in peace and his beautiful daughter is here to accept the award. Thank you very much. Thank you for being here. Thank you.

[*The President presented the medals.*]

That's pretty good stuff. Let me turn that around. Thank you. That's great. Hi, Gene. My friend for a long time.

Musician Gene Simmons. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. That's good. Thank you. My friend for a long time.

Musician Peter Criss. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much.

Mr. Criss. It's an honor.

The President. I think your father would be very happy to have you wear this. Okay? Thank you very much. He was a great guy. Thank you very much.

Those are great people.

In a few moments, we will be presenting these stars with their Kennedy Center Honors medallions, which were redesigned this year with the help of the fantastic team at Tiffany and Company. And I want to congratulate them. They have done a fantastic job. They're wonderful people. I know them very well because they're right next to Trump Tower. [*Laughter*] I've lived with them for many years, and they really have done a great job. So I want to thank Tiffany. Thank you very much.

We're also joined by members of the Kennedy Center Board of Trustees, who are doing a really great job. And as you know, the building is being renovated, fully renovated. It's being, I would say, fixed at a level that nobody has ever seen before. We're going to make it something really special. It is—it's been tired. It's been mistreated, a little bit like the White House has been mistreated, to be honest with you. And we're bringing it back to a level that I don't think any place in the country will see. We were given quite a bit of money by Congress to do the job, and we're doing it right.

And you'll see the new marble and the renovated marble in all of the different rooms and major auditoriums. The sound is so fantastic. One of the very big prerequisites, and something that doesn't happen often, is when you have great sound, you take advantage of it. And the Kennedy Center has great, great sound.

If they build it—fellas, you know this. Gloria, you would know it very well. George, you'd know it very well. Oh, Michael would know it so well. But if it's built with bad sound, you never get it fixed, right? It just doesn't work. They they've tried very hard at Lincoln Center and other places, and hadn't worked out too well.

But I just want to thank the Executive Director, Ric Grenell. Ric, thank you very much. Thank you, Ric. Ambassador Sergio Gor, Ambassador to India. Thank you, Sergio. Great job. And other friends and distinguished guests. Mr. and Mrs. Ike Perlmutter. So many people are here that are great friends. Mrs. Fischer, thank you very much. Very much.

We have some unbelievable people on the Board. The most prestigious Board, I think, now maybe in Washington. From Newark, New Jersey, to Poteet, Texas; from New York City to as far away as London, these are among the greatest artists, actors, and performers of their generation. The greatest that we've seen.

We can hardly imagine the country music phenomena without its king of country, or the American disco without its first lady, or Broadway without its Phantom. And that was a phantom, let me tell you. Or rock and roll without its hottest band in the world, and that's what they are. Or Hollywood without one of its greatest visionaries.

Each of you has made an indelible mark on American life, and together, you have defined entire genres and set new standards for the performing arts. You have set new standards. On behalf of every American who has been inspired by the unbelievable talent of Michael Crawford, who has been influenced by the music of George Strait or Gloria Gaynor or KISS, or who has been moved by Sylvester Stallone's unmatched heart and talent and grit—because nobody played that role and nobody will ever play that role like Sly—we want to thank you all. We want to thank you all. Really tremendous. Thank you.

So we're going to have a good time tonight. I look forward to celebrating with all of you at the Kennedy Center tomorrow, and it's going to be something that I believe and—I'm going to make a prediction: This will be the highest rated show that they've ever done. And they've gotten some pretty good ratings, but there's nothing like what's going to happen tomorrow night.

So I just want to thank you all. I want to congratulate you all. And I want to thank the media. They've treated this with such great respect. We very much appreciate it.

Now we're going to go to the State Department with Secretary of State Rubio and have a special event, something which was never done before, but we never had a President hosting the awards before. This is a first. I'm sure they'll give me great reviews, right? You know? They'll say: "He was horrible. He was terrible. It was a horrible situation." No, we'll do fine.

I've watched some of the people that host. Jimmy Kimmel was horrible. Some of these people—if I can't beat out Jimmy Kimmel in terms of talent, then I don't think I should be President.

But I want to just thank you all, because this is a special night, and I think you're going to see that at the end of this evening. And, by the end of these 2 days, you're going to say this is one of the most special days in your life. And I think a few of you have already told me it already was.

So thank you all very much. Congratulations. And we'll see you in a couple of minutes. Thank you.

Thank you, media. Thank you very much. Please.

Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:26 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Monique Frehley, daughter of musician Ace Frehley, who died on October 16; Isaac "Ike" Perlmutter, former chairman and chief executive officer, Marvel Entertainment; Laura Perlmutter, member of the Board of Trustees, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; and Jimmy Kimmel, host, ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" program. The transcript was released by

the Office of Communications on December 8, 2025, with a corrected transcript released on January 2, 2026.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : 2025 Kennedy Center Honoree Medals, presentation.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Crawford, Michael; Criss, Peter; Frehley, Ace; Frehley, Monique; Gaynor, Gloria; Gor, Sergio; Grenell, Richard A.; Kimmel, Jimmy; Perlmutter, Isaac "Ike"; Perlmutter, Laura; Rubio, Marco A.; Simmons, Gene; Stallone, Sylvester; Stanley, Paul; Strait, George.

Subjects: 2025 Kennedy Center Honoree Medals; India, U.S. Ambassador; John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; Secretary of State.

DCPD Number: DCPD202501169.