

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

**REMARKS BY JACOB LEW
DEDICATION OF ROBERT M. BALL FEDERAL BUILDING; BALTIMORE, MD
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Thank you for that kind introduction.

Commissioner Astrue, members of the Maryland delegation, friends, it is truly an honor to be here today to be a part of this tribute to Bob Ball.

To Bob's family, let me say that the naming of this building, the crowd gathered here today, and the kind words spoken do not do justice to the affection and admiration we all had for Bob.

As many of you know, I recently returned to a job I once had – being Director of the Office of Management and Budget. And on one of my first days there, I had literally just hung up my pictures on the wall when I was handed a folder with documents to sign.

In it, was an enrolled bill memo for the legislation renaming this building in memory of Bob Ball.

As I put my signature on this form recommending that the President sign this bill, I paused. Here I was, executing my first official act as OMB Director in the Obama Administration and able to do just a little part to help honor a man who was a mentor, friend, teacher, and hero of mine.

I was deeply moved.

I first met Bob when, as a young man, I had the privilege to work for House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill. Bob taught me a great deal and when I was assigned to work on the bipartisan effort to reform and strengthen Social Security, we became partners in an adventure that led to a great accomplishment – the 1983 Social Security Reforms.

Working with Bob was an education in and of itself. He brought to the task his encyclopedic knowledge of Social Security and his uncanny ability to develop clever policy options acceptable to two sides who agreed on very little.

In an environment where all options could have become radioactive by the actions or comments by any of the participants, Bob was a constant coach – reminding us all that we needed to look beyond the moment and toward the time when we would have to come to a resolution.

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No matter how hot tempers got or how intense the pressure seemed, Bob kept us focused. We had to engage with respect. We had to remain true to our core beliefs, but look at options rationally – and not get swept up in ideology or emotion.

And we had to do this for one simple reason: that was the only way to come to an agreement to preserve and strengthen Social Security.

Bob never lost sight of the ultimate goal.

For his entire career, across six decades, he gave so much of himself -- deep into his own retirement – in order to make sure that millions of Americans could have a dignified retirement.

Simply, Social Security as it is today is inconceivable without Bob Ball.

And I learned something else working with Bob.

Despite all Bob had accomplished and all the stature he had as we entered those talks in 1983, he showed me – a staffer young enough to be his grandson – extraordinary kindness, patience, and respect. He treated me like a full partner every step of the way.

I never forgot that, and over the many years that passed after 1983, it was my privilege to remain in touch with Bob through meetings, memos, calls, and notes. I learned from each of them – and treasure them all.

The story is told that when Bob was finishing his graduate studies at Wesleyan, his thesis adviser told him to join the Social Security Administration: “Well, this program is just starting up,” the adviser said. “It’s going to be a big program. It’s an attractive program and an important social program, and it would be a good thing if you got in on it in the beginning.”

Social Security is a big program. It is an important social program. And Bob Ball, in ways large and small, worked to make it so.

One of the pictures I was hanging up on my wall on that first day in the OMB job late last year was a picture with Speaker O’Neill, and Bob. It hangs together with letters from Bob and President Reagan and an inscription from the Speaker.

It reminds me that an important moment of bipartisanship – years ago – produced something that will be long remembered as a shining accomplishment that helped millions of Americans.

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That picture inspires me every day.

And I hope for the men and women who come to work here at the Robert M. Ball Federal Building will gaze up at that name and be inspired too – to pursue with pride a career in the public service, to be dedicated to bettering our nation, and to aspire to the ideals and the ideas of our friend, mentor, and colleague – Bob Ball.

Thank you.