



Published on *The American Task Force on Palestine* (<http://www.americantaskforce.org>)

[Home](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#)

Remarks by Senator John Sununu at ATFP Inaugural Gala

Image Gallery

- 
https://www.americantaskforce.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/img_gal_thumb/pictures/0154_0535_atfp_gala.jpg
[1]
- 
https://www.americantaskforce.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/img_gal_thumb/pictures/0155_0539_atfp_gala.jpg
[2]
- 
https://www.americantaskforce.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/img_gal_thumb/pictures/0158_0545_atfp_gala.jpg
[3]
- 
https://www.americantaskforce.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/img_gal_thumb/pictures/0160_0552_atfp_gala.jpg
[4]
- 
https://www.americantaskforce.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/img_gal_thumb/pictures/0163_0558_atfp_gala.jpg
[5]
- 
https://www.americantaskforce.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/img_gal_thumb/pictures/0166_0566_atfp_gala.jpg
[6]

[Back to Gala 2006: Towards Peace and Prosperity](#) [7]

Senator John Sununu
ATFP Inaugural Gala
October 11, 2006

Thank you very much, it's a pleasure being here. I suppose there is a fair amount of truth in that final observation but it doesn't change the fact that I am 42 years old and in the United States Senate and I'm sitting at the table, and my mother is fixing my bow tie, as my father frantically writes his speech on the back of a business card.

Let me begin by congratulating ATFP, Ziad, and all of his staff on a fantastic evening. It is a great pleasure for me to be here tonight to introduce my father John Sununu, or as he prefers

to be known, as “the real John Sununu.” It was at a fairly young age that I recognized that my family background was somewhat unique. I was definitely the only person in my class with a Palestinian-American father, who was born in Havana and grew up in New York City. At least, I was pretty sure that that was the case. But it was a special family background. Growing up, I saw at a very early age the pride my grandfather had at the fact that he grew up in Jerusalem, and he went to school within the walls of the Old City. My grandmother, Abara Hussein, was born in Central America. And it made for a family history that, I think, naturally encouraged me and my brothers and sisters to learn more about our background, to learn more about the world, to better understand the Middle East - the complexities, the challenges that we are facing in that part of the world, and America’s role in helping to address some of those challenges, problems, and inequities.

In public life, my father recognized, as he began local politics, moved on to serve as governor, and then as Chief of Staff to the President of the United States, that as an Arab American, one of the very few Arab Americans, in public life, I think my father recognized that there would be a greater level of visibility, there would come greater public scrutiny. But that was simply part of the bargain, if you will, that if you wanted to make a difference, if you wanted to affect policy, you wanted to improve the lives of those that were represented, whether at the local or national level in politics, you had to take that scrutiny as it came and rise to the challenge. And I think it is fair to say, that despite my biases, that he was able to do that. He brought to his work, in each of those roles, in public life, a commitment to a forthright, balanced, even-handed and informed discussion of the kinds of complex challenges that we just heard spoken of by Prince Turki, by the Secretary of State, and by others.

There are enormous challenges that the region faces, but in public life, time and again, those that agree with John Sununu and those that disagree with John Sununu have walked out of his office, saying that he understands the issues, he listens, he is informed, and he does his homework. And I think that is all we can ask anyone to bring to public policy, but especially as something that is as important as dealing with the Palestinian crisis.

Secretary Rice, I think, spoke well of what we really need at this point. If we are going to be prepared to take advantage of an opportunity when it arises, we all understand these are challenging and difficult times, but, if there is anything that I have learned from watching my father’s work, I learned that you need to be prepared to take advantage of opportunities. You simply can’t wake up one day, see an opportunity, and grab at it without having done the work necessary to take advantage of that situation, and to be prepared to deal with an opportunity when it arises in the Middle East. We need to expand our effort in public diplomacy, and do a better job providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians and others in the region. And we need to make every effort not to leave the future when an opportunity rises, but starting today, to build lasting relationship with our many Arab allies in the region. Otherwise we won’t be prepared to take advantage of the opportunity when it comes.

I will close with one final anecdote, which carries with it a few lessons, and it goes back to the family, and the family name. When my father first ran for office state-wide in New Hampshire, which wasn’t that long ago, 1980, about twenty five years ago, the conventional wisdom was simply, that with a name like John Sununu, you can’t get elected state-wide in the state of New Hampshire. Well, when I ran for office, ten years ago, people looked at me and said, “Sununu” - having that name is an unfair advantage in politics! There are two lessons from this. One is that we set our own course, we decide what we want to do, there are always challenges, that you’re taking on the work in public life, as my father has, and to a lesser extent, as I have, but we do set our own course. But a second lesson here is that times

change, and as the Secretary Rice has pointed out, what appeared to be unthinkable, at very specific points in our country's history, and in world history turned out in hindsight, almost to be inevitable. So we must remember that times change, and I think that simple fact, perhaps more than anything else is the best reason to maintain optimism, and hope, and as Ziad has described, faith about the potential for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It is my great pleasure, to introduce to you and present an award to father Gov. John Sununu.

[Back to Gala 2006: Towards Peace and Prosperity](#) ^[7]

TAGS:

[Events](#) | [Daily News](#) | [About Us](#) | [Resources](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Donate](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

[!\[\]\(cbe80b694ebd74fcfe136a095b608235_img.jpg\) Front Page Features](#) [!\[\]\(27df6be88af07602ea392719b144fe7f_img.jpg\) World Press Roundup](#) [!\[\]\(96f0a292e266dbee33329d5ab59a28c7_img.jpg\) ATFP in the News](#) [!\[\]\(e690b1f92192b826402019fb9f52289a_img.jpg\) Policy and Analysis](#)
[!\[\]\(2f1aaa3afac05d904f8b2c7a378e5c6b_img.jpg\) Briefing Summaries](#)

Source URL (retrieved on *May 27 2019 - 8:12am*):

http://www.american taskforce.org/remarks_senator_john_sununu_atfp_inaugural_gala

Links:

- [1] https://www.american taskforce.org/sites/default/files/pictures/0154_0535_atfp_gala.jpg
- [2] https://www.american taskforce.org/sites/default/files/pictures/0155_0539_atfp_gala.jpg
- [3] https://www.american taskforce.org/sites/default/files/pictures/0158_0545_atfp_gala.jpg
- [4] https://www.american taskforce.org/sites/default/files/pictures/0160_0552_atfp_gala.jpg
- [5] https://www.american taskforce.org/sites/default/files/pictures/0163_0558_atfp_gala.jpg
- [6] https://www.american taskforce.org/sites/default/files/pictures/0166_0566_atfp_gala.jpg
- [7] http://www.american taskforce.org/gala_2006