



# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Gov. Robert Ray named first Uncommon Iowan by Hoover Presidential Foundation

**Cedar Rapids, IOWA – Oct. 26, 2015** – Former Iowa Governor Robert D. Ray was presented the inaugural Uncommon Iowan Award on Friday, Oct. 23 at the Hoover Presidential Foundation annual Celebration Banquet in Cedar Rapids. Governor Terry Branstad made the presentation and Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, president, World Food Prize Foundation accepted on Ray’s behalf. Ray was unable to attend due to health reasons.

“Beginning in 1975, the Ray administration encouraged Iowans to assist with the settlement of Southeast Asian refugees in our state,” Branstad said. “He served the people of Iowa well. I know, because I was his third Lt. Governor.” Ray had spent 14 years in the Governor’s office. He has continued to be extremely active in public affairs in Iowa since leaving the governorship, serving as interim Mayor of the City of Des Moines, President of Drake University, and leading several statewide educational awareness efforts and fundraising campaigns. Ray is a life-term trustee of the Hoover Presidential Foundation and has been involved with the Foundation for over 30 years.

“Governor Ray is a great example for all...” said Branstad, “when he said, and I quote, ‘*I think what it shows is that everyone can do something and make a difference in this world. We might not be able to do it all but we can do something, and isn’t there great satisfaction in that? The happiest people I know are people who are doing things for other people.*’” Branstad continues, “Governor Ray is a great example of a wonderful humanitarian who made a real difference and continues to make a difference. I am honored to be presenting this Uncommon Iowan Award to Ambassador Ken Quinn, the president of the World Food Prize Foundation, the aid to Governor Ray that helped make it possible to bring all these refugees to the state of Iowa, on behalf of Gov. Ray.

“It was one of the great privileges in my life, was to spend four years working for Gov. Bob Ray,” Amb. Kenneth Quinn said. “Here’s why he is justifiably the uncommon Iowan. 1975, 130,000 people fleeing from Vietnam, Laos, and they’re coming to America. Each state is going to take its share. But there’s one group called the Tai Dam. They have their own distinct culture, language, kinships, history and they’re about to be scattered and all that is going to be lost. And they write a letter to every governor in the United State of America saying, ‘please take us as a people.’ Only one governor ever wrote back, Gov. Bob Ray.”

Quinn continues to describe how Ray went to Washington and lobbied the Health Education and Welfare Department and the State Department, “and they said OK, you can have all the Tai Dam. They’re still in Des Moines, they’re still in Iowa,” reports Quinn.

(Cont.)





Quinn also related a story of a trip to Thailand in 1979 with Gov. Ray to look at refugee camps. When they got there, they were rushed to the border because the first 30,000 Cambodians had just escaped the Khmer Rouge. They walked through an emaciated group of starved people who were dying at the rate of 50 to 100 a day. The governor took photos back to Des Moines and told his story to the Des Moines Register. The next day the headline in the paper read, 'I watched people die. – Ray.' According to Quinn, that led to the formation of Iowa SHARES, who raised \$600,000 between Thanksgiving and Christmas. On Christmas Day, the first truck left Iowa loaded with relief supplies, followed days later by groups of doctors and nurses. SHARES stands for Sends Help, Aides Refugees, Ends Starvation.

In his parting remarks, Quinn relates another story of the trip to Thailand where a group from Tai Dam met with Gov. Ray and wanted to show them their symbol of hope. "They brought us into a small thatched hut and said 'inside here is our symbol of hope.' We thought it must be some statue or item from their history," Quinn said. "They brought us in and there, tacked up on the wall, was the Iowa Department of Transportation highway map, with pins in it where their people had gone. The man who made the shape of our state the symbol of hope to people 12,000 miles away, who have nothing in common with most any of us, was Governor Bob Ray, the Uncommon Iowan."

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Photos:

01 Branstad at podium

02 Branstad at podium, 2<sup>nd</sup> view

03 Branstad and Quinn with award

04 Quinn at podium

Photos are at highest resolution, although shot in a dark room from a distance.

#### **About the Foundation**

The Hoover Presidential Foundation is a private nonprofit organization for the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum and Hoover National Historic Site in West Branch, Iowa. The Foundation fosters the collection, interpretation and preservation of historical resources relating to the life, ideas, values and times of Herbert Hoover, 31st President of the United States.

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