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Announcement of Stanley Plumly As Poet Laureate of Maryland

REMARKS BY GOVERNOR MARTIN O'MALLEY

The State House
Annapolis, Maryland
October 1, 2009

Alice, thank you for your kind introduction and for the work that you and your fellow your fellow selection committee members have done. It's great to be with friends. It's especially good to see you, Carla Hayden, who runs the best library system in the Greatest City in America. And Rick Cannon, my sophomore English teacher, who joined in this effort as well.

On this happy occasion, it's great to have several members of the Maryland State Arts Council with us to share in today's announcement.

It's also an honor to be joined by two former Poet Laureates: Michael Collier, would you raise your hand? Michael thank you very much for what you have done for your state. And also Michael Glaser, thank you. Thanks to both Michaels.

Maryland has one of the oldest Poet Laureate programs in the nation, and that doesn't surprise me. You know, this is the fiftieth anniversary...I am sure you had this on your calendar...The fiftieth anniversary of the Poet Laureate Program in Maryland.

So much of what we do in your state government, is about the question of "what type of society we aspire to." What sort of future we want for ourselves, for our children, and for our children's children.

The arts are inextricably connected to this future, and to our entire mission statement, which is all about strengthening and growing the ranks of increasingly diverse and upwardly mobile middle class.

The Irish poet John O'Donohue writes that *"there is incredible power in a community of people who are together, because they care, and who are motivated by the ideals of compassion and creativity."*

In big ways and small ways, our shared pursuit of progress as a people is really defined by that caring. It's defined by our idea of community. And it is also defined by our creativity and our longing for connection...to one another, to the past, to our desire as poets to strive always to occupy that stamina, that fulcrum between empathy and detachment... and to occupy the space with as much grace and comfort as this life allows.

If you think about it, art and music are in essence about relationships and connection. And we choose, as a people, to be represented by the Poet Laureate because we value these connections with others... We also understand that there are some things that are deeper and higher than an annual budget, than the program with many miles traveled.

STANLEY PLUMLY

Today we are entrusting these connections to Stanley Plumly, our new Poet Laureate in Maryland. Stanley is a Distinguished University Professor and the Director of the Creative Writing Program at the University of Maryland.

The recipient of numerous awards including eight Pushcart Prizes, the Paterson Poetry Prize (2007), an Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2002), he is the author of nine books of poetry, including Old Heart, which won the Los Angeles Times Book Award.

When Stanley was awarded the John William Carrington Award for Literary Excellence, his award letter said his poetry was being honored, quote: *"because it addresses themes -- such as the 'mysterious relationship of child to parent and more generally of past to present, the way self-knowledge, and the natural supernaturalism' of the environment...are 'urgent' to young and old alike."*

One of Stanley's newest works is the critically acclaimed: Posthumous Keats: A Personal Biography, about the poet John Keats.

Keats, once wrote that *"the imagination may be compared to Adam's dream -- he awoke and found it truth."*

We are looking to Mr. Plumly to help connect imagination with truth in his role as Poet Laureate, as he travels throughout our State, promoting reading and the arts.

CONCLUSION

Stanley, thank you for choosing to serve your State and for inspiring us with your words, your heart, your commitment to the arts, and your commitment to your community.

There is no better time to do this job than right now, and I thank you for doing it.

We have citation and an engraved glass bowl to present to you, sir... So step right up here...

No event is complete without a governor's citation...