Good morning. I am always delighted to be back in New York City. This week is Free Speech Week, an opportunity to recognize and reflect on the importance of the First Amendment. It is great to be in the company of so many from the film and television community, because all of you have a keen understanding of how critical free speech and free expression are to everything we do.

And I am equally delighted to discuss a topic that contributes to New York’s reputation as one of, if not the, greatest – and most recognized city in the world. As they say in the real estate business: location, location, location! For it is NYC’s location as the iconic and instantly recognizable film and TV backdrop for countless films and television shows that supports that reputation.

Whether you are a tourist from a foreign country, or someone who only comes here occasionally on business or you are a resident of this great city, every time you turn the corner in NYC, there is a chance you will see a scene you recognize from a film or television series.

And you can’t help but smile—especially if you’ve ever seen a Woody Allen movie.

Block after block, there is a never ending sense of recognition. A sense of being on the set.

Arrive at the corner of 57th Street and 5th Avenue and you see the ghost of young Audrey Hepburn gazing dreamily into the display window at Tiffany’s.

When you see that red firehouse in Tribeca, you recognize “Ghostbusters” headquarters.
And when you stop for lunch at Katz’s deli on Houston Street, where Sony’s Columbia Pictures “When Harry Met Sally” filmed, you are sure half the people in the room are pointing to other patrons’ tables and saying, “I’ll have what she’s having.”

And when it comes to television, New York City has of course provided an incredible backdrop for a stunning number of shows.

There are the gritty “Law and Order” locations, the hipster hangouts for “Sex in the City,” and more currently, New York’s streets, alleys and rooftops are featured prominently in five Marvel series on Netflix: “Daredevil,” “Jessica Jones,” the new “Luke Cage,” and the upcoming “The Punisher” and “Iron Fist.”

These five series represent an incredible investment by the Walt Disney Company to spend $200 million over the first three years of filming. An investment which is only likely to grow.

Beyond the instant recognition brought on by recognizable buildings and landscapes, the city also offers something else, something very few other cities possess – an incredible cultural and ethnic diversity – a rich source of inspiration for filmmakers and a major component of a wide array of award-winning movies and television shows.

Just take a look for instance, at these five Marvel series I mentioned earlier and you will see an incredible diversity of background and character that matches the wide range of diversity in well-known locales ranging from Harlem to Hell’s Kitchen.

Another new series, the highly praised “Master of None” starring Aziz Ansari has been described as “a casually multicultural, multiracial comedy that’s also acutely conscious of how identity still matters.”

And on Starz, “Power” the story of New York City night club owner and drug dealer, and VH1’s hip-hop drama “The Breaks” both carved out new ground thanks to their diverse casts.

Add to this, the new Sony Film to be released next year: “Spiderman: Homecoming,” which concluded shooting in Georgia earlier this year and then moved to New York City. Unlike some of its predecessors, this film has a wide variety of cultures and ethnicities represented in its cast.
According to its director, Jon Watts, this is no accident for a show that takes place at a high school in Queens, one of the most multicultural neighborhoods in the world.

That richness in diversity is of course not limited to New York City alone, and one movie I am especially looking forward to seeing is the upcoming film called “Marshall”—a drama about a young Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall that was filmed in Buffalo this past summer.

In addition to your backdrops and diversity, there is another reason New York remains one of the world’s leading film and television production destinations.
Over many, many years, New York has demonstrated an unrivaled ability to innovate and adapt.

For decades this city has welcomed—and rigorously trained—each successive generation of artists and creators: Writers, actors, directors. Many are born here.

And even more migrate to this city and are “re-born” when they enroll in the Actors’ Studio, Juilliard, The New York Film Academy, NYU Tisch School of Arts, and dozens of other training grounds for emerging talent, including SUNY Purchase, Kingsborough Community College and the Ghetto Film School.

You also offer first rate production facilities. Many of our most memorable programs during television’s Golden Age were produced here.

One of my all-time favorites that still hold up were the 39 episodes of “The Honeymooners,” filmed at the DuMont Television Network’s Adelphi Theater at 152 West 54th Street in Manhattan.

And there is also the incredible infrastructure you’ve built to support this industry.

There are also the legacy venues such as Kaufman Astoria Studios in Queens, which has a storied history, spanning almost a century. And here’s a little trivia: the Marx Brothers’ first two features—“Cocoanuts” and “Animal Crackers”—were both filmed there.

By the way, the Kaufman Studio keeps adapting and innovating: they are now the home to New York City's only backlot, which opened in December 2013.

Steiner Studios is another example—now the largest US film and television production studio complex outside of Hollywood—located on 20 acres within the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Silvercup Studios, recently completed its new Silvercup North film and television production facility in the South Bronx. They invested $35 million to transform an existing warehouse into an 115,000-square-foot, full service production facility—creating an estimated 400 production-industry jobs in the process.

Grumman Studios, on Long Island, offers 155,000 square feet with eight sound stages and 30 acres of paved outdoor space.

Also on Long Island, Gold Coast Studios has 175,000 square feet of stage space, six sound stages and a 13.5 acre backlot that served as Times Square in “The Amazing Spiderman 2.”

Simply put, the bottom line is this: major motion pictures and TV shows require locations that are as diverse and imaginative as the content of the stories themselves —
from the major cityscapes and bustling downtowns we so closely associate with New York City, but can also be found in Buffalo, Albany and other areas of the state – to the more pristine settings far from the metropolitan core.

It is not just New York City and her boroughs that are playing host to great TV and motion picture productions.

As many of you are aware, production has expanded statewide in New York.

“Teenage Ninja Turtles 2” produced by Paramount and Nickelodeon Movies, filmed car chases, helicopter rides and explosions, along Buffalo’s Kensington Expressway for two weeks in 2015.

“The Path,” produced by Universal Television and streamed on Hulu, films primarily in Rockland, Westchester and Nassau counties, and does its stage work in Mount Vernon. Other productions outside New York City include Showtime’s “The Affair,” Netflix’s “Orange Is The New Black” and “Royal Pains,” which ended its eight-season run this past July.

Now, in addition to the backdrops, the diversity, and the physical infrastructure that the city and state offer, you have also structured a rational, balanced, well thought-out production incentive program.

Your civic and political leaders—and, by extension, your citizens— have recognized that TV and film production is a fabulous economic engine for the state of New York.

And in a highly competitive global marketplace, New York State’s Film Tax Credit program is definitely a critical deciding factor when choosing to work in the Empire State.

In 2015 alone, a record 202 film and television projects applied for the program—and those productions are estimated to have generated 187,697 new hires and $3 billion in new spending statewide, according to Empire State Development.

And, just yesterday, according to the Governor’s Office of Motion Picture and Television Development, the state has reached an important milestone, receiving its 1000th application for the State’s Film Production Tax Credit since 2011.

This year, to date 158 new projects have already applied and are participating in the program, leading to nearly 182,000 new hires.

The New York State Film Tax Credit now stands at $420 million annually.

Governor Cuomo articulated a bold vision to create a world class production industry in New York State, and working with the State Legislature, and the people of the state, he has delivered on that promise.
The Governor has worked with the Legislature to extend funding for the credit through 2019, tripled the credit for post-production, and created an additional 10% percent credit for labor costs Upstate.

We look forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature to extend the program and help ensure the stability that helps make the New York State tax incentive such a phenomenal success story.

Over the course of the program, since Governor Cuomo took office, the Film and Television Credit has generated $14.5 billion in revenues and created an estimated 915,000 jobs in New York State, according to Empire State Development.

Those figures bear repeating: $14.5 billion in revenues and 915,000 New York jobs.

In addition to these jobs, there is a significant ripple effect on the local economy – hotels, car rentals, restaurants, laundry services, lumber yards, catering services, and so many other benefits directly from film and television production. It is estimated that a large film production spends nearly $225,000 a day on local businesses during the course of its shoot.

One of the key points I make when I talk to people about this industry is that for every star in any given television or motion picture production, there are hundreds of working people behind the scenes. Nationwide, 1.9 million people wake up and go to work each morning in jobs supported by the film and television industry. And for those who work in production, 96% occur below the line – never going to walk a red carpet or appear on the cover of a movie magazine.

This is a labor intensive industry, where for every star you see on the screen there are literally dozens and dozens of talented technicians behind them with jobs that on average pay $92,000 – 79% higher than the average salary.

This film and television incentive program is perhaps one of the most successful economic development programs in the history of the state—thanks to Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature.

It may be helpful to point out that it was not long ago the picture was not so bright.

In the 1960s and ’70s, much of New York television production moved west, to Hollywood. During the early days of the tax credit program –2004 to 2011—New York was only a secondary market in terms of production volume.

Features ostensibly set in New York were being shot in Toronto, Vancouver, Los Angeles, and elsewhere, with only a few days of what we call “walk and talks” filmed on the streets of New York.
All that changed with the re-vamping of the credit that began five years ago.

The new credit program boosted the available post-production credit from 10 percent to 30 percent in the New York metropolitan commuter region.

For post-production work in Upstate New York, a 35 percent tax credit was created for eligible productions.

This strengthened law was designed to attract post-production work to communities in all corners of the state—and it has: Five new post-production companies opened Upstate and an additional 22 have opened in New York City since July 2012. And today, New York is booming.

The Tonight Show, which started here in 1954 – moved to the West Coast – and is now back home in New York after 42 years.

And Speaking of TV shows, the most dramatic production increases in New York have been in television series production. A total of 112 television series came into the program during its first seven years, and since 2011, that number has jumped to 225—an increase of more than 100 percent.

This is particularly important for New York because television series tend to spend more, stay longer, and hire more New Yorkers than other forms of production.

And when a state like New York provides a sustainable creative environment—*and doesn’t change the rules in the middle of the road*—producers are incentivized to stay.

This is why New York not only attracts, but equally important, retains—long running shows like “Blue Bloods”—now in season 7.

....and “Orange is the New Black” —now in season 5.

... and “The Americans” —now in season 4.

Before I close, I would also like to underscore the point that the value this industry generates is far more than simply economic.

As much as I am proud of the economic impact the motion picture and television industry is making here in New York and across the country, I am equally proud of the social impact.

The best motion pictures and television shows filmed here, and elsewhere, enliven the national conversation, enrich the culture, and showcase our nation’s rich diversity.

Over the decades, Hollywood has tackled many of the loftiest concepts expressed in our founding documents —dramatizing them and making them resonant for millions.
While I could cite 100 examples of the contributions film and television shows have made to civic life, here are just a few:

- In 1940, Charlie Chaplin created cinema’s first important political satire when he mocked Adolf Hitler in “The Great Dictator.”
- Two years after World War II ended, Gregory Peck starred in “Gentlemen’s Agreement,” one of the first films to tackle the subject of anti-Semitism.
- Films like “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” broke new ground in race relations.
- “Philadelphia,” opened up the discussion about sexual identity and human rights.
- Films also remind us that a healthy skepticism of political and institutional authority is warranted. “Spotlight”, last year’s Academy-award-winning best picture about the investigative reporters at The Boston Globe who exposed child abuse in the Catholic Church is a memorable example of the power of film.
- “Concussion” challenged the National Football League, and “The Big Short”, our financial institutions.

Whether it’s confronting tyrants abroad, speaking truth to power at home, or pushing the limits—and buttons—of our society’s tolerance and cultural understanding, motion pictures and television often dare to say the unspeakable.

And productions in New York have been at the center of this cultural commentary, and excelling at it, I might add. As many of you are aware, the recent 68th Annual Primetime Emmy Awards recognized productions filmed in New York with 109 nominations and 19 Emmys.

Among them:

- Rami Malek won Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series for his work in the USA Network’s “Mr. Robot.”
- Kate McKinnon won Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series for her work on “Saturday Night Live.”
- New York-based productions also took home awards for outstanding costume design, hairstyling, directing, music, documentary filmmaking ... and more.

The 2017, Oscar nominations aren’t yet announced, but I am confident motion pictures filmed either principally or partially here will surely be on the list.

Which is why you all are very fortunate to live here, and to have one of America’s most revered industries woven into the fabric of your daily lives.

This is a great time to work in television and motion pictures.

And even greater time to be working doing this great work in New York!

Thank you.