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### 2008-11-07 H. Thomas Wells, Jr. ABA Presidential Speech

H. Thomas Wells Jr.

University of Alabama School of Law

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You will be introduced by Professor John Norton Moore, director of the Center for National Security Law at UVA Law School.

**Thank you, Professor Moore. I wish I could have been here yesterday morning to kick off the program, but I was invited to give a speech at the Keystone Leadership Conference for Air Force JAG officers—right up the Potomac from here. As you know, it's these folks and the JAG officers from the other military branches who are at the front lines of what we explore at these Reviews of National Security Law.**

**So I thank you for your indulgence as I welcome you on behalf of the ABA on this—*the second*—day of the conference. And I'm glad I was able to join you for dinner last night and hear Admiral Mullen's compelling remarks.**

**Given the election just three days ago and transition to the [Obama/McCain] administration, we're at a particularly important and opportune time to be discussing how the rule of law intersects with national security.**

**These are issues for which the ABA has a particularly respected and strong**

**voice, and that's due to all of you who are here today. Thanks to the careful and hard work of groups like the ABA's Standing Committee on Law and National Security, the ABA House of Delegates has adopted policies on treatment and due process for terrorism detainees, handling of state secrets, use of surveillance, and other important national security issues.**

**I'm sure these policies will gain the attention of the new administration, because our Governmental Affairs Office**

**is adept at advocating for them forcefully here in Washington.**

**We're grateful for the participation and all the work to put on this conference from the Center for National Security Law at the University of Virginia School of Law, and from the Center on Law, Ethics, and National Security, at Duke University School of Law.**

**And I'd especially like to acknowledge the ABA's own Standing Committee on Law and National Security, chaired by my friend Al Harvey.**

**The standing committee was founded in 1962 by then-ABA president and later Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell. The standing committee is one of the oldest in the ABA and has a proud history. Its work is unique. The caliber of its members and alumni is impressive. And its programs give knowledge and guidance to lawyers, courts, Congress, the White House, and the public.**

**We will continue to provide forums like the Review of the Field of National Security Law, and we will continue—with your collaboration—to develop positions**

**on the complex challenges we face. Our goal is that our executive, legislative, and judicial branches—indeed, the American people—will continue turning to us for guidance. Our national security, and the very existence of our nation as we know it, depends on our efforts.**