

Raleigh, NC - Good afternoon! I am honored to share this stage with so many leaders who have served our state and our nation with such distinction...and to share this room with the many Citizen Soldiers, first responders, elected officials, and public servants who work day-in and day-out to keep us strong and resilient. Secretary Richardson, we are particularly happy to welcome you to North Carolina today. I also want to recognize my friend Bob Etheridge, who played a key role in this effort as a member of Congress and more recently served as the Governor's point person for the Recovery Act in North Carolina.

The famous quipster (and Army veteran) Cullen Hightower once remarked that "talk is cheap – except when Congress does it." So I choose my words carefully when I say that this is truly a momentous occasion. Looking around the room, I cannot recall a single time when I was prouder to call North Carolina home. It would take a full hour to acknowledge everybody who deserves recognition for being here today. So rather than subject you to the formalities, I'd like to briefly recount the timeline of events that produced this impressive facility, acknowledging some of those whose efforts made it possible along the way.



