

## **Appreciation to former U.S. Ambassador John Rakolta**

*Friday, Jan. 20*

**BACKGROUND:** *Detroit Regional Chamber event featuring former U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, John Rakolta, Jr., Chairman, Walbridge.*

**NOTE:** *Event includes 50 invitees from Detroit Chamber CEO Sandy Baruah. Attendees are chamber board members and C-level executives.*

- First, thank you to the Chamber for assembling this prestigious and influential group.... Oakland University is delighted to be sponsoring this afternoon's program.
  - And thank you Sandy for your leadership and to the leaders in this room for your commitment to strengthening Michigan, the United States and the world.
- Ambassador Rakolta, thank you for your courage and determination in making the Abraham Accords a reality.
  - Your frank and honest approach proved critical in establishing diplomatic relations between Israel and its neighbors in the Middle East.
- On a personal level, I applaud your remarkable work. Your approach has been based on mutual understanding, coexistence, respect for human dignity and freedom, including religious freedom. This has led to the unprecedented breakthroughs resulting in the Abraham Accords.
- Much like the approach Ambassador Rakolta has taken, here in Michigan, our collective success depends on cooperation, open dialogue and recognition of the power of collaboration.

- Our common interest is in building a Michigan economy that provides opportunities, increases the number and quality of jobs and improves the lives of all residents.
- Higher education plays a vital role in the state's economic success by ensuring that we have a talented and prepared workforce and by partnering with local businesses and institutions to meet community needs.
  - At Oakland University, we're extremely proud that more than 95 percent of our graduates stay in Michigan and are working in high-paying jobs that sustain our economic growth and create the Michigan of the future.
- Mr. Ambassador, we are excited to hear your talk today. In addition, we look forward to seeing you again at Oakland University on March 29 when you will join Ambassador David Fischer for another conversation about the impact and legacy of the Abraham Accords.
  - That conversation will be coordinated by the OU Center for Civic Engagement, an example of how Oakland is a venue for nonpartisan conversations about the issues of our times.
- I'm here with Dave Dulio, who many of you know for his incisive political analysis, most recently on the impact of redistricting.
  - Dave is the director of the OU Center for Civic Engagement.

- We hope all of you will join us again in a few months for that conversation as well.
  
- So, in addition to thanking Ambassador Rakolta and Sandy Baruah, I would really like to thank each of you for your leadership and vision. Your invaluable leadership and vision are invaluable in shaping the prospects for metro Detroit and our state.