

Thanking McCain and Obama, tongue firmly in cheek, at the Bradley Prizes

Hundreds of influential conservatives gathered Wednesday night at the Kennedy Center to watch political analyst Michael Barone, former FEC commissioner Bradley Smith, Wall Street Journal editorial page editor Paul Gigot, and economist John Taylor accept the seventh annual Bradley prizes -- \$250,000 awards from the influential Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation.

It was, as ever, a lavish event more in the mold of an Academy Award ceremony than a typical D.C. dinner. After Fox News host Brit Hume introduced the award winners, Broadway star Brian Stokes Mitchell stepped onstage to sing the first of three showtunes, one combined in a medley with "America, the Beautiful." The honorees were introduced by thoughtful tribute videos, and gave short, graceful speeches explaining how they got onto the stage.

"The prosperity of journalists is inversely proportional to the prosperity of their country," said Gigot, "and so this administration is a full-employment plan for journalists."

"I want to thank Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.)," said Smith, "who, by criticizing me, probably made me the best-known FEC commissioner ever. If he ever watches this video [of the ceremony], I want him to know that I like him more than it seemed he liked me."

The post-award reception drew in dozens of powerful Beltway conservatives, such as Washington Post columnist Charles Krauthammer, Cato Institute president Ed Crane, anti-racial preferences activist Ward Connerly, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, former Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Americans for Tax Reform President Grover Norquist, American Spectator Editor-in-Chief R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., and former Virginia governor Jim Gilmore, who now leads the Free Congress Foundation long run by the late Paul Weyrich.

By David Weigel | June 17, 2010; 9:32 AM ET
