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D.C. events to mark 50 years since “Lady Bird’s Bill”

WASHINGTON – October 22 will mark fifty years since President Johnson signed into law the Highway Beautification Act, often called “Lady Bird’s Bill” because of its steadfast championing by Lady Bird Johnson.

The law was designed to protect the public investment in America’s rapidly growing network of highways by limiting or removing roadside blight like billboards and junkyards and encouraging planting of wildflowers and other native plants along the right-of-way.

“The Highway Beautification Act stands as testament to the prescient leadership of President and Lady Bird Johnson and other scenic visionaries of that era,” said Scenic America President Mary Tracy. “The law’s proponents saw that America the Beautiful was being eroded and wanted to take action. While their accomplishments were formidable, as anyone who drives our highways today can tell you, there is still much work to be done.”

A Scenic America symposium at the National Press Club on October 22 will be highlighted by keynote speaker Cokie Roberts, who will discuss the life and work of Lady Bird Johnson and her lasting impact on the visual environment of the country and of the nation’s capital in particular.

“Lady Bird believed that all citizens deserve to be surrounded by a maximum of beauty,” said Roberts. “She knew that while some people could be dismissive of the value of beauty, in the big picture it could have a profoundly positive impact on many of our pressing societal challenges.”

The symposium is one of several events Scenic America is holding to commemorate the fiftieth anniversaries of the Act and the 1965 White House Conference on Natural Beauty chaired by Laurance S. Rockefeller. A tribute dinner will be held on October 21 to pay homage to the scenic legacies of President and Lady Bird Johnson and Laurance S. Rockefeller.

Scenic America is the only national 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the scenic character of America’s roadways, countryside and communities. For more information contact Max Ashburn, Communications Director, at 202.463.1294 or ashburn@scenic.org.