

TRIBUTES TO HON. JOHN E. WALSH

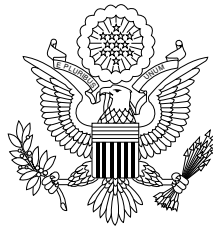


John E. Walsh

U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA

TRIBUTES

IN THE CONGRESS OF  
THE UNITED STATES





John E. Walsh

Courtesy U.S. Senate Historical Office

Tributes  
Delivered in Congress

John E. Walsh  
United States Senator  
2014–2015



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# CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| Biography .....                          | v    |
| Farewell Address .....                   | vii  |
| Proceedings in the Senate:               |      |
| Tributes by Senators:                    |      |
| Bennet, Michael F., of Colorado .....    | 4    |
| Boxer, Barbara, of California .....      | 7    |
| Coons, Christopher A., of Delaware ..... | 3    |
| Durbin, Richard J., of Illinois .....    | 4    |
| Hatch, Orrin G., of Utah .....           | 4, 6 |
| Hirono, Mazie K., of Hawaii .....        | 7    |
| Leahy, Patrick J., of Vermont .....      | 6    |
| Reed, Jack, of Rhode Island .....        | 3    |
| Reid, Harry, of Nevada .....             | 5    |





## BIOGRAPHY

Senator JOHN WALSH was born and raised in Butte, MT. Senator WALSH is the son of a union pipefitter and a homemaker. He graduated from Butte High in 1979 and enlisted in the Montana National Guard the same year. He began college at Carroll College in Helena, and became the first person in his family to graduate college, earning degrees from the University of the State of New York and the U.S. Army War College.

From 1979 until 1987, JOHN WALSH served in the enlisted ranks of the Montana National Guard. In 1987, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant. Through hard work and dedication, he became the adjutant general of Montana's National Guard. In 2004 and 2005, JOHN WALSH led over 700 soldiers into combat in Iraq—the largest deployment of Montana soldiers and airmen since World War II. For his distinguished service, JOHN WALSH is the recipient of the Bronze Star, Legion of Merit Award, and Combat Infantry Badge.

In 2012, JOHN WALSH retired from the Montana National Guard and served as Montana's 30th Lieutenant Governor, working to balance the budget, improve Montana's school system, and strengthen laws on child abuse.

JOHN WALSH was sworn into office on February 11, 2014, becoming one of Montana's U.S. Senators and the first Iraq veteran to serve in the U.S. Senate. He served on four committees: Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; Commerce, Science, and Transportation; Rules and Administration; and the Special Committee on Aging.

Senator WALSH is married to Janet, his wife of 29 years. Janet has been a paraeducator in the Montana public schools system for 17 years. They have two sons, Michael and Taylor, a daughter-in-law, April, and a granddaughter, Kennedy.



## Farewell to the Senate

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

Mr. WALSH. Madam President, I rise today to speak to this body and my fellow Montanans about service.

In preparing to leave the Senate, I add my voice to the voices of many other departing Members who have called for a return to civility in Washington, DC. Politics today is too full of pettiness. Public servants—you and I, as well as those elected to serve in the next Congress—should set the standard with better words and better actions, but we should also lead from the front. I am not saying anything that hasn't already been said, but more of us need to say it. If we are lucky, which we are, we are even blessed to stand in this room and do what we do on behalf of our fellow citizens.

Everyone in this Chamber has a unique story about their roots and their path to public service. Mine began in Butte, MT. I was the son of a union pipefitter in a struggling blue collar town, and my path led to the military. I enlisted out of high school in the Montana National Guard and soon found a career serving my neighbors and family.

The National Guard—the great citizen wing of our Armed Forces—was a home for me. Leading my fellow soldiers into combat in Iraq in 2004–2005 was a defining experience in my life. Overseeing two successful elections for the Iraqis added a new perspective to my view on democracy. Fighting insurgents drove home how fortunate we are to live in the United States of America and to enjoy the freedoms we often take for granted.

The men of Task Force GRIZ who unfortunately didn't come home with me and the men and women who came back with visible and invisible wounds have truly defined the cost of war for me, and they remind me every single day of the cost of public servants getting it wrong when it comes to our national defense. I have devoted much of my professional life since returning home to accounting for the true cost of war.

Today, from my perspective, the decks are stacked against the democratic process in America in many ways. There is too much money, too much noise, and too little commitment

to finding common ground. Anonymous money masquerading as free speech can poison campaigns. It silences the voices of the majority of American citizens. The concentration of wealth in fewer hands is bad for our society, just as the ability for a handful of the wealthy to carry the loudest megaphones in our elections is bad for our democracy. Elections are starting to look much like auctions. Dark money and circus politics shouldn't prevent the U.S. Senate from honorably living up to the power we have been given.

Growing up in a little house that shook twice a day from the dynamite blasts at the copper mine nearby, I never thought I would be involved in public service. I aspired to have a decent job. I aspired to get an education. I aspired to having the time to fish the lakes and streams I fished with my father. Just the normal stuff. That normal stuff is what I think most Americans still want today and too often can't achieve.

Public service—becoming a soldier—was my ticket to a better life: a job and a college education. After only a small taste, I discovered that I loved public service. I loved being devoted to something bigger than myself.

We should all remember that Congress can always use more Americans from more walks of life who have discovered public service through unlikely means.

It is the privilege of my life to serve the people of Montana in the seat of Senators Lee Metcalf and Max Baucus. Lee, along with Mike Mansfield, was my Senator while I was growing up in Butte, MT. The great citizen conservationist Cecil Garland said, "It was typical of Lee to fight to give the little guy a voice in government decisions."

In my time in this Chamber, I have tried to follow Lee's example.

The people who need a voice in this Chamber are the ranchers and hardware store owners like Cecil in towns like Lincoln and Dillon. The person who needs a voice in this Chamber is the mother in Troy, MT, who became the primary breadwinner when her husband lost his job cutting timber. The person who needs a voice here is the young woman in Shelby, MT, who has done everything right—studied hard and earned her degree—only to be squeezed by too much student debt and too few opportunities. The people who need voices are the servicemembers from Laurel and Great Falls, MT, who returned from the war in Afghanistan and Iraq with delayed onset PTSD and have fallen through the cracks at the VA. They are the entrepreneurs in Big

Fork and Bozeman, MT, who have opened small distilleries and faced the tangle of redtape. They are the committed couples across Montana—your neighbors, our families, our friends—who are treated like second-class citizens because of whom they love.

So today I urge my colleagues to lend people like this in each of your States your voice as a Senator in this Chamber.

I am humbled by the number of challenges that face the next Congress. I urge my colleagues to continue to fight to protect Americans' civil liberties. I leave the Senate dismayed by the scope of government surveillance in our everyday life. Congress must always—and I emphasize always—protect the privacy of our citizens.

I remain deeply concerned about the National Security Agency's unconstitutional spying on Americans' communications, the secret back doors into the Department of Commerce encryption standards, and the gag orders under the FBI National Security Letter Program.

I urge my colleagues to continue fighting for rural America. We need stronger voting rights and more jobs in Indian Country to promote tribal sovereignty and prosperity. We need to keep our farm safety net strong and address brucellosis to protect the livestock industry. We need a stronger commitment to fund and reform the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program and its sister programs. Small county budgets, schools, and roads depend on them. These same rural communities need better management of our national forests—something Congress and the Forest Service need to focus on.

We need an honest conversation and urgent solutions to the incredible challenge posed by climate change. As I said earlier from this same podium, “we cannot put our heads in the sand and continue with business as usual.”

“Members of Congress should be taking responsibility and upholding the oaths we all swore. We should agree with science—climate change is a clear enemy, and Congress must take steps to stop it.”

The next Congress should be thoughtful about women and families—from health care decisions to paycheck fairness.

Finally, I implore all of Congress, all of you, to redouble your attention to the crisis of suicide among our veterans. Yesterday the House of Representatives passed the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act. That bill now sits before this body, and we have an opportunity to act. We have an opportunity to pass it. I mentioned the

invisible wounds of war already, but if this country were losing 22 servicemembers a day on the battlefield, Americans would be on the streets protesting. Congress would be demanding action. But that is exactly the number of veterans who die by suicide each and every day from across our country. Veteran suicide is an urgent crisis facing our communities, and congressional action is long overdue.

I believe extending the eligibility for combat veterans at the VA is one essential way to address delayed-onset PTSD and reduce the suicide rate among our veterans. This simple fix and other solutions that improve access to mental health care for veterans should continue to be a top priority for the next Congress.

It is fitting that in the last days of the 113th Congress, the Senate is sending the President a bill that carries on the public lands legacy of Senators Lee Metcalf and Max Baucus and the thousands of Montanans who worked together to find common ground.

In the words of Randolph Jennings, Senator Rockefeller's predecessor from West Virginia, Lee "was a tireless champion of preserving and protecting our nation's natural heritage for succeeding generations to use and enjoy."

After Lee's death, Max and the rest of the Montana delegation carried on his legacy by passing wilderness designations for the Absaroka-Beartooth, Great Bear, and the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Areas. In the same spirit, I am honored to join Senator Jon Tester and Senator-elect Steve Daines in carrying on their legacy by passing the North Fork Watershed Protection Act and the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act. We took a page from Montanans. We sat down together, and we worked out an agreement that protected almost 700,000 acres of the Crown of the Continent. This is how democracy should work.

Forty-two years after the first citizen-driven wilderness, this week Congress is expanding the Scapegoat and Bob Marshall Wilderness Areas in Montana. Thirty-eight years after the Flathead River was protected from schemes to dam it and divert it, this week Congress is protecting the Flathead and Glacier National Park forever from efforts to mine it and drill it. Montanans came together. Farmers, ranchers, small business owners, conservationists, hunters, anglers—all worked together to find common ground. Montanans went there first, and their representatives in Congress followed.

When Congress rewards the work of citizens who collaborate, when we finally reach the critical mass in this Cham-

ber to be responsive, that is the day we earn the title of “public servant.” Montanans can be hopeful today that government by them and for them still works. They can still effect change. The Senate still listens and serves.

When President Eisenhower left office in 1961, Congress passed legislation at his request that restored his military title. He wanted to be remembered as a career soldier rather than the Commander in Chief.

My 33 years in uniform defined my life. I will always be a soldier. As a soldier, as a husband to my wonderful wife Janet, who has been my partner for 31 years, and as the proud dad of Michael and Taylor, as the father-in-law to my wonderful daughter-in-law April, and as the grandfather of a little girl named Kennedy, who will inherit this great Nation, I will return to civilian life with great hope for the U.S. Senate and for the United States of America.

I, along with millions of others, will be watching closely and imploring Members in this Chamber to check politics at the door and instead focus on the future. Honor veterans and their families who sacrifice so much. Honor seniors who have heard promises from you. Honor the most vulnerable amongst us. They are who we always should fight for.

Madam President, I am forever grateful to have served the people of Montana in this building standing side by side with each and every one of you. God bless each and every one of you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

Madam President, I yield the floor.





TRIBUTES

TO

JOHN E. WALSH



## Proceedings in the Senate

TUESDAY, *December 9, 2014*

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I would like to take a few minutes to salute my colleagues who are departing the Senate at the end of this year with the conclusion of the 113th Congress: Mark Begich of Alaska, Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, Kay Hagan of North Carolina, Tom Harkin of Iowa, Mike Johanns of Nebraska, Tim Johnson of South Dakota, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, Carl Levin of Michigan, Mark Pryor of Arkansas, Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia, Mark Udall of Colorado, and JOHN WALSH of Montana.

They have all worked hard, ceaselessly giving their energy and considerable time and service to their constituents, to their home States and to our country. I want to thank them for their service and for their kindness to me over many years in so many cases. In particular, I want to say a few words about these colleagues. . . .

JOHN WALSH is a friend I met and served with over the last several years. I want to salute him, not only as a Senator but as a combat veteran. He has had the greatest privilege that I believe any American has—the privilege to lead American soldiers. He did it well. I thank him for that. . . .

Along with all of my other colleagues who are leaving us at the conclusion of the 113th Congress, let me thank them for their service, their dedication to improving the lives of Americans, and on a very personal level for their friendship. I wish them all well.

WEDNESDAY, *December 10, 2014*

Mr. COONS. . . . As I close, I would also like to thank those of our colleagues who will be leaving the Senate after the New Year.

It is an incredible privilege to work in this Chamber and to represent the people. Every day I am awed by the dedica-

tion and talent of many of my colleagues, public servants who come to work to fight for their States and their government.

To those who are ending their service in the Senate, know that I value your friendship and partnership. It has been an honor to work with you, and I thank you for all you have done for our Nation.

ORDER FOR PRINTING OF SENATE DOCUMENT

Mr. BENNET. I ask unanimous consent that the tributes to retiring Senators be printed as a Senate document and that Senators be permitted to submit tributes until December 23, 2014.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THURSDAY, *December 11, 2014*

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to take a few moments to thank a Senator who will be leaving at the end of this term: Senator JOHN WALSH of Montana.

Though only in the Senate a brief time, Senator WALSH brought his wealth of experience to the work here and fought the good fight. Serving 33 years in the Montana Army National Guard, he brought his bravery and courage into the Senate. JOHN WALSH supported the Paycheck Fairness Act and was one of the original cosponsors of the Bring Jobs Home Act. He lived up to the values he was fighting for in the military by standing for workers here.

I thank him for his service and friendship and wish him the best in all his future endeavors.

FRIDAY, *December 12, 2014*

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I pay tribute to Senator JOHN WALSH. I have known JOHN for only a brief time, but I know that he is a good man who has served his country well.

Senator WALSH began his service to our country long before he came to the Senate. He joined the Montana National Guard right after high school—the start of an impressive military career. JOHN served 8 years as an enlisted U.S.

Army soldier before he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1987. As an officer, he distinguished himself and quickly rose through the ranks.

Senator WALSH led the 163d Infantry Battalion in Iraq, commanding more than 700 Army National Guard soldiers in combat. He later received the Bronze Star and the Combat Infantry Badge for his service. In 2008, Governor Brian Schweitzer appointed JOHN the adjutant general of Montana's National Guard. As adjutant general, JOHN oversaw the command of thousands of troops. These soldiers and their families looked to him for leadership and strength, and he always delivered.

Senator WALSH moved from military service to public office when he became Montana's Lieutenant Governor in 2013. Governor Steve Bullock appointed JOHN to fill former Senator Max Baucus' seat in February 2014, making JOHN the first Iraq war veteran to serve as a Senator.

Though his time here in the Senate was brief, Senator WALSH was an active member of the Committee on Rules and Administration; the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. He always treated me and our other colleagues with the utmost kindness and respect.

Senator WALSH is a good man who has dedicated his life to serving our country and keeping us safe. I wish him, his wife Janet, and their children the very best.

MONDAY, *December 15, 2014*

Mr. REID. Madam President, there is only one combat veteran of the Iraq war in the Senate, and that is General JOHN WALSH—Senator JOHN WALSH.

In 2004 General WALSH led the deployment of several hundred National Guard men from Montana to Iraq. He did the same thing a year later. It was a very difficult time for Americans in Iraq. General WALSH's men were in some of the heaviest battles. Many of them were wounded, and a number of them gave the ultimate sacrifice.

He led the largest deployment of Montana soldiers and airmen since World War II. For his service, JOHN was awarded the Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit Award, and the Combat Infantry Badge. JOHN came to the Senate a hero, and he will leave the Senate a hero.

He treated his time in the Senate like his time in the Army—he volunteered for the most difficult assignments here in the Senate. For example, Saturday night it was late—we thought we may have to be in here all night—and he volunteered to be here all night, not having to be relieved. He agreed to be here all night. He said, “That is what I am here for.”

He served the people of Montana admirably in the Senate. I thank him for his service over the past year.

I thank his family—his wife Janet, his sons Michael and Taylor, and granddaughter Kennedy—for their sacrifice in supporting his work here in Washington, DC.

I wish him the very best. He was the Lieutenant Governor of Montana, a job I held in the past, and we talked about that.

I don’t know what the next chapter in his life will be, but knowing the courage and integrity of JOHN WALSH, it will be an important chapter.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, Senator JOHN WALSH has served but a brief time in the Senate, but he came to this body with a long history of public service. A decorated veteran, he enlisted in the Montana National Guard in 1979, and he rose through the ranks, ultimately being selected as Montana’s adjutant general. He is the first veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars to serve as a Senator, and during his tour of duty, he earned the Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit, and the Combat Infantry Badge.

As a Senator, JOHN WALSH has been a strong advocate of mental health care for veterans, preserving Native languages, and bringing outsourced jobs back to the United States. As cochair of the Senate National Guard Caucus, I recognize and greatly appreciate his deep understanding and strong support for the Guard, its needs, and its future.

I wish him, his wife Janet, and their children and grandchild all the best in the next chapter of their lives.

*TUESDAY, December 16, 2014*

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, as we wind down the final days of the 113th Congress, it is a good time both to reflect on the past and to look toward the future. I have been very moved as I listened to the farewell speeches of our departing Senators, and I wish I had time to pay tribute to each one

of them. They have all been wonderful colleagues, and I enjoyed working with and getting to know every one of them. I wish them all the very best in all their future endeavors. They will most certainly be missed. . . .

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to our colleague, Senator JOHN WALSH of Montana. While his Senate career is shorter than any of us would have hoped, the institution is better for his service, and he will be missed.

His road to this body is different than most anyone else. He grew up in Butte, MT, close enough to a copper mine that his house would shake when the dynamite went off. His dreams were modest—get an education, find a job, and do some fishing.

But life often takes unexpected turns. He enrolled in the Montana National Guard in order to pursue those modest dreams, and found a home in the Guard. He rose to serve as adjutant general of the Montana National Guard. In this capacity he commanded troops in Iraq in 2004 and 2005. He earned the Bronze Star, Legion of Merit Award, and Combat Infantry Badge for his efforts leading over 700 young men and women. This military experience is one that he carries with him in ways that most of us will never know.

After retiring from the National Guard in 2012 he served as Montana's Lieutenant Governor, and currently, as a Senator. He is the first Iraq war combat veteran to serve in the Senate.

His experience growing up in a working class family, serving in the military, and as a public servant in elected office have made him a valuable Member of this body.

His advocacy for Montana, and for our servicemembers and veterans, and his perspective on national security matters—particularly reigning in the National Security Agency—have been valuable to our caucus. I know that he will carry these priorities forward in whatever endeavor he pursues next.

I am proud to have served as his colleague in the Senate. Aloha JOHN, and a hui hou, “until we meet again,” to you, your wife Janet, and your family.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I wish to celebrate and thank the 13 outgoing Senators who have worked tirelessly to represent their home States in the Senate: Senator Mark Begich, Senator Saxby Chambliss, Senator Tom Coburn, Senator Kay Hagan, Senator Tom Harkin, Senator Mike Johanns, Senator Tim Johnson, Senator Mary Landrieu,

Senator Carl Levin, Senator Mark Pryor, Senator Jay Rockefeller, Senator Mark Udall, and Senator JOHN WALSH.

I have worked side by side with these men and women for years—some for decades—and witnessed first hand their extraordinary commitment to public service and to the people they so proudly represent.

Even when we didn't see eye to eye on every issue, I always deeply respected and admired their service to our Nation and their dedication to fight for what they believe in.

It has been a privilege to serve alongside each and every one of these extraordinary colleagues. I will miss their leadership and their friendship, and I wish them all the best as they embark on the next chapter.

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