

I've long since forgotten, and as he left the room he did so with the observation, "Now Mr. President, if you'll excuse me, I have some important people waiting to see me in my office."

The memories go on and on in an endless line of splendor. With each one of them it reminds me that serving in the House of Representatives has been a high privilege, but a good bit of fun too.

#### GOOD ADVICE

And I remember the good advice I got. I got good financial advice from President Johnson. He had the freshmen gather in the Cabinet Room. I don't remember much of what he said except one thing; he told us "Buy your home." He said, "If you're like most politicians it'll be the only decent investment you'll ever make." I did and it was.

I remember Tip O'Neill putting his arm around me as we walked down the hall and giving me some advice. He called me Neal for my first decade here because I reminded him of a Boston baseball player by the name of Neal Hamilton. He said, "Neal, you can accomplish anything in this town if you're willing to let someone else take the credit."

I remember Wilbur Mills, a marvelous man, a superb legislator, who came, of course, to an unhappy ending. One evening we walked out of the Capitol together. His picture was on the cover of Time magazine; he was known all over the country; he was the foremost legislator in Congress—people sought his advice and clamored to speak with him even for a few seconds. I asked him where he was going, he said "I'm going back to Arkansas. I'll have a public meeting." He mentioned some small Arkansas town and said "There'll be about 15 or 20 people there." I never forgot it. As we departed he said "Lee, don't ever forget your constituents. Nothing, nothing comes before them."

And I remember Carl Albert who said always respect your colleagues and never forget that each one of them serves in this House because they were elected to do so by the American people.

#### PUBLIC ATTITUDE TOWARD GOVERNMENT

But let me go beyond the specific remembrances and turn more serious for a moment as we conclude.

There's been a massive change of attitude toward the role of government since I first came here. In the early 1960s many were brimming with optimism over the potential of federal programs to solve all kinds of problems—alleviating poverty, curbing racial discrimination, providing health coverage, rebuilding American's cities.

Today the mood has shifted toward pessimism about what government can achieve that is worthwhile. Many believe that government creates more problems than it solves.

Over these past 30 years I've been struck by the decline in public respect for government. In recent years it has threatened the ability of government to make good policy. Of course skepticism has always been a healthy strain in American thinking. Our Constitution reflects that with all of its checks and balances. And we all know that government can be inefficient, inaccessible, and unaccountable. But when healthy skepticism about government turns to cynicism, it becomes the great enemy of democracy.

I think the operative question in American government today is the same as it was at Gettysburg when Lincoln asked "Can this nation so dedicated and so conceived long endure?" That question may put it in rather apocalyptic terms, but it nonetheless is on the mark.

A constituent put the right question to me the other day, "What's the most important thing you can do to restore confidence in government?"

#### RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT

You'll be happy to know I'm not going to try to answer that question in any length tonight.

But my basic response to my constituent was that to restore confidence in government we have to make government responsive, accessible, and workable.

I believe that representative democracy is our best hope for dealing with our problems. We live in a complicated country of vast size and remarkable diversity. When I was in high school we had 130 million people. Today we have almost 270 million. So in my working lifetime the population of the country has more than doubled. Our voters are many; they've spread far and wide; and they represent a great variety of races, religions, and national origins. It isn't easy to develop a system that enables such a country to live together peacefully and productively.

Representative democracy, for all of its faults, permits us to do that. It works through a process of deliberation, negotiation, and compromise—in a word, the process of politics. Politics and politicians may be unpopular but they're also indispensable. Politics is the way that we express the popular will of the people in this country. At its best, representative democracy gives us a system whereby all of us have a voice in the process and a stake in the product.

In many ways, we have lost what the founding fathers possessed—the belief that government can work. Government is certainly still needed to provide for our national security and help promote our general welfare. Sometimes government gets in our way, but other times it can be helpful to ordinary people in their effort to succeed, to have opportunity, and to correct instances of oppression and injustice.

Those of us who see important reasons for government to act must be willing not just to criticize government and try to improve its operations, we must also work to improve public understanding of what government can do, what it cannot do, and what it has done. I simply do not see how it is possible to deal with many of our problems without a minimal public confidence in government.

I know that many people say the government and Congress don't work very well. And it's certainly not difficult to point out instances when they don't. But on the other hand, given the size of the country and the number and complexity of the challenges we confront, my view is that representative democracy works reasonably well in this country. I do not for a moment agree with those who think that the American system has failed or that the future of the country is bleak.

#### IMPROVING OPERATIONS OF CONGRESS

My main interest during my years in Congress has been to make government responsive, accessible, and workable. Part of that representative democracy system, of course, is the role of Congress.

Congress is an enormously important and resilient institution. I'm impressed almost daily with the way it tackles difficult national problems, manages conflict in the country, acts as a national forum, reflects diverse points of view, and over time usually develops a consensus that reflects the collective judgment of a diverse people. It has helped create and maintain a nation more free than any other. It is the most powerful and most respected legislative body in the world.

It is not, of course, perfect. It has some major flaws. It doesn't think enough about the long term, for example; it can be much too partisan; and the system by which we finance our elections is a mess. But I nonetheless believe that Congress is—overall but not

perfectly, often but not always—responsive to the sustained and express will of the American people. It's a much more responsive body than people think. Congress does usually respond to public opinion if that opinion is conveyed strongly by the American people, as we have seen in the recent work to balance the budget.

I have seen many changes over the years, but I think America is a better place today than it was when I came to Congress in 1965: The Cold War is over, and we are at peace; as the preeminent military power in the world, we do not worry about an imminent threat to our national security; it is hard to find a place on the map where the U.S. is not engaged in some manner trying to make things better; we enjoy the world's most competitive economy; the new global trading system means new challenges and a host of new opportunities; the Internet brings a world of knowledge to the most remote classroom or the most remote home; we have greatly improved the lot of older Americans with programs like Social Security and Medicare; women and minorities have had new doors opened to them like never before; and, by far the most important of all, this still is the land of opportunity where everyone has a chance, not an equal chance unfortunately, but still a chance to become the best they can become.

Congress did not single-handedly bring about all of these changes. But it played a major role in every one of them. Congress is still the protector of our freedom and the premier forum for addressing the key issues of the day.

As I receive this award from the Center for National Policy and look back over my years in Congress, I'm not cynical, pessimistic, or discouraged. I'm optimistic about Congress and about the country. I am grateful for every day I've been a part of this body and I do not know of any place in the world that I would have preferred to be. I believe that inch by inch, line by line, I've had a small—very small—part in making this a more perfect union and making this country stronger, safer, and freer.

What more could anyone want?●

#### RONALD REAGAN WASHINGTON NATIONAL AIRPORT

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to add my voice to the chorus calling for the renaming of our national airport in honor of one of our Nation's greatest Presidents, Ronald Reagan.

It is, of course, a long-standing tradition for us to name important buildings and facilities after those who have rendered extraordinary service to our country. Indeed, the monuments on the Mall outside this Chamber were constructed to show our gratitude toward and honor the memory of great men like Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson, who helped build America, and save her in time of peril.

When Ronald Reagan became President, our Nation was in grave peril. Caught in the grip of economic stagnation and moral malaise at home, we remained locked in struggle with the most deadly and powerful of armed ideologies, communism. Unlike his predecessors, President Reagan called the home of that ideology, the Soviet Union, by its proper name: the evil empire. He called on us as a nation, not to

foolishly court mutual annihilation, but to stand up for our principles and our way of life, confident that our cause was just, and would be looked on with favor by God.

Ronald Reagan told us to have confidence in the American way, as he had confidence in it himself. He cut taxes, fought to bring government under control, and launched us on a peacetime recovery unprecedented for its strength and longevity.

Mr. President, Ronald Reagan brought this Nation back. He brought it back to prosperity, he brought it back to self-confidence, he brought it back to an understanding of its fundamental principles, its attachment to well-ordered liberty and the freedom of the human spirit. The results are all around us. A prosperous nation at peace, an evil empire that has become extinct, replaced by struggling democracies throughout Europe, a new dawn of liberty around the globe.

Ronald Reagan wanted to lead his Nation into a brighter future. Like the jet airplanes that carry us to our destinations, he carried the United States through turbulent times into a new and brighter era. I can think of no more fitting tribute to his strength of character and his monumental service to this country, than to name our national airport the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.●

#### EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period for the transaction of morning business until the hour of 6:30 p.m.

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

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### AMTRAK REFORM

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity to speak in morning business about a bill that I believe we have an agreement to bring up at a later time, hopefully in the next few hours. It is a bill that we worked on for quite a long time. We will be talking about it again if we are able to bring it up tonight. But I wanted to get a head start, because I am such a believer in passenger rail transportation for our country. I think we are going to come to closure on an Amtrak reform bill that will allow Amtrak at least to have a chance to succeed.

It is not a slam dunk and there is no question that a lot of work is yet to be

done, but I think passenger rail in America will add mobility for people in this country who don't have other choices. We have a terrific aviation system and, in fact, there are Federal subsidies of our aviation system. There are Federal subsidies of our highway system. Highways, of course, provide the most flexible mobility for people. But trains can also add something for people who don't live near airports.

I think we have a chance to do something that will allow for an intermodal system that will serve the best needs of our country, will be the best for our economy and also will have, I hope, an impact on tourism and transportation in this country. I think it opens up a whole new world if we can have a good, solid transportation system with passenger rail as part of it.

We have worked in this bill to try to bring the labor protections into line so that, basically, we won't have protections that are above and beyond protections that most people have in this country. But we would leave it to the collective bargaining system that exists between Amtrak and its unions. I hope, when we have the agreement, to announce that the protections will be gone, and that collective bargaining will be a viable way to determine exactly what the people who work for our passenger railroad will have in the way of protections and also allow the railroad to be competitive, because, of course, if we are going to have a system that will survive. I think Congress has sent the very clear signal that the subsidies are going to be phased out.

But in order for the subsidies to be phased out, we are going to try to give Amtrak a chance to succeed.

So I am hopeful that in the next few hours or perhaps tomorrow, we will, in fact, have an agreement that we can announce and we will be able to pass this bill, send it to the House and send it to the President in very short order.

Of course, everyone knows that there is money from the budget reconciliation agreement that would help on the infrastructure costs that we think will provide efficiencies for Amtrak and make it even more profitable and make it more attractive for people to be able to take high-speed trains, especially in the corridors where there is more density. But the \$2.3 billion that has been set aside for the infrastructure depends on the reform bill going through.

The reform bill includes taking away some of the protections that are required in law that should be instead agreed to at the bargaining table, having some liability limits that will allow Amtrak and the railroads to buy an insurance policy so that they will know what their liability potentials will be.

We also have some protections for lines that are going to go out of existence. Right now there is a 90-day notice for a continuance of a line. I ran into a problem in my State of Texas in which they didn't have the ability to

make decisions quickly. Many State legislatures only meet every other year. So if they have a notice of discontinuance of a line, they don't even have a chance to stand up and say, "Look, we will step in and try to help with some funding."

We need to give the States more time. We give them, in fact, 180 days notice, up from the 90 days notice, to give them a chance to address any kind of disruption in service that would affect their States.

Second, we allow States to create interstate rail compacts. I think this is a very important possibility. It is not a mandate, of course, but it allows the States to come together. States that have commuters that go between two States can come together and form a compact and make a high-speed rail line that both States can contribute to. I think that should add to the ability to have more entrepreneurial spirit in our rail systems and perhaps allow States to work together for their mutual best interests.

Third, we provide for accountability. In fact, we want an independent audit of Amtrak. We are going to have, thanks to Senator JOHN MCCAIN, an Amtrak reform council that is going to look at everything Amtrak is doing and determine if there are things they could do better, if there are ways they can give better and more efficient service. In fact, they will report to Congress on their independent recommendations and if they think Amtrak will be able to succeed if these recommendations, along with the reforms in this bill, are put into place. If not, Congress will face that prospect with informed choices and must act on them.

I think we have a good opportunity here. I believe very much that Amtrak can contribute to the mobility of our country.

It will give more citizens more access to be able to get on a train and, for example, go see a grandchild that they would not have an opportunity to do because they did not live in a city that has an airport. Or take Amtrak to connect to a city with a major airport, making Amtrak part of a connected intermodal system. These are just a few examples of how important it is and can be to our transportation system.

So I am looking forward to discussing this bill further when the agreement is made and when we are able to actually act on the bill. But I wanted to give an outline of what we are looking at and what we are trying to do. I am hopeful that we will be able to do it in the very near future.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNETT). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.