

TRIBUTES TO RETIRING SENATORS

JOHN BREAU

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, we are in the midst of a very important discussion, of course, as we are considering what to do. As the leadership meets to consider what we should do that hopefully will either move this process forward or come up with some other resolution, I thought I might take a moment to speak about our colleague, Senator BREAU, and his retirement.

This would probably be a good time to talk about the senior Senator from Louisiana and to pay tribute to him because he would be one of the Senators most certainly who could help us figure out this situation. He has been helping us figure out situations like this for 32 years with a lot of success and, I might say, with a lot of respect from all the Members in this body, both on the Republican side and the Democratic side.

It might be appropriate for me to speak a few moments about the great contribution this man has made to this body.

Senator BREAU came to the House when he was 28 years old, and after four children and now three grandchildren, he leaves us after serving well and admirably for 32 years.

When he came to Congress 32 years ago at the age of 28, he was the youngest Member of Congress to be serving at that time. He has served with 7 Presidents and 16 Congresses. He served with President Nixon, President Ford, President Carter, President Reagan, President Bush, President Clinton, and now currently with President Bush. He served through 16 Congresses for 32 years in times of war and peace, through recessions and irrational exuberance. He has served as a husband, as a father, as a grandfather, and he served our State with great grace, great steadiness, and great leadership through it all.

It might not come as a surprise to my colleagues as we consider at this time what we are going to do to look at this picture of JOHN BREAU that will give us all a laugh. I do not know whether he was playing Li'l Abner or a farmer, but this is on his Web site and he displays it proudly. It shows a sense of humor, even as a young man.

He has been called brash and good looking and confident, and he still is that today. He is not only a storyteller, but a great dealmaker. He has a rollicking sense of humor. He is admirable. He is hard-working, amiable, smart, a bridge builder, a strategic thinker, and someone who has our deepest respect. He has been, and continues to be, a team player.

I found this picture of JOHN BREAU with his uniform on, which is the way he pretty much came to work every day, with his hat on, a baseball cap on, his uniform on, maybe just in a suit, but ready to get the work of the Senate done and get the work of Congress done.

There is probably not a major piece of legislation passed by this Senate that did not have JOHN BREAU's assistance. He was the teammaker, always ready to bat or pitch or catch or sit on the sidelines or referee because he basically did it all.

He was also considered a strategic thinker and a great leader for our country. He, as many of us, gets the opportunity to not only speak on this floor but to be on major television and radio programs speaking about the great issues of the day. And he most certainly has put his mark on many pieces of legislation.

As a member of the Finance Committee, as a member of the Commerce Committee, and as a member of the Fisheries Committee in the House during the time he served there, I can say there is probably not a major piece of legislation that has not felt the good mark of Senator BREAU: always there with a compromise, always there with a suggestion, always there with a little prodding. We and the people of our Nation can be grateful for his wisdom and his input at those critical times.

Whether it was the Medicare overhaul, laying the groundwork for a stronger Social Security system, or whether it was legislation related to agriculture, to sugar or rice, the commodities in Louisiana that are so important, JOHN was always there.

I want to say a word about a very important bill—and we will show JOHN playing tennis because this demonstrates that not only is he a great athlete and team player, but he is a great tennis player. What I like about this picture is he always kept his eye on the ball. Despite all of the great work that Senator BREAU did in this Senate on so many pieces of legislation, helping all States, he always kept his eye on the ball—the State of Louisiana.

There are 4.5 million people who live in our State—wealthy people, poor people, people who live far out in the woods in the country and people who live in the great urban centers of New Orleans and our capital city of Baton Rouge and our other cities. Not only did he keep his eye on the ball in Louisiana, he kept his heart with us.

I can tell you he has left a great mark on our State.

There is an act we are proud of that we now call the Breau Act. It is referred to as Wallop-Breau, but at home we call it the Breau Act because JOHN, in his typical quiet, responsible fashion, crafted a very special tax arrangement that is ongoing—and we will not talk too much about the details, JOHN, on the floor—but there was a very special arrangement made years ago with members of the Finance Committee that has helped us finance and send money to the State of Louisiana that has literally laid the groundwork to save our coastline.

It is not just Louisiana's coastline; it is America's wetlands. Two-thirds of the Nation is drained by it. Forty per-

cent of the fisheries are in the Gulf of Mexico. The greatest shipping channel in all of North America comes through that Mississippi Delta.

Because JOHN kept his eye on the ball—and although he did all this great work for the Nation, he always loved Louisiana the most, always put his State first—we are now able to build a great environmental legacy to save this coastline. We already lost the size of the State of Rhode Island, but because of JOHN's work, because of his great strengths and great sense of humor, great respect, and great intelligence, he was able to lay that groundwork.

Whether it was advocating for senior citizens in our State when they did not have an advocate, or showing up at senior centers early in the morning and late at night, whether it was advocating for children through education or whether it was advocating for sugar, he did it all.

Maybe this picture says it the best. On the front page of one of our Nation's leading magazines, here is Senator BREAU sitting at the table holding all the cards and most of the chips, which is the most important thing about this picture, with the elephant on one side and the donkey on the other, and JOHN BREAU in the middle. At times, we need men and women in the middle. We need people who can listen to both sides and try to figure it out.

Tonight, that is what we are trying to do on the Senate floor, just trying to figure out this situation. It is a serious situation, and I do not at all mean to be light about it, but figuring it out is what we do as leaders, making our government work.

While I do not gamble too much myself, I can most surely appreciate—and there are plenty of people in Louisiana who do gamble. So we are proud of this picture and proud of JOHN, but deals need to be made on principle and for the people. The people need the government to always give them a fair deal, a good deal, and a square deal, and that is what JOHN did.

So, JOHN, on behalf of so many people in Louisiana and around the Nation, let me say that you are going to be missed because you will not be a Member, of course, of the Senate, but we know that we can call you. We know that we can reach you. We know that you will always be advocating for us in Louisiana and for our Nation.

Let me also mention what has not been said on the floor and what was not said in my remarks. Besides having his name on many bills, the phone conversations and quiet consultations that he held with Presidents and with senior Members of this body, his wisdom was found and went through those conversations and into legislation that became part of the work of this body and the Congress.

So, JOHN, for all of your not only legislative work but for your good counsel to us, to Presidents, to leaders of nations, to leaders in industry, we thank

you for that and may you look forward to many happy years with Lois. I know that your father Ezra, and I know that your mother, God rest her, would be proud. I know that your father Ezra has watched you all these years and continues to be very proud of you. From Crowley, LA, from a young man who ran when he was 28 years old on the theme of experience matters, and was brash enough at 28, having never served a moment to say that experience matters, let me say, experience does matter, and we are proud to have had a Senator with the kind of experience and legacy of my senior Senator from Louisiana, JOHN BREAUX.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks time?

Mr. BYRD. 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.

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

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 3 minutes.

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

NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, while we are continuing to try to resolve our current situation, I will speak for a moment about something else today. Today is National Adoption Day. The Senator from Idaho and I spoke at some length yesterday in anticipation of today, so I will not go into too much detail, but I thought maybe some of my colleagues would be pleased because they worked so hard on this issue. It is an important issue. One out of six Americans has been touched by adoption.

While we were working in Washington, in our capitals and cities all across America, over 4,000 children were adopted today. That those children found forever families and parents who have prayed and hoped for either their first child into their family or children added into their family through adoption was made possible today because our country honors this day as National Adoption Day.

Both President Bush and President Clinton before him were wonderful advocates of promoting a better system of foster care and child care in our Nation for the children of America. We believe, as Members of the Senate, there is no such thing as unwanted children, just unfound families. Many of us do a lot of work in this area in terms of legislation to try to make our system work more effectively and efficiently so that all children can have the dream of a family, a mother, a father, at least one parent, to raise them, to bring them up.

We think that governments do a lot of things well—I, at least, think governments do a lot of things well—but one thing it does not do well is raise children. Families raise children. That is where children belong, in families. When they are separated from their birth parents for one reason or another—and there are many: war, famine, disease, and sometimes having to be separated from parents because of gross abuse and neglect—our work is to get them reconnected as soon as possible to a relative, to a responsible, caring adult, to at least some family in the community right there where they are and, if not, somewhere in the world.

I have a heartwarming and also heartrending story about a little boy from Louisiana. For the sake of time, I will quickly tell the story because it truly is touching.

Eight years ago, a little boy was born at Tulane Hospital. I am not going to say his name for the record. That was the wonderful news about being born, but the sad news was he was born with AIDS. He was so sick, so fragile and frail that his birth mother basically abandoned him and no one stepped forward for him.

The nurse that cared for him fell in love with him and basically took him home to her house. She and her husband raised, nurtured, and loved this little boy for many years. She tried through our system to adopt this child for years. I am not exactly sure if I could explain to Members why this never took place when the child was 2 or 3 or 4 except for bureaucracy or that people did not care enough.

Here is a little boy, dying of AIDS, wanting parents, a parent wanting this child, but the system did not work fast enough.

The happy part of the story is one judge in my State, Judge Taylor, after this came to his attention, decided to take action, and action he took. He brought all the court, which is unheard of, all the clerks, all of the lawyers to the hospital room where this little 8-year-old boy was lying in a frail condition, and he brought the prospective parents to the hospital room and they conducted the adoption ceremony right there in the hospital room. This is the only time I have ever heard of this. Maybe it has happened before, but this happened in New Orleans, LA, just in the last year.

He was so frail that his doctors insisted that the heart monitor be kept on the whole time that this was going on. When the judge said the words, this child is now adopted, his heart rate went up to normal for the first time in his life. The child could not speak, but the monitors said what the child was feeling when he was adopted because his last wish was that he would be adopted. Through the Make a Wish Foundation this all happened.

So the child was adopted, and his now new parents stood by his bedside and hugged and cried. That is the

happy part of this story. I do not know what kind of system was not working that would leave this little boy without these parents so long, but the happy news is he was adopted and they became his parents. The sad part of the story is that his little life did not go much further than that, and within basically a day of that ceremony, he passed on.

The great thing that I want to say today about National Adoption Day is that this child did not die an orphan. He died as a son. For this child and for the parents who adopted him, it was a wonderful ending.

So the work that we do in the Senate, whether it is on finance, tax, health care, or military, there is not too much work that we can do that is more important than connecting children to families, families who will love them, nurture them, and give them the best opportunity. We cannot promise our children rose gardens. We cannot protect them from harm or injury or disease, but we can give our children love for as long as we have them and, of course, they give us back so much more.

In honor of National Adoption Day, I thank all of our great leaders in Louisiana that made this wonderful story happen, and I congratulate the judges on our bench in New Orleans, the social workers who were on the positive side of this story, the parents themselves, the medical staff at Tulane University, and my sister Madeleine, who is a wonderful judge, who shared this story with me.

I ask unanimous consent that the article from the New York Times be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Nov. 18, 2004]

AGENCIES PRESS EFFORT TO SPEED ADOPTIONS

(By Kristen A. Lee)

In 1998, Judge Michael Nash, the presiding judge of the juvenile court in Los Angeles, had a disturbing realization: Foster children were languishing too long in the system before their adoptions were completed.

So with the support of a team of lawyers working pro bono, Judge Nash opened his court on a Saturday and completed 130 adoptions in one morning. Buoyed by that success, Los Angeles courts have had about 20 more Saturday sessions, handling the adoptions of 7,000 children.

Under the leadership of the Alliance for Children's Research, the program initiated by Judge Nash's court has expanded into a national drive. On Saturday, the fifth annual National Adoption Day, child welfare groups and family courts across the country plan nearly 200 events and hope to complete more than 3,000 adoptions.

Nationwide, 129,000 foster children are waiting for permanent homes, according to a study released yesterday by the National Adoption Day Coalition, a group of child welfare organizations and private companies. Inadequate communication between state child welfare agencies and the courts, crowded court dockets and heavy caseloads were the most significant obstacles cited to placing children in permanent homes. And states