

Ireland and for countless people in Ireland, Great Britain, the United States, and around the world who have prayed and hoped and worked for lasting peace.

Today, the devolved Government of Northern Ireland stands up to govern peacefully and democratically. The commitment of everyone involved, their constructive negotiations, their sacrifice, and their faith led us to this day of a new government and renewed hope.

I am proud of the role my husband and I were able to play in helping to bring about peace in Northern Ireland and to help make today possible.

Of course, some doubted that lasting peace could be possible. So many had lived through decades of violence, hate, and ill will; so many had buried loved ones. So many were resigned to what had felt, for them, inevitable: their children and their children's children would suffer the same fate. Their children were destined to grow up, go to school, and start their own families in the shadow of history and hostility. In recent months and years hope was fading. But not for the people of Northern Ireland who have endured great hardships who said to their leaders, "It is time for peace."

I remember in my visits to Northern Ireland meeting with women and men, leaders and citizens, who shared the same longing for peace, the same hopes for their children, and the same desire for a better future. It was this spirit that triumphed, that rose above the bad blood, that helped a people overcome a difficult legacy, to escape that shadow. It was this spirit that led to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. It is this spirit that we honor on a historic day.

I remember when Bill, Chelsea, and I traveled to Ireland in 1996. It was an important trip for lasting peace, and it was a memorable trip for me personally—among the most special in my time in the White House. In Ireland, I met the Nobel prizewinning poet Seamus Heaney. His words would become the theme for our visit and for this moment in Irish history.

History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave,
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.

For mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, and sons and daughters of Northern Ireland, history said to them "don't hope." But they hoped.

When we traveled through Ireland in 1996, I spent time with women working for peace. I was struck by so many who had suffered but did not suffer without hope; women who lost husbands and sons and loved ones but did not lose faith.

I will always carry the memory of 65-year-old Joyce McCartan, a remarkable woman who founded the Women's Information Drop-in Center in 1987 after her 17-year-old son was shot dead

by Protestant gunman. She had lost more than a dozen family members to violence. Joyce and other women had set up the center as a safe house, a place for women of both religions to convene and talk over their needs and fears. I remember Joyce saying, "It takes women to bring men to their senses."

I met with Joyce and several women sitting around a table who described over tea how worried they were when their sons and husbands left the house and relieved when they arrived safely home. When I left our meeting, Joyce gave me a teapot to remember them by. Joyce died before having the chance to see the Good Friday Agreement and before this historic day. But when I spoke at the first memorial lecture in her honor in 1997 in Belfast, I brought with me that teapot. I put the teapot on the podium and spoke of the courage of Irish women like Joyce who, at kitchen tables and over pots of tea, helped chart a path to peace. She helped make lasting peace possible; she helped write the song in which hope and history could rhyme. I still fill with emotion whenever I see that teapot or think about her.

I hope we can continue to draw inspiration from these stories of courage. There are countless people like Joyce whose names we will never know who helped make this day possible.

I also want to commend the political parties. Many people have suffered deep losses and the healing process will continue far into the future. I praise everyone involved, especially Prime Minister Blair and Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, who stayed strong when it seemed hope was fading. I know that the Catholic and Protestant leaders who have been working to see this day become reality are grateful for a bright and prosperous Northern Ireland.

During my last visit to Northern Ireland and Ireland I had the pleasure of seeing familiar faces and to visit with party leaders who I know all wanted a new day and a new beginning. And I commend political leaders like Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein, the Reverend Ian Paisley of the DUP, and all the others past and present who have worked hard.

I also want to remember the efforts of people like Senator George Mitchell, John Hume, David Trimble, Martin McGuinness, David Ervine Seamus Mallon and Mo Mowlam; people involved so deeply in the negotiations leading up to the 1998 agreement. The sacrifices and compromises made back then formed the basis of today's devolved government.

So many worked so hard and sacrificed so much over the past years and I think we must acknowledge everyone for their work and their endurance in traveling the long and difficult road to reach today's milestone.

I want to commend my colleagues here in the Senate and across the Rotunda in the House, people like Senators TED KENNEDY, CHRIS DODD, and

PATRICK LEAHY; Congressmen RICHIE NEAL, JOE CROWLEY, JIM WALSH, PETER KING, BRIAN HIGGINS. I want to commend everyone who labored to show the support of the American people and the Congress. Thank you for your leadership.

I have been proud to work among civic and business leaders on a variety of cross-border, cross-community efforts designed to spread the prosperity that is possible when people work together. I am grateful for the business leaders who have been strong partners in furthering the peace process and for the contributions they make to society in spurring job growth, economic investment, and trade throughout Ireland and beyond.

What has happened—and what is happening—in Northern Ireland should serve as a model for peace and reconciliation in our world and I believe people will look back upon these times and realize how truly great the accomplishment is for humanity.

I also want to recognize the Irish and Scots-Irish Americans who helped make the United States what it is today. Not only does today mark a victory for the people of Northern Ireland, today also marks the 62nd anniversary of Victory in Europe, which helped usher in peace and prosperity across Europe and the world.

The movement toward lasting peace in Northern Ireland is a model for how we, as a nation, can engage the rest of the world. But the progress we are commemorating today represents a larger note of hope: peace is possible.

I want to honor the leaders who now assume great responsibility to govern, heal and lead Northern Ireland into a new era. America must always stand with those working on behalf of Northern Ireland, and all people working and longing for a brighter, peaceful, more hopeful future.

HONORING FORMER SENATOR ROBERT STAFFORD

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I wish to speak today in remembrance of former Senator Robert Stafford, who passed away this past December and for whom we will be having a memorial service this evening.

I personally remember Bob as a moderate voice in the Senate, never putting partisan politics above his principled ideals. He and I served together on the Senate Committee of Labor and Human Resources in the early 1980s, beginning when I was a relatively young first-term Senator chairing the committee and Bob was beginning his third decade of congressional service. I often found Bob's advice and counsel to be helpful in handling many of the issues which came before the committee.

I, personally, remember what a profound influence Bob had on the Labor and Human Resources Committee while I was chairman. As a young chairman and a relatively new Member

of the Senate, I was sometimes frustrated with the way Bob and Senator Lowell Weicker often voted with the Democrats on almost every issue. This disparity of views within my committee forced me to work even harder to forge worthwhile and well-thought-out bipartisan compromises in order to move important legislation. This proved to be an enormous challenge but one that shaped my career and made me a better legislator. There is no question that challenges and beliefs of Bob and Lowell made me the legislator I am today.

Bob was born in 1913 in Rutland, VT. As a product of the Rutland public schools, he attended Middlebury College and received his first degree in 1935. He graduated from Boston University Law School in 1938 and immediately began what would be a long and distinguished career in public service.

Immediately after graduating from law school, Bob served as a Rutland County prosecuting attorney. In 1942, he left the prosecutor's office to serve our country in World War II. Enlisting in the Navy as a lieutenant commander, he served in active duty for the duration of the war.

Bob returned home to Rutland, VT, in 1947 and became a Vermont state's attorney. He served in that capacity for 4 years before volunteering to serve in our Nation's military in another foreign conflict, this time in Korea. Bob once again served honorably in the Navy from 1951 to 1953.

Returning home again in 1953, Robert began his career in Vermont State politics. I think both Senators LEAHY and SANDERS would agree that Bob was iconic figure in Vermont's political history.

Bob worked in the Vermont Attorney General's Office from 1953 to 1957, serving those last 2 years as Vermont's attorney general. In 1957, he was elected Lieutenant Governor, and in 1959, he was elected to be the State's Governor.

After rising quickly to the top of Vermont state politics, he was elected to Vermont's only seat in the House of Representatives in 1960 and, after being elected to five successive terms, he resigned his seat in 1971 to accept appointment to the Senate, temporarily filling the vacancy left by the death of Senator Winston L. Prouty.

Though he began his Senate tenure as a temporary replacement, Bob would, in many ways, become a permanent part of this institution. He won a special election in 1972 to serve out the remainder of Senator Prouty's term, and he would remain Vermont's Senator for 17 more years, retiring on his own terms in 1989.

As an educated man himself, he was always a champion of higher education. In fact, our Nation's most prominent student loan program was renamed after Bob during his last term in office.

He also played an important role in modernizing Federal disaster relief. In 1988, President Reagan signed into law the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief

and Emergency Assistance Act, which created the system in place today by which a Presidential disaster declaration of an emergency triggers financial and physical assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA. Obviously, Bob was instrumental in passing this landmark legislation.

During his time in Congress, Bob and I worked together to reform parts of the Federal entitlement system and to trim the fat from costly Federal programs. Although he and I would often disagree, I always enjoyed hearing his persuasive arguments to articulate his commitment. Even if you didn't agree with Bob's politics, you had to respect the thoughtful and genuine effort he put in to formulating his opinions and arguing his positions. I appreciated Bob very much for his convictions and his passion.

Mr. President, in Bob, our Nation has lost an elder statesman and a principled leader. His leadership and tireless public service are examples for all of us who have aspired to serve this great Nation. I am grateful for this evening's opportunity to remember his service and to reflect on his example.

LEARNING FROM KATRINA

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, once we were able to see beyond the death, destruction, and suffering that Hurricane Katrina wrought, we saw that America is unprepared for a megacatastrophe. We learned that lesson at the expense of those in the gulf states.

Nevertheless, our vulnerability is not limited to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, or to our Southern Atlantic States.

Fifty-seven percent of Americans live in areas prone to earthquakes, hurricanes, or other massive disasters. We know about the quakes that have rocked California, Oregon, and Alaska. But the largest earthquake to strike the continental U.S. was centered in New Madrid, MO, in 1811. It rattled a swath of land that spanned from Mississippi to Michigan, from Pennsylvania to Nebraska.

Twenty States, including Hawaii, and States that share a shoreline with the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, face the threat of hurricanes or severe storms every year.

New Jersey experienced the second most severe storm in its history just last month. These downpours forced nearly 5,000 New Jerseyans to evacuate their homes and led to the deaths of at least three.

Increasing numbers of people make those areas of vulnerability their homes every day. Eight out of the eleven most costly U.S. natural catastrophes have occurred since 2001.

The failures of Katrina—from neglected levies to negligent leadership—must be acknowledged and addressed now, before the next catastrophe strikes. We have a moral obligation to learn from that experience.

America needs an integrated program that unifies State and Federal policies to prepare and protect American families from the devastation of natural catastrophes.

There are steps we can and must take—and we must take them today.

We must prevent unnecessary loss of life and property by encouraging State and local governments to enact sensible building codes and land use policies that recognize the exposure to natural catastrophes.

We must support first responders with the equipment, training, and personnel needed to save lives and reduce property damage.

We must educate consumers and provide them the tools they need to prepare for catastrophes and protect their families and homes from harm.

We must establish a rigorous process of continuous improvement by learning from past mistakes and assessing recovery efforts after every disaster to identify ways to continually improve our ability to recover from catastrophes.

My Senate colleagues, the warnings before Hurricane Katrina were shamefully ignored and unheeded, the response was slow and erratic, and this Nation paid an enormous price.

We have been warned. We must learn from the lessons of Katrina and exhibit the leadership America needs to be prepared and protected from catastrophes to come.

PRESIDENT ÁLVARO URIBE

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I would like to speak for a moment today about a recent Washington Post editorial and President Álvaro Uribe of Colombia.

I noted with interest the Washington Post Sunday editorial concerning criticism President Uribe has received lately. I believe the Washington Post made some good points and asked the right questions. Like, why do some Americans heap criticism on a man who is one of our few allies in a region dominated by the likes of Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro and who has dedicated himself to ending the violence in his country and bringing justice to Columbia?

I agree with the Washington Post, that perhaps we should be more discerning in who we criticize and treat those who would be friends to the United States with a little more deference.

Additionally, I ask unanimous consent that an editorial concerning President Uribe from the Washington Post be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Washington Post, May 6, 2007]

ASSAULT ON AN ALLY: WHY ARE DEMOCRATS SO "DEEPLY TROUBLED" BY COLOMBIA'S ÁLVARO URIBE?

Colombian President Álvaro Uribe may be the most popular democratic leader in the