

NATO relationship as well. European militaries understand the value of what we can do, and what protections we can afford them. TED saw this, he knew what the results would be, and he shouldered the burden, fought the fight, and dragged the system into reality.

I have had the pleasure of helping TED raise money for his conservation efforts on the World Famous Kenai River. I have been fortunate enough to join him on the river. I had the even greater fortune to win his annual tournament a couple times. Some rivers are just lucky for some fisherman, and while I might wish my lucky river is a little closer to home than Kenai, AK, being lucky on a river famous for its prize salmon is not so bad. And what he is doing for that river, his conservation efforts, is remarkable. I have noticed a difference between my first visit and my last.

My wife Joan and I wish TED and his wife Catherine the best. God Bless.

NOMINATION OF ERIC HOLDER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak about some of the things we have seen recently in the press about the President-elect nominating Eric H. Holder, Jr. to be Attorney General.

Eric Holder would make an outstanding and historic nominee if President-elect Obama were to choose to nominate him. Mr. Holder would be the first African American to be nominated and confirmed to serve as Attorney General, the highest ranking law enforcement officer in the country. But far more important than that, he would be as qualified a person as could be found in either party in this country.

Over the last 8 years, political manipulation and influence from partisan political operatives in the White House have undercut the Department of Justice and its mission, severely undermined the morale of its career professionals, and shaken public confidence in our Federal justice system. We need the new Attorney General to be a person not only of integrity and experience, but also somebody who can inspire the thousands of hard-working prosecutors, agents and employees who do their best every day to enforce the law and promote justice without regard to partisan politics. We need an Attorney General in the mode of Robert H. Jackson, and Eric Holder fits that mold.

Investigations by the Judiciary Committees of the Senate and House and by the Department of Justice's own inspector general have substantiated some of our worst fears. As you go around the courts in this country, we now see a corrosive situation in which defendants routinely question whether Federal prosecutions are politically motivated; not whether the law was broken but whether political considerations determined whether the prosecution would be brought. Great dam-

age has been done to the credibility and effectiveness of the Justice Department.

I have known Eric Holder for years. If he is President-elect Obama's selection to be the next Attorney General, he will bring the kind of leadership, temperament, experience, and judgment we need to restore the rule of law and rebuild the reputation of the Department of Justice so it is worthy of its name.

In October, before the results of the current election were known, I wrote with Senator SPECTER about the kind of person who should be appointed the next Attorney General of the United States. Eric H. Holder, Jr., surely fits the bill. The next Attorney General has to understand our moral and legal obligations to protect the fundamental rights of all Americans. The Attorney General must ensure that the Department of Justice is working to uphold the Constitution and the rule of law, not working to circumvent them in order to promote the President's political agenda.

We need an Attorney General who realizes that no one is above the law. The Attorney General is not above the law and no Member of this body, but especially the President of the United States, is above the law.

I know Mr. Holder appreciates and respects the work and commitment of the thousands of men and women who work at the Justice Department in their dedication to enforcing the law and promoting justice. They know him from his days at the Public Integrity Section, from his time as a U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, from his years as the Deputy Attorney General, the second highest ranking official in the Department. I think this choice would be welcomed by career professionals and prosecutors at the Department of Justice. He can do a great deal to restore morale as well as the rule of law.

His career has been one of "firsts". It would be fitting for him to become the first African American nominated and confirmed to serve as the Attorney General of the United States.

Shortly after his graduation from Columbia Law School, he joined the Department of Justice as part of the Attorney General's honors program. He was assigned to the newly formed Public Integrity Section in 1976. He worked there for 12 years investigating and prosecuting corruption. While at the Public Integrity Section, Mr. Holder participated in a number of prosecutions and appeals involving such defendants as the State treasurer of Florida, a former Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, a local judge in Philadelphia, and assistant U.S. attorney in New York City, an FBI agent, and a capo in an organized crime family.

After a dozen years as a prosecutor, one of the best there was, President Ronald Reagan nominated him to be an associate judge on the Superior Court

of the District of Columbia. When Ronald Reagan nominated him to be a judge, he was easily confirmed, and he served in that position for 5 years. He left the bench—becoming, incidentally again, the first African American U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia. That is the largest U.S. Attorney's Office in the country. While in that post, he oversaw prosecution of a powerful Democratic Congressman.

Four years later he was nominated to the important post of Deputy Attorney General. I worked with the then-chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator Orrin Hatch to report his nomination favorably to the Senate. I was disturbed that an anonymous Republican hold delayed consideration of his nomination for 3 weeks. But when that hold was lifted and we had a vote—open, in the daylight—all 100 Senators voted to confirm Eric Holder to be the Deputy Attorney General of the United States. He became the first African American in the history of the Department to achieve that high position and later served briefly as the Acting Attorney General.

But, notwithstanding my friendship with Mr. Holder, notwithstanding my friendship with the President-elect, should he be nominated, Mr. Holder should be voted for or against on his merits. His race will be a historic footnote, but that is not what should make the difference.

Whoever is nominated to the position of the chief law enforcement officer of this country should be considered on his or her merits. And what wonderful merits he has. He has prosecuted high-level public officials and organized crime; developed comprehensive programs to combat domestic violence, child abuse, violent crime; revitalized programs to assist crime victims. He has helped guide the Department's efforts in the criminal prosecution of corporations, health care fraud, computer crimes, software piracy, helped develop a community prosecution model. He has served in nearly every level of the Department of Justice he would lead. That is what makes him qualified.

We need an Attorney General, as Robert H. Jackson said 68 years ago about the Federal prosecutor, "who serves the law, not factional purposes, and who approaches his task with humility." That is the kind of prosecutor Eric Holder always was, and that is the kind of Attorney General he would be.

This is very personal to me. I consider the 8 years I spent as a prosecutor in Vermont after returning from law school one of the best opportunities I ever had to serve the public.

I came close to serving in that area in the Federal Government. The then-Attorney General had invited me in to talk and to encourage me to come to the Department of Justice. He had reviewed my grades, he had reviewed where I was in the Georgetown Law Center, and he talked to me about coming in to the Department. I said to

him, "Mr. Attorney General, tell me again how the Department of Justice works. Are you free of political influence from the White House?" I remember him saying, and I can see his eyes today as he looked me straight in the eye and said, "I have told the President that neither he nor anyone from the White House can interfere with prosecutions. We will make those determinations here in the Department of Justice based on the facts and the law." I remember even at that time I thought if I was ever a prosecutor, that is the kind of prosecutor I would want to be. And this Attorney General whom I talked with did exactly that. When a person who was key to the election of the President of the United States had committed a crime, this Attorney General prosecuted that person. This was particularly significant because that Attorney General was Robert F. Kennedy. The President of the United States was his brother, John F. Kennedy. But he said: We will protect the integrity of the Department of Justice.

I want to see that again. I had that in my mind when I was a prosecutor. I believe strongly that we need to enforce the law with neither fear nor favor when. There is no question in my mind that Eric Holder would do that.

I think of the thousands of men and women who work for the Department of Justice, some of the finest people you will ever see anywhere, many I have known for decades. For most of them, I have no idea what their political allegiances are, whether they are Republicans or Democrats or Independents. But I know one thing about every single one of them: they are the best of the best. They deserve, as an Attorney General, the best of the best.

I commend President-elect Obama for considering Eric Holder for this position. He is a public servant who has broad support within the law enforcement community and on both sides of the aisle. I was pleased to see that the initial reactions of Senator HATCH, Senator SESSIONS, and Senator COBURN—all Republican members of the Senate Judiciary Committee—and many others, were to acknowledge his public service, his integrity, and good qualities. Mr. Holder should have the support of Senators from both sides of the aisle if the President-elect chooses to nominate him. I can assure you if he is nominated that the Senate Judiciary Committee will hold prompt and fair nomination hearings.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GREGG. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TRIBUTE TO SENATORS

JOHN SUNUNU

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, a large number of very special and extraordinary individuals will be leaving the Senate at the end of this session, many friends and many people I have admired for a number of years and had the privilege to serve with. I wished to speak specifically to one, and that is my colleague from New Hampshire, JOHN SUNUNU.

JOHN is the youngest Member of the Senate. He came here as the youngest Member, and he is still the youngest Member after 6 years, but he is one of the most accomplished and capable people in the Senate, one of the brightest, as we all know, and also one of the people who brings the most common sense to issues. Time and time again, I would come to the floor, and this was throughout his term but especially during the last few months when he was in a very challenging election, and there would be votes being cast that were very difficult political votes, votes which, when you cast these votes, most people knew they were not going to be understood and, in many instances, they were going to be misinterpreted or subject to misrepresentation but votes which were necessary to cast in order to preserve especially the fiscal responsibility of this Government. JOHN SUNUNU never backed away from any of those votes. He always cast the difficult vote, knowing in many instances that politically it was going to be characterized in a way which might hurt him; votes, the basic purpose of which, in most instances, were to protect the taxpayer, keep the size of government under control, and be a force for a better country and for more individual rights. He understands as well as anyone in this body the basic values of making Government live within its means, of having a government which people can afford but is still compassionate and accomplishes the goals of delivering adequate services. He has worked very hard in order to pursue those goals.

He also brought to the body a unique sense of humor, New Hampshire humor, quiet, witty, and comfortable with himself but also willing to make fun of himself, and an essential common sense, which I like to think is characteristic of New Hampshire, and also an integrity, a commitment to public service for the purposes of public service—the fact that he was here not to benefit himself in any way but simply to do what he felt was right in order to make our Nation better and make New Hampshire better. He served New Hampshire for 12 years, both in Congress and in the Senate.

As I mentioned, he is the youngest Member of the Senate and his service is hardly completed, I hope. His opportunities are virtually limitless because his abilities are limitless. He has talent and capability, intelligence, drive, the personality to pretty much do whatever he wants as he moves forward.

He also has one other resource which is very special and that is his wife and family. Kitty is an exceptional individual. Kathy and I have come to enjoy not only working with JOHN and Kitty but getting to know them as friends, as fellow travelers. Kathy has been through many years being a political wife, and she has put up with a lot of ups and downs. She and Kitty naturally bonded, as they understood the importance of what we do. Kitty is an individual who brings a smile whenever you see her because she is a person filled with good will to everyone. Their children, Grace and Charlie, John Hayes, great kids, very enthusiastic people, a wonderful family. That family is a tremendous support to JOHN, and he is a tremendous support to them. That unit, as it moves forward, will always be successful.

It is obviously with great regret that I look on JOHN's leaving the Senate. His talent will be lost here, and it will be a loss to the body. He is a special individual who had a special group of skills that uniquely worked for the benefit of New Hampshire and the people of New Hampshire. I hope he will stay engaged.

Kathy and I wish him and Kitty and their children the best of luck as they go forward and that the road always rises to meet them.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business be extended to 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, we do not intend to wait until the new Congress convenes in January to begin work on health care reform legislation. The fact is, health care reform was one of the signature changes promised by President-elect Barack Obama during the campaign. This legislation is too important and too urgent to put off until tomorrow, to wait until the new President and the new Congress are sworn in.

I applaud both Senator BAUCUS, Chair of the Finance Committee, and Senator KENNEDY, Chair of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, for plunging right into the ambitious and historic task of creating a comprehensive health care reform bill.