

kind words. I have really enjoyed the relationship. I think you can tell we worked together very well, and I hope that serves as an example to others of our colleagues. Even if you are on other side of the political aisle, you can work together, and you can get things done.

I also thank Senator LEAHY, my dear friend. He and his wife are very close friends of mine and my wife's.

To Senator STABENOW, the distinguished chairman of the Agriculture Committee, and Senator WHITEHOUSE, who served with me on the Budget Committee, I want to take special note of the friendships we have enjoyed. Senator STABENOW and Senator WHITEHOUSE will be friends of ours for as long as we are on this Earth.

I look forward to our continuing relationship with the Leahys, who, as I have indicated, have become very dear personal friends.

In closing, to Senator HOEVEN, the best part of service here is getting things done. And Senator HOEVEN has come with that attitude to this Chamber—to get results for the people we represent—and I appreciate that attitude, and I appreciate the friendship.

Finally, I say to the distinguished occupant of the chair, we have had a very good relationship as well. I thank him for his service and for this opportunity to have my farewell remarks before the Senate on this the 12th day of the 12th month of 2012. That is a remarkable set of coincidences.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor, and 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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, my fourth and final term as a U.S. Senator will soon come to an end. As I reflect on that reality, I am, of course, filled with many emotions, but the one I feel most is gratitude—gratitude first to God, creator of life and law, without whose loving kindness nothing would be possible; gratitude to America, the extraordinary land of opportunity which has given someone like me so many opportunities; gratitude to the people of Connecticut, who have entrusted me with the privilege of public service for 40 years, the last 24 in the Senate; gratitude to my Senate colleagues, whom I have come to know as friends and with whom it has been such an honor to serve; gratitude to all the people without whose help, hard work, and support I never would have made it to the Senate or stayed here, the gifted and hard-working staff in Connecticut and Washington who supported, informed, and enriched my service here,

and the volunteers in my campaigns who gave so much and asked for nothing in return except that I do what I believed was right; gratitude to all those who labor out of view in the corridors of this Capitol Building, from the maintenance crews to the Capitol Police and everybody else anywhere in this building—thank you for keeping our Capitol running and keeping us safe; and gratitude most of all, of course, to my family for the love, support, and inspiration they have given me every day of my life—my parents, grandparents, and siblings, my children and grandchildren, and Hadassah, my wife of almost 30 years now, the love of my life, who has been my constant companion, supporter, and partner through this amazing adventure.

So I want to begin this farewell speech by simply saying thank you all. I have a lot to be grateful for. But, Mr. President, being a Senator, and since this is my farewell speech, I do have a few more things I would like to say.

I am leaving the Senate at a moment in our history when America faces daunting challenges both domestic and foreign and when too often our problems seem greater than our government's ability to solve them. But I can tell you I remain deeply optimistic about America's future and constantly inspired by the special destiny I am convinced is ours as Americans.

My optimism is based not in theory or hope but in American history and in personal experience. I think particularly about my time in public life and especially the changes I have witnessed since I took the oath of office as a Senator on January 3, 1989. The fact is that over the past quarter century, America and the world have become freer and more prosperous. The Iron Curtain was peacefully torn down, and the Soviet empire defeated. The eternal values of freedom and opportunity, on which America was founded and for which we still stand, have made global gains that were once unimaginable. We have seen the spread of democracy from Central Europe to Southeast Asia and from Latin America to the Middle East. Hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty in places such as China, India, and just about every other corner of the globe, and technological advances have transformed almost every aspect of our daily lives.

When I started in the Senate, a BlackBerry was a fruit and tweeting was something only birds did. No more. None of these extraordinary developments happened by accident. In fact, to a significant degree, I would say they were made possible by the principled leadership of the United States, by the global economy and international system America created with our diplomacy and protected with our military and by the unique culture of freedom, innovation, and entrepreneurship that flourishes in our country and that remains the model and inspiration for the rest of the modernizing world.

We have every reason to be proud of the progress of humanity that has happened on America's watch and here at home to be grateful for the countless ways in which our own country has been benefited in the process. We live in a world whose shape and trajectory the United States, more than any other nation, is responsible for. It is certainly not a perfect world. I know that. But it is a better world than the one we inherited. In my opinion, it is actually in so many ways a better world than has ever existed before.

Here at home, over the past quarter century, we have moved closer to the more perfect union our Founders sought—becoming a more free and open society, in ways I would guess those same Founders never could have imagined.

Barriers of discrimination and bigotry that just a few decades ago seemed immovable have been broken, and the doors of opportunity have been opened wider for all Americans—regardless of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or disability.

During my time in Washington, we have had our first female Secretary of State nominated and confirmed and our first African-American President elected and reelected. It will forever remain one of my deepest honors that—thanks to Vice President Gore—I was given the opportunity to be the first Jewish American nominated by a major political party for national office—and, incidentally, thanks to the American people, grateful to have received one-half million more votes than my opponent on the other side. But that is a longer story.

While there is still much work to do and many problems to be solved, I believe we can and should approach our future with a confidence that is based on the real and substantial progress we have made together. What is required now to solve the real urgent problems we still have is leadership—leadership of the kind that is never easy or common but which we as Americans know we can summon in times of need because we have summoned it before.

Today, I regret to say, as I leave the Senate, the greatest obstacle I see standing between us and the brighter American future we all want is right here in Washington. It is the partisan polarization of our politics which prevents us from making the principled compromises on which progress in a democracy depends and which right now prevents us from restoring our fiscal solvency as a nation.

We need bipartisan leadership to break the gridlock in Washington that will unleash all the potential that is in the American people. So I would respectfully make this appeal to my colleagues—especially the 12 new Senators who will take the oath of office for the first time next month. I know how hard each of you has worked to get elected to the Senate, and I know you worked so hard because you wanted to

come here to make a difference for the better. There is no magic or mystery about the way to do so in the Senate. It requires reaching across the aisle and finding partners from the opposite party. It means ultimately putting the interests of country and constituents ahead of the dictates of party and ideology.

When I look back at my own career, the legislative achievements I am proudest to have been part of—such as passing the Clean Air Act of 1990, stopping the genocide in the Balkans, creating the 9/11 Commission and the Department of Homeland Security, reforming the intelligence community, reorganizing FEMA, and repealing don't ask, don't tell—all were achieved only because a critical mass of Democrats and Republicans found common ground. That is what is desperately needed in Washington now to solve our Nation's biggest problems and address our biggest challenges before they become crises or catastrophes.

Our future also depends on our Nation continuing to exercise another kind of leadership; that is, leadership beyond our borders. This too has never been easy or popular. Americans have rarely been eager to entangle ourselves abroad, especially at times when we have faced economic difficulties at home, as we do now. There has been the temptation to turn inward, to tell ourselves that the problems of the world are not our responsibility or that we cannot afford to do anything about them. In fact, the prosperity, security, and freedom of the American people depend more than ever before on what is happening in the rest of the world—and so, too, does the rest of the world depend especially on us.

I know we can't solve all the planet's problems by ourselves, nor should we try. But the fact is that none of the biggest problems facing the world can or will be solved in the absence of American leadership. Here, too, I appeal to my Senate colleagues—and, again, especially those who will take the oath of office for the first time early in January—do not listen to the political consultants or others who tell you that you shouldn't spend time on foreign affairs or national security. They are wrong. The American people need us, the Senate, to stay engaged economically, diplomatically, and militarily in an ever smaller world. Do not underestimate the impact you can have by getting involved in matters of foreign policy and national security, whether by using your voice to stand in solidarity with those who are struggling for the American ideal of freedom in their own countries across the globe or working to strengthen the foreign policy and national security institutions of our own country or by rallying our citizens to embrace the role that we as a country must play on the world stage, as both our interests and our values demand.

None of the challenges we face in a still dangerous world is beyond our

ability to meet. Just as we ended the ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, we can stop the slaughter in Syria. Just as we nurtured the democratic transitions after communism fell in Central and Eastern Europe, we can support the forces of freedom in the Middle East today. Just as we were able to prevail in the long struggle against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, we can prevail in the global conflict with Islamist extremism and terrorism we were forced into by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

But all that too will require leadership in the Senate. It will require leaders who will stand against the siren song of isolationism, who will defend our defense and foreign assistance budgets, who will support, when necessary, the use of America's military power against our enemies in the world, and who will have the patience and determination when the public grows weary to see our battles through until they are won.

I first set foot in this Chamber almost exactly 50 years ago, in the summer of 1963, inspired like so many of my generation by President John F. Kennedy and his call to service. I spent that summer right here in the Senate as an intern for my home State Senator, Abe Ribicoff. He was and remains another personal hero of mine. Although I never would have admitted so publicly back then, because it was so presumptuous, I came away from that experience with the dream that I might someday, somehow return to serve in this place.

I have been blessed to live that dream, and that is what America is all about. We have always been a nation of dreamers whose destiny is determined only by the bounds of our own imagination and by our willingness to work hard to realize what we have imagined. Indeed, long before the United States came into being as a government of institutions and laws, it was a dream—a dream, an implausible, incredible dream, animated by faith of a country defined not by its borders nor by its rulers nor by the ethnicity of its Founders but by a set of eternal and universal principles—that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are God's endowment to each of us.

That was the dream that gave us our existence and our purpose as a nation, and it is the dream that for more than 200 years, through every passing generation, has been reinventing, renewing, entrancing, and surprising us—the very dreamers who are living that dream.

I leave this Chamber as full of faith in the dream called America as when I stood here nearly one quarter century ago to take the oath of office for the first time—and as when I first came here nearly one-half century ago as a 21-year-old, the grandchild of four immigrants to America, the son of wonderful parents who never had the opportunity even to go to college but made sure my sisters and I did and

gave us the confidence to pursue our dreams, which was their American dream for us.

America remains a land of dreams and a nation of dreamers. I know my own story repeats itself today in millions of American families and their children. As long as that is so, I know our best days as a country are still ahead of us.

So I will end my remarks where our country began a long time ago—with a dream and a prayer that God will continue to bless the United States of America.

I thank the Chair and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I will have a lot more to say about my friend from Connecticut in the next few days. In the meantime, I wish to thank him for a very important, a very visionary, and very wonderful statement. We thank him for it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I wish to thank my colleague and friend from Connecticut on behalf of all the people of our State for his lifetime of public service.

Our lives have been intertwined personally and professionally for almost 40 years.

I had the privilege of coming to know Senator LIEBERMAN's family, his parents who gave him the values and ideals he has expressed so eloquently and powerfully repeatedly throughout America as he did today on the floor of the Senate. That dream, which they inspired, is indeed a uniquely American dream, but it is rooted also in the Stamford and Connecticut community that we share, those ideals of faith, education and intellect and those qualities of independence and courage and perseverance in the face of adversity which he has embodied and taught to so many young people and others around our State and around the country and, of course, the ideals and goals of civility and, maybe most important for this body, the ideal of public service, which he has exemplified through all of these years, an unremitting, unstinting, and unwavering commitment to making the world a better place, person by person, individual by individual, helping make America equal to that great ideal and dream he has articulated so eloquently.

I have been privileged, also, to know JOE's wife Hadassah, who has added so extraordinarily to his life and made possible so many of his achievements. This tribute is to her and his family as well as to him.

For the past 2 years I have had the privilege of working with Senator LIEBERMAN, it has been a real honor, and I look forward to continuing my work with him, although it will no longer be in this Chamber, just as I worked with him before reaching here. In a sense, I

followed his professional path as a State senator, as attorney general, and now here.

Many of our colleagues will come to the floor in these remaining days of this session to commemorate the tremendous legacy he leaves. It is a legacy of action, not just of words as we have heard today, but action and achievement. He has been a steadfast supporter of family planning and a woman's right to choose, raising awareness and garnering commitment of congressional colleagues for that cause. He has been a champion of equality and justice, exemplified, for example, in his advocacy of the repeal of don't ask, don't tell. He has been a leader on environmental conservation as attorney general of our State, as well as in this body, especially in the fight to protect Long Island Sound, a treasure of Connecticut and the entire Nation.

He was a leader in bringing to the floor of this Chamber one of the first bills on climate change. His legacy will live on in these efforts: the clean air and water he has helped to protect, the urgency with which he has fought to protect our natural treasures in Connecticut and around the country. His spirit of environmental stewardship will inspire generations to come. That ideal of stewardship is also articulated by his remarks here, the stewardship of democracy, of our Republic.

One of Senator LIEBERMAN's signature accomplishments has been the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in which he aimed to consolidate disparate agencies to facilitate interagency communication. In the wake of 9/11, he made that a mission and achieved it as chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs as well as a leader on the Armed Services Committee. And on that committee, Armed Services, he has championed a strong and vital national defense. That remains essential now as it has been throughout his career.

I am grateful to Senator LIEBERMAN's support for a bill I recently introduced, the End Trafficking in Government Contracting Act, which addresses the serious problem of human trafficking by Federal contractors and subcontractors. I think his support for that measure demonstrates, again, his commitment not only to equality but helping and working with others in this body on a bipartisan basis who share his goals, as that measure has been and will be, as is the cause of ending human trafficking and achieving human rights.

Most recently, in a very personal way I observed Senator LIEBERMAN's deep empathy for people who are victims of natural catastrophes. When the recent spate of storms struck Connecticut, Irene and Sandy, I toured with him stricken places, seeing in his eyes and hearing in his voice his sense of how individuals and their families are affected by any kind of natural disaster.

He is a person of heart and of soul—a big heart and a soul that reaches out to people.

I thank him for his great work, his contribution, his unstinting generosity to the people of our State, Connecticut, through all of his years of service in many different positions, in many different ways, in a myriad of places throughout the State and throughout our Nation.

I thank my Connecticut colleague for dedicating his life to public service. I look forward to being with him, if not in this Chamber, in many other places around the country. I continue to admire his great contributions to our country as well as to our State. Thank you, Senator LIEBERMAN.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to honor my colleague, Senator JOE LIEBERMAN, who will be leaving the Senate at the end of this term. Senator LIEBERMAN's long career in public service began in the Connecticut State Senate, where he served for 10 years, including three terms as the majority leader. JOE then put his Yale law degree to good use as the attorney general for the State before winning his bid for the U.S. Senate in 1988. He has served in this esteemed body for 24 years, and I am grateful for his dedication and service to our country.

JOE is a true patriot. As Senator, he has made ensuring the security and safety of our Nation his priority. He spearheaded the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002 and has served honorably as the chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. In this position, Senator LIEBERMAN promoted a forward-thinking security strategy of preparing our military to respond to the unique security threats posed in the 21st century. In particular, he has worked to address cyber security issues and prepare our military to respond to evolving warfare tactics.

Senator LIEBERMAN has also worked to ensure that our Nation can stand strong in the face of natural disasters. In 2006, he worked with Senator COLLINS to make the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, more effective and responsive to communities suffering from the effects of natural disasters. He insisted that FEMA centralize and upgrade its information technology, IT, system to better respond to disasters and the needs of the public.

JOE and I have worked together as members of the Anti-Meth Caucus to fight the methamphetamine epidemic. Senator LIEBERMAN recognizes the threat drugs like methamphetamine pose to the security of our borders, the health of our citizens, and the economic prosperity of our Nation. I was proud to work with him on this important issue.

In 2000, Senator LIEBERMAN ran as the Vice Presidential candidate, becoming the first person of the Jewish faith to represent a major political party on a national ticket. Despite ris-

ing to the top of the ticket as a representative of the Democratic Party, Senator LIEBERMAN has frequently demonstrated his willingness to work across the aisle to achieve his vision.

I respect JOE's commitment to his personal convictions and his hard work on behalf of the people of Connecticut. I thank him for his service to our country and wish him all the best.

I yield the floor, and 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.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARDIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today to thank the people of Nebraska. It is a tremendous honor to have had the opportunity to serve the state for 20 years—8 as Governor and 12 as Senator. The people of Nebraska are generous and hardworking and it has been a true privilege to represent them.

I also want to thank my parents—Birdella and Benjamin. Raising me in McCook, NE they instilled in me the values I have tried to embrace and which serve as guiding principles for me in both public and private.

I especially want to thank my family for their unwavering love and support. As my colleagues know, public service requires our families to sacrifice—sacrifice privacy and sacrifice the ability to determine their own schedule among many other things. And so I sincerely thank my wife Diane, our four kids and five grandkids for their patience and understanding. While it is hard to walk away from this body, I look forward to getting to spend a lot more time together.

As a public official the lens through which I have always tried to view decisions is: how will this policy, this vote or this decision impact my community, my State and my country? This focus and advocacy for my home State has resulted in both praise and criticism at various times but I stand before you today proud of the accomplishments achieved over the last 12 years and grateful for the opportunities afforded to me by the people of Nebraska. Arriving in the Senate in 2001 I recall thinking about what one of my predecessors in this body, Ed Zorinsky, used to say. Senator Zorinsky said that the biggest problem in Washington, D.C. is there are too many Democratic Senators and there are too many Republican Senators. There are not enough U.S. Senators. Unquestionably my proudest moments in the Senate are those efforts that were bipartisan and pursued by a collective motive to get the best possible result while maintaining the dignity of this institution.