

mom a teacher, and they instilled in him a love and appreciation for education—and that is an understatement. He got his bachelor's degree from Harvard and his law degree from Stanford. Those are two of the finest educational institutions in the world, and he has a degree from both of them, Harvard and Stanford.

At Stanford, where he was going to law school, he met his wonderful wife Anne. I have such warmth for this woman. We have traveled together. I can remember trips we took on Senate codels; she was always the life of the party. She is a great match for JEFF—JEFF being quiet, subdued; Anne, not always so. I love them both. Anne is a political powerhouse in her own right. She served 3 years as head of the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice under President Bill Clinton.

After they finished their law degrees, JEFF and Anne returned to New Mexico, and they both entered the private practice of law. There, JEFF spent 6 years in the Army Reserve, and at that time he and Anne had their son John. Senator BINGAMAN served a year as assistant attorney general before being elected attorney general of New Mexico in 1978. Four years later he was elected to the U.S. Senate.

As time evolves here, you see it in the face of our children. I can remember that when I first came to this body, JEFF had already been here 4 years. We had our Senate retreats, and there was little John, and I watched him grow as we did the retreats. I saw him just a short time ago, this handsome young man, now working on his own in New York in a very important job.

In addition to being a committed advocate for the people of New Mexico, JEFF has been a distinguished chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. As chairman, he has pushed for solutions to perhaps the greatest crisis of our time: global climate change. He has run into brick walls many times. As the Presiding Officer knows, it has been difficult to get much done. But it is not because JEFF BINGAMAN hasn't tried. I am so disappointed that JEFF is leaving that committee with so much unfinished work. Certain Senators have held up hundreds of bills in that committee. What a shame. But that is what has happened.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005—passed thanks to Senator BINGAMAN's leadership—changed the Federal Government's role in energy policy. It created energy efficiency and renewable tax credits that have grown the crucial green energy industry. He led that charge. Two years later JEFF guided Congress to raise vehicle fuel efficiency standards for the first time in 32 years.

Senator BINGAMAN also serves on the Finance Committee. He is tireless there, whether working on ObamaCare—and he was instrumental in the progress of that, working with Senator BAUCUS, Senator CONRAD, and others. He has also served on the Joint

Economic Committee. He has been a valued Democratic Member of this body. In the caucus, he has been terrific.

He has been someone I can call upon to ask for advice. Over the years we have served together, he didn't come and visit with me often, but when JEFF BINGAMAN wanted to see me, I knew immediately that he had thought through and knew what he wanted to talk about and knew what he wanted me to help him with. I think so much of him, I admire him, and I appreciate him. I will always remember this good man and the work he has done. I am sorry to see this brilliant, hard-working leader depart this body.

When JEFF announced his retirement a couple years ago, this is what he said:

It is not easy to get elected to the Senate, and it is not easy to decide to leave the Senate. There is important work that remains to be done. That is true today, and it will be the case at the end of this Congress. It will be true at the end of every future Congress as well.

Again, he hit the mark: There is plenty of important work left to be done. I am only sorry he won't be here to help us do that work.

I congratulate Senator BINGAMAN and his wife Anne on their long, productive careers. I wish them the very best in the years to come.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

PLAN B

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to start out today with a little context.

For more than a year, President Obama and Democrats in Congress have known, as well as I have, that every single taxpayer is scheduled to get slammed with an automatic tax hike on January 1, and for an entire year, they have been running out the clock.

Think about it. For President Obama, there is no better outcome than for taxes to go up on absolutely everybody. Why do I say that? Why does the President want taxes to go up on absolutely everybody? Because, frankly, that is the only way to pay for the big government this President wants. You have to raise taxes on everybody—the super-rich, the rich, the middle class, the lower class—you name it. Everybody has to have a tax increase because if all you do is whack the so-called rich, you only get enough money for about a week of government. If all you do is whack the super-rich, you only get enough money for about a week of government. So let's be clear about this matter. He wants to soak everybody, and there is only one way to do it, and that is exactly what he gets if we do nothing.

If that wasn't obvious before this week, it should be perfectly obvious now. Here we are less than a week before Christmas, and what is the President doing? What is his quarterback here in the Senate, the majority leader, doing? They have been playing Lucy and the football with the American people for months. They have said no to every single proposal that has been offered to avoid this tax hike, including their own. They are running out the clock, moving the goalposts, sitting on their hands. They aren't doing anything.

Well, I say enough. Enough. The time for games is over. The President may want to soak the American people to fund his vision of a social welfare state, but we are not going to let him do it.

Later today Republicans in the House will pass a bill that protects more than 99 percent—99 percent—of Americans from the tax hike Democrats want to slap them with within 2 weeks. The House bill will protect 99 percent of America's taxpayers from the tax hike that is coming in 2 weeks.

As I have said endlessly, we don't want to see taxes go up on anybody or anything. The problem isn't that government taxes too little, it is that it spends too much. The problem isn't that government taxes too little, it is that it spends too much.

But the President is determined to leap off the cliff. Well, we are not going to let him take the middle class with him. We are going to do everything we can to protect the American people from this scheme.

There is no reason in the world that Democrats actually shouldn't join us. I have literally a book of quotes from Democrats saying they want to protect the middle class.

It was the theme of the recently completed campaign. Well, here is your chance. We are at the end of the line. We have one chance to put your money where your mouth is and that is by voting on the bill the House sends over later today.

It will be, obviously, up to the majority leader to act. Will the majority leader act to protect the American taxpayers? Will he sit on his hands and do absolutely nothing? Will the Senate just sit back and watch the tax rates go up or will the Senate act? Enough is enough. Let's get this done. Let's show the American people we are working on their behalf. It is time to act to prevent this tax increase on 99 percent of America's taxpayers.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the

Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1) making appropriations for the Department of Defense and the other departments and agencies of the Government for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2011, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid amendment No. 3395, in the nature of a substitute.

Reid amendment No. 3396 (to amendment No. 3395), to change the enactment.

Reid amendment No. 3397 (to amendment No. 3396), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 3398 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 3395), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3399 (to amendment No. 3398), of a perfecting nature.

Reid motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Appropriations, with instructions, Reid amendment No. 3400, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3401 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 3400), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 3402 (to amendment No. 3401), of a perfecting nature.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

BEN NELSON

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, with the retirement of Senator BEN NELSON at the close of the 112th Congress, the Senate will lose one of its most respected members, and a distinguished career in formal public service will come to an end. I use that adjective "formal," because it's hard to imagine BEN NELSON not finding new avenues for public service as a private citizen in the years ahead.

Senator NELSON and I come from neighboring States in the rural, upper Midwest, and we have much in common. But we differ in at least one respect: I come from the small town of Cumming, IA, population 351; BEN comes from the big city, McCook, NE, population 8,000.

Senator NELSON is often described as one of the most conservative Democrats in the Senate, frequently voting with the minority party. I prefer to describe him simply as the most independent Democrat in the Senate, a progressive at heart who—like so many from our part of the country—is also deeply imbued with respect for traditional values and fiscal prudence.

As we all know, Senator NELSON prides himself on reaching across the aisle to get things done. He is a pragmatist, not a partisan. He has never al-

lowed ideology or party to stand in his way of doing what he believes is right for Nebraska and the United States of America.

As my colleague on the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, Senator NELSON has been a passionate advocate for family farms and rural America, and he has been a leading advocate for increasing the use of clean, renewable biofuels in order to decrease our Nation's dependence on foreign energy sources.

As a member of both the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans Affairs, no one has been a stronger supporter of both active duty and retired servicemembers.

BEN NELSON has been a successful CEO of an insurance company, a popular two-term governor of Nebraska, and, for the last 12 years, an accomplished and effective United States Senator. He has been a wonderful hunting colleague of mine on more than one occasion.

Our friendship, of course, will continue. And I wish BEN and Diane the very best in the years ahead.

JIM WEBB

Mr. President, in these final days of the 112th Congress, the Senate is bidding farewell to a very special member, the junior Senator from Virginia, Senator JIM WEBB.

He came to this body with unique and extraordinary credentials: a graduate of the Naval Academy and first in his class of 243 at the Marine Corps officer school at Quantico, a much-decorated combat veteran of the Vietnam War, and Secretary of the Navy during the Reagan administration.

I would point out one more of his sterling credentials. I guess I can say this now, because he is retiring, and a political opponent will not use it against him: JIM WEBB is an intellectual with a passion for ideas and knowledge. For goodness sake, he writes books, excellent books, the kind that win glowing reviews in the New York Times, and get turned into documentaries on the Smithsonian Channel.

Senator WEBB has put this past experience to superb use here in the Senate as an active member of the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Veterans Affairs, and the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

To his great credit, before coming to the Senate, he was an outspoken critic of the invasion of Iraq, warning that it would be a unilateral war with no exit strategy. After the invasion, he was equally outspoken in challenging the Bush administration's conduct of that war.

At the same time, as a member of the Committee on Veterans Affairs, he worked hard to pass legislation to provide enhanced education benefits for veterans, a 21st century GI Bill, for those who have served in the military since the attacks of 9/11.

I admire JIM WEBB as a friend and colleague. I have the greatest respect

for his life-long commitment to protecting America's national security, and fighting for economic and social justice here at home. There is no question in my mind that JIM will find other avenues for public service in the years ahead. I certainly wish JIM and Hong Le all the best in the years ahead.

JOE LIEBERMAN

Mr. President, with the close of the 112th Congress, our friend and colleague Senator JOE LIEBERMAN is retiring after nearly a quarter century of dedicated service in this body to the people of Connecticut and the United States.

As we all know, Senator LIEBERMAN is a fiercely independent Senator who prides himself on speaking his conscience and reaching across party lines in order to get things done. He is a pragmatist, not a partisan. Yet he has never allowed his ideology or his party or what is popular to stand in the way of doing what he believes is right for Connecticut and the United States of America.

In the years since Senator LIEBERMAN left the Democratic Party to become an independent, he has sometimes disagreed with his colleagues on this side of the aisle, but he has never been disagreeable. To the contrary, he has been unfailingly decent, gracious, and reasoned. He has been unfailingly a gentleman and a friend, a person with a great sense of humor and always has a smile. It is these sterling personal qualities that are a big reason he will be greatly missed by Senators on both sides of the aisle.

During his four terms in this body, Senator LIEBERMAN has earned a reputation as one of the Senate's most influential and knowledgeable voices on interests of national security. In the wake of the attacks of 9/11, he was the lead sponsor of the bill to establish the Department of Homeland Security. As chairman of Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Senator LIEBERMAN has been a vigilant leader in safeguarding America.

Throughout his distinguished tenure in this body—and before that as a Connecticut State senator and attorney general—JOE LIEBERMAN has been a proud and principled progressive with a passion for social and economic justice for all Americans.

To cite just one example: Senator LIEBERMAN deserves enormous credit for introducing and successfully championing legislation to repeal the military's discriminatory don't ask, don't tell policy, which banned patriotic gay and lesbian Americans from serving openly in our Armed Forces.

As we all know, JOE LIEBERMAN is a person of deep faith, a faith that inspires him to public service and informs his progressive vision for America. Last January, when he announced his decision to retire, he said:

I go forward with a tremendous sense of gratitude for the opportunities I have had to make a difference.