

Loss of integrity is a greater handicap to any politician and, once lost, cannot be regained with confidence. Johnson's integrity has never been in question.

TIM JOHNSON has his integrity. He has his unbreakable determination to fight for the people of South Dakota and just fight to do the things he needs to do.

TIM is retiring after 18 years in the Senate and 10 years in the House. To say he will be missed by the people of South Dakota is a gross understatement. He worked here with my predecessor, the Democratic leader Tom Daschle, and they got so many good things done for the State of South Dakota. Senator Daschle is missed as TIM will be missed, but their friendship is something I have long admired.

To show the type of person he is, the person he beat by 524 votes came back the next election and endorsed him—a Republican and long-time Member of the House and Senate, Larry Pressler. He endorsed TIM JOHNSON in his reelection. That is the kind of integrity TIM JOHNSON has. People admire him very much.

TIM JOHNSON leaves the Senate as he entered it, undefeated. I will miss him very much. My wife will miss Barbara. They are members of a book club, and I have seen their exchange of emails back and forth as to what books they should read, what they thought of the book, and where they are going to meet. So the Reids will miss the Johnsons. South Dakota will miss the Johnsons. But TIM will still proceed forward and be a great blessing to the State of South Dakota, as he has always been, and to his family.

TOM HARKIN

Mr. President, Abraham Lincoln once said:

I want it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow.

Today I stand for just a few minutes to honor a man by the name of TOM HARKIN. Throughout his time in the Senate he has planted many flowers—so many we can't count them all. TOM HARKIN's legacy of fighting for all Americans, particularly those who are disadvantaged, will never be forgotten. In fact, no one in the history of this institution has done more for people who have a physical disadvantage, an emotional disadvantage, a mental disadvantage, and disadvantages generally, than TOM HARKIN.

TOM's life wasn't easy. His father was a miner. His mother, a Slovenian immigrant, died when TOM was 10 years old. He and his family pushed forward, living in a house without hot water or a furnace.

Not one to use his difficult upbringing as an excuse, TOM HARKIN pushed himself very hard. He attended Iowa State University. He came there on a Navy ROTC scholarship. Upon graduation, he enlisted in the Navy and became an Active-Duty pilot—a naval pilot.

I have such admiration for naval pilots, for all pilots, really, but thinking of landing on an aircraft carrier out in the middle of the ocean, that postage stamp size you have to try to find and land out there is something Navy pilots do, and TOM HARKIN did this.

In 1974 he was elected to represent Iowa's Fifth Congressional District, a seat he held for 10 years. When he came to the Senate in 1984, TOM, similar to President Lincoln before him, encountered many thistles.

He was especially motivated to help millions of Americans with disabilities, as I have already said. Here is what TOM HARKIN said once:

I heard stories from individuals who had to crawl on their hands and knees to go up a flight of stairs, who couldn't ride a bus because there wasn't a lift or couldn't cross a street in a wheelchair because there were no curb cuts. Millions of Americans were denied access to their own communities and to the American dream.

TOM did a lot to make sure people did have the ability to dream. What did he do? He encountered the injustice faced by millions of disabled Americans and responded by authoring the Americans with Disabilities Act.

People don't realize now what those disabled people had to go through. There was a big dispute here in the Senate and in the House as to whether Members of Congress should vote for this. It created a lot of issues for businesses. A former Member of the House of Representatives, James Bilbray of Nevada, was getting a lot of pressure not to vote for this, but he voted for this, and here is why he voted for it:

Just like TOM HARKIN saw this long before many of us did, James Bilbray had a friend whose daughter was confined to a wheelchair. This man wanted to visit Congressman Bilbray and his family here in Washington, DC. What an ordeal it was. They couldn't find a place with a hotel room. They had trouble getting airline reservations. It was extremely difficult. So Jimmy Bilbray said: That is enough for me. I am voting for this.

This landmark legislation that was pushed and pushed by TOM HARKIN has helped to move areas of employment, public services, transportation, and telecommunications for people with disabilities. TOM HARKIN's work to protect the disadvantaged hasn't been just reactive, it has been preventative.

TOM has lost four siblings to cancer. In response to that heartbreak, what has he done? Senator HARKIN fought to double the funding for groundbreaking medical research at the National Institutes of Health. He had a partner in this for many years, Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania. They worked on that subcommittee, Labor-HHS, and Appropriations. Some will remember that this was an unbelievable thing he did to force us to spend more money on medical research. But in hindsight, what a blessing this was for America and for Members of the Senate who voted for this. It was good for us, and

it was good for the country. It was good for our constituents. With the extra money NIH got, they have engaged in a landmark effort to cure cancer, heart disease, and a myriad of other diseases.

We have a long way to go. Funding hasn't been adequate the last 6 years. The only boost we got in NIH funding was in the stimulus, the first few months of the Obama administration where we got additional money. That was done as a result of the work by TOM HARKIN and Arlen Specter, and that money now is not there. We need to do more for the National Institutes of Health.

TOM HARKIN has been tireless. He worked to triple the funding for the Centers for Disease Control. In fact, in ObamaCare he is the one who was responsible for the prevention title in that bill.

He has spent his career coming to the defense of the defenseless. A longtime defender of human rights, TOM has worked to fight child labor, both domestically and abroad. His tireless efforts gave him the U.S. Labor Department's Award for the Elimination of Child Labor.

I have spent much of my Senate life on the Senate floor. I can remember when I would look and see one of his staff come to the floor, and I thought: Oh, no. I knew we were in for some trouble. His name was Richard Bender. I really have such admiration for Senator HARKIN's staff, but it was epitomized when Richard Bender walked in this door because I knew HARKIN was going to do something we had not planned. Sometimes it took a lot longer to get things done because of Bender and HARKIN, but in the end it was always better for our country.

So after a lifetime of service, TOM will finally be able to spend his post-Senate time in another direction, still involved in a form of public service. I have such great admiration for Ruth, whom I know extremely well. I don't know Amy and Jenny, his daughters, but I do know they are going to be able to spend a little more time with their dad and her husband.

On a side note, TOM HARKIN is one of the few Senators who has been to my home in Searchlight. I was there one day, and I got a call. He said: "Are you going to be home?"

"Yes."

"Do you mind if we drop by?"

"No, I don't mind if you drop by."

So within an hour he was at my home in Searchlight.

So as TOM HARKIN closes a chapter of service to the American people, I salute TOM HARKIN on a job very well done. He has become the longest-serving Democratic Senator in Iowa's history, and he will be greatly missed.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The Republican leader is recognized.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS BRANDON T. PICKERING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to a fallen soldier from Kentucky who was lost in battle. PFC Brandon T. Pickering of Fort Thomas, KY, died on April 10, 2011, in Germany from wounds sustained on April 8 in Wardak Province, Afghanistan, when enemy combatants attacked his unit with small arms fire and a rocket-propelled grenade. He was 21 years old.

For his service in uniform, Private First Class Pickering received several awards, medals, and decorations, including the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the NATO Medal, and the Combat Infantryman Badge.

Says Tammy Moore, Brandon's mother:

To know Brandon was to know love and laughter.

When Brandon was boarding the plane to go back to Afghanistan, he turned and looked at me and I thought, "My God, my son's a man." It was the first time I looked at him and didn't see him as my little boy.

Brandon grew up in Fort Thomas, in northern Kentucky and attended Woodfill Elementary, Highlands Middle School, and Highlands High School. As a kid growing up he loved to fish and played baseball and football. Brandon also practiced tae kwon do as a kid, and he earned his black belt by age 10.

Brandon's high school classmates and teachers remember him as an unassuming student with a big heart, a good sense of humor, and a dedication to helping others.

Says Highlands High School principal Brian Roberts:

As a school, we join the Fort Thomas community and the family in mourning his loss.

Says former high school classmate Stephanie Orleck:

Even on bad days, I was always able to turn to Brandon to bring out a smile on my face.

Brandon also had a mischievous side. His mother recalls:

Brandon loved a good prank. In high school he decided it would be funny to place a mouse trap in another student's locker. When the principal called him, he admitted it right away.

That was the worst trouble Brandon ever gave his parents.

As a teenager, Brandon also enjoyed the freedom that came with his driver's license.

While teaching Brandon how to drive, he told me, "Mom, I know you don't want to hear this, but this is the happiest I've ever been."

I told him, "Brandon, I know you don't want to hear this, but this is the most scared I've ever been!"

After graduating high school in 2008, Brandon attended Cincinnati State.

Tammy recalls:

After two semesters, he told me he was thinking of joining the Army. I asked him to give school another semester and if he still felt the same, I would support his decision. The third semester came and went, and Brandon was firm on his decision.

He enlisted and in September 2009 he left for basic training at Fort Benning, GA. After basic training he was stationed at Fort Polk, LA.

Tammy said:

There was a small town outside of Fort Polk named Pickering; Brandon thought that was neat and so did I.

Brandon was an only child, but when he got to Fort Polk he found brothers.

Assigned to Fort Polk in April of 2010, Brandon was assigned to the 1st Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division. He was soon deployed to Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom in October of 2010. Part of a two-man machinegun team, Brandon was 6 months into his first combat tour when he was fatally wounded.

Brandon was flown to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany before he died. Because of this, his family was able to be with him before he passed away.

Brandon made one final gift by volunteering to be an organ donor. His final sacrifice was an offering of life for four Germans, including a 6-year-old girl.

Tammy said:

Even in his death, Brandon saved the lives of four people.

I often wondered how I could have raised such a wonderful human being and then I think, only by the grace of God.

The Fort Thomas, KY, road where Brandon grew up was fittingly renamed in his honor as a permanent reminder of his life and his deeds. The portion of River Road in Fort Thomas that runs from State Route 8 along the Ohio River to South Fort Thomas Avenue next to the Cincinnati VA Medical Center is now named the Private First Class Brandon T. Pickering Memorial Highway.

We are thinking of Brandon's family as I recount his story for my Senate colleagues, including his mother Tammy Moore, his father David Pickering, his grandfather Thomas Pickering, and many other beloved family members and friends.

Brandon was laid to rest with full military honors at the Alexandria Cemetery in Alexandria, KY. His tombstone bears the words, "Live a life worthy of my sacrifice."

Tammy had some final thoughts on the words that mark her son's grave.

People should think about that—not just for my son, but for all the sons and daughters, and the ones in the past.

What people have sacrificed to keep this country free—freedom isn't free, and it's not cheap. It comes at a high cost, and we all have a responsibility to each other and to this nation.

I couldn't agree more with Tammy Moore's thoughts, and I want her to know that this Senate certainly does

recognize the responsibility we have as a nation to honor and always remember the sacrifices of brave heroes like her son, PFC Brandon T. Pickering. We are in awe of his life of service, and we are humbled by his final sacrifice. From Germany to Afghanistan to Fort Thomas, we can see the lives he touched and the people he left better off for having known him.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, for debate only, until 10:30 a.m., with the time equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am looking at the clock, and I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be able to continue in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

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

WELCOMING THE GUEST
CHAPLAIN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD will show the introduction of and prayer by our visiting Chaplain today, Father Claude Pomerleau of Portland, OR, a member of the Holy Cross priests. That is as much of a thumbnail as saying any one of us is a U.S. Senator, period. There is a lot more to it.

Claude Pomerleau has been nearly 50 years a priest. I know because he is my brother-in-law, and my wife Marcelle and I, as well as his wonderful parents, Phil and Cecile Pomerleau, joined him in Rome nearly 50 years ago when he was ordained a priest. My family—my parents, my brothers and sisters, and also our children—has always had such a wonderful relationship with Father Pomerleau. It is great now to see the young grandchildren come in and give him a hug and say: Hi, Uncle Claude.

I also look at his distinguished career. He is not just a brother and brother-in-law, an uncle and friend, he is a man who has taught, speaks many languages, and who has a Ph.D. from the University of Denver. He teaches now at the University of Portland even in semiretirement and also in Santiago, where he is a well-respected visiting professor, and where I am told his Spanish is like that of a native.

He was born in Vermont. His parents are French Canadians, two people who strongly practiced their religion, believed in it, and brought up their children speaking French at home. They instilled in him the values that really make our country great and make a human being even greater.