

chair. Under his leadership, the Appropriations Committee responsibly refocused efforts on regular order, reviewing and approving all—I repeat all—12 annual government spending bills through the committee during his tenure. As chairman, HAL has made oversight of Federal spending a top priority, and his Appropriations Committee has held more than 600 hearings to ensure that Federal tax dollars were being spent properly. Under his leadership, the Appropriations Committee has gotten results, such as reducing wasteful spending by \$126 billion in total annual spending cuts since fiscal year 2010.

HAL is only the third Kentuckian to chair the House Appropriations Committee. The last was Congressman William Natcher, who held that position until 1994. He is, of course, the only Republican chairman from the Commonwealth. I know that becoming Appropriations Committee chairman was a great achievement for HAL and something he worked hard to earn.

Just on a personal note, I would like to add that HAL ROGERS is a great friend of mine. Elaine and I have always enjoyed spending time with him and his wife Cynthia. As the senior Republican in Kentucky politics, he has been a leader in getting things done for the benefit of the people of his district and of the Commonwealth for nearly four decades.

You can see his impact in many places. One can drive across the Hal Rogers Parkway in Southeastern Kentucky or visit one of the many institutions in service to Kentuckians. HAL is literally beloved in Southeastern Kentucky where he regularly wins reelection, as I indicated earlier, with an overwhelming majority of the votes.

HAL loves the people he serves. He is one of them. He is proud to champion their causes here in the Nation's Capital.

I thank Chairman ROGERS for his steady hand at the helm of the House Appropriations Committee for the last 6 years and for all he has done for Kentucky. Both Kentucky and the Nation are thankful for his service. As he turns his considerable energies to other important roles in Congress, I wish him the very best and look forward to partnering with him many more times in the future on behalf of the Commonwealth we both love.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, will my friend yield for a brief comment?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am going to give a speech here in a minute regarding Senator MIKULSKI. But the reason I mention that is I want the record to reflect that Chairman ROGERS has been so nice to me whenever we have gone to public events and events dealing with the work of the Hill. He has been always a gentleman—I mean first class.

In meetings with just Democrats, I have heard Senator MIKULSKI talk about her great relationship with this

good man, so it has been pleasant for me to listen to the description of the relationship of the Republican leader and the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. I just wanted to take a minute and let everyone know that I have also been honored by his presence wherever it has been.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID VITTER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, after two terms in the Senate and more than two decades of public service, our friend and colleague Senator DAVID VITTER will be leaving us at the end of his term. I would like to say a few words before he does.

Our friend from Louisiana is the first Republican Senator popularly elected from his home State. It is an impressive achievement that history will long record. But Senator VITTER had little opportunity to celebrate at the time. Hurricane Katrina hit just a few months after he took office. It was a catastrophic natural disaster that presented massive and immediate challenges for Louisiana.

Our colleague did not miss a beat. Back home, he and his team worked tirelessly to set up mobile offices. Here in the Senate he fought hard to bring aid to those in need. It underlined something we have all come to know about Senator VITTER: He is passionate about his home State. That has been a constant throughout his career. He simply loves Louisiana. He loves the richness of its history, loves the richness of its culture, loves the richness of its food, too—crawfish pie etouffee and several other things I can't pronounce. Senator VITTER loves it all.

He flies home just about every chance he gets. When he was younger, he turned down offers from Harvard and Yale to study law in the Pelican State. This is after he spent some time in Cambridge, MA, and Oxford, as a Rhodes Scholar, by the way—pretty impressive—so perhaps it was born of a simple lesson: You're just not going to find alligator sauce piquante anywhere else.

Nor are you likely to find many Saints fans, certainly none as enthusiastic as our colleague. You will find Senator VITTER glued to a TV every football Sunday. If the Senate is in session, he will watch between votes in the cloakroom behind me. He has been a diehard fan of the Black and Gold for as long as he can remember. It was not as though he had much choice, of course, growing up in the Big Easy, but he has stuck by his team through thick and thin—often thin. It is what made the Saints eventual Super Bowl win in 2010 that much sweeter. He called it a dream come true.

This tenacity and determination carries over to his political career as well. Whatever the issue, Senator VITTER's staff says he is always looking for solutions that can improve the lives of Louisianans. They say he is always ready to roll up his sleeves and stay

the course on legislation that will do just that.

Senator VITTER has worked hard to protect his constituents from the effects of hurricanes and floods before they occur and to rebuild when they do. He has taken the lead on important initiatives to reform the Army Corps of Engineers and improve our Nation's waterways.

Most recently, he helped to pass the first significant reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act in nearly four decades. Senator VITTER was a critical player throughout, working across the aisle with our late colleague Senator Lautenberg and then Senator Udall to steer this much needed legislation to passage and eventually law.

Senator VITTER says he believes his most important job is to keep an open-door policy for constituents who need help. I know he would tell you that, although it may not be the most publicized part of the job, he considers it the most fulfilling.

He still remembers the woman in desperate need of a liver transplant. With the help of his office, she got it. He still remembers the veteran who needed an operation to save his leg and his life. With the help of Team Vitter, he received that too.

Senator VITTER will never forget the countless families in need of assistance following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the oil spill, and recent flooding. He has seen firsthand the life-changing, even lifesaving impacts constituent casework can have. It is what inspired him to compile these powerful stories and best practices into a constituent service guidebook that will help guide his successor from day one.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without a great staff, and Senator VITTER has built a strong team that is as committed to the people of Louisiana as he is. It is tight-knit. It is loyal. It is a group of men and women who know they have a boss who takes genuine interest in their success, who trusts their judgment, and who is always eager for their input.

Senator VITTER awards a Reform Trophy each week to the staffer with the best new policy idea. He truly believes in a heavy dose of competition. That includes when his son Jack is in town. Staffers can expect to be enlisted in an entirely different competition then; it is called Office Olympics. Team Vitter knows to bring their A game when Jack is around. They also know to bring their sense of humor. It turns out Jack is a bit of a prankster. I hear you don't want Jack laying hands on a Post-it note or a roll of aluminum foil when he is in the office, but lifelong memories are often made when he does just that.

It is these relationships and it is this capacity to make a difference for the people of Louisiana through constituent service and the legislative process that I am sure our colleague will miss most when he leaves the Senate.

Senator VITTER may be retiring from his post in this Chamber, but we know he will continue to look for ways to serve the State he loves so much. Today we join with his team and his family in recognizing his many years of service. I know each of us is looking forward to seeing what else our colleague is able to achieve on behalf of Louisiana in the years to come.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, if the majority leader will yield for one moment, I want to thank the majority leader for his very kind words. Serving in the Senate for two terms has been the highest honor of my professional career. I have enjoyed it so much and have been honored by the relationship with all of my colleagues, certainly including the majority leader. I will have a few more reflections next Monday, but I sincerely thank him and also congratulate him for getting the Senate, particularly in the past 2 years, back to working order and some of its best practices. Not as a Member but as a cheerleader on the outside, I will be very much looking forward to even greater successes this coming Congress.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I thank my colleague.

I have one more statement, and then I will be through.

21ST CENTURY CURES BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday the House passed the 21st Century Cures bill with overwhelming bipartisan support, and I hope to see the same in the Senate. The medical innovation bill is one that can have a substantial impact for families across our country. It supports medical research, including promoting regenerative medicine. It provides real funding to help combat the prescription opioid epidemic that swept our Nation, particularly in places such as my home State of Kentucky. It improves mental health programs, among other bipartisan priorities.

I thank Senator ALEXANDER, chairman of the HELP Committee, for his tireless work in driving this critical legislation forward. We should also thank Senator HATCH, who worked with our Finance colleagues on a significant number of Medicare provisions in the package to protect care for America's seniors. I would like to note the great work by Senator CORNYN and Senator CASSIDY to incorporate key mental health reforms into the Cures legislation.

Let's work together to send it to the President's desk as soon as possible.

IRAN SANCTIONS EXTENSION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, later today we will have a chance to pass the Iran sanctions extension legislation that passed the House by a large margin.

Given Iran's continued pattern of aggression and the country's persistent

efforts to expand its sphere of influence across the region, preserving these sanctions is critical. This is even more important given how the current administration has been held hostage by Iran's threats to withdraw from the nuclear agreement and how it has ignored Iran's overall efforts to upset the balance of power in the greater Middle East.

The authorities extended by this legislation give us some of the tools needed to, if necessary, impose sanctions to hold the regime to account and to keep the American people safer. Next year I expect the new administration and new Congress will undertake a total review of our overall Iran policy. These authorities should remain in place as we address how best to deal with the Iranian missile test, their support for Hezbollah, and their support for the Syrian regime.

I urge all Senators to support this legislation later today.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA MIKULSKI

Mr. REID. Mr. President, at times it seems that Democrats and Republicans in the Senate don't agree on very much, but the one thing we all agree on without any exception is this: Our colleague BARBARA MIKULSKI of Maryland can turn a phrase better than anyone else. It is one of her many gifts. Just listen to some of the memorable lines we have heard her utter.

Running for her first term in the Senate, Barbara said:

I might be short, but I won't be overlooked.

Just prior to the 2013 government shutdown, she told Senate Republicans:

You can huff and puff for 21 hours, but you can't be the magic dragon that blows the Affordable Care Act away.

Earlier this year, she spoke of the Zika virus as follows:

The mosquitoes are coming. The mosquitoes are already here. You can't build a fence to keep them out, and the mosquitoes won't pay for it. The mosquitoes are here—this is not an Obama fantasy.

My personal favorite was something she said at a welcome reception for the 1986 class. We gathered in the Russell Building, and it was a festive occasion for Democrats. We had many new Democrats. It was a huge class—Daschle, SHELBY, Breaux, GRAHAM, Conrad, and Fowler. There were many Democratic Senators, but the day was stolen by BARBARA MIKULSKI. We were all asked to say a word. About her opponent, she stood and said: "I may be short, but it sure wasn't hard for me to slam dunk Linda Chavez," her opponent.

It is safe to say that with that quip, BARBARA immediately hit it off with all the Members of the Senate class.

From the moment she first set foot in the Senate, Senator MIKULSKI was determined to be herself—honest, disciplined, principled, undaunted, with an incredible wit and a fierce love of Maryland.

You will not find a Member of this body more devoted to her circumstances—and we will talk about those in a little bit—devoted to her constituents and her State than Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI. She served the State of Maryland for more than 50 years. A graduate of Mount Saint Agnes College and the University of Maryland, she made her name as a social worker and a political activist.

Her grandparents are well known, especially her grandmother. They ran a bakery. I have heard her talk about that bakery so many times, how the people in the neighborhood would come and wait for that bakery to open. Her grandparents went there very early, as bakers do. She speaks with nostalgia, warmth, and love of her grandparents.

Her own parents ran a little grocery store next to a steel mill. They would get there early in the morning, and the steelworkers would come and get their lunches and sometimes their breakfasts in that grocery store. Her parents were part of her life, as were her grandparents. She is so proud of them.

In 1966 the Baltimore City Council proposed building a large highway through the center of the city of Baltimore. There was a downside to the plan: It would have razed entire neighborhoods, African-American neighborhoods and especially immigrant neighborhoods. They would have to leave their homes.

The city's leaders, political bosses, and, of course, the wealthy real estate interests and many others—the power brokers of the State of Maryland, the city of Baltimore—knew this was a done deal, but the power brokers didn't count on a young social worker named MIKULSKI to fight for these families. It was her first political activism, and activism it was. It was her alone. Because of her magnetism, her warmth, and her ability to organize, she organized an effort to stop the highway. Everyone said it couldn't be done, but no one bothered to tell BARBARA. She rallied the citizens of Baltimore in opposing the highway, and what a rally it was—not one rally, not two, but many of them until it was determined that she had won and the power brokers had lost. These people got to keep their homes, and today there is no superhighway towering over the center of Baltimore. People remember BARBARA MIKULSKI for that.

BARBARA's fight against the highway made her a hero in Baltimore and propelled her to the city council in 1971. In 1976 BARBARA MIKULSKI fought her way to the Congress of the United States as a Member of the House of Representatives. After five terms in the House, BARBARA MIKULSKI ran for a seat in the Senate, in the one I just told you about. She slam-dunked her opponent,