

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,

making her the first Democratic woman in history to win seats in both the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States. Today Senator MIKULSKI is the longest serving woman to serve in the U.S. Congress. For more than 40 years she has served the people of Maryland.

She is the first woman and first Marylander to chair the prestigious Senate Appropriations Committee. Her legislative record reflects her hard work for women and for equality. She worked with then-Senator JOE BIDEN to pass the first Violence Against Women Act in 1994. She was the architect of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. She was repeatedly in the forefront to fight for paycheck fairness, which determined that men and women who do the same work should be paid the same money.

When so many of us were duped by misinformation about the Iraq war, BARBARA MIKULSKI was not duped. She voted against the war.

BARBARA's career in the Senate has been historic, but I would be remiss if I failed to note her impact on my life and my career. As I said, we came to the Senate together. We served together. We got the same committees. We, of course, served together in the House, but that is a huge body—435 Members. Frankly, I served there two terms. I know the Presiding Officer served in the House. It is a huge body. When I left there after 4 years, I can remember a vote taking place. Where did these people come from? It is hard to get to know 435 people, but I knew BARBARA. Everybody knew BARBARA. But in the Senate we came together, served on the same committees, and we got to know each other very well early on. BARBARA MIKULSKI has always protected me, looked out for me.

One of my first memories took place right here in the well. I was new, she was new, and it was a very close vote. It was an issue that was her issue, and I couldn't vote her way. That happens here. It was a close vote. People were nudging me: You have to change. You are going to upset everybody. You are a Democrat; you can't do that.

I walked BARBARA MIKULSKI into this crowd. I was there. I was really kind of afraid, but she wasn't. She walked in. People moved away. She said: "Leave him alone. It is a matter of principle." People left me alone. That is who she is. Was she disappointed? I know she would have been disappointed had I not done what I believed in.

I served for 10 years with John Ensign, the Senator from Nevada. John and I had a unique relationship. In 1998 I won an election for the Senate between Ensign and REID by 428 votes. That was a close election. But as fate would have it, 2 years later he came to the Senate. Senator Bryan retired, and he came to the Senate.

Well, John had some personal issues. He hadn't been here very long at all and had some personal issues. I called

him at home, and he said: Yes, I have some problems here. I thought how I could help him. Here in the Senate we have the right to do what is called pair. Senator Ensign and I rarely voted alike anyway. So I said: Well, John, what I will do, so it won't affect your voting record, is that I will just pair with you and that way it won't show you have missed votes. So I agreed to do that, and for 2 weeks I told him I would do that.

Well, it worked out fine because we voted differently on everything, except there came an issue that affected Senator MIKULSKI. She came to me and said: Why are you voting that way? I told her: Senator Ensign has a personal issue, and I told him I would pair with him. She said: If you had done anything else—and I won't use her exact language—you would have been a fool. I wasn't a fool in her mind. Even though it was not good for her, she was supportive of me. She would not have been satisfied that I had done something that was wrong in her mind, and she accepted my explanation and that I had to do what I did. We have always had a lot of respect for each other.

Senator David Pryor of Arkansas had a heart attack and became very, very ill. He was a wonderful Senator. Everyone liked him. But he announced he couldn't serve as secretary of the Democratic caucus, and that was something that I was interested in. But I also heard BARBARA MIKULSKI was interested in it. She had been so good to me so often that I immediately went to BARBARA, and with the two of us together, I said: BARBARA, do you want this secretary's job? She said: Yes. I said: You have it. That was the end of that. Nobody opposed her.

Well, surprisingly, a few years later, out of nowhere, Wendell Ford, who was the whip, decided he wasn't going to run for reelection. It was a surprise to everyone. He was assistant Democratic leader, and that was something I was interested in, but again there was MIKULSKI. I didn't say a word. The word was out there that I was interested in it. So as fate would have it, I was walking from my office in the Hart Building over toward the Russell Building, and she was coming in the other direction. Those of us who know BARBARA know that a lot of times she is a person of few words. She is not a gadfly. Sometimes she talks a lot, but sometimes she doesn't want to talk. We were passing each other in the hall, and she said: I want to talk to you for a minute. She said: You took care of me in the Senate; the whip's job is yours. That ended it. It was all over. When that was done, I had a clear route to be the whip of the Senate—the Democratic Senate.

That is the relationship I have with BARBARA MIKULSKI. So she is as responsible as anyone for my years in Democratic leadership. Without her friendship and her loyalty my last 20 years in the Senate would have been much, much different. Working with BARBARA MIKULSKI is one of the highlights of my

congressional career. Just hearing her speak is a privilege.

I have seen and listened to good orators. When I was in the House—and my friend, the Democratic whip is here—we heard Jim Wright. Jim Wright was a great orator. He was the majority leader and the Speaker of the House. He was really good. Tom Lantos, an immigrant from Hungary, could speak. He was so dynamic, so good. Claude Pepper had a different style but was someone you listened to. Here in the Senate I have listened to some great orators. Back there was Dale Bumpers. I can still see him. He had a long cord here. He had an extra-long one, and he would walk up and down these aisles speaking. He was a great orator. I listened to him. George Mitchell, one of my predecessors, was so good, so articulate—and DICK DURBIN, from Illinois. They are all terrific orators.

But in my estimation, there is no better orator who I have come across in my congressional service than BARBARA MIKULSKI. We have talked about her one-liners, but I would like, just for a minute, to talk about a trip I took with a congressional delegation led by the very famous John Glenn—war hero, astronaut, and gentleman. We went to places in Europe. The Iron Curtain was down. We went to Poland. BARBARA MIKULSKI's heritage is Polish. They called in John Glenn to give a speech. Ted Stevens from Alaska was also on that trip. I said: We have someone here who is of Polish heritage. Let's listen to her. Oh, what a speech—I mean it was spellbinding. She talked about how she felt about who she was and about her grandparents and her parents.

So I know there is no better orator than BARBARA MIKULSKI. That is because she speaks from the heart. She is honest and so genuine. As the Baltimore Sun wrote: "People know authenticity when they see it, and there's nothing fake about BARBARA MIKULSKI, most especially her love of her job." That is pretty good, coming from the biggest newspaper in the State.

BARBARA has loved her job in the Senate, and the people of Maryland and the United States have loved having her as their advocate and defender. She leaves the Senate as she entered it, as a political activist and a fighter.

So, BARBARA, thank you very much for your guidance, your mentoring, your friendship. It has been an honor to work by your side. We are forever friends. Godspeed, BARBARA MIKULSKI.

I yield the floor.

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, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.