

I thank the staff of the Senate serving here on the floor and in the cloakrooms, the U.S. Capitol Police, and all of those who preserve, protect, and defend this hallowed institution.

I thank each of my colleagues for the privilege of joining them in service. The friends and working partners I have found here in the Senate give me great hope that, in the right hands, this experiment in representative government will long endure.

I thank the men of principle who have served Alabama with honor for years before me. I especially thank my friend RICHARD SHELBY for his friendship and his guidance during my time here in the Senate.

Finally, I thank the people of my State. Alabama is a beautiful place with millions of hard-working, good people who call it home. As I look back on my career, I am most proud of the last 7 years I have spent working on their behalf, both in Montgomery and here in Washington.

Mr. President, in preparing my remarks today, I spent a lot of time in the Marble Room. I reflected on the stone that built it and the bedrock of my hometown. I thought about the lawmakers who frequented it years ago. I thought about the challenges they faced, their own principled stands and pragmatic negotiations. Most importantly, I thought about the common ground they found there.

Off the record and away from the cameras, this space represents an opportunity to once again find balance. Balance between principle and pragmatism in the Senate would reflect the very spirit of America, which is defined by balance.

The zeal for adventure that won the West and put human footsteps on the face of the Moon is balanced by a reverence for tradition and our founding principles—individual liberty, the rule of law, and the pursuit of happiness. The entrepreneurial drive that built great cities and today drives innovators to ask “what’s next?” is balanced by a solemn remembrance of the struggle and sacrifice that have paved the way.

The Senate is a sacred place that was designed to embrace the spirit of America. To lose the art of balance and compromise in this body is to lose something essentially American. If we cannot find shared cause, shared purpose, in the quiet corners of the space across the hall, then we may never find it here on the floor of the Senate, where the critics are so quick to point out how the doers of deeds could have done them better.

As I prepare to leave this esteemed body, I urge my colleagues, who will face many more challenges ahead, to take these words to heart. For the sake of our Nation, I urge them to return to the Marble Room.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

TRIBUTES TO LUTHER STRANGE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on behalf of all of our colleagues, I want to thank the junior Senator from Alabama for an extraordinary farewell. Due to the unusual circumstances of his arrival, his service here regretfully is limited to roughly a year, but I know all of our colleagues share the view that the Senator from Alabama has made an extraordinary difference for Alabama and for the Nation during his time here. I know I also express the views of all of our colleagues that we will miss him greatly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise as a Member of this great body to say thank you to our good friend from Alabama for serving. It is such a shame that we have so many good people in this body and some really great people in this body who are here for such a short period of time, and to have a person like Senator STRANGE come before us and be part and try to make a difference.

I truly enjoyed his speech based on bipartisanship, which is what we are all here for, and seeing how we have digressed to the point where there is very little bipartisanship that goes on and then knowing that we can make that change and make a difference.

I want to thank the Senator. It has always been a joy to be around him. He has such a way and such a demeanor about him—his congeniality, his camaraderie and wanting to make this place work the way it is supposed to work and the way they have told us it did work.

With that I would say, Senator, I am grateful I got to know you. I am grateful that you have passed through these doors for all of us to call you our friend. I am sad that you are not staying.

I know there are bigger things in store for you. I know your life is going to be blessed, and with that, you blessed us by being part of us for a period of time.

Thank you, Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I have had the unique privilege of knowing Senator STRANGE in that I have the privilege of being the chairman of the all-powerful—sometimes-powerful—Senate Agriculture Committee.

I hope every Senator will read your comments, sir. I think, perhaps, every Senator in their heart wishes, as you do, that we could get along better. For better or for worse, I think we represent the Balkanization in this country, but we come here with the hope that, yes, through compromise, and, yes, that in working together, we can represent our people in a much better fashion. Your remarks, I think, really hit the nail on the head in terms of what we should be doing.

We do that on the Agriculture Committee. When Luther first came to the

Senate and asked to be on the Agriculture Committee, I knew right then he was a special person and would be a special Senator. A lot of people get sentenced to the Agriculture Committee. It is a pleasant sentence, really, when you do that work. I have been privileged to be the chairman in the House and in the Senate for quite a few years. We will not get into that.

The Senator asked to be on the Ag Committee, and so, when we try to put together a farm bill, it is our responsibility—both the distinguished Ranking Member STABENOW and myself—to travel to various States. We have sat on the wagon with the farmer, the rancher, the grower, and said: What do you think? We listen to the farmer first, knowing that if you are fair to the farmer—they are the backbone of the Nation and underappreciated in our society today.

So I have been going to Kansas, Michigan, and Montana, and I said: I haven’t been down South, I am going to Alabama. I am going to go down there with our newest Member who wants to be on the Ag Committee and has already demonstrated his affection, not only for the committee but his commitment to represent farmers and growers and ranchers in Alabama. So we planned an event. We were going to listen to every commodity group, every farm organization, and any farmer who wanted to come in and talk to the chairman and the new member of the Ag Committee.

This was a special day for me and, as sometimes happens, planes don’t fly. Planes fly to Atlanta, but they don’t fly from there, which was the case when we were going down the night before, before we had this opportunity to visit with a lot of folks in Alabama. If you try to find a rental car that time of night, it is difficult. So we finally found a rental car after the third or fourth rental car opportunity, and then we drove to Montgomery.

Now, if you drive from Atlanta to Montgomery—people don’t usually recommend doing that, but I will tell you, from about 1:30 in the morning to about 4 a.m., it is an easy drive. Then you get to Montgomery, and you get to that square they have there in Montgomery where they have a statue of Hank Williams. So the first person to welcome me in Montgomery, AL, was Hank Williams. Of course, being a country and western aficionado—or at least fan—I thought that was very special. So we went down and saw Hank. I saluted him.

Then we went off to the hotel. Of course, the hotel had given up our hotel reservations. So that posed a little bit of a problem. They finally made some accommodations for me, at least, but it didn’t have a bed. It was an office room. Then I finally figured out it was a wall bed, and I pulled the wall bed down, but there were no sheets and pillows. I just sort of slept in my wardrobe, so to speak. Then I said: I can’t sleep. It was getting to be 5:30, 6:30

a.m., and we were starting off about 7 in the morning.

I came down the elevator, and as happened, the elevator door opened up. Across from me was Luther. He said: How did you sleep, Mr. Chairman? I said: As well as could be expected. Finally, I told him what happened.

After all of that, I had probably one of the best days in my service in the Senate, visiting a State I had not visited before. I talked to every commodity group, every farm organization representative. We went out to many different farms. I learned firsthand that a big export factor to China is peanuts. If we are going to be making friends with China—or at least getting to a situation where we have a better relationship with any country—as you know, agriculture can be a tool for peace. It is a stabilizing factor. It becomes a national security situation. We talked about this at length.

I must say I was very impressed with the folks I met there and the respect they had for you, Luther, for wanting to be on the Ag Committee, obviously, and for your record as attorney general and your public service. To a person, they were committed to you and thanking you for your service on the Agriculture Committee.

So wherever you go, whatever you do, I know you are an Aggie. I know you will continue to fight for your farmers, and, as you know, we are going through a pretty rough patch.

Personally, I want to thank you for your friendship, and, personally, I want to thank you for the message you gave to all Senators here, which I think should be mandatory in our quest to see if we can't achieve a better situation in working together to find solutions. The Senator from West Virginia and I feel the same way, and I know whatever you are going to do, you will do so with dignity and with respect and with strong leadership.

Thank you, my friend.

Mr. STRANGE. Thank you.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to bid farewell and to express my gratitude to Senator LUTHER STRANGE as he leaves the U.S. Senate. During his too-brief tenure here, he established an admirable reputation for hard work, dedication to his State of Alabama and our Nation, and a commitment to principles.

Senator STRANGE was appointed to the Senate last February to fill the vacancy created when Senator Jeff Sessions became Attorney General of the United States. From the start, it was clear that Senator STRANGE's pride in his home State was matched only by his humility at being selected to represent the State he loves.

Building on the reputation he earned as attorney general for Alabama, Senator STRANGE established himself here as a determined advocate for the rule of law and defender of our Constitution. From preserving the Senate traditions that foster full and open debate to supporting our veterans and

strengthening our national security and our economy, Senator STRANGE has worked on a number of important initiatives.

Senator STRANGE has met the obligations of his office with energy and dedication, and it has been an honor to serve with him in the U.S. Senate. I wish him and Melissa all the best in the years to come and look forward to many more contributions and accomplishments from this distinguished American.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I just want to say on the record how much I have enjoyed serving with the Senator from Alabama. He has meant a great deal to this institution, to this body during his short time here, and it is sad to see him go.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session, as under the previous order.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Joseph Balash, of Alaska, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 1 hour of debate equally divided in the usual form.

If no one yields time, the time will be charged equally.

The Senator from Minnesota.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, a couple of months ago, I felt we had entered an important moment in the history of this country. We were finally beginning to listen to women about the ways in which men's actions affect them. The moment was long overdue. I was excited for that conversation and hopeful it would result in real change that made life better for women all across the country and in every part of our society.

Then the conversation turned to me. Over the last few weeks, a number of women have come forward to talk about how they felt my actions had affected them. I was shocked. I was upset, but in responding to their

claims, I also wanted to be respectful of that broader conversation because all women deserve to be heard and their experiences taken seriously. I think that was the right thing to do. I also think it gave some people the false impression that I was admitting to doing things that, in fact, I haven't done. Some of the allegations against me are simply not true, others I remember very differently.

I said at the outset, the Ethics Committee was the right venue for these allegations to be heard and investigated and evaluated on their merits; that I was prepared to cooperate fully and that I was confident in the outcome.

An important part of the conversation we have been having the last few months has been about how men abuse their power and privilege to hurt women. I am proud that during my time in the Senate, I have used my power to be a champion of women and that I have earned the reputation as someone who respects the women I work alongside every day. I know there has been a very different picture of me painted over the last few weeks, but I know who I really am.

Serving in the U.S. Senate has been the great honor of my life. I know in my heart that nothing I have done as a Senator—nothing—has brought dishonor on this institution, and I am confident the Ethics Committee would agree.

Nevertheless, today I am announcing that in the coming weeks, I will be resigning as a Member of the U.S. Senate. I, of all people, am aware that there is some irony in the fact that I am leaving, while a man who has bragged on tape about his history of sexual assault sits in the Oval Office, and a man who has repeatedly preyed on young girls campaigns for the Senate with the full support of his party, but this decision is not about me; it is about the people of Minnesota. It has become clear that I can't both pursue the Ethics Committee process and, at the same time, remain an effective Senator for them.

Let me be clear. I may be resigning my seat, but I am not giving up my voice. I will continue to stand up for the things I believe in as a citizen and as an activist, but Minnesotans deserve a Senator who can focus with all her energy on addressing the challenges they face every day.

There is a big part of me that will always regret having to walk away from this job with so much work left to be done, but I have faith the work will continue because I have faith in the people who have helped me do it.

I have faith in the dedicated, funny, selfless, brilliant young men and women on my staff. They have so much more to contribute to our country, and I hope that as disappointed as they may feel today, everyone who has worked for me knows how much I admire and respect them.

I have faith in my colleagues, especially my senior Senator, AMY KLOBUCHAR. I would not have been able to