

He has been a leading voice on housing reform, of course, and the combination of his background with his post on the Foreign Relations Committee has led to some unique BOB CORKER accomplishments. Just this year, he has been hard at work on the BUILD Act to overhaul how America makes loans to new projects in the developing world.

He was also a key champion of the electrify Africa bill that became law in 2016, laying groundwork for a more stable power grid across that continent.

There are also other subtler ways he has remained the consummate businessman. Tennesseans know that many of the good things their junior Senator has achieved for his home State didn't even involve legislation. Every bit the former mayor, BOB has continued to hustle to convince every new job and new investment in sight why his home State is the place for them—phone call by phone call, meeting by meeting.

So the Senate is preparing to say goodbye to one of our most energetic and accomplished Members. We will miss his enthusiasm and his expertise, but we will also miss his famous generosity and the great kindness everyone close to BOB jumps at the chance to describe.

He is thoughtful to those he knows well and to those he has just met. I have it on good authority that on at least one occasion, BOB met a promising young man working in a checkout line and signed him up right there on the spot for a job interview with his chief of staff.

Most recently, we know BOB CORKER as the brilliant chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. He has traveled constantly. He has engaged issues around the world with an enormous degree of skill and capacity. He is a powerful voice for American interests and those of our allies and a forceful, influential thorn in the side of those who might wish us harm.

He has also used that position to champion vulnerable people around the world. His spearheading of the End Modern Slavery Initiative Act, focusing resources and attention on a humanitarian crisis affecting literally millions, will be a core piece of that legacy.

I know BOB prides himself on bringing more regular order back to the committee and getting it back to basics—legislation, treaties. Under his leadership, the committee passed the first authorization bill for the State Department—listen to this—in 14 years.

Predictably, that BOB CORKER work ethic is on full display when he is traveling the world on our Nation's behalf. I hear that when BOB was leading a trip to Israel and Palestine a few years ago, he heard about smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza and decided to go see them himself.

So the way I heard it, he arranged for ground transportation to Gaza, examined the system, and was back in Tel Aviv later that day to discuss the situation with Prime Minister Netanyahu.

I will admit, though, that I am plenty excited to see what this hugely accomplished individual will get into next, and there is plenty of talk about what mission is next in the queue.

I have heard his name is in the hat for an opportunity envied by many in this Chamber, and that is the chance to spend a lot more time with family. I am sure Elizabeth and the family will oblige with a smooth confirmation process.

I have to admit, whatever comes next, I really doubt we will be able to call it a retirement in any ordinary sense of the word. You see, I have heard what happens when BOB CORKER tries to relax.

Apparently, there was one summer when he endeavored to take up water-skiing. You know—nice, lazy days; soak in the sunshine. Well, that didn't last very long. BOB went all in. He practiced and practiced and kept at it all summer, and soon he was a masterful but somewhat exhausted and burned-out water-skier. Once the challenge was gone, on to the next thing, on to the next deal, on to the next construction project.

So, BOB, we will miss you a lot. The Senate and the great State of Tennessee will miss your service, but we just simply can't wait to see what you build next.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

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

#### TRIBUTE TO BOB CORKER

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, let me begin where the majority leader stopped.

It is a true story about the tunnels. Senator CORKER was curious about smuggling supplies from Egypt to Gaza. Others of us might have asked somebody about that—not BOB CORKER. He hailed a Jeep, rode to the border, inspected the tunnels, took photographs, and as the majority leader said, when he met with Benjamin Netanyahu that afternoon, showed him the photographs. Netanyahu was startled. The Prime Minister of Israel might have been surprised by BOB CORKER's conduct, but none of us who knew BOB CORKER were surprised.

As Senator MCCONNELL said, BOB CORKER is always a man on a mission, with little regard for the obstacles in the way.

In 1978, age 25, he had saved about \$6,000, and he started a construction company. A friend of mine in Maryville, my hometown, worked for him as he built a shopping center in Blount County. My friend said: I always knew that that CORKER was going to amount to something.

After his experience in Haiti that Senator MCCONNELL discussed, he also

began to apply his skills of construction to help find decent homes for nearly 10,000 people in Chattanooga.

I met BOB CORKER 25 years ago. It was 1993. His friend Jimmy Haslam, who was his roommate at the University of Tennessee, called me and said he had this friend who was thinking about public service, and he wondered if I would talk to him. Jimmy Haslam is today the owner of the Cleveland Browns. When they first knew each other, I believe, according to CORKER, they spent a lot of their time sitting on the roof of the fraternity house at the University of Tennessee drinking beer.

Nevertheless, BOB CORKER and I walked up and down the beach at Hilton Head, SC, for what must have been an hour and a half. In his typical BOB CORKER way, he was weighing both sides—all sides—of the issue. Should I run for the U.S. Senate? Should I run for Governor of Tennessee—which might be better suited to somebody with his executive background.

He ran for the U.S. Senate in 1994, which would have been a very good year for a Republican to do that, with one exception. He had a primary, and he was defeated by Bill Frist, a doctor who had never before been involved in politics. Some people said it really amounted to Frist—for these two rookies who were running against each other in a primary—Frist just spent more of his money to beat CORKER than CORKER spent of his to beat Frist. In any event, Frist came here and even served as the majority leader of the U.S. Senate.

Of course, that didn't slow BOB down more than about 10 minutes. The new Governor of Tennessee, Don Sundquist, invited him to become, in effect, the chief operating officer of our State government.

There, we saw the first indications of diplomacy that we now see today in his work around the world. He began to work with the Democratic mayor of Nashville, whom Governor Sundquist had just defeated in the Governor's race, and together they brought the Titans to Nashville and to Tennessee—which, by the way, play the Jaguars tonight at 7:20.

BOB earned so much respect from the Democratic legislature that existed then that they tried to persuade him to run for Governor as a Democrat, but he said no, and he returned to Chattanooga and jumped back into business. Real estate companies were what he became involved in, and then he became the mayor of Chattanooga in 2000.

Now, he would be the first to tell you that Chattanooga was already on a roll, that a lot of people had a lot to do with Chattanooga's success, but everybody else will tell you he was the best, fastest runner to have on the last stage of the relay team because he took what was already beginning to happen in Chattanooga and put it into high gear, lay the groundwork for what eventually attracted Volkswagen to put its

North American manufacturing plant there and to have the country generally regard Chattanooga as one of the most, if not the most, desirable, midsized cities in America. He was enormously successful as a mayor.

Then, in 2006, the man who had defeated him in his Senate race 12 years earlier, decided to retire from the Senate, and Bill Frist persuaded BOB CORKER to run for his seat. Maybe Bill Frist didn't tell BOB the whole story. That was a tough year for Republican candidates, and it was a different race. It was the closest race in our State's history for the U.S. Senate, and BOB nearly lost it, but he did something that almost no one would do, whether they are a politician or an executive.

Six or eight weeks before the election, he understood he was about to lose it, and he completely changed what he was doing. He moved his campaign headquarters to Nashville; he hired a new team; and he began to tell the story of who BOB CORKER really is, instead of some Washington ad man's version of it, and so we began to learn about his interest in Haiti and about the 10,000 people whose homes he had helped find in Chattanooga and about his work to restore that city and to lead our State and recruit the Titans. People liked that. He was elected. He had the privilege of being the president, the secretary, and the treasurer of the freshman Republican Senate class that was sworn in, in 2007. He was the only one.

When BOB first came here, the truth is, at first he was bouncing off the walls. He was a lot like many executives who come to this body and find it a very unusual place to be and to work. That didn't last very long. As the majority leader said, he jumped in right away.

Without repeating all of those things, there was the financial crisis, there were the problems with the auto industry. I would think BOB probably learned as much about General Motors as the General Motors board of directors knew, and he showed that as he worked with them. He was unafraid to talk to the managers or to the union about what needed to be done.

He became really focused on the Federal debt of this country and seeing it as our biggest challenge, and I don't think there is anyone in this body, over the last 12 years, who has been more consistent in trying to point out what the real problem is—the entitlements. He even came up with a plan and introduced a bill to deal with it. The only problem is, he and I are the only two cosponsors of that bill. So as he leaves, that is a problem he highlighted, but we still have to work on.

He thought about not running for a second term. He was discouraged, to some degree, about how the place works, but he had already accomplished so much that he decided to do it, and so he continued his habits of being up early, reading everything he could get his hands on, calling every-

body he could think of, traveling to 70 countries, worrying about issues and saying what he thought—always trying to do it in a bipartisan way because he understood that is how you get results, and he wanted results.

BOB CORKER voted with the majority of Republican Senators 85 percent of the time, but he always has been a conservative who prizes results over speeches. In 2015, he became chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and began to deal with the issues Senator MCCONNELL mentioned—Iran, sex trafficking, and others. His tough-minded pragmatism and grasp of economics has restored prestige to the Foreign Relations Committee. His skills are reminiscent of the skills of the man we honor this week and the team of George H.W. Bush and what he was able to accomplish in foreign policy.

When Time magazine picked him in 2015 as one of the world's 100 most influential leaders, I wrote about that incident at the border of Gaza and I said this at the time: "If BOB CORKER is not President of the United States himself, he is an obvious choice for Secretary of State or for the Treasury," which is exactly what happened when President Trump was running and was elected in 2016. He considered Senator CORKER for Vice President, then for Secretary of State, and, more recently, for Ambassador to Australia. Of course, over this time, Senator CORKER has demonstrated with President Trump the same thing he did with President Obama—that he was not afraid to work with him and he was not afraid to challenge him.

This produced some sparks. I have told both President Trump and Senator CORKER that they shouldn't worry about those sparks very much because that is just the way developers and contractors talk to each other. I know both men well enough to know that deep down there is a lot of mutual respect between the two of them.

For me, these 12 years of working with BOB CORKER have been a joy. It is well known that Senators—especially Senators from the same State, especially Senators of the same political party—don't always get along well with each other. This is a body that operates by unanimous consent. This is a body where relationships matter. BOB CORKER and I have followed the old rule that Senator Howard Baker and Senator Robert Byrd followed: I won't surprise you if you won't surprise me. We not only didn't surprise each other, but we looked out for each other. We respected each other's work, even though we didn't always agree. Our staffers saw that. So they worked the same way, and I am convinced the people of Tennessee were the beneficiaries of that, because when they approached the Corker staff and the Alexander staff or either one of us, I think they found that one plus one equals three, not two, and that the people for whom we work are the beneficiaries.

Peyton Manning once said that he hoped BOB CORKER would serve in the United States until he was 100 years old. I think that was really to get people to quit asking Peyton Manning to run for the U.S. Senate, because he knew better than to get involved. While I am looking forward to working with MARSHA BLACKBURN, who is BOB CORKER's successor, I have to admit that I agree with Peyton Manning.

BOB CORKER has done as a U.S. Senator what every Tennessean and every American should hope a U.S. Senator should do. He has gotten up early, determined to find some way to make the country a little better, read everything he could find, talked to everybody he could find on the telephone—anybody he thought knew anything about an issue he cared about—and jumped into it with both feet, saying exactly what he thought was the right thing to do for the country and usually coming out with a result that did just that.

It has been a privilege to serve with him and to know better Elizabeth and their wonderful family. I look forward to watching what has to be one of the best upcoming shows in town, which will be whatever BOB CORKER decides to do next.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection.

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I am honored to have the opportunity to join my colleagues and rise today to speak in tribute to my friend Senator BOB CORKER and in recognition of his remarkable service to our Nation here in the Senate of the United States. Senator CORKER and his staff have left an astonishing legacy of tireless energy, engagement, and productivity, and I am thrilled to have a few minutes to follow on the comments of the majority leader and the senior Senator from his home State of Tennessee.

When I first came here as a freshman in 2010, I partnered with Senator JOE MANCHIN, who was elected at the same time as I was in a special election. We decided that the first thing we had to do was to go to Afghanistan and see our troops in harm's way. Having never been a Senator before, I had no idea how one went about getting to Afghanistan, but Senator MANCHIN assured me he had it under control and it was all going to be just fine.

Just a few weeks later, I ended up on an airplane with two Senators I had never heard of—BERNIE SANDERS of Vermont and BOB CORKER of Tennessee. Maybe I had heard of them, but I certainly had never met them and knew little about them.

As we all got engaged in this trip—we went to Pakistan and Afghanistan—I learned more and more about BOB CORKER. You just heard it, but I will

repeat it. Possessing a fierce work ethic, incredible intellect, and a determination to get things done, Mr. CORKER is a builder who reaches across the aisle, extends his hand, and doesn't relent until there is a deal done. I can't think of a more frustrating place to try and bring that attitude than Afghanistan. We were there at a time when our own law enforcement had just informed us that then-President Hamid Karzai's half-brother had stolen nearly a half billion dollars from the American taxpayers. Chairman CORKER unleashed on the President of Afghanistan with a focused communication that I will not soon forget, and that left me looking around to make sure there were folks from our side in the room.

He was respectful and supportive of our men and women of the Armed Forces. He was engaged and purposeful with the leaders of Afghanistan. In every single meeting we had in Pakistan and Afghanistan and then in the follow-on in Jordan and Israel, BOB was a blizzard of activity with purpose. What an introduction that was.

What I realized on our trip is that my background as a county executive who did a lot in land use and development and BOB's background as an entrepreneur and a builder and then a mayor and someone passionate about providing housing to those in need meant that we had a lot in common. He has an attitude of wanting to get a lot of things done and refusing to be satisfied with a body where folks talk too much and accomplish too little. So from that first trip, I concluded Senator CORKER was someone with whom I could really get things done.

He is the sort of person who has been willing at times to put Nation above party and to be always committed to his home State of Tennessee.

I do want to make sure I also say thank you to his wife Elizabeth and to his daughters, Emily and Julia, and his family, including his grandchildren, who have supported him in this service.

His dozen years in the Senate has left a lasting legacy, and that is only because he has a family who has loved and supported him even as he has traveled relentlessly around the world and worked tirelessly to tackle our budget issues. As a builder, an entrepreneur, and successful businessman, BOB can read a balance sheet, and he knows that ours is badly out of whack. As a member of the Budget Committee in my first few years here, he was relentless at delivering a message to anyone who was here that we were headed toward a reckoning. That is a piece of unfinished business that I feel some obligation to try and carry forward in Mr. CORKER's honor.

As you heard his colleagues say, though, it was at moments of BOB's tireless, relentless energy and his determination to build things and get things done that he encountered the tragic realities of the world that most moved him. A trip to Haiti opened his eyes to the profound need for housing

in this region of the world. Much later, a trip to the Philippines to see the tragedy of young women ensnared by sex traffickers profoundly touched him and moved him. It is this combination of a relentless will, great intellect, and a huge heart that has made Senator CORKER—Chairman CORKER—such a successful leader here.

Whether meeting with world leaders, fighting to solve budget issues, or chairing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, there is universal agreement about his passion, his character, and his integrity. That is because he genuinely listens to people, asks them thoughtful, sometimes tough, very focused questions, and then gets moving toward solving a problem.

I asked for a review of the bills that we have worked on, and it is longer than the time I have allotted. So let me just give a few highlights. One of the issues that bears mentioning is that in a deeply divided, often too partisan Congress, where too few Members are willing to work across the aisle to achieve results, my work on legislation with Chairman CORKER has led to most of the things that I can say with confidence have made a difference in my short 8 years here.

We recently worked together to reauthorize PEPFAR, President George W. Bush's emergency program for AIDS relief, in just September of this year. We worked together—this is really Senator CORKER's issue and his leadership—to pass the End Modern Slavery Initiative Act, a critical step in fighting the scourge of slavery around the world today. We worked to pass the Global Food Security Act, which authorized USAID's Emergency Food Security Program, and we worked tirelessly—work I intend to continue—to make our food aid more efficient and focused.

There is the Water for the World Act, which promotes safe, clean drinking water for a billion people around the world and was signed into law in 2014.

Most recently, there was a bill we spent a great deal of time on and where his staff was particularly effective, the BUILD Act, which will deploy \$60 billion of American private capital around the world, at no cost to American taxpayers, in a way that meets the challenges we face from China, investing everywhere in the world. It allows us to step up the skills and strength of our private sector to help build and meet the needs of a growing world. Working to implement the BUILD Act and to execute on BOB's vision will be one of the things I will tend to this coming year, as well as making sure that the Electrify Africa Act, which we worked on together, is implemented this coming year, and this will be something I look forward to doing.

Working on making sure that the End Modern Slavery Initiative Act is carried forward this coming Congress is something I look forward to.

What I will deeply miss is time with Senator CORKER. It was at Easter time

last year that he asked me on short notice if I thought we should go to the fastest growing refugee camp in the world, Bidi Bidi, in Uganda, where more than a quarter-million people were living after fleeing war-torn South Sudan. I went to my wife and said: I sort of planned a quiet weekend at home this year, what do you think? She said: There is no better place on Earth you can be than with BOB CORKER. She and I both have been impressed with his tireless commitment to making a difference in the world, and the impact of that trip on both of us—of spending that weekend not in the comfort or quiet of our own homes in our home States but with people who had just fled violence, torture, rape, and abuse, and to provide some measure of comfort and confidence to them and to gain insight into how we are helping around the world—touched my heart and will affect the whole rest of my service and my life.

Let me just say this in closing. We have had a remarkable time serving together in Foreign Relations. Chairman CORKER has shown us how Members of this body should act. We have real differences. He is a conservative Republican. He is of the opposite party. He comes to things with different principles. But he has been relentless in finding solutions, and the problems that face us will not be solved without leaders like Chairman CORKER.

It has been my honor to have the opportunity to work with him on a few issues. Frankly, I wish more Members were here to talk about all the other issues—from financial services to the auto industry to things around the world—that I know are pressing business in this short lameduck session.

Let me say this. I am eager to see what Chairman CORKER does next, because his relentless energy, huge heart, and great intellect have made such a lasting difference here. I am eager to find out what he is determined to build next. There is nothing to which he has bent his will toward that hasn't been shaped by his character, his integrity, and his kindness.

It has been a true blessing, Mr. CORKER, to serve alongside you and, in some small way, to try to earn the opportunity to make a difference in this country and in this world with you. Thank you and thank you for your service to our Nation.

With that, Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.  
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.