

Chicago to meet the movers and the shakers. Reverend Clay Evans was high on that list, and, as luck would have it, at one of the dinners we were seated next to one another. He leaned over to me—I knew exactly who he was—and he said: Congressman, I am Reverend Clay Evans.

I said: That is not what I heard. I heard you are Reverend Chicago.

He laughed and he looked down. He said: Well, they call me that from time to time.

That is the kind of respect that he commanded, not just because of his ministry but also because he was such an integral part of the faith scene in that big city.

We got to be friends, and I was always looking forward to the times we could get together.

With a choir led by his sister, Lou Della Evans-Reid, Pastor Evans produced and recorded over 40 gospel albums—11 that charted on and 2 that topped the Billboard Gospel Albums Chart.

His first No. 1 gospel hit was called “I’m Going Through,” released in 1993. The title song talks about staying on the righteous road, no matter how steep the climb, how large the obstacles.

Reverend Evans would sing:

I’m going through. I’m going through no matter what they may do. The world behind, heaven in view, I’m going through.

The Reverend Clay Evans walked that righteous road. He overcame obstacles and widened the road so others could follow. He is certainly going to be missed, and the crowd of speakers Friday night is just evidence of the many lives that he touched.

My wife Loretta and I want to offer our condolences to his wife of nearly 74 years, Lutha Mae, their children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren, and all of those in the family of Clay Evans who tried to maintain a warm smile at a time of sadness for many of them.

What he has left behind is something that we will all point to for years to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

FEDERAL REGULATIONS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, on Monday I spoke at the annual meeting of the Missouri Farm Bureau, and, in our State, as in, frankly, almost every other State, the No. 1 economic activity in terms of value produced is agriculture.

Where we live in the middle of the country, we do better in an economy that focuses on growing things and making things than we do on an economy that focuses more on giving advice—not that we don’t want to give a lot of advice, but the truth is we don’t want to get a lot of advice, either.

So there is nothing wrong with a service-based economy, and there is nothing wrong with an important service sector in our economy, but Amer-

ica, in so many ways, was built on a productive economy, on an economy that produced something and something tangible. I think we have a chance to see those things happen again.

Where we are located, almost exactly in the middle of the country, the Mississippi River Valley is the biggest piece of contiguous agricultural land in the world. Compared to the near competitors in size, it is the only one of them that has its own built-in, natural transportation center.

In fact, there are more miles of navigable river in the Mississippi River Valley than in the rest of the world put together. I didn’t say more river than the rest of the world put together because that wouldn’t be true, but more miles of river that you can actually navigate—river you can use as an avenue of transportation and commerce than everywhere else in the world put together.

For an economy that is trying to reach out to the world or trying to efficiently compete, that is a big advantage.

So at the Farm Bureau meeting, at least three of the things the people I talked to were most interested in were regulation, transportation, and trade.

When it comes to regulation, Missouri farm families understand that many of the best things that have happened to them in the past 3 years have been the things that didn’t happen. There was a terrible regulation proposed—waters of the U.S.—in which the EPA was trying to decide that their authority over navigable water would be authority over all the water. Suddenly, navigable water had become, under the Obama EPA, any water that could run into any water that could run into any water that eventually would run into navigable water. If that is how we want to define it, the Congress should decide that, not the EPA.

I stood on this floor many times during that terrifying time when the EPA was about to take over anything that related to water, from the new sidewalk in front of your house to whether you pave your driveway to whether you could set a utility pole without EPA approval.

With the Farm Bureau map of Missouri, I think 99.7 percent of our State would have met the new EPA definition of the water the EPA would regulate. The other 0.3 percent, I think, were sinkholes that went directly back into the middle of the Earth. So virtually 100 percent of all Missourians would have been affected by that.

It would have slowed the economy in an incredible way because the EPA could never have exercised effectively the jurisdiction they were asking for. The good news is, it didn’t happen.

The Trump administration moved forward with a Clean Water Act that made more sense. They listened to rural America. They listened to the people who build houses, to the people

who provide power, and to the people who provide jobs, and they said: We are not going to go in that direction.

Then there was the Obama Clean Power Plan, which sounds like a good thing. Clean power—I am not opposed to that, and I don’t know anybody who is. We want power to be as clean as you can reasonably expect it to be. But the Obama Clean Power Plan was so aggressive in its approach that where I live, the average utility bill at home and at work would have doubled in about 10 years.

Well, lots of things work at today’s utility rate—or some gradual increase of today’s utility rate—that just frankly wouldn’t work if the utility bill doubled.

That didn’t happen either. In fact, we reversed course, and there is now an affordable clean energy rule making its way into law and regulation that really understands that.

Again, if you at home write your utility check and then write it out of your checkbook again, a lot of things that you would do at your house you wouldn’t be able to do if you had to pay your utility bill twice. Frankly, the job you may have may not be there if you had to pay your utility bill twice.

Also, when thinking about making something in America today—and I think there is a lot of interest in bringing manufacturing that has gone overseas back to this country for lots of reasons, but when you think about making something in America today, the first question you would ask yourself would be this: Can we do what we want to do and pay the utility bill? The second question would be this: Does the transportation work for what we want to do? If the answer to either of those questions is no, then there is no reason to ask a third question. There is no reason to talk about workforce. There is no reason to talk about tax structure in the place you are thinking about locating. There is no reason to ask any other question if you can’t do what you want to do, pay the utility bill, and still have some profit.

There is no reason to talk about—if you can’t do what you want to do—having a transportation system that allows you to do what you want to do. Those things are critically important, and they were critically important at the Farm Bureau meeting. They certainly understood it takes good highways, good State roads, and it takes a strong understanding of connecting highways, roads, railroads, and water together that will allow you to compete.

The last continuing resolution on this issue that we passed just a few weeks ago actually funded the fifth year of the highway bill that was passed 4 years ago. It provided for 5 years of authority but only 4 years of money.

That \$7.6 billion allows the transportation systems in our States and many things in our communities to happen. It allows county bridges to be built.

Missouri would lose \$350 million in Federal highway funds if we hadn't figured out how to fund that fifth year, which we did figure out just a few days ago. Knowing that is going to happen allows people to begin to look forward to other things.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. President, on trade, I was predicting on Monday that we would get to the USMCA before the end of the year. I was pleased on Tuesday when it was announced that we had an agreement between the House and the administration.

The votes had been there for a long time to pass this, but the House had to pass it first. So it is important to understand that the election has consequences. Speaker PELOSI got to decide and got to do some final negotiations, but trade is important.

Trade policy, tax policy, and regulatory policy are the three Federal policies that make a difference in how competitive we are and how strong our economy is. Certainly, when you have our No. 1 and 2 trading partners—Mexico, our No. 1 trading partner, and Canada, our No. 2 trading partner—involved, clearly, when they are the only two countries that we share a border with in the continental United States, for the neighborhood to do well, it is important.

What has happened in Mexico since NAFTA is incredible. What has happened in the United States in a positive way is also incredible. So, hopefully, we will see the continuation of the commitment to have a vote in the House this year and a vote in the Senate as soon as we meet the deadlines the law requires—the waiting periods—once we get a bill in the Senate. A lot of people are going to be relieved to know that there is more certainty about that.

TRIBUTE TO LEIGHTON GRANT

Mr. President, I also want to take a moment today to recognize Leighton Grant, for whom I asked earlier to have floor privileges for the rest of this Congress.

Leighton Grant has really been critical both to my work in appropriations and in our work on foreign policy in our office. He has handled many of our national defense matters in the 116th Congress.

Leighton's 15 years of service to our country, both in Active Duty and as a civilian in the U.S. Air Force, have allowed him to cultivate a deep understanding of national security issues that affect the State of Missouri and affect our country. His prior experience at the Pentagon, where he worked extensively on generating the Air Force's budget and strategy documents, has been particularly valuable in my work as a defense appropriator.

The air defense of the country is critical. The appropriations decisions we make are critical. The order we keep them in is critical—keeping defense lines active so that we are not stopping

and starting to meet our future needs—so doing that in a reasonable way matters.

Leighton certainly understands that, and he should. He joined the Air Force in 2004 as a command and control battle management operator. He served four deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of the global War on Terror. He also deployed to Qatar and Jordan, as well as to Latin America.

He holds a bachelor's degree in aeronautics, as well as a master's degree in project management. While working as our military fellow, he completed work at the Air War College and obtained a certificate of legislative studies at Georgetown University.

He has contributed greatly. He has helped support us in veteran casework, Defense appropriations, and military construction projects that will impact our State.

On Sunday night, I ran into a mom who said: I just want to thank you for all you did to get my son out of Syria. This was a young man who got caught up while hiking in Syria. She knew Leighton Grant's name because Leighton Grant took that seriously and, after several weeks of working, helped to get him out of Syria. That is the kind of thing he has helped us do. He has worked on matters that relate to Iran, Colombia, Australia, China, and other areas. I am glad to have him.

I want to thank his wife Jennifer, his daughter Marleigh, and his son Cyrus for supporting his career as he serves the Nation. I wish him and his family well as they embark on a new chapter. I hope this year of working with the Senate and Congress, with the vast breadth of issues he has helped us with, turns out to be as valuable to him as his help has been to us.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX CUT AND JOBS ACT

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, it has been almost a year since I was sworn in. I thought it was a good time to kind of reminisce a little bit about the first year of being a U.S. Senator from Indiana. I want to cite that, when you come from a place like Indiana, it is where America really works. Think about it. We still believe in balanced budgets. We have rainy day funds. We take on big issues and talk about how we are going to pay for it, not borrow the money, throw it on the backs of our kids and grandkids.

So, in being here now nearly a year, I want to reminisce back to what motivated me to stick my neck out and do it in the first place. I saw in November of 2016 that it looked like we might have a different dynamic here in our U.S. Government. I look back and see,

in December of 2017, a Main Street entrepreneur, someone who has always lived by those rules of stick your neck out, take a risk. You don't really exceed mediocrity unless you do things that push the envelope a little bit now and then, but do it in the context of where it is sustainable.

I noticed, in December of 2017, we finally got some legislation across the finish line that rewards enterprisers, rewards Main Street USA. That was in the Tax Cut and Jobs Act passed then. I did not know how it was going to unfold. Of course, even our CBO said it was going to end up costing the government, not rewarding it through more enterprise, greater revenues. Well, we have now got some evidence from it. We have got the hottest economy that we have had in modern history, and, yes, we are raising record revenues, despite having lower tax rates.

Well, that sounds like the math wouldn't work out. Well, there is a point, especially in small business on Main Street, that you will not keep enterprising, you will not work hard if you end up having to send too much to a place like this that over the years did not, to me, look like it was delivering good value. So we have been vindicated; it is working.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, so what else has happened in this first year? That happened before I got here. I ran because I wanted to weigh in on things like the cost of healthcare. I tackled that in my own business back in 2008. I found a way to make it consumer driven to where the people that use healthcare actually have some skin in the game.

I did it in a way I wanted to emphasize wellness, not remediation. I tried as a State legislator back in 2015—served 3 years in the Indiana State House—and realized how hard that was going to be. I had three really good bills that now, ironically, are pertinent here on the main stage. I could not even get a committee hearing. The healthcare industry has dug in to the point where I think, if they don't start embracing the fact that they need to reform themselves, they could be under a drastically new system.

So we had a President that was elected that wasn't going to be happy with business as usual. I was hoping that we might parlay some of that into real results here. Well, we have worked a year on trying to reform the healthcare system, and we are really not any further ahead than what we were a year ago. That is because the system is digging in and fighting it. That doesn't mean I am going to give up. That is kind of bad news, other than the fact that 80 Senators have come forward to say, Hey, you are not doing a good job. We have got suggestions. That ought to be a real wake-up signal that you get with it.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, one thing we have done here that has been immensely valuable is that we, as conservatives, have