

two important emergency unemployment benefit programs that were created by the CARES Act and which will expire in December without action. These programs have been championed by our Democratic colleagues, particularly the senior Senator from Virginia, and we made sure they were included in the framework.

I hope our Democratic colleagues will finally let Congress pass a bipartisan bill that the President will likely sign into law and do so soon.

TRIBUTE TO LAMAR ALEXANDER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on a completely different matter, the Senate revolves around people.

The body consists of 100 individuals. One of our key duties concerns the personnel whom we examine and confirm, and there are all these dedicated staff professionals who make this place go.

Today, it is both my great honor and regrettable task to honor someone who secured all three parts of that senatorial triple crown: the senior Senator from Tennessee, the chairman of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, LAMAR ALEXANDER.

LAMAR first set foot here as a talented young staffer. Decades later, he appeared before us as a supersuccessful former Governor and university president with a nomination to the Cabinet. And for the past 18 years, the other 99 of us have gotten to serve alongside one of the most impactful Senators in modern American history.

I have known LAMAR for more than 50 years. We first met in 1969, when I was working for a freshman Senator named Marlow Cook and he worked down in the executive branch. We met at the suggestion of his previous boss and mentor, Senator Howard Baker. Either he suspected our paths might cross again later or he just saw two serious young guys in need of some livelier social lives. Now, this may shock the Presiding Officer, but I am afraid young LAMAR ALEXANDER and young MITCH MCCONNELL did not exactly go crazy and paint the town red. But I will take a five-decade friendship any day.

Both of us headed back home to continue our careers. It was already clear that a bright future in elected office likely lay in store for him.

LAMAR's reverence for public service started early. I believe he was about 10 years old when his father, himself a longtime local official, took him to meet his hometown Congressman, Howard Baker, Sr. The father of his future boss shook the boy's hand and handed him a dime. I think LAMAR was hooked, then and there.

Decades later, when LAMAR announced his 1996 Presidential run, he was in his hometown of Maryville. His speech began with a story about his mother. She had read where he had lovingly described his upbringing as lower middle class, and she had taken umbrage to that. After all, LAMAR had a

library card and music lessons. In her words, "everything you needed that was important."

And I would certainly add loving parents to that list.

This son of two educators grew up steeped in the importance of schooling. He would later reference his mother's work in early childhood education by saying he is probably the only Secretary of Education in history—in history—who spent 5 years in kindergarten.

That passion would remain throughout LAMAR's career. His cutting-edge focus on improving opportunities and reforming education benefited Tennessee hugely in the 1980s, and our whole Nation during his time in President Bush 41's Cabinet.

But that isn't the only way LAMAR has honored his roots. You couldn't walk across the entire State of Tennessee in a plaid shirt, get elected Governor before the age of 40, and serve more combined years as Governor and Senator than anyone else in the history of the Volunteer State without becoming entirely intertwined with the place. Every corner of the State is better for his service. His groundbreaking work to bring home good-paying auto jobs has paid dividends, so has his major focus on infrastructure and better roads.

But alas, even building a statewide and then national reputation does not always, always, translate into honest-to-goodness celebrity status.

I understand that following LAMAR's Governorship, a stretch of highway in Maryville was fittingly named the Lamar Alexander Parkway to honor him. I further understand that sometime later, LAMAR was driving on that very road and stopped for breakfast. When it was time to pay for his food, he handed over his credit card. The woman on the other side of the counter glanced at the name on the card, and then back at LAMAR. "Hey," she said, "were you named after this road?"

Now, as a man of faith, I am certain LAMAR knows Luke, chapter 4: "No prophet is accepted in his hometown." Apparently, neither are statesmen to be recognized on their own highway.

Here in the Senate, too, LAMAR's impact has been massive, and the convictions that fueled it have been straightforward. He starts with a very firm framework: the right-of-center principles that Ronald Reagan used to rebuild a confident, prosperous America and beat communism. The Federal Government isn't meant to take over our States, neighborhoods, or our lives. But LAMAR's career has also confirmed that conservative governance is not a contradiction in terms. There are genuine public goods it is the government's job to secure: public roads, public lands, public education, certain aspects of public health. He has dedicated himself to making those things better and stronger, especially for those who need opportunity the most.

This vision aligns with the greatest traditions of the Republican Party and

indeed of American history—government that is limited but effective and smart; a system where power stays close to the people and working families can thrive and prosper. These principles made our colleague a nationally known leader long before he was sworn in as a Senator. But I would say they have reached full flourishing with Chairman ALEXANDER's astonishingly effective leadership right here in this body.

Students, families, and teachers benefit every day from the Every Student Succeeds Act, Chairman ALEXANDER's historic, bipartisan makeover following No Child Left Behind. One report called it "the largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter century."

Millions of medically vulnerable Americans also have their champion in our friend from Tennessee. The overwhelmingly bipartisan 21st Century Cures Act was the single most important law of the entire 114th Congress. It is paving the way for more innovation and faster innovation to benefit patients who have no time to waste—another LAMAR ALEXANDER production.

His leadership was instrumental in the landmark legislation we passed 2 years ago to combat the opioid epidemic.

Just this year, he was the driving force behind the Great American Outdoors Act, the Senate's historic project to secure our parks and public lands for generations to come.

The list doesn't end there. There have been other education wins, like permanent funding for historically Black colleges and universities and simplifying the student loan process. There have been laws like the Music Modernization Act, which LAMAR hammered out with our former colleague, Senator Hatch—a legislative duet from two musical virtuosos in their own rights.

Senator ALEXANDER knows about 50 different issues as well as most Senators know 3 or 4. He is hands down one of the most brilliant, most thoughtful, and most effective legislators any of us have ever seen.

He likes to say this about the Senate: "It's hard to get here; it's hard to stay here; so while you're here, you might as well try to accomplish something." Well, mission accomplished—and then some.

If you reviewed Senator ALEXANDER's resume and results without knowing the man, you might suspect he arrived as an established hotshot and threw his weight around. But even as LAMAR has mastered the levers of power here, his character has never been captured by Washington. LAMAR has remained clear that he has just been on loan from Tennessee the whole time.

So we have had more than just a master legislator to call upon; we have been blessed with a sober, honest, and deliberate statesman—someone who cares as much about preserving this institution as the near-term results he can wring out of it.

From daily conversations to committee business, to the most dramatic moments on the floor, whether in the minority or the majority, LAMAR has taken pains to treat his colleagues exactly as he would hope to be treated in their shoes. He has worked to build consensus in a consensus-based body. He has cherished and defended the Senate the Framers designed.

It is no exaggeration to say LAMAR ALEXANDER is one of the most brilliant people I have met in my life. His mind is a steel trap. I understand he likes to keep his staff experts locked around a conference table for long sessions, turning a complex issue over and over until they have arrived at the best path forward for the country and the most precise, concise way to communicate it. He has a mastery of policy, mastery of the English language, and I can't forget to mention my friend's good cheer.

LAMAR really does live by the motto he inherited from his good friend and fellow Tennessean, the late author Alex Haley: "Find the good and praise it."

I myself have leaned on LAMAR's wisdom for many years, but I think I have learned just as much from his optimism, his can-do spirit, and his ability to look on the bright side and then discern how some more hard work can make it brighter still. So I am going to miss our regular dinners, even with our weeknight scheduling and official one-drink limit. Like I said, we weren't exactly party animals in our twenties either.

But here is something else that never changes: How reassuring it is to be weighing a thorny question and see LAMAR ALEXANDER seated across the table. You know, the Senate can be all-consuming. It is not only our colleagues but their spouses and loved ones who all get folded into the extended family around here. So I am extremely grateful that it turned out that MITCH MCCONNELL was not the most important young person LAMAR ALEXANDER met during his stint in Washington—not by a mile.

Honey Alexander is a remarkable woman. She is a force of nature and incredible partner for LAMAR. She raised a young family in the Governor's mansion for 8 years. She charmed and impressed more voters during LAMAR's various campaigns than LAMAR himself, and she has devoted her own career to public health and philanthropy. Their shared love and mutual respect inspire everyone. Honey is just about the finest "in-law" the U.S. Senate could have ever had, so Elaine and I are grateful to call her our friend as well.

So as much as I am dreading life in the Senate without my brilliant friend, even I can't begrudge him the silver lining. The most distinguished public servant has more than earned the right to spend more days fly-fishing or walking trails in the Smokies, more mornings waking up on Blackberry Farm, and a much larger share of his time with Honey and their family.

About 6 years ago, it fell to LAMAR to eulogize his friend and mentor, Howard Baker. Here on the floor, he quoted another Senator who had said that when it came to the Senate, there was Howard Baker, and then there was the rest of us.

Well, my friend, for 18 years, there has been LAMAR ALEXANDER, and there has been the rest of us. So I am sorry that in a few more weeks, it will be just the rest of us left. But you are leaving this body and those of us in it and the Nation it exists to serve stronger and better because you were here.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Chair lay before the Senate the House message accompanying H.R. 6395.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the bill from the House of Representatives (H.R. 6395) entitled "An Act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2021 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes," do pass with an amendment.

COMPOUND MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask consent that the Senate insist on its amendment, agree to the request of the House for conference, and appoint the following conferees on the part of the Senate, the list of whom is at the desk.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES

The following conferees were appointed:

James M. Inhofe, of Oklahoma, Chairman; Roger F. Wicker, of Mississippi; Deb Fischer, of Nebraska; Tom Cotton, of Arkansas; Mike Rounds, of South Dakota; Joni Ernst, of Iowa; Thom Tillis, of North Carolina; Dan Sullivan, of Alaska; David Perdue, of Georgia; Kevin Cramer, of North Dakota; John Thune, of South Dakota; Rick Scott, of Florida; Marsha Blackburn, of Tennessee; Josh Hawley, of Missouri; Jack Reed, of Rhode Island; Jeanne Shaheen, of New Hampshire; Kirsten E. Gillibrand, of New York; Richard Blumenthal, of Connecticut; Mazie Hirono, of Hawaii; Tim Kaine, of Virginia; Angus S. King, Jr., of Maine; Martin Heinrich, of New Mexico; Elizabeth Warren, of Massachusetts; Gary C. Peters, of Michigan; Joe Manchin III, of West Virginia; Tammy Duckworth, of Illinois; Doug Jones, of Alabama.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO LAMAR ALEXANDER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, let me add my words of fond farewell to

my friend LAMAR ALEXANDER and the touching moment between the leader and the senior Senator from Tennessee, which is moving to all of us.

Now, Senator ALEXANDER and I have not always agreed, but what an amazing and capable legislator and true statesman he has been. He has been in the middle of things for much of his 18 years in the Senate. That is because he is not some ideologue who stood alone in his corner. It is because he is someone who has been always willing and insistent on reaching across the aisle, on hearing another Senator's perspective, and on searching for common ground, however narrow it may be. He searches to do the right thing.

I remember when we did the immigration bill. There was a lot of pressure on Senator ALEXANDER to vote against it, and I watched him wrestle with it and churn and churn, and I sort of knew in my heart he would do the right thing, in my judgment, and vote for that bill, as he did, at some real political consequence to himself. And that is who he was and is—a man of principle.

We often would talk in the Senate gym almost every morning for a prolonged period of time—I don't go to the Senate gym post-COVID—and more often than not, we found each other on opposite sides of the Senate gym. We helped open up the amendment process on childcare legislation. Together, we led the Rules Committee for a number of years, and we come from very different backgrounds. But I will never forget the weekend that Iris and I spent with Honey and LAMAR at Blackberry Farms, and it was a beautiful weekend for us that we will always, always cherish and remember.

Given the opportunity to put a stamp on the Presidential inauguration, LAMAR and I said whoever is in the majority—we didn't know—we would give each other time to speak, and it served us both well. This is the kind of person he has been: someone who is willing to reach out; someone who is willing to see the other side; and someone, above all, in tumultuous and very difficult times for all of us, who is a man of principle and conscience.

Senator ALEXANDER will leave this Chamber with a legacy that every Senator would be proud of. I wish him and his family the very best.

TRIBUTE TO MARK KELLY

Mr. SCHUMER. Now a few other remarks. We have a going and we have a coming, and our coming is of a new Senator who will be installed today, and that is CAPT Mark Kelly, who will be sworn in as the next Senator from Arizona.

It may not be the role he expected for himself earlier in his life as a U.S. Navy captain and then an astronaut aboard the International Space Station. As Mark likes to say, his wife Gabby was already the member of the family in Congress. But tragedy upended both their lives and changed so