

the period every 2 years when the Senate begins our process of honoring and bidding farewell to our distinguished colleagues who are soon leaving our ranks. Seeing friends off is hardly a task to look forward to, but it is made more tolerable when I get to boast about and embarrass our talented colleagues one last time before they head for the exits.

I will begin today with one of only two current Senators who were around when I arrived as a freshman in 1985. By then, of course, PAT LEAHY had already made history.

When PAT was first elected in 1974, he was the first non-Republican to represent Vermont in the Senate since 1856. And now, after eight terms, he will depart having made history all over again as his State's longest serving Senator by a comfortable margin.

Of course, it is the dash in between the dates that matters the most, and to say that PAT LEAHY has made the most of his time in Washington would be truly an understatement.

PAT first developed his habit for lifelong learning growing up around the printing press of his family's newspaper in Montpelier. But I suspect our friend never hit the books as hard as he did after he found out that the girl for whom he had fallen head over heels, Marcelle, spoke not English but French at home. The way PAT tells it, he "wanted to know what [Marcelle's] parents were saying about [him]." So the studies began.

Here in the Senate, that same energy and curiosity led PAT to collect enough policy passions for an entire congressional delegation—from dairy farming to privacy, to landmine mitigation.

PAT and I got a chance to work closely together during our long tenures switching off and on as chairmen and ranking members of the State and Foreign Ops Subcommittee on Appropriations. As often as the majority changed hands during our time, PAT and I made a point of working as partners. He always knew the right time to break up tense negotiations with a stemwinder of an old Irish joke.

We rolled up our sleeves and bonded over our shared commitment to extending American influence and promoting our interests using soft power, everywhere from East Asia to the former Soviet Union.

And like good appropriators, we also bonded over a firm mutual conviction that our true opponent was never each other. It was the House.

Our time leading the subcommittee together saw a major landmine removal effort deservedly come to bear the name of its champion: the Leahy War Victims Fund. And PAT lent equal support to one of my passion projects: our work on behalf of the pro-democracy movement in Burma.

All of this work was accompanied by great humor. One time, after an election that turned out well for my side, PAT showed up at our next hearing having found a unique way to show

grace in defeat. Here is what happened. He showed up with a yard sign from a campaign of some local candidate where he lived that read, "McConnell for Chairman," and remarked that, apparently, the voters of his neighborhood had gotten their wish.

Even just measuring by local votes cast, PAT's colossal Senate legacy put the name "Leahy" right up there with fellow titans like Kennedy, Stevens, and Inouye. But PAT's legendary service to the people of Vermont has been more than a vote tally. Over eight terms, he has made a point of becoming not just a familiar name but a friendly face and a committed servant to his neighbors.

And it certainly didn't come easy. The way I have heard the story, PAT's first Senate victory came after he wisely dispatched his darling French-speaking emissary, Marcelle, into the Francophone enclaves of Vermont's "northeast kingdom."

Of course, we know Marcelle is much more than a natural campaigner. She is an accomplished nurse and a treasured member of the Senate's family in her own right.

So I know I speak for so many colleagues, past and present, in saying the Senate will miss our distinguished President pro tempore. But we know that PAT and Marcelle have more than earned some extra free time to spend in their beautiful home State, with their kids—Kevin, Alicia, and Mark—and their five grandkids, and with the many neighbors who are grateful—so grateful—for a lifetime of outstanding service.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, while the distinguished leader is still on the floor, let me thank him for those remarks. And I know Marcelle will thank him too. Of course, our spouses have spent a lot of time together, and we know who the real leaders are in the house.

I think of what the leader has said, and he speaks of the time when we worked together. And I appreciate very much—I have told him privately, but I will say it publicly: I have appreciated the friendship and the work together.

We did go back and forth over a period of years. Part of the time he was chair, and part of the time I was chair, but in a very, very important subcommittee.

In Foreign Ops we had everything from foreign aid to a lot of the things we did around the world. But that bill would pass on the floor, oftentimes on a Friday afternoon, when everybody would say: Bring it up; we have got to get out of here.

And it passed, virtually, unanimously. We would work out a couple of differences. First, we talked about them, and then they were gone, and off we went.

I remember speaking at a symposium put together by the distinguished leader, and I was given and presented with

a Louisville Slugger with my name on it. Now, throughout the course of any Senator's career, and certainly one of 48 years, you get presented with a lot of things, which you thank people for, and you put them in the closet or the attic. This, I would tell the distinguished Senator, has stayed in public view in my office ever since I came home with it. And I loved showing it off at a time when we have to be back together on more things. But we have on that. You talked about the landmine legislation and the war victims legislation, and I appreciate your work on that, Mr. Leader.

And it reflected such good in this Senate but also the people who were helped by it. There are no eradicating landmines, there is no victim of landmines that is going to come in and say: Well, we can support your next campaign.

No, they don't even know who we are. They know we helped them.

When the leader talked to me about Burma, I finally got educated on Burma. And I was an easy sell—I think he would agree on that—because of the case he made but also because of the history he gave me.

I don't want to hold up the Senate. I will speak longer about these things on the day I leave, which will be soon.

I look forward to leaving because Marcelle and I can be back home all the time, but I will miss so many friends I have made—the well over 400 Senators I have served with. And I think the distinguished leader has served with hundreds also. Some were here for a long time. Some were here for, sometimes, I think, in a couple of instances, a matter of a month or two. I prefer a long time to a month or two. It is easier to get to know each other.

I will speak further about this. But I was honored to be on the floor when this happened.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I walked onto the floor just as Senator LEAHY was closing his remarks, and I want to tell you that we were together in the Judiciary Committee this morning, where I joined the chorus of praise for his career and his service in the Senate. And it seems like at every room he steps into, there is another tribute, and well-deserved. I thank him for being such a steadfast Member of the Senate and, particularly, of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which will forever be benefitted by his contribution.

UKRAINE

Madam President, I rise today to speak on a different topic, and it is one that is very timely and important.

Yesterday, a number of us received a classified briefing from the White House about Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. It was sobering. Russia continues to indiscriminately target civilian populations and infrastructure, killing tens of thousands of innocent people in Ukraine, leaving countless more in the bitter dark and cold without access to electricity, water, or heat.

The briefing was also astonishing because it raised a bigger question: What has Vladimir Putin really accomplished with this cruel war?

I will tell you the answer.

Today, as a result of Putin's barbaric invasion of Ukraine, the Western alliance in opposition to him is stronger than ever before. Putin's actions have strengthened the resolve of the Ukrainian people to fight to the death for a free and democratic country, as they press back against the Russian occupation and regain territory from Kharkiv to Kherson.

Moreover, NATO is now stronger and more united, with two new countries, valuable additions to the NATO alliance—Sweden and Finland—soon to join the fold. And just this week, NATO also recommitted to continuing support for Ukraine.

Countries have rallied behind the United States in sending everything from weapons to helmets, to medical supplies, to food, and in imposing crushing sanctions that are taking a massive toll on the Russian economy.

Yesterday's briefing also made one thing abundantly clear: Now is not the time for the United States or NATO to back down. While Putin deceived himself into thinking the Ukrainian people would fold and welcome the Russian military with open arms, or that Kyiv could fall in days, the Ukrainian people—and their desire for sovereignty and self-rule—have prevailed.

The world stepped up to help secure their freedom, bound together by the shared principles and international norms that dictators like Putin can never and will never wipe away.

The day will come when Putin and his thugs are held accountable for their war crimes, and, sadly, there are many.

Since February, the United States alone has committed billions of dollars in aid to Ukraine, with defense articles delivered at record-breaking speed to support Ukrainian war efforts on the frontlines. And just weeks ago, the White House requested another supplemental aid request for Ukraine. I support it.

Now, I understand that some Members of Congress have expressed a concern about the economic consequences of increased defense spending and whether there is appropriate oversight of the actual funds sent and spent. I share those concerns. They are legitimate. They are reasonable. And I pushed the administration to ensure that it strengthens efforts to fully account for our assistance to Ukraine.

I might just add parenthetically that over the decades that we were in war in

Afghanistan, it is well known that so many dollars were wasted, American tax dollars, in an effort to stop the forces of terrorism that were residing in that country. We should never knowingly allow that to occur, and we certainly shouldn't in Ukraine despite my wholehearted support for President Biden supporting the efforts.

I am glad my colleagues on the other side of the aisle finally joined us yesterday—yesterday—in the confirmation of Robert Storch. He is going to be the next inspector general at the Department of Defense. If you want to keep an eye out on how the money is being spent in that great and important Department, you need an inspector general. It took us months to reach the point where the Senate confirmed his nomination. He will be key to oversight.

Instead of looking for solutions, some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are vowing to stop assistance to Ukraine or slow it down in another way to obstruct the Biden administration. In doing so, they are undermining our broader foreign assistance programs and ultimately undercutting the success of Ukraine's resistance.

The Presiding Officer and I both know we have to fund the fiscal year we are currently in. It runs from October to October. We are in that fiscal year already. We know that if we do a continuing resolution, that it will be wasteful spending, and we will not be investing in the things we really need to keep America safe and strong. If we do the Omnibus bill, the Omnibus appropriations bill, we can cure that problem by having specific appropriations bills that target the money where it is needed in our future. If we don't do that, it is going to undermine assistance in many areas, including Ukraine.

We can't let leadership fail on either side of the aisle when it comes to the spending bill. As the Ukrainian people continue to fight, we must continue to stand by their side.

When the news first broke of Russia's full-scale invasion this past February, I was sitting in an airport departure lounge 800 miles away in Lithuania. Many in this Chamber have heard me speak many times about my mother, who arrived in the United States from Russian-occupied Lithuania when she was 2 years old in the year 1911. Life was bleak and oppressive for the Lithuanian people at that time. It was no wonder that my family tried to escape the Russian czar and his heavy hand. That was the case in Eastern Europe for many countries.

So it is no surprise that when the Soviet Union collapsed, many of these same nations reached out to join the community of democracies and stand with us behind the shield of NATO. We welcomed and supported Lithuania, the Baltic States, Poland, and so many other countries, as we welcome Ukraine's efforts now to stop this invasion.

Today, decades later, Lithuania is a thriving democracy and is among the many countries rallying to Ukraine's aid. I want to commend the people of Lithuania. So many times, this tiny little nation has spoken out in courageous ways to stand up for democracy and freedom. I am very proud of them and what they have done.

The free nations of the world understand Ukraine is on the frontlines in the battle for democracy over autocracy. It is a fundamental struggle between the rule of law and the rule of brute force. Now is not the time for the United States and the rest of the free world to in any way diminish their support for Ukraine. Like the Ukrainian people, we must show resolve, determination, and a commitment to fighting on and standing together in the defense of democracy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, tomorrow, Northrop Grumman and the U.S. Air Force will unveil the new B-21 bomber, a sixth-generation aircraft that will revolutionize the Air Force's long-range strike capabilities.

I had the special opportunity to see the first tails under development at Palmdale, and I am excited that this incredible feat of U.S. engineering will finally be unveiled to the American public and to our adversaries. It is an exciting day for the Air Force, and it is an especially exciting day for Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, which was chosen to be the first home—Main Operating Base 1—of the B-21 Raider.

We have come a long way at Ellsworth since I first came to the Senate. Shortly after I took office, Ellsworth was recommended for closure by the Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure Commission. So one of my first priorities as a U.S. Senator became getting Ellsworth taken off the closure list. Statistically speaking, our odds of pulling through were not high, but thanks to an all-hands effort by the congressional delegation and State and community leaders, we won the day, and we were removed from the BRAC list that August.

Then we got right to work on building up the base so we would never again find ourselves in the same position.

In 2007, the Air Force Financial Services Center opened at Ellsworth, and 2011 saw the arrival of the 89th Attack Squadron and its command and control stations for MQ-9 Reapers.

In 2015, a nearly decade-long effort paid off with the quadrupling of the