

efforts to close out the NDAA by trying to jam in unrelated items with no relationship whatsoever to defense. We are talking about a grab bag of miscellaneous pet priorities—like making our financial system more sympathetic to illegal drugs or the phony partisan-permitting reform in-name-only language that has already failed to pass the Senate earlier this year.

If Democrats wanted these controversial items so badly, they had 2 years to move them across the floor. Heck, they could have scheduled those matters for votes this week. But, no, we are doing more mid-level nominations while Democrats keep half-threatening to take our Armed Forces hostage over these extraneous matters.

So there is an old saying that goes “Poor planning on your part does not necessitate an emergency on the part of other people.” The Democrats’ failure to plan ahead for unrelated liberal pet priorities should not be creating uncertainty and confusion for the brave servicemembers who keep us safe.

My colleagues across the aisle need to cut their unrelated hostage-taking and put a bipartisan NDAA on the floor.

TRIBUTE TO ROY BLUNT

Mr. President, now, on another matter, my friend and our distinguished colleague ROY BLUNT is one of us whose political careers began at the most local level. As a 20-something-year-old county clerk, ROY’s career in government required real hands-on public service right from the beginning. Fortunately, hard work and rolled-up sleeves weren’t foreign concepts for ROY. After all, before our friend became the first in his family to finish college, he grew up on a dairy farm.

And for decades now, that doggedness and persistence have served ROY’s neighbors exceptionally well. Green County’s young clerk, a former high school history teacher, fell short in his first campaign for higher statewide office. But a few years later, he handily became the first Republican Secretary of State Missouri had seen in half a century. After 8 years there and then 4 as a university president, ROY was already a seasoned veteran, firing on all cylinders, when he arrives in the House of Representatives in 1997.

Little wonder that, after just three terms, ROY became the newest representative to be voted House majority whip in 80 years. So, clearly, ROY had a big-time reputation for getting things done before he moved across the rotunda here to the Senate. When he won his election in 2010, all his colleagues knew our team was getting an all-star.

And, sure enough, in 6 years from freshman status to House leadership, he set a modern land speed record on that side of the Capitol. Then over here, ROY broke the sound barrier. He joined our conference’s leadership team 1 year after he became a Senator.

The record of accomplishments ROY has racked up reflects the fusion of

focus, detail-mindedness, and a rare knack for broader strategy and management. Time after time, Senator BLUNT has thrown himself into the weeds of policy, achieved total fluency in the details, and then climbed back up to 30,000 feet to make a strategic decision that would actually move the ball down the field.

Case in point: I believe ROY is the only Rules Committee chair in history to have actually served as his State’s top elections official. He knows the ins and outs of voting issues as well as anyone. He knows that the Federal role in our elections is both important but also very limited. He understands the big picture, the fine details, and everything in between.

The leaders of Rules also have huge ceremonial duties as the Capitol organizes the Presidential Inauguration every 4 years.

I have it on good authority that in both 2017 and 2021, when ROY headed up the ceremonies, our resident history buff handwrote every word of his speeches himself, longhand—names, dates, historical references, quotations, all straight from his pen, and it all passed his team’s careful fact-checking without a drop of red ink.

Now, those ceremonial duties bear mentioning, in part because taking center stage is such a departure from the way ROY normally tackles his business. Working methodically and diligently, building consensus behind the scenes, Missouri’s senior Senator has steered hundreds of millions of dollars toward improving transportation infrastructure at the crossroads of the American heartland.

He has reached across the aisle repeatedly to improve workforce development for American veterans. He has worked tirelessly to protect the integrity of our election systems. And perhaps most important of all, ROY has had a direct, generational impact on the future of cutting-edge American medicine. He spent years—years—building the transformational new consensus that became the Excellence in Mental Health Act.

His work to equip researchers to tackle rare diseases helped pour the foundation for the 21st Century Cures Act. At the National Institutes of Health, ROY BLUNT’s name is literally on the door of the signature initiative he championed to help the millions of Americans affected by dementia.

Time and time again, our capable and trusted colleague has wound up in the middle of high-stakes, high-profile work; yet ROY remains the same humble and approachable Show-Me Stater who first got into this business to help his neighbors.

These are qualities ROY shares with fellow distinguished Missourians who preceded him. Ever the historian, our colleague has regaled guests with the history of his Senate office suite, which once belonged to Harry Truman both as a Senator and even including Truman’s brief spell as Vice President.

Apparently, Truman came back personally to collect his things and finish moving out after he had already become the Commander in Chief.

But history isn’t the only subject where this former teacher still administers pop quizzes. ROY’s staff tell fondly how their boss is liable to walk into their offices at any time and simply inquire: So, what do you know? That one signature query captures ROY so well: the high standards, the curiosity, the restless energy to find the next big project that will make a difference. These qualities have made ROY one of the best the Senate has ever had at sniffing out common ground and delivering outcomes.

But legislation isn’t the only area where our friend’s nose-to-the-grindstone spirit pays dividends. For example, I am not sure what ROY has planned for his next chapter, but given his penchant for spending Saturdays walking the aisles at Home Depot and knocking out home improvement projects, I give him about 2 weeks before there won’t be one leaky faucet or rusted hinge within a three-mile radius of ROY and Abby’s place.

We know our friend much too well to predict that he will follow 14 general election victories by kicking back and taking it easy.

But, I suspect, ROY sure won’t mind the extra time with Abby and seeing more of Matt, Amy, Andrew, Charlie, and his grandkids as well.

So on behalf of all his friends here in the Senate and on behalf of the country, I thank my friend, the senior Senator from Missouri, for his years of outstanding service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to thank my good friend Senator McCONNELL for his comments this morning, and I have reserved some time this afternoon for what would be my official farewell address in the Senate.

But as it relates to our leader, Mr. McCONNELL, he and I were whips—when I was a whip in the House, he was a whip in the Senate. We met every week. We have had a long and close relationship. I am grateful for his advice, his friendship, and his comments today. Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we will be losing several members to retirement at the end of this year, including my friend ROY BLUNT.

ROY and I have served together for the majority of my time in the Senate, and I also served with him for several years in the House of Representatives.

We started in the House at the same time, and we became friends right away. Our wives have become friends as well through the years, and it has been a joy over the years to host ROY and Abby in South Dakota, along with their son Charlie, and to visit them in Missouri. On a personal level, I am going to miss ROY a lot, and the Senate

as an institution is going to miss ROY as well.

ROY is someone who aspires to be involved in doing the hard things. And throughout his congressional career, he has put himself forward for positions where he can make a difference.

He became chief deputy whip just 2 years after becoming a member of the House, and he was elected majority whip just 4 years later, winning the position earlier in his career than any member in Congress in eight decades.

It has been a similar story in the Senate where ROY was elected vice chairman of the Republican Conference in his first year. In 2019, he became chairman of the Republican policy committee which plays an important role in providing members and staff with the resources they need on the issues. And he has done that while serving as the top Republican on the Senate Rules Committee.

ROY has always been committed to doing the big things, but he is also very solutions-oriented and very clear-eyed and practical about what is achievable in a place where it is hard to get things done.

He has a saying: Never announce publicly what you won't vote for. What he means by that is that you shouldn't back yourself into a position where you can't support a good compromise. While it is not always possible to get everything you want, you shouldn't let that stop you from doing as much good as you can.

ROY has done a lot of good during his time in Congress, and one of his lasting legacies will be the bipartisan achievements in the healthcare space, including his efforts to help create and expand the certified community behavioral health clinics program to improve access to mental health care and championing medical research. The facility housing the NIH's Center for Alzheimer's and Related Dementias is actually named after ROY in honor of his longtime work to support dementia research. And, of course, no mention of ROY's legacy would be complete without mentioning his stalwart advocacy for the people of Missouri.

I am going to miss ROY, and the Senate will miss ROY, but I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve together, and I am happy he will have more time to spend with Abby and his children and grandchildren.

ROY has made a lasting impact here in the Senate, and I look forward to seeing his next chapter.

TRIBUTE TO JAMES M. INHOFE

Mr. President, shortly before Thanksgiving, one of great icons of the Senate, Senator JIM INHOFE, gave his farewell speech, and I want to take the time today to honor his service.

As I said, JIM is one of the icons of the Senate, and it is difficult to imagine things here without him. Over his 28-year career, he has built an incredible legacy, particularly when it comes to building up our military and developing our relationships in Africa.

One of the first trips I took when I got to the Senate was a trip with JIM to Iraq and Germany to meet with some of our troops and to talk to our military leadership. I would like to think I am a pretty energetic guy, but I was left in awe by JIM INHOFE. He was like the Energizer Bunny. He left people half his age in the dust.

I don't know anybody who works harder than JIM. He leads by example, and his legislative achievements are a tribute to his tireless service.

Everyone knows that JIM INHOFE is an accomplished legislator, but not everybody knows that JIM is also an accomplished pilot. He has over 11,000 flight hours. I mentioned that he is like the Energizer Bunny, and he has flown an airplane around the world. I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to be his passenger once as we flew around Oklahoma, and it remains one of the best flights I have ever taken.

While I deeply admire JIM's work ethic and his legislative achievements and his piloting prowess, I might add, the thing I appreciate the most about JIM INHOFE is that he is a man of deep and profound faith. I have been blessed to gather with him and other Senators for Bible study for a number of years now, and I don't think he has ever missed a session.

When I think about JIM, I think about the verse in I Peter that says, "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you." JIM INHOFE is always ready to give that defense.

JIM isn't a man who pays lip service to his faith; he models it and he lives it. In word and deed, he is a great ambassador for his Savior, and I will miss his presence and his witness.

While I will miss JIM being in the Senate, I am glad he and his beloved wife Kay will now have more time to spend together with their children and their grandchildren, and I wish him the very best for retirement. He has more than earned some time off.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Before the Senator leaves, the Bible study that he has referenced is one that JIM and I and a handful of other Democrats and Republicans join in every Thursday when we are in session, with Barry Black, the Chaplain of the Senate, and it has been hosted literally in the hideaway of JIM INHOFE. So it is a home game for him, but it is a home game for Democrats and Republicans just to share some time together in prayer and faith and some of the challenges we face.

Some people across the country watch the news all the time—you would think we hate each other here and we never want to work together, never want to get anything done. Thanks in no small part to JIM INHOFE's hospitality and participation and example, that is not the case.

So I just want to add my comments as well.

He is the two-time chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee and a great partner with me in reducing emissions from buses and diesel engines and stuff like that. He is the lead Republican on the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act. So I just want to say there are some good environmentalists in Oklahoma, and on all the issues we have dealt with, JIM INHOFE has been one of those.

Mr. THUNE. Would the Senator from Delaware yield for just a minute?

Mr. CARPER. Sure.

Mr. THUNE. I just want to thank you for what you have said about Senator INHOFE and about our Bible study.

I would say to all of our colleagues that of all the time we spend here each and every week, that particular hour is arguably the most impactful, and I always encourage other of our colleagues to join us. We have been meeting, as Senator TOM CARPER mentioned, in Senator INHOFE's office now for many, many years and have been very blessed by his leadership not only here in the Senate but his witness with regard to his faith.

Mr. CARPER. People ask me: What do you like most about being in the Senate? What do you like most about public service? I like helping people. When they ask me more specifically what gives me joy in the Senate, it is that Thursday, it is that half an hour we spend together just about every Thursday. I am always pleased to be there with our colleagues—sometimes even work out in the gym together.

TRIBUTE TO JIM GARDNER

Mr. President, now to talk about another Jim—and I have been joined by CHRIS, CHRIS COONS, our Senator from the State of Delaware, and I am delighted to join Senator COONS and also our colleague in the House. We only have one congressional seat in the House, and it is filled by LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER. We are all going to be talking—not today here on the floor—Senator COONS and I will be, but LISA will be talking over in the House about Jim Gardner.

Who is Jim Gardner? He is an icon. That is a word you hear a whole lot, but he is truly an icon. He is signing off the air after 40 years of delivering the news for WPVI-6abc, which really is the dominant, if you will, television station in the whole Delaware Valley, including Delaware and southeastern Pennsylvania, parts of Maryland, and parts of New Jersey as well.

Jim has been delivering the news not just for that station, but he has been delivering the news for all of us, and one of the reasons why that station has enjoyed incredible ratings is in no small part because of his presence at the station. He has been a steady voice for viewers in the region, anchoring the 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. newscasts for as long as I can remember. Throughout that time, he earned the respect and he earned the trust of millions of viewers