

Meanwhile, across the city, the other half of the SHELBY partnership was developing a reputation for visionary leadership here in Congress. Where RICHARD is concerned, the word “visionary” is neither throwaway praise nor exaggeration. It is simply accurate. People around the Senate like to say that RICHARD SHELBY doesn’t just see down the road; he sees down the road and also around the corner.

Our colleague has not just known how to fight for Alabama and the individual issues and debates that each day has brought. He has also invented creative, new, forward-looking visions and missions that nobody else had dreamed of and then, methodically, set about turning them into reality.

RICHARD has trained his efforts on a small number of core priorities at one time, the places he is most convinced he can make an outsized difference. And once one of those big priorities is identified, he has been like a dog after a bone.

Take the city of Huntsville. As the story goes, a few decades ago it was a sleepy town by the Tennessee border. Today, it is a booming technological hub for cutting-edge industries like space exploration and missile defense.

Or take the Port of Mobile. The way I understand it, the spark was an overseas trip where RICHARD saw firsthand the latest international shipping infrastructure that was rapidly taking shape out in Asia. I think the sentiment was more or less this: If Singapore can do this, why not Mobile?

So today, what used to be a small inlet on the gulf coast is now a booming hub for shipping, a transformation that is sending ripples of prosperity across the entire region.

But even our visionary colleague’s prolific foresight occasionally hit its limits. RICHARD’s good friend, our former colleague Phil Gramm, had the good judgment to switch to the Republican Party way back in 1983. He immediately started working on his good buddy to follow suit. But even after a charm offensive that I am told involved multiple White House lunches with President Reagan, even after Robert Byrd had skeptically accused Senator SHELBY of harboring “definite Republican tendencies,” it still took our friend until after the Republicans’ landslide victories in 1994 to finally cross the threshold and join our team. Well, the rest is history.

The iconic phrase “Chairman SHELBY” could refer to our colleague’s time steering sensitive oversight at the helm of the Intelligence Committee, or his mastery of the most complex matters as head of the Banking Committee, or his time lending a steady hand to institutional priorities as Rules Committee chair, or, more recently, the years our colleague has spent in the No. 1 or No. 2 slots on top of the Appropriations Committee, directing the American people’s money into key national priorities, most especially our constitutional duty to provide for the common defense.

But RICHARD’s Washington expertise never came at the expense of his home-State roots—just the opposite. The national renown that RICHARD SHELBY accrued was just a pathway by which his beloved Alabama came to punch more and more above its weight.

A long line of SHELBY staffers have learned that there is no need for a road map or a GPS when they have got the Senator himself in the car. Our friend knows every single backroad and highway exit. He knows every good “meat and three.” And if there is ever time to stop in for lunch or coffee, just pick a spot, and RICHARD will know a handful of the folks inside.

How exactly has our colleague sustained this level of sharpness and influence over such a historic career?

Well, for one thing, I understand the seasoned chairman is a frequent visitor to the “Health Committee.” That is his moniker for the Senate gym.

Likewise, I have it on good authority that, at one point, our friend held the distinction of having more books checked out in his name from the Library of Congress than any other Member in either Chamber.

Occasionally, having such a voracious reader for a colleague can lead to trouble. Years ago, shortly after the passing of President Reagan, I was wrapping up a meeting with my Banking Committee colleague when I half-wondered whether we could find a way to honor the Gipper with a place on our currency. With no particular malice toward Alexander Hamilton in mind, I loosely suggested: What about, perhaps, the \$10 bill?

But, alas, little did I know that I was sitting across from the most recent person in America to finish Ron Chernow’s gigantic, newly released biography of Hamilton. This was the book that would go on to inspire the hit musical and spark a big revival of interest in Hamilton. RICHARD SHELBY had spent weeks eating up every single page, admiring Hamilton’s genius more and more with every chapter.

So let’s just say, a few minutes later I was back at the drawing board.

It is difficult to imagine the Senate without RICHARD SHELBY, but I am not too concerned that the opposite will hold true. As much as RICHARD has loved this institution and excelled in it, we know our colleague can imagine life beyond the Senate just fine. There will be even more time to stay a student of history, even more time for duck hunting with good friends. The visionary brainstorming for Alabama and our Nation won’t stop—oh, no. But our friend will get to balance it out with a whole lot more time with his beloved Annette, their two sons, and their grandkids—more time to enjoy the home State that has been literally transformed by RICHARD’s passion and vision.

RICHARD, thank you very much for an outstanding career.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I came to the floor to speak on another topic, but I want to join in the comments of the Republican leader about RICHARD SHELBY of Alabama.

We became friends under different political circumstances when he served in the House of Representatives. It has been my honor to count him as a friend and to have the occasion to travel with him and Annette, his wife, in the past. I am going to miss my friend.

I wish you well, and I am sure you have got some football to watch in Alabama when you get home.

FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Madam President, in this Congress, the Democrats have shown up for everyday Americans. We passed historic legislation to build infrastructure. We became a global leader in chip manufacturing. We improved gun safety. We protected our climate. These are wins for Americans, and they make headline news.

Today, I want to talk about an issue that may not get the headlines, but it is just as important to fixing our broken student loan system and ensuring that Americans can go to school and participate fully in our economy and maintain our Nation’s competitive edge. I am talking about holding for-profit colleges accountable. I have been coming to the floor for almost 10 years on this topic. I believe, in my heart of hearts, that what is going on here is unfair to students, their families, and taxpayers.

Why is it essential to bring this issue up frequently? Two numbers, and these two will be on the final. So pay close attention. The numbers are 8 and 30. For-profit colleges enroll only 8 percent of America’s college students—8 percent—but they account for 30 percent of Federal student loan defaults.

How can that be—8 percent of the students and 30 percent of the student loan defaults? The answer is obvious. The schools charge too much. They offer too little. Those who don’t drop out end up with worthless diplomas. In a sentence, that is the problem. It is built on a business model, this for-profit college business. It is not built on an educational model.

First, for-profit colleges deliberately lure in first-generation and low-income students with slick marketing that the community colleges can’t even match.

Second, they pressure students to take on as much debt as possible to pay for the courses, and they charge a lot more than community colleges in offering good, quality educational courses.

Third, once the students are enrolled and are on the hook for huge amounts of debt, these for-profit colleges provide low-quality education and very little support. If a student graduates from a for-profit college and ends up with a degree that is practically worthless, finding a working job that will pay them any kind of money to pay back the loan is next to impossible.

They can barely cover basic living expenses, much less pay back their student debt.

I have been calling for greater scrutiny and accountability of the for-profit college industry for years. Despite the well-documented misconduct and fraud of this nefarious industry, the Department of Education continues to provide billions in Federal funds to them each year.

Under the Trump administration's former Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos, for-profit colleges had just an absolute holiday. We witnessed crucial protections like the gainful employment rule, which put sanctions on the worst performing schools, being rescinded. Early on, Secretary DeVos said she was going to prioritize individual students. Instead, by removing these safeguards and this accountability, she left them even more vulnerable to the unscrupulous for-profit colleges. The DeVos Education Department even refused to provide defrauded borrowers with the loan discharges they deserved under borrower defense.

After Secretary DeVos's indefensible borrower defense policies were struck down in Federal court, she continued to refuse to act even after the court ruled against her, allowing a backlog to build up of—listen to this—230,000 student borrowers who languished under mountains of debt that Secretary DeVos would not relieve them of in any way. The Trump-DeVos Education Department left borrowers hopeless and buried in debt while the taxpayers footed the bills.

As I said, I have called for more accountability over the for-profit college industry for a long time. Luckily, the Biden administration is listening and is reversing the course taken under the Trump administration. I hope it continues to be the case.

Unlike the Trump-DeVos Department of Education, President Biden's Department has processed borrower defense claims as the law requires. This has canceled the student loan debt of nearly 1.1 million borrowers who were defrauded and swindled by predatory for-profit colleges. Legendary names like Corinthian Colleges, ITT Tech, and Westwood turned out to be the worst excuses for higher education in America's history. This has enabled these students to get a chance to start again, to make up for time lost and have a better experience with a for-profit school.

The Biden administration has also issued sweeping student debt relief, which disproportionately helps lower income students, which is the way it should be. Borrowers who attend for-profit colleges borrow an average of \$40,700—that is the average for each student—and 71 percent do not graduate on time or at all. That is 71 percent of for-profit school students. For those who do graduate, they often have degrees that are worthless and jobs that are worthless as well.

If the Supreme Court approves President Biden's student loan relief plan, it

will help millions of borrowers climb out from a mountain of debt, pay their bills, and even return to a higher education experience that is worthwhile.

To curb future wrongdoings, the Biden administration has also terminated the Federal recognition of a sketchy accrediting agency that long ago failed to meet the mark which, long ago, kept these for-profit schools in business when it shouldn't have.

It has taken the steps, too, to close the infamous 90/10 loophole. That is a loophole that basically says: For-profit colleges do not count GI bill and servicemember benefits as part of their revenues from the Federal Government, resulting in some schools generating more than 90 percent of their revenues from Federal tax dollars.

Listen to what these schools do. They lure kids into the for-profit college experience. They promise them the Sun, the Moon, and the stars. Many of them are of the first generation of their families to ever get near a college. Their parents can't give them much advice because they don't have any lasting experiences to draw from. The students are told: Add up your debt, and don't worry about it. You will pay it all back with the wonderful job that awaits you in your future.

It turns out to be a fraud on them, their families, and the public, and the taxpayers end up holding the bag. This for-profit industry is taking advantage of veterans, too. The GI bill of rights was not designed to be wasted on for-profit schools.

In looking ahead, we need to take steps to ensure that students are protected and that there is real supervision and reform. That is why I recently introduced the Proprietary Education Interagency Oversight Coordination Improvement Act, which has got to be the longest title of any bill I have ever introduced. It creates an interagency task force with the Departments of Education, Justice, Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Defense to improve coordination in dealing with the for-profit college industry.

This is a serious problem. When I think of the thousands of young people I am aware of who have been defrauded by these for-profit schools, I say shame on us and shame on the Department of Education. Let's do right by these young people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The junior Senator from Alaska.

TAIWAN

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I rise to talk about a very important and, I believe, very bipartisan issue. It is the need for us in the Senate and the entire U.S. Government to focus on the intensifying Chinese Communist Party threat and the People's Liberation Army threat to Taiwan and why it matters.

My remarks will be focusing primarily on the Chinese Communist Party and the leader of that party, Xi

Jinping, not on the Chinese people, who have a proud history, heritage, culture of thousands of years, and, as we have seen over the last several weeks, they are very brave people who simply want more freedom.

In March of 2021, in a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, I asked the then-INDOPACOM Commander, Admiral Davidson, when he thought there would be an invasion of Taiwan by the PLA and the Chinese Communist Party.

He responded to my question by saying this:

Senator, I think the threat of an invasion of Taiwan is manifest during this decade—in fact, within the next 6 years.

Now, that was 2 years ago almost. His successor, ADM John Aquilino, has confirmed this timeline. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Director of National Intelligence, the CNO of the Navy, and even the Secretary of State have recently been ringing alarm bells on this timeline as well.

On the heels of the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Xi Jinping has emerged as the ultimate supreme leader, surprising the assessment of even the most seasoned China hands with his audacity. He has packed the Politburo Standing Committee with loyalists, promoted party stalwarts with military intelligence and technology backgrounds, and positioned the Central Military Commission to preside over the conquest of Taiwan.

Take a look at this poster. Those are Chairman Xi and a bunch of his comrades I just talked about. Let's face it. They might look ridiculous in military fatigues—I think they do—but the message of these kinds of propaganda photos is very, very clear, which was just recently sent out by the Chinese Communist Party. It is this: China is preparing for war.

Americans and the rest of the world should take this threat very seriously. I know that our eyes are on Ukraine, which is something we should stay focused on, as defeating authoritarian aggression in Europe is essential to deterring it in Asia, but we can't lose sight of the threat to Taiwan and of what is at stake.

So I want to lay out, today, what will be the consequences of a potential invasion of Taiwan and why I believe vital American interests—security and economic interests—are implicated by that and what we should do—all of us together—to work to deter it. But I would like to begin my remarks by focusing on a different era in a different region of the world.

In 1948, the Soviets cut West Berlin off from food and fuel, and the United States and our allies, led by our powerful military, responded with the Berlin Airlift. Many of you have seen this very famous photo taken during the Berlin Airlift. At the height of this airlift, allied supply flights were landing in West Berlin literally every minute. Think about that. We did that for a