

and hopefully having some nice dinners at his and Yvette's home on the Eastern Shore.

The work Terry began will certainly continue. The fights he advanced shall go on. And as we celebrate Terry's well-earned retirement, we wish him and his family the very, very best on their next adventure.

#### TRIBUTE TO BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Madam President, finally, on another retirement announced just this afternoon: Let me close by honoring another great friend—beloved, truly beloved Member of our Senate, our dear colleague BEN CARDIN of Maryland, who announced earlier today that he will retire at the end of this term. He is one of my dearest friends in the Senate and has been for a very long time and someone I have always admired for favoring substance over flash, for digging deeply into issues, and for his ability time and time again to persuade his colleagues of the justice of his causes, often working across the aisle to turn his ideas into successful legislation.

In Senator CARDIN, the people of Maryland have been gifted with the consummate public servant. "Consummate public servant," doesn't that describe BEN so well? Whether representing Marylanders in the State House of Delegates or in Congress or in the Senate, BEN's north star has never changed: It is the people he serves, the communities he knows well, and the country he so dearly loves.

And whether in foreign or domestic issues, he put the issues first, the politics second. And in doing so, won the respect of every corner of this Chamber.

As Chair of the Small Business Committee, he spent years fighting for Main Street and been a tireless advocate for job creators and entrepreneurs, especially those who don't always have a seat at the table.

And during COVID, Senator CARDIN's leadership and expertise were absolutely essential as we passed legislation to protect family restaurants, local shop owners, independent businesses. There are tens of thousands, probably hundreds of thousands, of small businesses that are in existence now that wouldn't have been had BEN not fought so hard for them.

So, in conclusion, I wish BEN and Myrna the very best on their road ahead. I have no doubt they will find new ways to serve the State of Maryland moving forward. And we will remain friends forever.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### REMEMBERING JANET GARDNER MULLINS GRISSOM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, over the weekend, our Nation lost an outstanding public servant, and I lost a dear friend of nearly 40 years.

Janet Gardner Mullins Grissom was a proud daughter of Louisville, a trail-blazing government leader, and my very first Chief of Staff here in the Senate. She passed away at the age of 73.

I believe Janet was a 29-year-old single mom when she and her young daughter Shannon arrived here in the Nation's Capital, determined to start a new chapter. To give you a sense of Janet's spirit, here is what she would later say about her first job interview:

I told them I could take dictation, which I couldn't, but I figured I could learn.

Janet had smarts. She had tenacity. And she had a communication style that one might delicately call direct. Our hometown newspaper would later report that she had "a salty tongue." Well, that was putting it mildly. She was a riot. She was a force of nature. And those qualities fueled a meteoric rise.

By the time I met Janet at some parent-teacher function at both of our daughters' school back in 1983, she had already ascended to the top rank of Senate staffers and actually left Washington to go back home to Louisville.

As you can imagine, I had to cajole Janet into heading up my long-shot first Senate campaign. I understand Shannon only permitted her mom to take the job and the potential return to Washington that winning might entail because Janet had assured her there was virtually no chance we would pull it off. Surprisingly, we did pull it off. We packed our boxes for Washington. I believe Shannon at least got a new puppy for a consolation prize.

Janet's veteran know-how helped me hit the ground running and make an impact from the start. She could ask for sensitive meetings, explain detailed policy issues, and curse a blue streak at some unruly reporter—and that she would all do before lunchtime. You couldn't imagine a better friend to have in your corner.

I believe she was the first woman to serve two different Senators as chief of staff. After my office, Janet's next stop was the political operation of then-Vice President Bush. That is where she met James A. Baker after he left President Reagan's Cabinet to oversee the Bush campaign in 1988. Apparently, while the other campaign staff greeted the famous newcomer with the awe and deference one might expect, Janet marched down the hallway barefoot and said: "Hey, Jim, nice to meet you." Everyone else recoiled, but Jim Baker laughed. When he became Bush 41's Secretary of State, Janet went with him and served as Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs. When Baker became White House Chief of Staff, Janet went with him and became an assistant to the President. And when Janet left government for the private sector, she kept on blazing trails. She spent a decade helping steer the Ford Motor Company as a senior officer.

So Janet Mullins Grissom built a prototypical Washington, DC, power-

house resume by being a thoroughly untypical Washington person. Brilliant and accomplished, yes, but tough as nails and a little rough around the edges in the best ways.

That same spine of steel helped Janet hold a serious illness at bay for a number of years. Up to just a few days ago, she was still in the fray, still tweeting up a storm on politics and media criticism, relishing the good fight right to the end.

Janet lived to see her most lasting legacy come full circle. Her older grandson, Harry, has a startup business. Her younger grandson, Sam, has gone into political communications himself. He even spent a couple of years in my office as an outstanding speechwriter and press aide. I know Janet was thrilled to see the boys thriving.

Elaine and I send our deepest condolences to Janet's husband Tom, her beloved daughter Shannon, and her grandchildren, Harry and Sam, and all the family members, friends, and colleagues mourning this tremendous loss.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. 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.

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I am here to discuss the Defense Department's financial audits—or, more accurately, the lack of credible audits. My colleagues know that I am as stubborn as a mule when it comes to my oversight work of the Pentagon's accounting system—or lack of system.

I wish I could stop sounding like a broken record when talking about the Pentagon's financial track record.

The fact is that the Pentagon is pig-headed when it comes to accounting for taxpayer dollars. It keeps pouring billions of dollars into an antiquated accounting system that doesn't work.

Late last year, I read an article that appeared in a national security blog. The blog is called War on the Rocks. This blog article is called "The Pentagon Can't Count: It's Time to Reinvent the Audit." It was written by Steve Blank, a business professor at Stanford University.

As a former member of the Defense Business Board, the professor calls for a whole new approach to defense auditing. The Pentagon is spending \$1 billion a year—and these are his quotes—"to get incrementally better" and still, according to him, clean opinions are nowhere in sight.

He raises a legitimate question: Why is the Pentagon spending so much money for so little results—meaning money on audits?

Thinking outside the box was not in the Defense Business Board's charter,

but Professor Blank allowed himself the luxury of thinking outside the box. He dreamed about doing the impossible, and he wrote this fairly long quote:

What if we could invent the future? It dawned on me.

Continuing to quote:

If we tried to look over the horizon, we would discover that the department could audit faster, cheaper, and more effectively by inventing future tools and techniques rather than repeating the past.

The professor envisioned a “5th generation of audit practices” to break the cycle of audit failures at the Department of Defense.

I give the professor very high grades for creativity and his search for new solutions but disagree with some of his thinking.

However, when it comes to pinpointing the root cause of unending audit failures, the professor hits the nail on the head.

So I quote from him:

[The] Department of Defense needs to lead the audit industry to create a 21st century integrated finance and accounting system, including a U.S. Standard General Ledger that provides reliable and complete data.

“Integrated systems” and “reliable data” are the magic words.

The experts, like the auditors, the financial managers, the inspector general, have known this truth for 30 years or more. They dutifully report it, wringing their hands in frustration, and then rinse and repeat the cycle from 1 year to the next year.

Now, see here. We have the mighty Pentagon that develops the most advanced weapons systems the world has ever known. Yet, when it comes to deploying basic technology like an accounting system, it is buffaloe—or is it? Maybe they want the system to work that way so nobody knows what is going on and how the money is spent.

After hundreds of billions have been poured into patching up old audit systems, the Department of Defense still can’t perform the most elementary accounting tasks in the book. They don’t capture transactions as they occur and post them to the correct accounts. So just go figure what is wrong.

Well, there once was a true sage assigned to an attic cubbyhole at the Pentagon who claimed to know the answer. That person was A. Ernest Fitzgerald. We called him Ernie. Ernie was the Management Systems Deputy of the Air Force in the Comptroller’s office. He blew the whistle on the C-5A cost overruns and, of course, got fired when President Nixon didn’t like what he testified to before the Congress of the United States.

Some years after being restored to his post—and he was restored only by court order—he was detailed to my staff for several years to lead a joint review of the internal controls over vendor payments. Ernie believed the Pentagon barons lorded over their financial fiefdoms for one reason and one

reason only: They did not want to see the status quo go away. It is pretty simple. Keeping the books in disarray gives the Department of Defense the so-called flexibility to hide overspending and other financial shenanigans.

Once upon a time, a promising fix lent credence to Ernie Fitzgerald’s theory. It was called the Defense Corporate Database/Warehouse System. It was at the threshold of success when it got torpedoed—and torpedoed by whom? By the bureaucrats in the Defense Department. That system could have been a building block for a modern accounting system that might have delivered a victory to the American taxpayer.

If the brass were truly committed to cleaning up the books, it would have happened long ago. The technology is there for the taking. To break out of the cycle of failures, we need to step back, hit the audit reset button, and chart a new course.

As a first step, Secretary of Defense Austin should hold the Chief Financial Officer accountable for failing to have an accounting system that meets statutory requirements. That is as simple as accounting 101 and accountability 101 in my book. If Secretary Austin holds the CFO’s feet to the fire, just maybe we will finally see a course correction.

As a lifelong family farmer, I can tell you that hope springs eternal at the start of every planting season. After four decades of working to weed out the fiscal mess at the Pentagon, it is a tall order to be optimistic. I am not going to give up. I am not going to give up this fight. With the help of a team of auditors under the leadership of the Government Accountability Office’s general counsel, Emmanuelli Perez, and support from our allies, maybe together we can nudge the Department in a new direction. Otherwise, expect more of the same—a colossal waste on failed audits.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. 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.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, over the weekend, the small town of Cleveland, TX—more or less in East Texas; east at least of Conroe and the Houston area—they experienced a shocking crime. We are still learning more details about the perpetrator and exactly what happened that led to such horrific bloodshed, but here is what we know right now.

Late on Friday night, 38-year-old Francisco Oropesa was firing his gun in his front yard in this rural part of the

State. His neighbor came over and asked him to stop, respectfully, because it was just about midnight and the neighbor explained he had an infant at home who was trying to get some sleep. He asked that Oropesa shoot farther away from the home, hoping to minimize the disturbance to his 1-month-old son. Oropesa refused. He said he could do anything he wanted on his property and continued shooting.

The neighbors did what anyone else would do under the circumstances: They called law enforcement. They called the police. The gunshots continued, so the neighbors called the police again, eventually calling five times.

Before police could arrive, Oropesa stormed his neighbor’s home with a gun and began firing, and he killed five people before fleeing. He remains at large. All of the victims found inside the home were killed in what law enforcement has described as execution-style shooting.

The first victim was 25-year-old Sonia Argentina Guzman, a mother of three. Sonia’s husband Wilson had been the one to go to the door and ask that the shooting stop so their 1-month-old son could get some sleep. While Sonia’s husband, infant son, and 2-year-old daughter survived the shooting, her eldest son did not. At just 9 years old, her son, Daniel Enrique Lazo Guzman, was also murdered by Oropesa. The other victims were family friends who had been at their home that evening. This includes 21-year-old Diana Velasquez Alvarado, 31-year-old Julisa Molina Rivera, and 18-year-old Jose Jonathan Casarez.

I can’t imagine the shock and grief these families are experiencing today. What they thought was just a normal Friday night surrounded by family and friends turned into a life-shattering day because of the actions of this criminal. My prayers are with these families as they search for peace, healing, and justice.

In the wake of this tragedy, Governor Abbott’s office announced that the suspect had been in the United States illegally and had been previously deported four times. He never should have been in the United States in the first place.

As devastating and unimaginable as this story is, it is not entirely unique. I remember the murder of Kate Steinle in 2015. She and her father were walking alongside a pier in San Francisco when she was shot and killed. The man who killed her was an illegal immigrant who had been deported not once, not twice, but five times. He had seven felony convictions.

I want to be abundantly clear about one point: The actions of these criminals do not and should not reflect on the tens of millions of law-abiding immigrants in this country. Any attempt to frame immigrants in general as a threat to our country is completely devoid of facts and detached from reality.

But my point in sharing these stories is to prove that there are devastating