

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

TRIBUTE TO BEN SASSE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as we all heard, in just a few days, our colleague and my neighbor from Nebraska, Senator BEN SASSE, is retiring from Congress to become president of the University of Florida. I have to say that his leaving is a loss for the Senate, not least because the average educational attainment here will drop precipitously when he leaves. Ben has four—four—graduate degrees, three master's degrees, and a doctorate.

I have to say thank you to all of his many staff, who are represented both here and in the Galleries, and to his family—to Melissa and Corrie and Alex and Breck—for the sacrifices that you all have made so that he could serve here and be such an inspiration, I think, to so many of us who have had the opportunity to serve with him and to see not only his great intellect but his passion and his ability to get things done for the people of Nebraska and for the people of our country.

I will say that, when I hire people, I typically hire people on my staff—or at least I try to—who are smarter than I am. In my case, that is not hard. In his case, that is probably a little more challenging.

So your staff has got to be the Mensa caucus around here.

It is no surprise that he became the college president of Midland University at age 37, making him one of the youngest college presidents in the Nation.

But, seriously, the Senate will be a poorer place without BEN SASSE. He is incredibly smart, as I said. He combines that with being incredibly principled. He lives by his principles. He is always willing to do the hard things—the right things—even when they aren't popular.

During his time in the Senate, he has been notable for speaking out against oppressive authoritarian regimes; for standing up for the right to life of the most vulnerable and innocent Americans—unborn babies; for his interest in the future of work; for his commitment to building up our American community; and so much more. He is a big-picture thinker who oftentimes gets up at the early hours of the morning—at 4:30 in the morning—and just starts brainstorming on a big piece of paper. It is a quality that will serve him well as a university president, and I can think of few individuals more suited to leading a university.

Florida is lucky to have him, and I know how deeply committed he will be to the university, although I have to warn them that if the Cornhuskers ever approach BEN about the position of offensive coordinator, he may be out of there quickly—but, no, I don't think that will happen.

It has been a pleasure to serve with Senator SASSE. In addition to being a

tremendously smart and thoughtful guy, he is a very witty guy who always makes me laugh and, I think, many of his colleagues here laugh as well. He and I have a lot in common, being from neighboring States. I am going to miss him as a neighbor, as a leader, as a colleague, and as a friend. There is a lot to admire about BEN SASSE; but, ultimately, what I respect the most is that he is a man of strong faith. I know that wherever life takes him, his faith will continue to be his rock.

BEN, congratulations on your appointment at the University of Florida, and I look forward to seeing all that your vision will accomplish at the university. I pray that God will richly bless you and Melissa and Corrie and Alex and Breck in the years ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

TRIBUTE TO BEN SASSE

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I wish that every American could have heard the speech that was just delivered by our friend and colleague from Nebraska, Senator BEN SASSE. It reflects his intellect, his intelligence, his integrity, his imagination. It demonstrates that he is both a historian and a visionary. It paints a portrait of where we need to do work in America, but it also holds out the promise of making our great country even better.

In his speech and in a recent op-ed in the Wall Street Journal, Senator SASSE said:

This country belongs to the optimists, the innovators and the builders.

Those words by BEN SASSE perfectly describe the qualities that he has brought to this Chamber and that he will bring to his new leadership position at the University of Florida.

As he leaves us to assume the presidency of the University of Florida, I want to thank my friend from Nebraska for his service and congratulate him on this exciting, new opportunity to make a positive difference once again.

BEN came to the Senate in 2015 with a remarkable record of accomplishment as an educator, as a consultant to businesses and nonprofit organizations, and as the president of a university. His work for the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and Health and Human Services prepared him well for the issues he addressed here. Consistently, BEN took a thoughtful approach that was defined by his commitment to the facts, by his genuine desire to understand opposing points of view and find common ground, and, most of all, by his integrity.

He is the author of two best-selling books that reveal much about his character. In one, he offers advice on how we can strengthen our children's self-reliance, work ethic, and civic responsibility. In the other, he provides remedies for the societal alienation that drives us apart—and of which he spoke

today—that infects everything from our local communities to national politics. In confronting these challenges, BEN does not scold his readers. Instead, he puts forth thoughtful, practical, inspiring solutions.

I was pleased to hear BEN mention today his work on the Intelligence Committee, and I have thought the same thing that he said today so many times. If the American public could see what goes on behind closed doors, I think it would restore their faith in this institution because there are no cameras; no one is performing; everyone is asking serious, thoughtful questions in trying to get to the answer—to the nub of a problem.

I have really enjoyed working with BEN on that committee, and I have always looked forward to hearing his very thoughtful, probing questions. He has been a leading advocate for improving cyber security to better protect government, businesses, and critical infrastructure from hostile actors. He has worked to remove unnecessary roadblocks and supply actionable intelligence to Ukraine to aid in its defense against the barbaric invasion by the Russians.

Here at home, BEN has stood firm against efforts to repeal the filibuster—eloquently arguing that it would destroy the spirit of consensus building and compromise that is the very heart of the Senate.

He was a strong ally in our bipartisan work to reform and modernize the archaic Electoral Count Act of 1887 to prevent the flaws of this outdated law from undermining future Presidential elections. In fact, I well remember the night before we were to introduce the bill. There were 15 of us, including, obviously, BEN, who had worked so hard to craft this legislation, including Senator Portman, who is standing right next to Senator SASSE on the floor. BEN, in being the thorough, careful Senator he is, had some deep, insightful questions, and I think I spent half the night answering them as we texted and called back and forth—he wanting to make sure that we were not infringing on the legitimate role of State governments or State courts as we attempted to strike exactly the right balance. And at 4:30 in the morning—which is when Senator SASSE gets up, but it is not when I am usually awake—a text that I welcomed very much came across my phone saying that he would cosponsor the bill. And I knew then that we had truly gotten it right, because he is so thorough in his approach, and I knew that he had read every single word.

As Senator SASSE departs us, it is my hope that the words that he spoke, the advice that he gave us today, will fill the hearts and minds of all who have the privilege to serve here. As he said, "now, perhaps more than ever, it is our job to stop giving ear to political arsonists who would burn down our institutions and intensify our divisions.

Now is the time for us to think together over the long term how we renew those institutions.”

Like BEN SASSE, I am optimistic that we can do just that.

It has been such an honor to serve with Senator SASSE. I am grateful for his efforts to strengthen our institutions, elevate our national discourse, and bring people together while recognizing that we are always going to have vigorous debates on the proper path forward for our Nation.

I have learned so much from him.

In a recent column, BEN wrote that “America was the best home freedom has ever had, and it still is. Let’s build together anew.”

I know that BEN SASSE will continue to build toward this bright future when he leaves the Senate. I wish him, Melissa, and their family all the best in this next chapter of their lives.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Alaska.

118TH CONGRESS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, for many of us, this day has been special. It has been a day to welcome new Members. For some like myself who have been around for a few years, it was good to commence yet another term of service to our States and to our country and the people we serve. So it is good to be back doing the work of the people.

I just wanted to take a small moment. I have taken some family and some friends around the Capitol on a little bit of a historical tour today, and it reminds me of the extraordinary opportunity that we have to serve and how often we take for granted the surroundings that we work in and the people we work with, those who support us.

I would like to give special thanks and appreciation to the staff who keep this Capitol moving and going, whether they are those who are taking the log, the pages who serve us, the Parliamentarians, the staffs on both sides, the janitors, the cloakroom people—all those who make our day-to-day operations just a little bit better.

As we commence a new year and a new term and the 118th Congress, know that we all extend our thanks and our gratitude.

We all serve in different ways and different capacities, and taking just a moment to show appreciation for that is something that is important.

I am extraordinarily honored to be here on a good day hopefully for the Senate and for the country.

I yield the floor, and I thank you all for your service. Happy New Year.

TRIBUTE TO MARCY KAPTUR

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, on the first day of the Senate, the Presiding Officer and I had the honor today of escorting the—I guess we call him a second-term Senator now from Georgia, Senator WARNOCK. He was elected once to a 2-year term, now to a 6-year term, and he chose Senator KAINE and me to walk him down the aisle, which is an honor that I consider a great honor. I think my friend from Virginia does too. And I know he can’t respond sitting in the Presiding Officer’s chair, so a nod would be good enough. Thank you.

I rise today to recognize and honor my long, longtime friend, fellow Ohioan colleague, Representative MARCY KAPTUR from Toledo.

For 30 years, I have had the privilege of working alongside MARCY when I was a Member of the House and now representing Ohio as the senior Senator from the State. And for 40 years, MARCY has dedicated her life to serving the people of Toledo and Northwest Ohio. And, actually, her district—when one particularly egregious map of redistricting sent her all the way to Cleveland, she represented all along Lake Erie there and did it so well.

She is a passionate, principled advocate for the Ohioans whom she serves.

Today—today, starting with whatever bedlam is happening straight down the hall in the House of Representatives, today MARCY KAPTUR is beginning the first day of her 41st year in the Congress.

No woman in the history of this country has served in the House or the Senate or the House and Senate combined more than 40 years. I believe Barbara Mikulski, who we saw earlier today, House Member for years—House Member, I believe, 10 years; Senator for 30 years—she escorted Senator VAN HOLLEN down the aisle today, along with Senator CARDIN. She—MARCY—broke the record of those 40 years that Senator Mikulski served.

Marcy is the granddaughter of Polish immigrants. She comes from a working-class, Catholic family. Her father was a trucker and an autoworker, small businessman. Her mother worked at the Champion spark plug factory, which—of course she did—she helped organize workers to form a union.

MARCY’s story echoes that of so many of her generation. Her parents worked hard and, with the help of that union card, earned their way to a better life for their children.

MARCY was the first in her family to graduate from high school, then the first in her family to graduate from college. MARCY KAPTUR never forgot those roots, from her work for Ohio’s Polish and Ukrainian communities to her championing of all Ohio workers—blue-collar, white-collar, African-American, Latino, Asian—workers, regardless whether they punched a clock or swiped a badge or worked for tips.

Unemployment reached almost 20 percent in Toledo in the early eighties

when she first ran for office. She said this:

[It was] the condition of working people that drove me to change my life and run for office.

She has lived up to that ideal, fighting for working families in Ohio. Every day she has served in Congress, she stood up for Americans. She stood up to corporate interests over and over through her whole career.

MARCY and I worked together—my first year in the House; her, I believe, 11th year in the House—fighting against the North American Free Trade Agreement because we knew it would cause job loss across Ohio and around this country. Unfortunately, time has proved that right. And since then, as MARCY and I have fought trade deal after bad trade deal after bad trade deal, she has been an ally, a leader in that fight for a trade policy that puts workers first—not corporate interests, not stock portfolios, not rich people first—put workers and small businesses first.

That fight has paid off. This year, with a new President and a new Senate; we passed the CHIPS Act; we passed the Inflation Reduction Act; we passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. We passed the strongest buy-America language ever in Federal legislation, bringing supply chains home, creating an economy that puts American workers, American jobs, American production first. It is Intel in Columbus; it is First Solar in Wood County, up MARCY’s way.

We worked together to protect Ohio’s greatest natural resource, Lake Erie. Our economy couldn’t function without it.

My favorite piece of trivia about Lake Erie—five Great Lakes, Lake Erie is the smallest, the shallowest. The shallowest is 30 feet in the western basin. Of all the Great Lakes, Lake Erie has 2 percent of the water but 50 percent of the fish. Lake Superior has 50 percent of the water and 2 percent of the fish. That is why keeping Lake Erie is so important to my State, so important to the environment, so important to marine life and all that suggests.

MARCY has been a leader in veterans’ issues too. She wrote and introduced the legislation designating the World War II Memorial, and I am grateful for all she has done for veterans. She has been a real role model for a lot of us.

Over the summer, we passed the PACT Act to ensure that veterans exposed to toxic substances, those football field-sized burn pits—especially in Iraq and Afghanistan—that so many soldiers, so many of our service men and women were exposed to—we passed the PACT Act so they will get the kind of coverage they need. MARCY KAPTUR was there for that.

A few weeks ago, we announced the restoration of the pensions of hundreds of Toledo union roofers made possible by our Butch Lewis Act. It took years of fighting; we got it done. Now hundreds of thousands—literally a million