

REMEMBERING DIANNE FEINSTEIN

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise with great sadness today to honor my friend and our colleague Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN. She was a pioneer and a strong and dignified leader.

DIANNE, who was the longest serving woman in Senate history, had a career marked by many firsts: the first woman to serve as mayor of San Francisco, the first woman Senator to represent California, the first woman to serve as the chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and the first woman to serve on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

DIANNE was such a strong presence in the Senate. She was a determined and tenacious advocate. Many of us worked closely with her on the Intelligence Committee, where she was such an excellent chairman. She was always fair, respectful, informed, and strong. We worked together on the Appropriations Committee as well, where she chaired the Energy and Water Subcommittee. Many of us were her allies on the Violence Against Women Act and the Respect for Marriage Act.

The Senate and the country have lost a model Senator—elegant, graceful, kind, compassionate, strong, informed, intelligent.

I have also lost a dear friend. I put up this watercolor painting that DIANNE did and gave me so many years ago. It has hung in my office ever since, and it will have a place of honor there always. Every time I would pass by, I would look at it and think about how talented DIANNE was in so many different areas. I treasure this painting.

When I became engaged 11 years ago, it was DIANNE who sponsored a reception for me and my now-husband Tom Daffron in her home in Washington. My story is very similar to that of the Republican leader.

I was also reminded when I heard Senator MURRAY talk about DIANNE's generosity. At one point one year, she bought seersucker suits for every woman who was serving in the Senate so that we could all participate in Seersucker Thursday. That was DIANNE. She paid attention to the smallest details and to the largest issues that affected not only our country but the world.

Most of all, DIANNE was such a role model for girls and women. She was a role model for us who came to the Senate, after she began her storied tenure here. I will miss DIANNE terribly. My heart goes out to her family, and may she rest in peace.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

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Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, we mourn the death of a trailblazer, my colleague and friend Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN.

I have been privileged to have known DIANNE throughout her entire career in

this Chamber and my entire time as well. She was my friend and seatmate on the Senate Judiciary Committee for over 20 years. When you are that close to someone politically—day in, day out, week in, week out—you pick up on the things that mean the most to her. Certainly, her family was the highest priority to her, over all things, but her life experience created what we know as the legacy of DIANNE. How many times she told the story of serving on the pardon and parole board for the State of California—the cases that she remembered in detail that had occurred decades ago stuck with her and inspired her when it came to her service on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

I think that situation also inspired her when it came to legislation, where she was looking for fairness. We certainly all know her efforts in dealing with the Violence Against Women Act. That was an extraordinary effort by her, on a bipartisan basis with Senator MURKOWSKI, Senator COLLINS, Senator ERNST, Senator PATTY MURRAY, and so many others.

In addition to that, she recounted many, many times that terrible, unimaginable tragedy when the mayor of San Francisco was killed along with Harvey Milk, a commissioner. She was there at the bloody scene afterward. She recounted that so many times in the midst of her debates over an assault weapons ban.

Think about that assault weapons ban. It was almost the holy grail in politics. So many people said that is the one thing we absolutely have to do; it has to be done. She did it. She, along with Senator SCHUMER, who was then a House Member, put together the bill that established an assault weapons ban and reduced the number of deaths in America by gunfire. They did it, and she was the leader, inspired by that terrible tragedy with Mayor Moscone.

I can also remember, there was a time, years ago, when we engaged in debate in this Chamber on stem cell science and biology. It was a complicated debate. Many of us liberal arts lawyers were lost as they went into the detail. DIANNE not only led that debate; she had mastered the subject. And time and again in the caucus, when we would discuss it, she would be the one to stand up and straighten everyone out on the basics. She was a gifted person in that regard.

But I do want to say that there is one thing that Senator COLLINS noted that I noted many times. Members of the Senate, in the committee hearings, were given a notepad in front of them—the Senate Judiciary Committee was no exception—and a pencil nearby to make notes in the course of our business. Sitting next to DIANNE all those years, I can't tell you how many flowers I saw her draw on those notepads. I asked her for one, one time. She signed it, and I have kept it. But it is an indication of the sweetness and the elegance in her life; that, on the one hand,

she could be arguing the most serious life-and-death issues in the committee but, on the other hand, show that kind of dignity and determination to bring the human side to the debate.

She was one of the best, and I was honored to call her a friend.

There were many times that she made the rollcall in the Senate Judiciary Committee, the last year or 2, when I know it was an extraordinary sacrifice. She was going to show up because that was her responsibility. I respected her so much for that. And the committee divided 11 to 10, I needed her. She knew it, and she was there. She answered the call.

She served California with such distinction. She often talked about her beloved Golden State, but we all know that she was also a treasure to the Nation.

DIANNE FEINSTEIN inspired many, particularly many women, to public service. She served California well, and she served our Nation, and it was my honor to serve with her.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Alaska.

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Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, there will be many opportunities in the next few days and in the weeks following to reflect on the life and the contributions of Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN and, as has been noted, the significant legislation that she advanced over three decades here, what that meant to her State, to her constituents, really, to her country, but also to us.

And as I think about the work that we all take on here, we know that we are capable of much, but we are made even more capable by extraordinary staff. And one of the things that I have noted over the years is the extremely loyal staff that Senator FEINSTEIN had built around her. I know that they are grieving today, as is DIANNE's family and so many friends. But I think we acknowledge them at the same time of this very significant loss of not only a colleague but of a friend.

And I think it is important that people understand that, here in the U.S. Senate, a place that can be so divisive at times, true friendships actually exist. And whether it is the Republican leader and his wife over the years dining together or, as Senator COLLINS has stated, just the very generous nature of Senator FEINSTEIN sharing—sharing her works, sharing her art, sharing a purse—I still have that seersucker suit.

I still have that seersucker suit. When we all engage in the annual ritual of donning the seersucker suit—mine is now 20 years old; I think yours is, too—our reality is, it is a direct reminder of the spontaneous generosity of a woman.

DIANNE FEINSTEIN was generous. She was gracious. She was thoughtful. She was kind. There were many times when

we were looking into a weekend when we were going to be here, and she, being from California, and I, being from Alaska—recognizing that probably neither one of us was going to be making it to that other coast, she would say: “LISA, let’s go to dinner.” Sometimes, we would just spontaneously make that happen, and other times, we would just make the plans. But that was that outreach to do so.

What she did as one of the female leaders in our women Senators group was she made sure that the dinners we have engaged in over the years, that those continued. She would come and say, “Isn’t it about time we have another dinner?” And she would be right, and we would organize it. It was, again, a reminder of what it means to come together as colleagues, yes, but really the more that we can do to build those relationships that make a hard job just a little bit easier. DIANNE was able to focus on that in a giving and, again, a very generous—generous—way.

I think it pained us all—it certainly pained me—in just these past months to see what I believed to be grossly unfair attacks on a woman who was in failing health. And I think for some who would focus on that, they would fail to appreciate what this extraordinary woman, what this extraordinary leader had contributed not only to the Senate but, again, to her State and to her country.

So as we speak of the beauty of DIANNE FEINSTEIN and all that she gave to this country, I hope we reflect on the words that Senator MURRAY shared with us—that her commitment to this job, her commitment to the people was so much that she would put her physical health, how she was feeling—some days, we just don’t feel like coming in, you know? Senator FEINSTEIN was here. Senator FEINSTEIN was with an institution that she cared about. She cared deeply about it. She wanted to make sure that we were the best of the best and we reflected that.

I think she would actually be really pleased with the resolution about dress. I don’t need to go into that on the floor. But Senator FEINSTEIN was a woman who was put together—put together in her presence and in her bearing. I think she wanted to see the Senate in a dignified and a respectful manner at all times.

As I walked in this morning, I thought she probably wouldn’t approve of my shoes, and I am sorry, DIANNE. But I share this because I think it demonstrates again where the commitment of this woman was. It was to the people she served, but it was also to an institution that she loved and she dignified with everything she did right until the end.

We have lost an extraordinary woman, and we have lost a friend. But they never leave. They will always be with us, as will DIANNE.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

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Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, before I begin, I also want to acknowledge others who are here in the Chamber to be part of this tribute, part of this moment—the first of many over the coming days and weeks, no doubt.

Senator SCHUMER acknowledged Speaker PELOSI, Speaker Emerita PELOSI, and Katherine in the Gallery here. We do have a good amount of the California congressional delegation here as well paying their respects—the dean, Representative LOFGREN, and so many friends from the north to the south to the east and the west of the Golden State. Up in the Gallery also is Team Feinstein, so many of the staff members who make sure the office is always performing at peak capacity, just the way DIANNE insisted. I know that personally, and I will tell you why in a minute.

But I think I speak on behalf of all of us when I say that it is with profound sadness that we bid farewell to my dear friend, colleague, and outright champion for the State of California, Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN.

As we have been hearing today, she was a towering figure. Let me be clear. She was a towering figure not just in modern California history but in the history of our State and our Nation. Yes, she broke barriers throughout her career. You heard about that from Leader SCHUMER, how many firsts. Her leadership, though, as the city of San Francisco’s first female mayor in the aftermath of the tragic assassination of Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk showcases her unique ability to lead with grace and strength in the face of adversity. And it wouldn’t be her last time.

Following her election to the Senate more than three decades ago, DIANNE’s commitment to bipartisan collaboration made her a deeply respected figure on both sides of the aisle. So my heart is full to hear the words of Senator COLLINS and Senator MURKOWSKI and others.

She understood the importance of working together to find common ground and to get things done for California, for the country, and most importantly, for the American people. Her ability to bridge divides and find that consensus, especially on the thorniest of issues, was a testament to her dedication to the principles of our democracy and the many attributes you are hearing about her today. That is the one I have admired most and have worked my damndest to try to emulate throughout my career and especially here in the Senate.

Now, long before being able to serve together here in the Senate, DIANNE gave me one of my first jobs in politics in her Los Angeles office at a time early in my career when I was looking to make a difference for my community and for our State. It is in part thanks to her groundbreaking career that a Latino son of immigrants could one day not just work for her but work

alongside her to keep up the fight for the American dream.

As we mourn Senator FEINSTEIN’s passing, we must also celebrate her incredible legacy, her contributions to our Nation—from gun safety and environmental conservation to national security and healthcare reform and so much more—just as a reminder not just of the power of her example but the power of public service.

For Californians, so much of our public lands have been preserved thanks to her singular drive and leadership—from the redwoods of the Headwaters and the San Francisco Bay to Lake Tahoe, to the Southern California desert.

We can go on and on, but it is clearly—clearly—a tremendous impact she has had. She leaves behind a legacy of service, of leadership, and a deep love of our country and our democratic ideals. Senators have mentioned her grace, how she worked, how she carried herself—an example for us to follow.

I would be remiss if I didn’t say there was an exception to that, and that is if you were one of her staff members who came into a meeting with her unprepared. You did not want to not have the answer to her question.

She was classy, absolutely. We won’t get into the debate about the dress code. As Senator MURRAY said, she was absolutely generous. Now, I did not receive a seersucker suit. I was not here at the time. But for the decades of the relationship that we had, every time I came to Washington, I made it a point to reach out—at a minimum, a call; a lot of times, a quick meeting in her office—and I always came away with something. More often than not, it was a book. She has quite a library, her collection. Once upon a time, it was a Senate tie. There was always something.

I, too, Senator COLLINS, have a watercolor. It is hanging at home in Los Angeles—my wife’s favorite—so I don’t have it here to display. What I do have, though, is a photo, as she said, from “back in the day” that she sent me just a year ago—periodically going through her files, her archives—a picture from the San Francisco AIDS walk in 1987 but personalized—no autopen here; a personal note from Senator FEINSTEIN.

The last story I will share, which I do think is unique. Another example of her generosity is the day I was sworn in to the Senate in 2021 under the most trying of circumstances: COVID prevaccine; 2 weeks after January 6; 40,000 National Guard women and men on the perimeter of a fenced-off Capitol Complex. She honored me by escorting me down the center aisle to the rostrum and stood behind me as I was sworn in. Big day for me. Tough day not having Angela and my boys by my side.

As soon as the votes were over, the session was over, she grabbed me by the hand and said: Come with me. I am not sorry to say I had interviews lined up. We marched right past reporters to her hideaway.