

Phil attended Sacred Heart Academy and graduated in 1950. Afterward, he attended Kansas State University and completed a degree in business administration. Phil was also an active member of Beta Theta Pi Fraternity.

After graduating from Kansas State University, Phil married his wife, Margaret, and they were married for 57 years, until Margaret's passing 10 years ago.

Phil's career started at the Union National Bank, where he worked as a consumer loan officer. With years of banking experience, Phil decided to charter his own bank, to go out on his own, and, in 1969, the Kansas State Bank was opened. It was chartered and opened in a trailer home and now has grown to a nearly \$1 billion enterprise.

His interests in business did not stop with banking. Phil was elected to serve as president of the Griffith Oil Company and founded both Master Medical Company and Baystone Financial Group.

Years later, Phil served on the board of St. Mary's Hospital. He was an active member of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce and sat on the dean's business advisory council for Kansas State University.

Phil established foundations to help people across the Manhattan community and across our State of Kansas. Through the Greater Manhattan Community Foundation and the foundation's Youth Empowerment for Success Fund, he helped impact many, many lives, especially young people.

I would see Phil at Manhattan Rotary Club meetings. And I know I speak for many when I say Phil will be greatly and sadly missed.

Robba and I are praying for his family, his friends, and loved ones during this time. Robba attended the services this morning at Seven Dolors Catholic Church in Manhattan.

Mr. Howe was a respected businessman and community leader, the kind of person every community in Kansas wishes there were just more like him. More importantly, Phil was a kind and caring man of character and of faith—just what our State, our Nation, and world so desperately need today.

I offer these remarks with the greatest amount of respect and gratitude for a life well lived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

PUBLIC DEFENDER FUNDING

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, our judicial system is vital, and every player has an important role—from the judge to the prosecutor, to the public defender, to the bailiffs, to the jurors. Cuts to our Federal public defender program have caused real difficulties in meeting the constitutional obligation of the role that public defenders play in our justice system.

Every day, across the country, public defenders work to ensure that the Constitution is applied fairly and evenly to all, regardless of whether you are the richest or the poorest person in the

courtroom. By doing so, public defenders safeguard our democratic values, providing a necessary check and balance in our judicial system.

As the Senate's only former public defender, this is very personal to me, but it really is vital to all of us. I spent some of my first years after law school serving as a public defender in White River Junction, VT, and I saw firsthand how many people who find themselves in our criminal justice system are struggling with substance abuse or misuse, mental health challenges, and oftentimes both. And I saw how absolutely important it is that every person who comes into the courtroom gets as good a lawyer as those who walk in with a high-priced attorney.

The principles that public defenders represent are vital to what we believe in our Constitution: fidelity to due process and fidelity to equal treatment under the law. Those have been engrained in our country since its founding.

Mr. President, as I think you well know, John Adams—hardly a supporter of England—chose to represent British troops after the Boston Massacre. Why? Because he believed in the right to counsel, and he believed in the presumption of innocence, and that they were indispensable to our democracy. He had so much confidence in acting on those principles that it showed the confidence he had in the future of our country.

Public defenders are the direct descendants of those founding principles that underpin the rule of law so vital to our well-being.

As the Supreme Court recognized in 1938, when it required appointed counsel for Federal defendants, access to a competent lawyer is an "essential barrier against the arbitrary or unjust deprivation of human rights." That led the Court to realize, 25 years later, in the case of *Gideon v. Wainwright*, that the right to counsel is one of the fundamental rights for all of us who live in the United States. The Court's words then are as true today as they were before:

The right of one charged with crime to counsel may not be deemed fundamental and essential to fair trials in some countries, but it is in ours.

That is a confident country. It can live with the rule of law, and the rule of law requires representation. We will provide it, and we will make ourselves stronger for it.

For months, I have been talking to many of my colleagues, highlighting that there was a funding shortfall facing Federal public defenders. Six months ago, it looked like Federal defender offices across the country were going to have 10 percent personnel cuts. Those are very painful cuts, and really it was going to affect the quality of representation.

Instead, Congress acted, and Congress has basically corrected the shortfall in the final appropriations package released today. I understand that these

Federal funding levels will allow the Federal defenders to avoid layoffs this year and end what had been a proposed and very harsh hiring freeze.

I am so grateful. I am so grateful to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: Chair PATTY MURRAY, Vice Chair SUSAN COLLINS, Chair CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, Ranking Member BILL HAGERTY, along with the chair of our Judiciary Committee, DICK DURBIN. All have worked diligently on this issue.

And I really want to thank the hard-working Appropriations staff for supporting the important role public defenders play in protecting our Constitution and our democracy and working as staff members to get the job done, with the leadership of their Senate leaders.

I ask that this budget cycle be a reminder and a lesson that we don't repeat this next year. The Constitution guarantees indigent criminal defendants the right to counsel, and it is our obligation to make certain that they are there, just as we pay for the salaries of prosecutors. The Administrative Office of the Courts has already submitted a budget request for next year that would allow us to honor this obligation.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to support public defenders throughout the next budget cycle.

This decision by this Congress in this budget to uphold and strengthen all of the people who play such a vital role in our justice system is an act of commitment and renewal to our constitutional principles, and it is an act of confidence in the future of our democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO MARY JANE COBB

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate Mary Jane Cobb for her career as executive director of the Iowa State Education Association. She began her distinguished career in education in 1994. After serving in a number of positions working with students across the country, Mary Jane came to Iowa in 2008. In her role with ISEA, she has worked with teachers and schools around the State on many issues affecting our students. Mary Jane had an impact on the education of hundreds of thousands of our students in Iowa. I congratulate her on her career and wish her a happy retirement.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF
CHARLESTON, ARKANSAS

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the 150th anniversary of Charleston, AR.

This city in western Arkansas, incorporated in 1874, has a rich history as an education, business, and government hub.

Located within the former territorial area acquired by the United States in the Louisiana Purchase, the community was eventually named for one of its first settlers, Charles R. Kellum, who moved to Arkansas from Massachusetts. He operated a general store, organized a Baptist church, and was appointed as Charleston's first postmaster.

In the decades that followed, Charleston became a stop along the Butterfield Overland Mail Company route and served as a home to many businesses. Its first school was established in 1855 and soon had more than 100 students.

During the Civil War, skirmishes between Union and Confederate soldiers resulted in a tragic consequence when most of the city's buildings and homes were burned. This didn't stop the resolve of Charleston residents. When the war ended, citizens returned to rebuild and laid out a new community.

Because Franklin County was divided in half by the Arkansas River, the State legislature created a second county seat in Charleston to serve the southern portion of the county in 1885. The community was an important stop for the railroad and flourished with cotton, coal, and eventually natural gas.

World War II brought new opportunities to Charleston with the creation of Camp Chaffee less than a mile from the city limits. The new Army fort brought jobs and helped develop a strong economic and cultural bond between the city and military members.

Charleston is also noted as the first school district in Arkansas to desegregate after the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Just days after the ruling, the schoolboard voted to enroll 11 Black students in the Charleston School System.

The community is proud of its native son, Dale Bumpers, who was the 38th Governor of Arkansas before being elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served for 24 years. Bumpers was a soldier and a statesman who was born and raised in Charleston. He was known as the Senate's best orator. In his decades of service, one role he held was the chairman of the Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee, which led him to promote agriculture in Arkansas tirelessly. The results of his advocacy continue to impact farming and rural support programs in the State today.

His story is just one of many that help define the city's growth and progress over more than a century.

Congratulations to the entire community on this 150th anniversary. Charleston continues to be a place people are proud to call home. I am excited to recognize this milestone and look forward to continuing to work with area leaders to support this great Arkansas city and its bright future.●

RECOGNIZING IDAHO'S
COMMUNITY COLLEGES

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, along with my colleagues Senator JIM RISCH, Representative MIKE SIMPSON and Representative RUSS FULCHER, we once again honor Idaho's community colleges in recognition of April as Community College Month. We thank them for their important work to equip Idahoans for success.

Community colleges across the Gem State are incubators for ideas and catalysts to Idahoans achieving their goals. These academic institutions provide vital hands-on training and high-quality education best suited to support Idaho's workforce, small businesses, and economy. These community hubs are preparing Idahoans for a successful future, whether that be advancing their education or entering the workforce.

With more than 26,000 students enrolled in Idaho community colleges in the fall of 2023, these educational institutions offer significant opportunity for students of all ages and walks of life.

This year's theme for Community College Month is "Cultivating Skills for the Future." Idaho's community colleges truly embody this theme in their efforts to cultivate important on-the-job skills and developing our communities next leaders.

Thank you to Idaho's community colleges for your dedication to continued education. We are blessed to have you in our communities backing Idaho innovation with skills, knowledge, and experience.●

TRIBUTE TO CARL CHALFANT

• Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, today, I want to recognize a lifelong Kansan who dedicated nearly 40 years of his life to volunteering in his community. Carl Chalfant has led, served, and provided for his community and family as a dad, grandfather, first responder, and city administrator. Carl was born on a dairy farm near Lancaster and attended Cloud County Community College where he met his wife of 48 years, Vickie. Together, they have two daughters and five grandchildren.

Lots of boys and young men dream of having the heroic job of a police officer, firefighter, or paramedic when they grow up. Carl didn't just settle for one of those jobs; he did all three. It is important to note that in rural states like Kansas, many communities don't have the resources to staff and maintain full-time first responders. Instead, most rural communities will purchase

equipment, like a fire truck or ambulance, and members of the community will volunteer to be trained as first responders and serve as an on-call, volunteer EMT or firefighter. This is how neighbors look out for each in rural communities and how Carl came to be a hero for many of his neighbors and friends.

I want to share a brief history of Carl's service as a first responder, mostly in volunteer capacities.

EMT—starting in 1986, Carl served as an EMT in Marshall County, Jefferson County, and recently retired from being an EMT in Washington County.

Firefighter—Carl started volunteering for the local fire department in 1976. He served as the assistant chief in Marshall County until 1990, at which time he moved and served as the volunteer fire chief in McLouth. He retired from firefighting in 2013.

Police—Carl worked as part-time police officer for Marshall and Jefferson Counties for a little more than 10 years.

His daughter recalls how his many volunteer activities earned him the title of a "weekend warrior." And these were just Carl's volunteer or part-time jobs. Carl has worked in a number of positions for communities across Kansas and is currently the city administrator for Washington, KS.

For many folks across Kansas, Carl has been the one to shop when things were scary or dangerous. He has saved countless lives through his service to the community. Serving others is a way of life for Carl and a character trait he has passed on to his two daughters and five grandchildren. Whether helping students at 4H events, girl scouts, or the local theatre, you can often find Carl and his whole family pitching in to help out.

After decades of service, Carl has retired from being an EMT, but nevertheless is still an active member of the community. He sits on the Kansas Rural Water Association as a board member and is an active member of the Masons. Carl's decades of service, commitment, and leadership have impacted hundreds of lives. He is an inspiration to others, a hero to his family, and brings a smile out of everyone he meets.

Thank you, Carl, for your contributions to your community and the State of Kansas. I hope you enjoy retirement and spending more time with your loved ones.●

REMEMBERING DONALD OVERTON
NEAGLE

• Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I rise to honor the passing of a great Kentuckian, Donald Overton Neagle. He passed away on February 20, 2024, at the age of 86.

Don was born on November 3, 1937, in Green County, KY. While Don accomplished many things in his life, it was his 65-year career in radio that made him a well-known name across South