

TRIBUTE TO KAILY GRABEMANN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now, Ryan is not the only one with the tough job of making me look good. That task also rests in the capable hands of my broadcast media adviser, Kaily Grabemann.

Kaily is simply the best in the business at what she does. Whether it is a quick radio call-in from the road or a big prime-time interview in the studio, Kaily makes sure I am armed and ready, including the occasional visual touch-ups she likes to refer to as “glam.”

As our colleagues know, I am not always a frequent flyer on the cable news networks. But with Kaily's help, I keep a close eye on who is. And in that regard, I am hardly the only beneficiary of her media savvy. For years now, colleagues across the Republican conference have come to rely on Kaily as a clearinghouse for media advisability, helping Senators get on the air with important messages and helping producers get the Senators they are looking for.

For the sake of their sanity, most folks in this town try to avoid spending too much time glued to the news. To my good fortune, Kaily doesn't have that luxury. There are a number of things I am sure Kaily would rather do with her evenings or Sunday mornings—like, perhaps, train for the next marathon—but I am grateful she has been so willing to keep a watchful eye out instead.

Kaily, thank you so much.

TRIBUTE TO SCOTT SLOOFMAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now, this entire operation I have just described is rowing in the same direction thanks to the staff director of the Senate Republican communications center, Scott Sloofman.

Scott is actually a two-timer on my staff. The first time around, he hitched a ride back to Washington after steering my campaign's research operation through a vigorous reelection fight in 2014. It was clear from the beginning that he had a knack for politics like few people I have ever met.

As it turns out, “Sloof” felt so at home in the trenches of campaign life that we had to let him go out and win a few other races before he was ready to settle into life here in the Senate. When he came back, we wanted to make him feel at home so we lined up a couple of high-stakes Supreme Court confirmation battles and budget reconciliation fights.

Through it all, Sloof has displayed unflappable political instincts. And as the coordinator of a multipronged communications team, he has never been afraid to bet big on the right message. Time and again, his willingness to question assumptions, challenge conventional wisdom, and play devil's advocate have made his colleagues and me sharper and better prepared to take on tough challenges.

So, Sloof, I am glad to have you in my corner. Thank you so much.

TRIBUTE TO CATHERINE FRANCOIS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now, the fine work of the communications center only makes it here to the floor because we have talented wordsmiths like my deputy speech writer, Catherine Francois, on the job. From her seat in the same noisy bullpen where the rest of the team wrestles with the news cycle, Catherine is engaged in a relentless process of air traffic control: digesting the latest news and research, helping me organize my thoughts on a given topic, running interference with fact checks and formatting, and getting the best possible draft on paper by the time the Senate opens every day, before doing it all over again the next day. It is a workflow that could make anyone's head spin, but Catherine's grace amid the chaos is all the more impressive when you consider that my team managed to poach her from the comparatively steady, contemplative world of policy analysis and think tanks.

So the comms center may have been quite a culture shock, but the habits of a true policy wonk die hard. Catherine has lent us an invaluable knack for hunting down fresh sources, interesting data, and underdiscussed angles on the issues of the day and then helping me package them in a compelling way for delivery from this podium. And I am so grateful for her contributions.

Catherine, thank you very much.

TRIBUTE TO DYLAN VORBACH

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on my chief speech writer, Dylan Vorbach. I admit that when Dylan's long-time predecessor, Andy Quinn, told me he was leaving, I worried what I would do without him. After all, the rapport you build with a speech writer is built on a lot of trust.

I shouldn't have worried. Dylan stepped right into the senior role and quickly became an invaluable partner in my preparations for all sorts of speaking engagements, especially on the topic of American leadership, which is what I have focused on so heavily.

Dylan is a consummate professional: loyal, reliable, and steady. He is a high-capacity, low-drama individual—an ideal combination for a job where everything can change on you in an instant.

When we engage in daily partisan warfare, Dylan's pen is as sharp as they come. But Dylan carries a unique piece of his own portfolio as well.

This institution is special, and the Senate leaders have a responsibility to the institution on certain occasions to speak not only for ourselves but also for our colleagues: a funeral for a beloved colleague, a tribute to a retiring doorkeeper, a heroic Congressional

Gold Medal recipient, or the Senate spouses who really keep all of us grounded. In each and every moment, Dylan strikes the perfect grace note. He makes us look better than we are, and that serves us all very, very well.

I am not quite sure how a young man raised in New England has managed to become an honorary son of the South, but ever since Dylan came to us from our former colleague Luther Strange, he has hung onto an extra talent for channeling the best parts of our country.

But Dylan's talents extend far beyond putting words on a page. Somehow, his idea of unwinding on the weekend is a multiday baking project or an off-road bike race. I am just grateful he hasn't broken any of his typing fingers.

So, Dylan, thank you so much.

TRIBUTE TO JERRY CALENGOR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now, some of my staff can do their work from the relative peace and quiet of the office, but the last two folks I would like to thank today are dug in on the frontlines.

First, my deputy press secretary, Jerry Calengor. As some of our colleagues may recall, I have had good luck in the past hiring sharp communicators from the State of Minnesota. It must be something in one of those lakes.

Serious pride in his roots, along with a wicked sense of humor, helped him hit the ground running in the busy bullpen where much of this team spends their days. He wasted no time becoming an essential member of the research team, particularly when it came to carefully vetting nominations.

But it didn't take long to recognize Jerry's aptitude for dealing with the press more directly, and I am proud of the way Jerry has grown as a trusted adviser I turn to as I prepare for interviews, including our weekly stakeout. Appropriately, he still keeps an old hockey helmet at his desk for days when the incoming barrage from the press corps is especially thick.

Jerry is fortunate that his wife Grace tolerates this rough-and-tumble day job. As I didn't understand it, she was willing to road-trip back from their wedding so he could be in the office for a busy Monday.

On top of it all, Jerry is responsible for taking a last careful look at just about every public statement and press release I make, and then making sure people actually see them. I am grateful to have his good judgment and eagle eye double-check our work.

So, Jerry, thank you.

TRIBUTE TO DOUG ANDRES

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, finally, to folks around the Senate—or Twitter, as I understand—this last one needs no introduction: my trusted press secretary, Doug Andres. Doug is,

without a doubt, the most skilled navigator of the Capitol Hill press corps a Senator could hope for.

I hired him specifically for his reputation as an unmatched flack. Over his years in the Speaker's office, he had already tilted successfully with the House and executive branch press corps, and I had a feeling he would do the same here in the Senate. Boy, was I right. It may have something to do with his disarming, deadpan wit. It certainly helps that Doug is the kind of guy everyone wants to be friends with outside of work.

Whatever the reason, Doug has got an uncanny nose for news. He is consistently able to predict stories that are still miles off and around the bend. Frankly, I shudder to think how many headaches he could create for the rest of us if he wanted to switch sides.

For now, there is only one thing I ever worry could distract Doug from his duties as my early warning system with the press, and that is his growing role as ringleader of a group of prominent figures who actually share his name. We had a Doug running for President earlier this year, and another one is the Second Gentleman. But there is no doubt that the heart and soul of the "Doug Caucus" is right here in the Senate, and I know my entire team sleeps safer with Doug on the job.

So, Doug, thank you for everything.

Mr. President, I will need another few speeches to adequately thank the whole team around me in the leader's office for all of their outstanding work—work that is not nearly finished. It is a great problem to have, and I will have much more to say soon.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY,
SEPTEMBER 16, 2024, AT 3 P.M.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 3 p.m., Monday, September 16, 2024, and does so as a further mark of respect to the late Steven D. Symms, former Senator from Idaho.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 3:30 p.m., adjourned until Monday, September 16, 2024, at 3 p.m.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by
the Senate September 12, 2024:

THE JUDICIARY

LAURA MARGARETE PROVINZINO, OF MINNESOTA, TO
BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT
OF MINNESOTA.