

Hoeven	Moran	Schmitt
Hyde-Smith	Mullin	Scott (FL)
Johnson	Murkowski	Scott (SC)
Kennedy	Paul	Sullivan
Lankford	Ricketts	Thune
Lee	Risch	Tillis
Lummis	Romney	Tuberville
Marshall	Rounds	Wicker
McConnell	Rubio	Young

NOT VOTING—2

Sinema Vance

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Texas.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, last week, I spoke about a few of President Trump's excellent choices to lead his foreign policy agenda. Today, I would like to highlight a few of the impressive individuals he has tapped to lead his agenda for American energy abundance at the Energy Department, the EPA, and Interior.

It is no secret that Texas is an energy-producing State. The 30 million people I represent have been suffering from high gas prices, along with inflation and higher utility bills, under President Biden these last 4 years. From day one of his Presidency, President Biden made clear that he was taking his cues not from people like my constituents, who had to pay these higher prices, but from radical activists looking to further their leftwing climate agenda. He started by canceling the Keystone XL Pipeline, which would have created jobs and helped keep gas prices affordable.

While Texans, along with other Americans, were suffering from historically high inflation, President Biden responded to their pleas by signing into law a so-called Inflation Reduction Act, which I like to point out did nothing to reduce inflation. Well, the Inflation Reduction Act, in fact, added more burdensome regulations and wasteful spending, while President Biden himself admitted that the law has "less to do with inflation."

Adding insult to injury, the EPA put into place a tailpipe rule that creates emissions standards so stringent they practically force consumers to choose an electric vehicle rather than a gas-powered car. Of course, that was part of the goal. No one I know of wants to be told by the government what kind of car they have to buy, but consider, as well, that Texans are already having trouble keeping up with their bills due to high inflation. Does President Biden really think forcing them to buy an expensive electric vehicle or forcing hard-working people who can't afford an electric vehicle, even with the subsidy, to subsidize wealthier Americans so that they could do so is helpful? It makes no sense whatsoever.

Finally, by significantly limiting America's LNG exports, liquefied natural gas, many of which leave the

country and travel to our allies by way of Texas ports, President Biden gave a gift to Vladimir Putin and forced our European allies to rely more heavily on Russia and Saudi Arabia for their energy needs.

It should be no surprise to the Biden administration that Texans voted against a President who prioritized keeping radical climate activists happy at the expense of average Americans.

But with President Trump at the helm, I have no doubt that Texans will be able to breathe a sigh of relief when it comes to their energy needs. Chris Wright, whom the President has tapped to lead his Department of Energy, will bring a wealth of experience in the oil and gas sector, and he has been an outspoken advocate for economic growth and American entrepreneurship.

I also look forward to working with former Congressman Lee Zeldin, whom the President has chosen to be the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

And then there is the former Governor of North Dakota, Doug Burgum, an outstanding choice to lead the Department of the Interior. He will bring a fresh perspective to Washington from his excellent track record as Governor.

I look forward to working with each of these Cabinet nominees, and I hope they will embrace the all-of-the-above energy strategy that includes all forms of energy, something that Texas has always championed.

Texas-based companies are making serious strides in energy innovation. Every day, they are finding new ways to make our most prevalent and affordable energy sources cleaner. But, to that end, there is a lot of work that needs to be done to reverse the damage caused by the current administration.

First off, the President's pause on LNG exports must be lifted. As many Texans know, LNG is one of the cleanest sources of energy on the planet. If activists are serious about working in good faith to lower CO₂ emissions, they should be pushing for more—not less—LNG that, produced here in the United States, could be provided to our friends and allies around the world.

When our European allies and others can't access American LNG, they have to turn elsewhere to ensure that they can keep the lights on. Alternative countries like Russia and Saudi Arabia don't have nearly the same environmental standards as we have here. The last thing the United States should do is to cause our allies to rely more on Vladimir Putin and Russia for their energy needs, but that is the consequence of President Biden's policies.

I spoke yesterday on how China, Iran, Russia, and North Korea are working in concert to undermine American interests around the world in a very dangerous situation. It is not an overstatement to say that President Biden's ban on LNG exports directly advances the interests of this axis of authoritarians. That is dangerous.

It is clear that we need to be producing more domestic energy of all

kinds to support not only our domestic needs but our friends and allies around the world, and President Trump has made a great choice to help advance that effort.

Over at the Department of the Interior, I hope that Governor Burgum will get to work quickly to reform and streamline the permitting process for energy activities on Federal lands. This is one of the most serious self-inflicted wounds that the U.S. Government has inflicted on itself by restricting access to streamlining permitting.

Another pressing issue for the incoming administration is that NEPA is in desperate need of reform. These are the environmental review programs.

Under the Biden administration's unwieldy handling of this process, costs and timelines have been unpredictable, making it nearly impossible to tap the vast natural resources our Nation is so abundantly blessed with.

My Republican colleagues and I stand ready to work all of these nominees to reverse the harmful policies of the current administration, like the tailpipe rule, turbocharge America's energy sector, and pass commonsense permitting reform.

I look forward to working with President Trump's team, and I am confident that together we can put the full forces of the Texas energy sector back on display and once again unleash affordable, reliable, and secure energy right here in America.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, my friends and colleagues, today I rise with a full heart and an overwhelming sense of gratitude. It has been the honor of my life to represent my great State of West Virginia and this great country of ours.

Fourteen years ago, I walked in this building not knowing what to expect. I had just left the best public service job of my life as the Governor of my great State of West Virginia. Everything I knew about the Senate I had heard and learned from Robert C. Byrd. Though I was stepping into his seat, I knew I could never, ever fill his shoes. But I truly believed that I could continue to bring our commonsense West Virginia values to Washington and do even more for our great State and our country. I really believed that in my heart.

Throughout my life as a public servant, I had seen the power of good people coming together to solve tough problems. Sometimes we thought it was impossible, but we did it.

Now as my time here comes to an end, I want you to know my belief in the potential of this institution and each and every one of you that represent it remains as strong as ever. I have said this, I believe in you probably more than you believe in yourself at times.

You don't come into politics looking for fame or fortune—or at least you shouldn't. You come in because you believe you can make a difference in

helping your neighbor, your community, and the country that has given you so very much.

I was not elected to take a side. I was elected to represent all sides. The only side I ever truly believed in is the American side, which I believe we all belong to. And that is why I entered public service all those years ago. It was not a dream of mine to be a politician or be in public service. But I can say with a clear conscience that I have always tried to serve the people first, putting country before party, principle before politics.

Each and every one of us are products of our environment. We are who we are because of who raised us, where we were raised, and how we are were raised. It never should leave you. It never has.

I was raised in Farmington, just a small coal mining town in West Virginia, where we learned early on the best way to get ahead was roll up your sleeves and get to work. Pretty simple. My grandparents were born in Czechoslovakia on my mother's side and Italy on my father's side. They all came to the country in search of this American dream they heard about. They were thrown into survival mode early on. And they wanted a better life for themselves, but, most importantly, for the generations to follow.

They all taught me the value of a good education combined with hard work and the importance of helping others. Always be conscious of your surroundings and the people around you. From them I learned a core principle: You have a moral obligation to help those who can't help themselves. Very clear.

Able-bodied people who fall on hard times don't need a continuous handout. What they need is a hand up to get back in the fight of life. I believe the greatest gift you can give someone when they are struggling is a job. It is not just about earning a paycheck; it is about dignity and purpose and the hope that goes with it.

I have always believed that this was true for government too. Government is not designed to be your provider. It is designed to be your partner—and the best partner you ever had.

The most effective government programs are the ones that people get to work. They give them a sense of purpose and help them build a better future. During the Great Depression—and all of us who know our history—do you ever remember the Federal Government sending anybody a check? Not one time did we ever hear of FDR sending checks out. He sent hope and opportunity. And we rebuilt America. We did it. We put people back to work. That is really what it is all about. Government is there to help you during difficult times. There are Americans out there today—many, many Americans all over our great country—that need a second chance. They really do. And we should give it to them. That is our responsibility.

For example, in 1946, the Federal Government intervened to stop a nationwide coal strike because it was destroying our economy coming out of the north. Something had to be done. In exchange for returning to work, the United Mine Workers of America received a guarantee from the Federal Government that their pensions and their healthcare benefits that they had worked for and earned would be guaranteed for them for their life.

Over the next 60 years, Congress had to step up to make good on this promise as individual coal companies' bankruptcies threatened to take away all they earned—everything.

In 2019, after Murray Energy declared bankruptcy, the entire system was on the verge of collapse. And nearly 100,000 coal miners—not just from my State but all over the country—and their families were about to lose everything, nothing to look forward to. Every one of us stepped up. Democrats, Republicans worked together to make sure we fulfilled the promise that the government made 60 years ago.

But somewhere along the way, government stopped being a partner and started being a provider. It is not good for people who end up trapped in a system of dependency and poverty, which we all have some in our States—some have it way more than others. It is time to put the relationship between government and the people back in its proper place.

When I started in the West Virginia State House of Delegates, I was 1 of 100—1 of 100. I went to the State senate and became 1 of 34. Then I became secretary of state. Then I became Governor of the State of West Virginia. At every step, I asked myself one simple question: How can I be in a position to help more people in my State—1 of 100 and 1 of 34 and 1 of 1?

Then I had the opportunity to go to the Senate to really do something extraordinary for the whole country, helping millions of people. That question has been my compass that eventually led me here to the U.S. Senate. And that is exactly why we are all sitting here, I believe. And when asked what my politics is, I never have hesitated to tell you, I am fiscally responsible and socially compassionate. It is the way I was raised. Again, you go back to your childhood—where you were raised, how you were raised, and who raised you. That was it. Take care of yourself and help others when you can.

As secretary of state, I launched a program called SHARES, Saving History and Reaching Every Student. No one had heard anything about this. We had to do something because our voter turnout was low, and I was secretary of state. I had to get an insurgence there. So we came up with this program.

First, we went into the schools because they weren't teaching it. Democracy and education, everything that is needed to be done in the schools wasn't being done. What we had done then, we

would go in there and we taught every high school—every person in West Virginia who was 17 years of age who would turn 18 on or before the general election could vote in the primary at 17 years of age.

Then we had a contest. Jennings Randolph was the father of this contest. We put his name on it. What we did then is we gave out certificates and schools of excellence if they got everyone—100-percent—registered.

Let me tell you what happened there. Once we got all the kids involved and got them wanting to go vote—now that they knew they could at 17 years of age and they were going to be 18 before or those who had already turned 18—they started taking their parents back, their grandparents back, their aunts and uncles. Our voting percentages went up tremendously just to get them enthused. I said: We can't get the old dogs back in the barn—in the house, but we can teach those old dogs new tricks. It wasn't about who won or lost. We wanted them to register. We never told them how to register or what party to be in. I saw firsthand what we could accomplish.

So when I tell you it wasn't exactly my plan to join the Senate, when Senator Byrd passed away in 2010, I had to make one of the toughest political decisions in my life. But I saw an opportunity to serve more people and tackle bigger challenges. That weighed on me heavily. Our State was in good shape. We worked hard. I had been there 6 years as Governor. We worked together tremendously. I thought, man, we can really do something together. We will come here and work together.

I have to admit to you, it was a harder transition than I expected. Coming here to Washington was so humbling. It really was. I came in thinking, OK, here we go. We are going to work together, just like we did in West Virginia, to solve the Nation's problems now—not West Virginia problems, but the Nation's problems.

But it didn't take long for me to see that the divisions here went pretty deep. One of my first conversations with Harry Reid—Harry's conversations weren't very long, so it was short. He asked me to fundraise for Democratic candidates to run against sitting Republican Senators—which, I guess, both sides, that is just the way it is. I didn't know that.

Where I come from, they take you behind the barn, and we will have a little conversation.

I told him: Harry, I am not going to raise money to attack my friends and colleagues just because they have an R by their name. How do we expect to work together when I am working against them when they are in the cycle? I am not going to do that.

Of course, I didn't win a popularity contest with Harry either, but I sure felt like the right thing to do. Equally important, it felt necessary. If the Senate was going to work on behalf of the people, we needed to treat each other

with respect. I have tried to do that with everybody.

I don't look at anybody sitting here who I feel is not my friend. I feel very strongly about that. I signed an ethics pledge on this floor to never campaign against a sitting colleague. I have other colleagues sitting here who feel the same as I do. I am looking for more signatures. I want to keep working on that. I think it would be wonderful if we just controlled ourselves and wouldn't campaign against each other. I am a little bit persistent. I am going to give it everything I have for the next however many days I have, and I'll still be around even a little after that.

Despite all that, we achieved remarkable things the past 14 years. We set a new standard for Wild and Wonderful West Virginia. My colleague Senator CAPITO and I worked on so many things together. I appreciate her very much. The New River Gorge became a national park. We just agreed to acquire 2,700 acres of the Blackwater Canyon, which is the most beautiful venue. We have been trying 20 years to make this happen. It is finally coming to fruition.

The whole country can enjoy something. You can't believe how pretty it is. We are anxious to share West Virginia with everybody.

We maintained West Virginia's status as an energy powerhouse. The Mountain Valley Pipeline is flowing. Companies like Nucor, Berkshire Hathaway, and Form Energy have brought new facilities to West Virginia and thousands of new clean energy jobs.

Success in West Virginia is part of a larger American story of energy innovation and independence. We have always been a powerhouse in energy, whether it be coal or natural gas. Now we have wind and solar, battery storage, and everything in between.

In 2023, America produced more energy than ever. I want you to hear this. In 2023, we led the world in energy production: 38 trillion cubic feet of natural gas was produced; 4.7 billion barrels of crude oil, which is a record; 11 billion cubic feet daily of LNG; 238 million megawatt-hours of solar; and a record 6.4 gigawatts of new batteries installed on the grid. Nowhere in the world does that happen but here because of all of us.

You can't eliminate your way to a cleaner environment. You heard me say this so much. You can't eliminate—just quit using stuff. You have to innovate through technology. That is why we funded the development of regional hydrogen hubs and made sure one of them would be in the Appalachia region. It needed to be there because that is where the powerhouse is. This is one time California and West Virginia agreed on the same thing. We are both from hydrogen hubs, and it worked out well.

As I have always said, when you hit a pothole, it doesn't care if you are a Republican or Democrat. It is going to bust your tire.

And we needed to do something about infrastructure. We really did. By focusing on investing in roads, bridges, airports, pipelines, and broadband in the bipartisan infrastructure law—which we all should be extremely proud of—we not only created jobs, but we strengthened the very economic foundation of this Nation. We had deferred maintenance for over 30 years and done nothing about it. But we got to do the job that needed to be done. And we did it together.

In West Virginia, we secured over \$1.2 billion in broadband to make every resident have access to internet by the end of this decade. We have some tough terrain to work in. And they are going to get it, thanks to so many of you all sitting right here.

We also secured funding to finish Corridor H. It has only been on the books since 1964. We think we are going to get it done. We have been working a long time with this.

With the Chips and Science Act, the United States is bringing semiconductor supply chains back home. We are creating good-paying jobs supporting American innovation, manufacturing, and advancing our national security.

West Virginia, like so many States, is one of the most patriotic States in the Nation. We are home to many veterans and servicemembers today. To honor our veterans, like each one of you, we fought to expand veterans' access to healthcare and prevented the closure of VA facilities in West Virginia.

Every day, we work to improve the lives of West Virginians. Together, we protected health insurance with pre-existing conditions. We brought down healthcare costs, including \$35 for insulin for seniors and established a multifaceted strategy to combat the opium epidemic. That is one thing that we have to conquer and we have to cure. It is just unbelievable what it has done to our country and each one of your States.

Lastly, since day one in the U.S. Senate, I have worked to protect—and I want to repeat this—I have worked, and I believe with every bone in my body and every fiber in me and every ounce of blood that I have, to preserve the bipartisan foundation of this Senate, and that is the 60-vote threshold of the filibuster. I believe in that with everything in me. I do.

Each of these victories required Senators to come together from both sides to find solutions. These were bills that just made common sense, and when each side could take a little step to find common ground, powerful things happened.

But with the successes, I have seen more than my share of missed opportunities: legislation that was overwhelmingly supported by the American public, bills that would have significantly improved the lives of millions of Americans, immigration reform, background checks for guns, balancing the budget—

too many opportunities to fix what is broken in America that have slipped right through our fingers—not because of any disagreements we might have had or substantial disagreements; these opportunities were missed because the politics got in the way of doing our job, stopped us from doing it.

I am not saying that dealing with politics is easy. It is not, and it is messy at times. I have had my share of tough votes, and at times, I felt like the whole Senate was united in being upset with me. So maybe we did. Maybe we were able to bring you together. I don't know. I tried.

Anytime I was confronted with a tough decision—I know you have heard me say this—I relied on where I came from, how I was raised, and who raised me. I would just tell them: I can't explain this back home. It doesn't make sense. I can't vote for it. I am just sorry. Please don't be upset. It is who I am.

And you all have been tolerant at times.

If it didn't make sense, as I said, I couldn't vote for it.

The stark reality is that we face some serious challenges today. In one of my first hearings in the Armed Services Committee, I asked former admiral Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—I asked the general: What is the greatest threat facing our country?

I had been a Governor. I had not been in Armed Services. I had just gotten there. And I think I see my Senators shaking their heads—they were there with me. We asked that question, and I was chomping at the bit. What is he going to tell me? He never hesitated, never missed a minute. He said: Our national debt, which is more threatening than any other country's military might, will take us down first. The national debt will take us down, as it has most developed nations in the world.

That went through me like—I don't know—just like wildfire.

So let me just tell you: Today, our national debt is \$36 trillion. And I know there are Senators here who feel the same as I do. That breaks down to \$104,000 for every man, woman, and child in America. This is not sustainable—not sustainable. This is something you all have to cure, and I know you will.

It is terrifying to think that by the end of this fiscal year, the United States will spend more on paying interest on our debt than we will to defend our country or help Americans everywhere—more on the debt than anything else.

Our current immigration system is broken. Our southern border is a disaster. It is plain and simple: We must secure our border and support legal immigration. You can't do one without the other; you have to be able to move forward.

American leadership means standing with our allies and standing up against

authoritarianism. We must continue to support both Israel and Ukraine as they fight to protect democratic values.

We have four countries of major concern we talk about—I think we are all in agreement—China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea, all of which are basically challenging the international rules-based order, and they simply do not share our values. No matter what we do or what we say, no matter what we try to entice them with, it is not going to happen. They don't share our values.

Lastly, inflation is driving our high cost of living, and it has to be addressed. We can't kick this can down the road any longer. But there is nothing we can't solve if we just start working together.

You may not know this, but one of my favorite memories from this place didn't happen in the Senate Chamber; it really happened on the boat. A lot of things happened on the boat.

Anyway, I had invited, like I have done a lot, Senators down. We had Senators coming down one day. They were walking down, and Tom Harkin, a very progressive Senator from Iowa, a good friend, was there. He said: JOE, it is the first time I have been on the Potomac River. I have been here for 30 years and have never been on it.

I said: Good, Tom. Come on, sit down, have a little beverage, and we will get things going here.

About that time, he saw TED CRUZ walking down the ramp to get on the boat. He said: JOE, I don't think I can do this.

I said: What?

He said: I don't think we can be on the same boat together.

I said: Come on, Tom, give it a shot.

TED got on the boat with Tom, and before you knew it, they started talking. I don't know what they were talking about. It probably wasn't politics. But by the end of that day, the next day, they started working on some amendments together and doing legislation.

That is just the power of sitting down and listening and getting to know each other, and we don't do that much here. It is hard for us to get together. We know that. We need more of that in Washington. I hope you all make an effort to visit with each other, spend a little bit of time.

I am not going anywhere, gang. The boat is still going to be there. You all call me whenever you want to come down. We will get together whenever you want.

Many of our differences pale in comparison to the disagreements between the Founding Fathers in 1789, but they understood what was at stake, and they were willing to put their differences aside to build something extraordinary. We need to recapture that spirit today.

To my colleagues, I will leave you with this challenge: Every day ask yourself, what have I done for my country today? What have I done? Not

for your party, not for your donors, but for your country. After all, that is why we are here. That is the purpose of us being here.

We have to stop demonizing each other. We have to argue over ideas—that is fine—but not personalities. You can argue over ideas but not personalities. We are all elected, and we all should be respected for that.

George Washington warned us about the dangers of political parties dividing our country over 200 years ago, and we are living in the world he feared today.

The easiest vote to take here is no. We all know that. You can retire pretty handsomely here if you just vote no on everything, because, you know why, there is never going to be a perfect bill. You can always find something wrong. You don't have to explain "no"—you don't—because half the country is mad at everything anyway.

So you can get by with a "no" vote, but if you want to get something done, that is not the purpose of being here. Find another job. This is a place where you have to take tough votes, and let's get things done.

The political process has taught us that Americans want to be for something. They want to be for something—something that captures the hearts and captures the minds of people to give them something to live for. It is not enough to just run against something or someone; be for something.

As I look around the Chamber and I think back on the good times and bad times, I want you to know I still believe in this system. I really do. I believe in the purpose of what we have and basically the challenges we have before us. I believe in the institution of democracy and the need to cherish it.

We have created something pretty special here in America, and no one ever thought it could be done, especially for 240 years. And we still can do great things. We can have a military—that is still peace through strength—while also having compassion. We can have financial stability and prosperity while still helping Americans and people around the world in need. We can do all that.

You hear people talk about the American dream like it is some kind of a myth, like it is gone; we don't have it anymore. I want to tell you this: I am standing here, as many of you are here, because of that American dream. You don't hear people chasing the China dream or the Russian dream. I never heard anyone say: Oh, I am thinking about that China dream or that Russian dream. That is because the American dream is unique. There is nothing like it. Think about it. Look around. There is nothing like what we have got. It is about freedom and opportunity and the belief that if you work hard, you play by the rules, you can build a good life, and it is the only dream that allows you to control your own destiny, the only dream that you can control.

Thomas Jefferson once said, "I like the dreams of the future better than

the history of the past." Think about that. "I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past."

I believe in our future, I believe in the American people, and I believe that when we come together, great things are going to happen.

We are better because we put around us all these wonderful people, these staff, as I look around. None of us could do it without them. I don't need to tell any of you how we feel about our staff. I have staff that is currently with me, and I have staff that have moved on, and I can only say: Thank you. I love you.

With that, they are the backbone. They do all the hard work, and they know that. I try to say thank you as much as I can. I am not good at it as much as I should be, but I think they know in my heart how I feel about each and every one of them. I hope so.

I am also here with the most important assets of my life—my wife Gayle up there and my family. I have my children, I have my grandchildren, I have my brothers and sisters, my brothers-in-law and sisters-in-laws—I have everybody here. I just appreciate and love you all so much.

Really, without our family and the support of our family, we couldn't do it. They put up with so much.

I always wondered why my Uncle Jimmy—my Uncle Jimmy was really a character—why he was missing at so many of the functions we had at the holidays. He was always out politicking somewhere. They had to have him here or there. I said "My goodness, we are more important than that," and then I found myself 35 years old, getting into the same thing I condemned him for—not being around. It is a calling. It really is.

So to my wife and to all of you, I want to say thank you. I love you, honey, and I love all of you.

I love all my staff and all of you. I know you are going to do great things.

Any of you all looking for good staff, there are some good people sitting around here that you are going to maybe want to talk to.

As I told you, the boat is still going to be docked here. Anytime you want to have a gathering, please call. I will be there. We will put it on for you. We will have a good time. We will have the dancing and the music and all.

CHUCK said some nice comments on the floor, but he left out one thing. Every time we have been on the boat, one thing we do at the end—do you remember? Lee Greenwood, "Proud to be an American." We all hug each other in a circle. That is what it is all about. That is more of what the country needs right now. It needs more of us together, listening to each other, respecting each other, working together.

So I would like to say this: God has blessed me and blessed you with the opportunity to do something for a lot of people. They are counting on us. And I think the challenges before you are going to be more daunting than ever

before. But, again, I said I believe in you more than you believe in yourself. I know you are up to the challenge. I know you will do the job. I really do. I believe that. I am going to be rooting, screaming, and hollering for my team. This is my team. All the D's and the R's and the I's—you are my team, and I love each and every one of you.

Thank you for giving me the honor of a lifetime to serve in I think the greatest deliberative body the world has ever known and ever will know—the United States Senate.

God bless the State of West Virginia, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

TRIBUTE TO JOE MANCHIN III

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, a few of us have some remarks to make about the honored Senator from West Virginia. When he is finished with his hugs, we will continue.

Mr. President, I want to say to my friend JOE MANCHIN, wonderful speech. It really had a lot of meaning for me as someone who knows you very well but also to all of us. You have touched everybody's life in this room and many people beyond.

So I just want to say a few words about my colleague and my friend and my fellow Senator from West Virginia, Senator JOE MANCHIN—but we all call him “JOE”—will be retiring from the Senate. But it is safe to say, and he has already guaranteed us, that it will not be the last time that we hear from him.

Before he leaves us, I would just like to take a moment to highlight, from my perspective, his impressive and successful career for the country but particularly for our State of West Virginia.

I would also like to acknowledge JOE's better half Gayle, up there, and his wonderful family. Gayle has endured all the hard work that comes with public service in her own right, and I would like to personally thank her and both of them as a great couple but also a wonderful and beautiful family that you have. I am so happy that they are here today.

It seems just like yesterday that Joe was knocking on my door at 1010 Wilkie Drive in Charleston, WV. He was there to measure the carpet in the house that my husband and I had just purchased as newlyweds. This was over 40 years ago. And he measured that carpet, and he told me after I recounted the story to him later, he could lay that carpet today if he needed to.

So fast forward. Today, JOE is serving in his 14th year as a U.S. Senator, after serving our State in the House of Delegates, in the State senate, secretary of state, and as Governor. We went through a couple tragedies, really tough tragedies, when JOE was our Governor. And I can say, with maybe

one exception—maybe my dad or they might be equal—I have never seen such a compassionate, empathetic, and effective Governor during really, really tough times.

So I am going to miss working side by side with him, but I know that the relationship we have built over these years will continue for years to come.

JOE has been the senior Senator from West Virginia for all of my 10 years of my tenure, and the reality is, I have got big shoes to fill here. And in case I forget that, JOE reminds me of that every single day. Sometimes we disagree. But when we disagree, we do it respectfully and on the merits. We might disagree; we don't become disagreeable. The next day, we get up and fight for the things we both believe in, and that is to focus our energy on improving the lives of our neighbors. That is how JOE sees his constituents: Everybody is JOE's neighbor.

And that is what makes him a relentless advocate for our State. We have the same goals—all of us do—in mind of helping our States and our constituents. And in some ways, JOE and I have served like a tag team for our State. Sometimes he shows up when I can't get there, and he fills in for me. I show up when he can't get there, and I will fill in for him. And then we can come from both—we can do the double press. We can come from the Republican side, the Democrat side, and now we got the Independent side on our side. So we can really press, I think, and what that does is really has West Virginia punching above our weight here in the U.S. Senate.

It could be backing West Virginia jobs and economic development, fighting for our coal miners, standing up for our veterans, or addressing the challenges that face our rural communities. JOE has always led with conviction and a very steady hand.

I don't have time to list all of the efforts and successes that we have been able to work on together, and he has done many of these before I got here and way before I even became a Senator: UMWA pension bill, you mentioned that; New River Gorge Park and Preserve, huge victory for us; economic development issues that JOE mentioned; bipartisan infrastructure law; Mountain Valley Pipeline; Appalachian Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub. It is interesting we have the same sort of recall of the things that we have been able to work on—Jessie's Law that JOE really pushed through in memory of a friend, a fellow State Senator whose daughter lost her life in an overdose, and so many, many more.

He has enlisted me to help steer him sometimes to get the West Virginia victories, and I am so proud of the accomplishments that we have had together. So thank you for that partnership, JOE. It has really been important to me.

Aside from his love of our home State, JOE possesses many other qualities worthy of a leader and a states-

man. There is much to say about JOE MANCHIN. He is a dealmaker for sure—probably started as a salesman, yes—voice of reason, a defender, as he said, of Senate traditions, and as Politico said, “The most powerful man in Washington.”

What do we think about that, JOE?

I assume JOE would just as well want to be remembered as a good and steady friend. There are people in West Virginia who say: If you want a friend, get a dog. I wasn't sure if I was actually going to say that in light of your successor, but I said it anyway. I assure you those folks have never met JOE MANCHIN.

Twenty years ago, I joined an all-male, all-Democrat West Virginia delegation here in Washington. I joked with JOE that I forced them to get out of the male restroom so we could have a delegation meeting, but JOE was always a warm and welcoming presence. He always picks up the phone if you need to chat; he is always ready for a joke, that is for sure; and he has been a shoulder to lean on during personal times.

When he was Governor, JOE and Gayle Manchin invited my whole family back to the Governor's mansion, where my parents had lived for 12 years, to show us around. It was a really special evening. It was a simple and kind gesture that meant a lot to our whole family, especially my mom and dad.

Years later, at my father's funeral, JOE delivered the eulogy and talked about his good friend, my dad, whom JOE always called “Chief.”

JOE has always been there for every West Virginia family. I will note that sometimes JOE can be just a bit too present. When I am home in West Virginia, he is sometimes like a shadow. I won't even tell about the last time I saw you. He is sometimes like a shadow I can't shake. One night many Christmases ago, I was running out of the house with my husband Charlie, and we were late for somewhere we needed to go, but the doorbell rings. I open the door. It is a group of Christmas carolers. And lo and behold, there is JOE MANCHIN singing Christmas carols. I don't know. They must have needed a baritone. I don't know what happened. But he is always there, even when you don't know when you really need him.

And my colleagues can testify, he has more energy than anybody I have ever met. He is everywhere. He is always traveling. He has always got that leg going too. I have noticed that. And he is always going fast. He has a prodigious lead foot—one I have personally experienced myself riding on motorcycles and in cars with him while traversing the country roads of West Virginia.

There was the one time we were traveling home late at night together. We were just going into Beckley, and I turned to JOE, and I said: Have you ever been stopped for speeding?