

judges, and we want to keep that going as much as we can this week and next.

TRIBUTE TO JON TESTER

Madam President, now, later this afternoon, Senators will convene on the floor to hear farewell remarks of a beloved colleague. Someone we will dearly, dearly miss, someone who for all the days he served in this office, never forgot who he was, never forgot what he stood for. That Senator, of course, is my dear friend Senator JON TESTER of Montana.

There are a lot of labels that come to mind when JON's name is mentioned, so many of them: Interesting, decent, good, fine are these adjectives and labels. Most people around here know JON is a third-generation farmer. He still grows organic lentils and barley and grain, even after all these years in office.

He lost three of his fingers working a meat grinder as a 9-year-old, a turning point in his life.

I used to talk to JON when he was thinking of starting his organic farm out there in Montana. He was so smart, so able to see around the curve. He knew that organic types of grains and lentils were going to start selling, and it takes a long time before the field is eventually purely organic. But he does.

And he loves farming so much that he is one of the rare people—I think Senator GRASSLEY may be another—who goes home each weekend to tend to his farm. When I would call him up—I know his old phone number by heart; I know his new phone number by heart—he would often be on his tractor. He would say: Hey, I am on my tractor.

He was a happy man when he was on that farm, and he is going to continue doing that farming as he goes home.

Most of us know how proud he is of Montana, how he so often shared with us thoughts about what Montanans think. He embodies that State in every way: the way he talks, the way he thinks, the way he works, but unless you are actually from Montana, unless you have seen JON TESTER in his own backyard, working the dirt, talking to his neighbors, butchering a cow or greasing a combine, it is difficult, if not impossible, to grasp how important home is to everything he has done.

And JON still lives and works on top of the very same soil his father and grandfather worked for over a century. It has never been an easy existence. JON says some years it was hard for him and his wife Sharla to make even \$20,000.

JON also taught music at the very same school he attended as a kid. You know, in this day when society—when things move so fast, and we are almost rootless, here is a man with deep roots. And those deep roots in Montana and in the soil and even in the classroom where he taught himself how to play the trumpet showed through every day, and it made him one of the most effective Members of this Chamber.

When he got up to speak, everyone listened because they knew it was com-

ing from the heart. They knew he had the background that very few Senators have, and he was so persuasive in what he does.

And to show you the continuity, he actually owns the very same meat grinder that took three of his fingers off when he was young. On YouTube, there are even videos of JON answering constituent questions while grinding meat.

Now, JON says he doesn't remember the moment his hand slipped on that dreadful day. But what he does remember is everything that happened after: the 13-mile drive in the family station wagon to the nearest rural hospital. He has been a defender of rural hospitals ever since because, in all likelihood, that rural hospital saved his life.

He remembers the intense pressure that his parents felt trying to keep it together in the years after the accident so their son could heal and thrive and grow up like other kids his age.

And when he came to the Senate in 2007, he brought every piece of home with him to Washington, and he was one of the best champions of small farmers in the Senate.

He awakened this body to the idea that rural areas are short of housing; it is not just urban areas that housing is an issue.

He constantly reminded us of one of the reasons meat prices were so high: because of the beef cartels and the combination of the big companies creating even less and less competition.

He brought memories of rural doctors and nurses who saved his life. He brought all these lessons, so much instilled in him in his roots. He is one of the most rooted people I have ever met. And that is why even when adversity hits, whether as a child or now—he didn't win that election and that is a shame because he is such a fine person and he has served Montana so well—but his rootedness, I know, will keep him strong and happy and productive through the years.

JON has always been, in all those years in Washington, a Montanan first, a Senator second, and that is why he has been so effective. One of the other areas about JON is veterans. I don't know of a single voice in this Chamber—everyone talks about veterans. That is a good thing. We all love our veterans on both sides of the aisle. But I don't know a single person who has done more for veterans, who fought so hard for veterans than he did.

JON moved heaven and earth to get the PACT Act done. He never rested. Every week he would get up in our caucus and talk about it. He felt the pain of those who had been exposed to the burn pits and were heartlessly told by the VA that unless they could find absolute, undeniable proof that the exact harm from the burn pits went into their bodies, that they wouldn't get funding, even though everyone knew that is what caused these cancers and other things that they had.

Well, right now, there are millions of veterans who are much better off who

were exposed in Iraq and Afghanistan to the burn pits because of JON.

And he always looked out for other people. He knew my job was a tough one. He always said: I don't want your job. He was that smart to know that, of course, but he always asked me how I felt and what I was doing and what he could do to help.

He had something that very few people have; he had enough strength, enough heart, enough soul that not only could he work on the things he worked on, whether it is farm, the people of Montana, working here in the Senate as head of the Veterans' Committee and now head of the Defense Subcommittee—one of the most powerful committees in the Senate—but he always had enough time to care about everybody else.

This is a deep, strong, wonderful man. Even on the hardest days, he never let the pressures of Washington get in the way of his humor and his decency. You know, everyone knows JON is a friend of the bassist for Pearl Jam, Jeff Ament. A line to one of their songs goes like this:

I changed by not changing at all.

JON, your friends in Pearl Jam could have been writing that song about you. After all these years, all the things you have done, everything you have accomplished, all of the emoluments and praise you have gotten, you haven't changed at all from the moment you entered public life, rooted, strong, caring, effective, someone with all three, a great brain, a great heart, a great soul.

We will miss you. Thank you for 18 wonderful years.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, in a matter of weeks, President Biden will hand off his authority to a new Commander in Chief, and his administration will submit its stewardship of U.S. foreign and national security policy to the judgment of posterity.

Already, the contours of history are coming into focus. On this administration's watch—and, frequently, at its tacit invitation—the gravest threats to America, our allies, and our global interests have grown and aligned more closely.

Senior administration officials insist that the exact opposite is true and that they are preparing to hand off a world that is safer and more stable than they found it. This sort of spin isn't surprising; it is just profoundly untrue. And nowhere is the administration's revisionist gaslighting more blatant or bizarre than in its account of events in the Middle East.

Yesterday's collapse of the Assad regime in Syria was a stunning close to a half a century of authoritarian rule and 13 years of senseless slaughter, torture, and innocent suffering. Bashar

Assad is an agent of Iran, an ally of Russia, and a butcher whose hands are stained with so much innocent blood that the death toll defies precise counting.

The destination of this butcher's flight from Damascus over the weekend is telling. Fellow dictators still find a warm welcome in Putin's Moscow, and, I might add, so do unrepentant traitors like Edward Snowden.

It is quite clear that the recent lightning success of Syrian rebel groups is due, in part, to the distraction of the Assad regime's essential patrons. For more than a decade, assistance from Russia and Iran has shored up the twin pillars of Assad's rule: oppression and fear. But today, Russian attention and resources are tied up in a protracted war of aggression over in Ukraine, and Iran is busy propping up a network of terrorist proxies that Israel has dealt savage blows.

If you ask the Biden administration, this was all part of the plan. The President himself said as much yesterday. He noted that the Assad regime's strongest backers—Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah—are weaker today than they were 4 years ago, as if to suggest that it was his administration's policy that made these events possible. But my colleagues—and, for that matter, America's allies and partners—know a lot better than that. We know that, to the extent that our adversaries are weaker today than they were when the President took office, it is in spite of his chronic hesitation and half measures in the conduct of American foreign policy.

Ukraine has blunted Russian military power, in spite of this administration's unfounded fear of escalation and repeated withholding of lethal assistance. Israel has put Iran and its proxies on the back foot, in spite—in spite—of this administration's repeated efforts to dictate the terms of Israel's military operations and its ongoing freeze on the transfers of essential precision munitions.

If the Assad regime's brutality was an abiding concern for the President or if the ongoing plight of the Syrian people factored meaningfully into his administration's policy, then his National Security Advisor's description of the Middle East, last fall, as “quieter than it has been for decades” is even more incongruous than the horrors of October 7 already made it.

If the President now intends to claim credit for bringing a potential end to Syria's grinding civil war, it begs the question why, as Vice President, he agreed with President Obama's decision not to enforce his self-imposed redline on Assad's use of chemical weapons.

The last Democratic administration's approach to Syria helped Russia displace American influence and helped Iran turn it into its staging ground for its terrorist proxies' war on Israel. The current Democratic administration's scolding and hectoring of the Jewish

State has made defending against this war more difficult.

The Commander in Chief's record will speak for itself. History will reflect that, if this administration wanted to heed the urging of leaders of both parties in Congress and deliver the sort of lethal capabilities and permissions Ukraine needed to defend against Russian aggression at the speed of relevance, it was fully empowered to do so.

And had this President even once expressed a willingness to take a serious bipartisan approach to the Middle East's primary agents of chaos in Tehran—and its proxies and vassals from Yemen to Syria—it would have found willing partners on this side of the aisle. I made this much crystal clear from the first days of his administration.

At best, the Biden administration has been an impassive observer. At worst, it restrained America's friends from defending themselves and hampered the otherwise transformational success of Israel's operation against the enemies who actually started the war.

In spite of the administration's fixation on deescalation, Israel decimated Hezbollah, the crown jewel of Iran's terror web. While the administration obsessed over the illusion of returning to the stable status quo, Israel actually turned the tables on Iran and its proxies.

Today, there is no longer such a status quo in Syria. After years of war stoked by Russia and Iran, the prospects of a beleaguered Syrian people are certainly complicated and uncertain. But the fall of the Assad regime is an opportunity for our partners in the Middle East to chart a new future and to press the advantage earned by Israel's decisive operations and uproot Iran's remaining influence throughout the region.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, tomorrow the Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on President-elect Trump's planned mass deportation of undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Millions—some 13 million—of undocumented immigrants live in this country, and many have been here for a decade or longer. These immigrants have become our Nation's healthcare workers, teachers, farm workers, entrepreneurs, police—you name it. And many of them grew up alongside our own kids, with the same hopes and dreams of their first job, getting a driver's license, and a college acceptance letter.

Twelve years ago, in response to a bipartisan request from myself and the late Senator from Indiana, Richard Lugar, President Barack Obama established the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, known as DACA. DACA was a program where, if

you were brought to this country under the age of 18 as a child and you had lived here, you had an opportunity to apply for a 2-year period of grace and not be fearful of deportation, through the DACA Program.

More than 830,000 young people came forward to sign up for DACA, all of whom were brought here as children, some as young as a few months old, and they became known as the Dreamers.

The DREAM Act, the legislation which would have made this law and made it unnecessary for an Executive order, was a bill I introduced 23 years ago. You have to be patient in the U.S. Senate, but 23 years is a long, long time—long for me to sponsor but even longer for those affected by it.

These young Dreamers, part of our country, with DACA and otherwise, earned \$27.9 billion and contributed \$2.1 billion to Social Security and Medicare in the year 2022. They are a big part of America and a big part of our economy.

One of those DACA recipients I am going to highlight today. This gentleman's name is Foday Turay. He is currently a prosecutor, a husband, and a father; and he is going to testify before our Judiciary Committee tomorrow.

Foday is the 148th Dreamer whose story I have shared on the Senate floor. He came to the United States from Sierra Leone when he was 7 years old, after his grandmother became ill and died.

Foday didn't know he was undocumented until much later in life. He decided to apply for a driver's license, and they said: You are not a citizen; you can't apply. He was devastated. He had dreamed of going to law school and becoming an attorney. And now everything seemed utterly impossible because of his citizenship status.

But Foday never wavered in his faith and hope to make it in America. He said the day DACA was announced was the best day of his life.

Thanks to Barack Obama's DACA, Foday attended college and then Penn State Dickinson Law School, where he received his Juris Doctorate degree.

He works full time as a prosecutor for the district attorney's office in Philadelphia. He protects his community from violent crimes, and he helps crime victims navigate a complex legal system.

Growing up in the United States since he was 7 years old, Foday has put down deep roots. He met and married his wife, who is a U.S. citizen. And he is a proud homeowner and father to a beautiful 18-month-old baby boy.

DACA allowed Foday to pursue his dreams of becoming a lawyer, husband, father, but his life is still in limbo.

Why? Consider what happened to DACA the last time President-elect Trump was in office. In 2017, President Trump shut down the program. Thankfully, the Supreme Court blocked his effort, but he also encouraged MAGA Republicans to file lawsuits against DACA, endangering the program's future.