

fact, George Will once wrote that SHERROD “radiates rumplessness, even in a well-pressed suit.”

Such characterizations have never seemed to bother SHERROD because, you see, he didn’t come here to be a clothes horse or pose for GQ. He wouldn’t know what to do with a custom-made, clean-pressed suit every day at work.

SHERROD BROWN has spent 50 years in public office—50—including the last 18 years in the Senate. He is the kind of person who comes to the Senate ready to fight for people who don’t have lawyers and lobbyists to speak for them.

SHERROD grew up in Mansfield, OH, a town hit hard and early by the decline in American manufacturing. His family was comfortably middle class, but many of his friends and seatmates in school weren’t so lucky. When a factory in the town closed, his friends’ families struggled and worried. SHERROD has spent his life trying to make those families, and others like them, in a position to get a fair shake.

It is a noble kind of service to feel the burdens of others and to work to ease their load, even when you don’t need help yourself. SHERROD’s solidarity with others who needed help was evident when, for years, he even refused to take congressional health benefits until we passed the Affordable Care Act, which made them available to almost every American. He didn’t think it was right to accept that benefit as long as tens of millions of Americans were unable to obtain quality, affordable healthcare.

SHERROD has spent his life working for an economy and government that cares about the working class and invests in towns, factories, healthcare, and the potential of working families. He has fought for fair trade deals and opposed trade agreements that he thought shortchanged American workers, even when his opposition put him at odds with the President of his own party.

He insisted that the historic bipartisan infrastructure bill include a “Buy America” requirement, and he helped save the pensions of 1.5 million union members and retirees, with the so-called Butch Lewis Act, which I was proud to join him on.

Today, two huge new Intel computer chip factories are being built in Ohio in New Albany because SHERROD BROWN helped pass the Chips and Science Act.

As a long-time member and, since 2021, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, he has worked to prevent the kinds of Wall Street recklessness and greed that crashed the global economy in 2008. He has fought for affordable housing and consumer protection, and against predatory lending and exorbitant junk fees. He has worked to hold executives of failed banks accountable and to make sure that AI and technology advances help consumers and aren’t misused to rig the system in favor of the wealthy.

He worked so hard and was so gratified by the child tax credit. I think it

was one of his proudest achievements, and he said as much.

In 2002, in the House, he voted against the Iraq war. I did, too, in the Senate. There weren’t many of us at the time, and it wasn’t a popular stand, but it was the right thing to do, and SHERROD knew it.

I am going to miss his gravelly, Tom Waits voice in this Chamber. I am going to miss the many stories he brought back about his wonderful wife Connie. She is a great writer and has been recognized beyond the United States in many places around the world for her insight and her writing. I wish the best to both of them. Their work here may be finished for the time being, but they have left a positive mark on America.

TRIBUTE TO JON TESTER

Mr. President, the big man from Big Sky Country, JON TESTER—before his election to the Senate, 18 years ago, Senator JON TESTER had never lived more than 2 hours away from his family’s wheat farm in Big Sandy, MT, the same farm his grandparents homesteaded more than a century ago.

JON started his campaign for the U.S. Senate traveling across the State on a farm tractor-trailer. And with his seven fingers, Roger Maris flattop, and scuffed size-12 cowboy boots, he has cut a singular figure in the Halls of Congress. He is a prairie pragmatist and a defender of programs that many rural Americans depend upon, such as market fairness for family cattle ranchers and rural community development efforts.

JON voted for the Affordable Care Act because it was right and because it is a lifeline to rural hospitals, to farmers, ranchers, small business owners, and others who need affordable, accessible healthcare coverage.

He has been a strong voice for Native Americans. Growing up, JON played “Taps” at the funerals of World War II veterans. It taught him, at an early age, that many veterans continue to pay a price for their service for the rest of their lives.

He gave a speech on the floor of the Senate, just a day or two ago. He pointed to that moment in the funeral service for former Senator Dan Inouye, a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, where, in Hawaii, JON was called on to play “Taps” for Senator Inouye. He said it was one of his proudest moments, and I am sure that is true.

When I think of the giants of the Senate, like Dan Inouye, I think about those like JON TESTER who, in his own way, showed his courage time and again.

As chair of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, JON TESTER has worked to strengthen VA healthcare and protect disability benefits for all veterans. He pushed the Senate to pass the historic PACT Act to provide healthcare for veterans who were sickened by exposure to burn pits and other toxins and the survivor benefits

for their spouses and young children. As of last week, the VA has approved more than 1.3 million claims under the PACT Act, including more than 51,000 veterans in my State of Illinois.

By the way, you likely have been hearing about self-professed “efficiency experts” combing through the Federal budget. Some of them have even called for the elimination of the Veterans Health Administration. They are wrong. They should listen to JON TESTER, a patriot, who it has been an honor to work with and count as a friend.

And you can’t close with JON without mentioning Shar. His wife Shar has been his partner in life and in politics and in every step they have taken together. It is a wonderful, loving, caring, inspiring couple. I am going to miss their physical presence, but their memories will live on in the Senate.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

Mr. President, it was the evening of January 28, 2017, in the early days of the first Trump administration. Airports in Chicago and throughout the Nation were filled with people protesting the administration’s early ban on travelers from majority-Muslim nations. Among more than 100 protesters at the Philadelphia International Airport, one man stood out. Dressed in a tuxedo and tails, he had just attended a black-tie function when he heard about President Trump’s decision. That man was Senator BOB CASEY. He went directly to the airport.

As we all know, Senator CASEY isn’t usually so flashy as to wear a tux, but his principles guide him in everything he does. BOB CASEY is one of the most decent people I have ever served in Congress with. He is a bridge builder. He is committed to creating dialogue and finding common ground. He is the only—the only—Pennsylvania Democrat ever to serve three terms in the U.S. Senate.

He has been a strong voice for working families struggling to get by. He has a great family himself with Terese. Poor mothers and children, coal miners at risk, and others finally had an advocate here standing up for them in the U.S. Senate.

As chair of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, he has protected Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. He helped lower seniors’ cost for prescription drugs—a promise that was made years ago and finally kept, thanks to BOB CASEY. He has targeted scam artists who prey on seniors.

BOB’s father was a popular, two-term Pennsylvania Governor. And while Robert Casey, Sr., may have embedded the Casey name in Pennsylvania political life, ROBERT CASEY, Jr., through his decades of service, has added new honor to that name.

TRIBUTE TO MITT ROMNEY

Mr. President, finally, I want to say thank you to a departing Senator from across the aisle.

On the evening of January 6, 2021, many Senators in both political parties

denounced the violent assault on this Capitol. But I believe history will record that the truest, bravest words spoken that night were from Senator MITT ROMNEY of Utah. He said:

In light of today's sad circumstances, I ask my colleagues: Do we weigh our own political fortunes more heavily than we weigh the strength of our Republic, the strength of our democracy, and the cause of freedom?

Senator MITT ROMNEY is a man of deep faith and considerable accomplishments: a successful businessman, the rescuer of the 2002 Olympics, a Republican Governor in a deep blue State, and his party's nominee for President in 2012.

After he had been here a few months, I went up to him on the floor, and I said: The more I get to know you, MITT ROMNEY, the more I wonder why I said all those things about you in that Presidential campaign.

He laughed, and I did too.

He is a conservative, but he is a man of conscience and character. We would all do well to ponder his question and emulate his courage.

I will miss Senators BROWN, TESTER, CASEY, and ROMNEY, and our other departing colleagues, and I join a grateful nation in thanking them for all that they have given, sacrificed, and contributed to us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

TRIBUTE TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I actually rise to the floor to follow, I think, one of the Democratic leaders, my dear friend from Illinois, to probably make pretty similar comments about some of our retiring Members. And, you know, the work we do in this body sometimes is frustrating. Sometimes, it is inefficient. It is critically important.

But one of the things that makes it worthwhile is the relationships and friendships that we develop with colleagues all across the political spectrum, from both sides of the aisle. And I am sure I am going to echo some of the comments that have already been made by the senior Senator from Illinois. So let me talk about some of these comments. I want to highlight their accomplishments one by one.

TRIBUTE TO JON TESTER

So let's take a quick trip across the country and start in Big Sky Country, in Montana, where my friend JON TESTER oftentimes started his day as early as 2:45 a.m., just to make sure he would be able to get back to DC in time for votes.

Now, on many dark, freezing Montana mornings, he took an hours-long drive and then a plane and then another plane to get to the Senate to fight for Montanans and veterans across the country. Most times, it took 11 to 12 hours. And as the Presiding Officer knows, that was only the case when it wasn't snowing.

But week in and week out, he did it, and he fought hard for Montanans in the Senate. And then reversed that

same long commute at the end of the week to make it back to the farm with his wife Sharla.

And amongst all of it, I am not sure if there is anyone else in this body who still is operating as a citizen legislator and literally having another full-time job trying to farm his ranch in Montana.

I have been guilty, as I said the other day on the floor, of sometimes complaining about this job. I have to always take a deep breath and realize I am a guy who lives 20 minutes away and was lucky enough to come into the job with some financial resources—not totally dissimilar from the Presiding Officer.

When I think, though, about sacrifice, when I think of people who are here for all the right reasons—no matter how hard it is, no matter how long it takes—I think, first and foremost of my friend JON TESTER.

When I think of public servants—and I have had people ask me this, not dozens of times but hundreds of times: Whom do you most respect? How do you put up with this? All of the vagaries in this job—I always tell them the story about JON TESTER. He has done it. He is a man who has done it all to serve the people around him—a former band teacher; long before it was cool, an organic farmer; and an incredibly effective Senator. JON has lived a life of service and devotion to the country, all while having fewer fingers than many of us.

He helped us negotiate the infrastructure law. He single-handedly led the passage of the PACT Act, one of the most significant expansions of benefits to veterans ever. He did it all without complaint, without asking for much attention, and with enough time to travel home 12 hours at the end of the week, as I said, to be with family and continuing to produce food that feeds America.

JON is the consummate public servant. He is a phenomenal farmer and friend. And he will be deeply missed here in the Senate.

I can't think of anyone—as we think about the political activities these days, we often talk about, you know, who is authentic or not, the most outrageous criticism of JON TESTER never included any sense that he wasn't a real Montanan, that he wasn't authentic. And he never strayed from what brought him here in the first place.

TRIBUTE TO MITT ROMNEY

Mr. President, now, let's move slightly down from Montana to Utah, where the Senate is again losing an incredibly principled leader in MITT ROMNEY. In his 6 years in the Senate, when MITT ROMNEY gave his farewell speech, again, he acknowledged he is still just a freshman Senator.

MITT led with an unshakable, tireless adherence to his values. It is not too hard to stand up for what you know is right if you agree with the rest of your team. But if you are bucking your party—and I have done that more than

once—it requires tremendous bravery and sometimes enduring a deeply loneliness and isolation.

Even when it was hard, even when it was lonely, even when he endured harsh critique, MITT never backed down from his principles—and I say this with deep admiration, even for the times when I disagreed with him. And there were many.

We worked closely together on all of the bipartisan “gangs”—the effort to bring about the final COVID package under then-President Trump, the infrastructure bill, the CHIPS bill, the notion of the Electoral Count Act. Time and again, MITT was right there fighting for his values, but also realizing you have got to get to “yes” if you are actually going to make things happen.

The infrastructure bill, in particular, is an incredible achievement that is going to bring millions of homes in Utah to the broadband they deserve, the kind of road, rail, and other services that are essential. And during every step of these negotiations, as I said before, MITT never wavered from his strong conservative beliefs.

He can read a balance sheet. He is part of a very small minority—I will include the Presiding Officer, probably less than double digits in this Senate—who can read a balance sheet. I count myself as one of those. He knows when numbers don't add up. And he will fight to make it right.

Our Nation is stronger because of his smart, principled leadership. And, again, while I understand that he and Ann have got other things to do going forward, he will still be involved in our community. We are going to miss him here in the Senate.

TRIBUTE TO KYRSTEN SINEMA

Mr. President, I am going to go a little bit further south, to MITT's southern neighbor, Senator KYRSTEN SINEMA. Senator SINEMA is also departing the Senate after a storied 6 years.

KYRSTEN also worked together on all of these bipartisan efforts, particularly the infrastructure bill, where she and her friend Rob Portman were the leaders of our group and on so many other notable compromises—yes, compromises—over time in Washington. KYRSTEN was a former social worker, an incredibly fast runner, and a tireless independent advocate for Arizonans. Senator SINEMA always made a splash and often, at the end of the day, won her battles.

But for all the ink spilled on KYRSTEN, what I think a lot of people failed to see is her incredible ability to talk and build relationships with everyone. There have been so many times—not just on the big bills, candidly not just at the behest of Democratic leadership, but candidly on the behest of some of our Republican friends, to say this Senator is being particularly challenging on this bill or on this issue. I think there was probably no one who got sent into those kind of negotiations or “Can you work to get this Senator or that Senator to release their hold?”