

WILDLIFE INNOVATION AND LONGEVITY DRIVER REAUTHORIZATION ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 399

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today in support of Senator KAINE's request for unanimous consent for the Senate to pass the Saving the Civil Service Act. It is a critical bill that I hope all my colleagues would agree needs to be enshrined into law.

One of the great strengths of our democracy is that we have an independent, merit-based civil service. Back in the 19th century, we saw what happens when you had a Federal workforce that was made up of a system of spoils and political patronage. So the Congress, back in 1883, said: We ought to put in place an independent civil service.

That has been the law of the land for the last 150 years. Virtually every other industrial nation in the world has modeled their independent workforce after the American model.

We have 2 million Federal employees across the country. Virginia has 147,000. There are close to that many in Maryland and in the District, but they are all over. Senator HIRONO mentioned earlier Hawaii has some of the highest concentration.

Senator KAINE's bill, which we are all proud to be cosponsoring, would simply say: Let's not break that system.

The idea—and the incoming President has said he wants this—to make and get rid of a merit-based civil service is, in my mind, beyond comprehension. Do you really want that nurse at the VA hospital, that the first criteria we are looking for is who did she vote for as opposed to whether she knows nursing; or that air traffic controller that says: Well, I may have been politically active for an unpopular candidate, so I am going to get fired? Or, more likely, one of the things that we have seen that has been a strength of our system: The independent economist at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Presidents of each party get mad when their numbers come out each month because those numbers are independently verified. Do you want to fire all those folks and put in political loyalists?

The rest of the world would run from that, and it would, frankly, undermine the reserved nature of the U.S. dollar as the currency of the backbone of the world, if we are cooking the books on our economic numbers.

There are a host of other examples that we could go almost category by category. I can tell you, the vast majority of Federal workers whom I interact with, most of them could actually have done better in the private sector. They do this work because of that sense of public service.

And if you get rid of a merit-based system and do it all for political patronage, who is going to actually join

that kind of government on a going-forward basis?

This would undermine our economy, undermine our security, and obviously undermine the ability of the American people to get a fair administration of government services.

With that, I am going to yield to my good friend, the Senator from Maryland Senator VAN HOLLEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague from Virginia Senator WARNER, who just addressed this very important issue, and my friend and colleague, the other Virginia Senator, Senator KAINE, who is making the motion today that we pass his Saving the Civil Service Act.

This is a critical piece of legislation to protect one of America's best innovations, which is the idea of a non-partisan, merit-based Federal workforce—one that serves all Americans, regardless of political affiliation; one where you don't take a political test to decide whether you have the credentials for the job; you take a skills-based, knowledge-based test to decide if you are best for the job.

Our Federal workers are the air traffic controllers who ensure safe passage when Americans fly; they are the inspectors who protect our food supply; they are the folks who determine whether or not medicines put on the market are going to be both safe and do what they say they are going to do; they are the folks at the Social Security Administration in Baltimore City who make sure that people get their Social Security checks on time; they are the nurses and doctors at veterans hospitals who help our veterans; and many, many other essential functions.

Today, the only criteria for their employment is performance. It is what they know, not who they know. They are qualified to serve based on those credentials, and they do a good job protecting the American public. And they serve in those jobs regardless of what President is in the White House and what party that President may belong to. Their duty is to serve the American people.

So why are we here on the floor? Because the incoming administration has threatened to change the longtime practice of making sure we have a merit-based civil service.

At the very end of the last Trump administration, they proposed something called schedule F, which would allow them to convert merit-based positions into politically based positions—in other words, substituting political cronies for qualified merit-based Federal employees. That is a recipe for corruption.

Our predecessors, a long time ago, recognized that. That is why, back in 1883, the Congress passed the Pendleton Act to create the merit-based civil service. Prior to that, we had a spoils system, where people who worked on campaigns thought that they could get

any job they wanted, regardless of their qualifications, because of their political party label.

In fact, the reason we ended up getting the Pendleton Act—one of them—was that, in 1881, one of those people, who had worked on a political campaign and thought they should have gotten a job and didn't, assassinated President Garfield. So at that time, the country was shaken, and they said: We have to get rid of the spoils system and replace it with a merit-based system.

I want to just make two other points because the incoming administration, as I said, tried this schedule F idea at the end of the last administration. This time, they are talking about doing it near the beginning of this incoming administration, which is why we are here on the floor today trying to take this action to prevent that from happening.

I want to point out that Presidents have about 4,000 political positions to fill. We are talking about the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State. Presidents have the discretion already—the power today—to nominate people for those 4,000 positions. So we are not talking about taking that away. We are saying: You can't convert thousands of other positions that today are based on merit into those political type of jobs.

Finally, we have heard a lot about the need for more government efficiency, and count me in. Count all of our colleagues from Virginia and Maryland and I think probably both sides of the aisle in on the idea of trying to make sure that we achieve greater efficiencies in government. But I will not support and we will not support something that, under the cover of the claim of government efficiency, is simply a Trojan horse to undo our merit-based system and turn it into one based on political cronyism because that leads to corruption, which will erode the public's confidence and erode the quality of service that our Federal civil servants provide.

So I want to again thank my colleague from Virginia Senator KAINE for all he has done. I want to thank my colleague from Maryland Senator CARDIN, who has also been a great partner in this.

I yield to the Senator from Virginia Senator KAINE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I appreciate my colleagues Senator WARNER and Senator VAN HOLLEN. We just had a press conference where Senator CARDIN and Senator HIRONO also came to speak about the importance of this issue.

As everybody knows—you learned this in civics in grade school—officials in the United States swear loyalty not to the President but to the Constitution of the United States. Under the Constitution, Congress passes laws, and the President enforces them.

But from the beginning days of our country, the President can't do all the

enforcement and implementation on his or her own; it is too big a job for an individual. In a big and complex country, you need people whose whole job might be enforcing a particular law—say inspecting a meat-processing plant. You need people to make sure planes don't crash into each other at airports, people to prosecute anybody running a scam to cheat the elderly out of their life savings, people to bust tax cheats or catch somebody dumping toxic chemicals into a stream, in violation of the Clean Water Act.

Federal employees do all these things. They work to ensure that critical resources and services are provided in countless communities across America. They work to keep Social Security up and running, manage veterans' benefits, research medical diseases, and develop cures and vaccines.

Enforcing the law and running government requires people who are duty-bound to enforce the laws enacted by Congress and to obey the lawful orders of the President, all subject to the overriding duty to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. But we swear fealty to that Constitution, not to a person.

Early in the Republic, as my colleague indicated—Senator VAN HOLLEN—the executive branch operated under what is known as the spoil system, as in the expression “to the victor go the spoils.” But there quickly arose an obvious problem: If the people who enforce American laws answer only to the President, then if you are on the President's team, they go easy on you, and if you are against the President, they bring Federal law down on you like a hammer. That is not the rule of law.

It took a century, from the founding of America until enactment of the Pendleton Act—and Senator VAN HOLLEN talked about a tragedy that occurred at the foot of Capitol Hill, which was once a train station where President Garfield was assassinated in 1881. It took that tragedy to basically galvanize this growing awareness that our Federal employees should be hired based on merit, not political loyalty.

Since then—nearly 150 years—our Nation has recognized the value of a nonpartisan and merit-based system to carry out Federal Government functions. Having a dedicated civil service based on merit rather than political loyalties is in the best interest of everyone. It not only promotes professionalism and reduces cronyism, it also promotes stability.

We saw in the last Trump administration the track record of the political appointees. There was a revolving door in many of these positions. How many Secretaries of State? How many Secretaries of Defense? How many Secretaries of the Navy? When you are switching positions out, you get worse and worse quality of service. The professional civil service is not just about merit, it is also about stability.

Our civil service is tasked with protecting so many important values: na-

tional security, economic productivity, guiding public health, and so much more. There have been attempts in recent years to erode the independence of the Federal civil service, and that is why I am here on the floor, where I will in a minute request Senate passage of the Saving the Civil Service Act.

The bill upholds the merit system principles to ensure that the Federal Government is equipped with the most qualified and experienced individuals. Specifically, the Saving the Civil Service Act will prohibit the reclassification of Federal employees to schedules outside of the competitive civil service without congressional consent. If Congress agrees to this, that is one thing, but to do the reclassification over the objection of or without even consulting with Congress would be barred by this bill.

Over 2 million Federal employees work in all 50 States and U.S. territories.

There are 147,000 in Virginia.

In New Mexico, there are more than 22,000 Federal employees who work in critical areas such as nuclear research. Some of the most important research that has been done in the history of the United States was done in New Mexico by highly trained scientists, and that continues today.

In Missouri, which my colleague Senator SCHMITT represents, Federal employment is more than 37,000, and many work for the VA, for the Treasury, for the Army, for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and for the Department of Homeland Security.

This shouldn't be a partisan bill. We don't have any need and never have had a need for Democratic meat inspectors or Republican air traffic controllers, Democratic VA nurses and Republican cancer researchers; we just want people who have expertise. These experts may have their personal political opinions, but as long as they are doing their jobs, they deserve protection from political retaliation.

To be clear, the President can govern as he or she sees fit within the bounds of statute. Many Federal laws have ambiguity. If there is too much ambiguity, we in Congress need to fix it. The President is empowered to use flexibility within the law as he sees fit, and career Federal employees have to follow those directives and implement the President's interpretation of the law falling within legal bounds. The President, additionally, has the ability to appoint 4,000 political appointees, some of whom must be confirmed by the Senate but many of whom don't even require Senate confirmation.

If a President tries to go outside the law, someone should be able to stand up and say, “Mr. President, that is illegal, and you can't do it. Telling your boss “That is illegal, and you can't do it” is not disloyalty. That is patriotism. That is loyalty to the Constitution and to the law. Again, we all take the same oath. The oath is to the document, not the President.

Third and finally, my bill does not mean that we don't expect accountability from Federal workers. In any large organization, government agency, or large company, there is a potential for unnecessary bureaucracy to develop. In a large pool of people, there may be some bad apples not doing their job. Nothing in this bill protects Federal employees from accountability for their performance.

In fact, the National Federation for Federal Employees has testified before Congress on more than one occasion about the circumstances in which Federal employees have been terminated for cause. That demonstrates that while they exist to defend the rights of their members, they are not going to apologize for or shirk responsibility for bad behavior of employees whose performance merits termination.

I am all for solutions that increase accountability and efficiency. I am on the Foreign Relations Committee, and I followed with great interest the efforts of President Trump's first Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, and his team in 2017 in that space.

The rights of civil servants and the goals of an efficient, responsive Federal Government shouldn't be in competition, and I refuse to dismiss as naive the idea that Federal workers can have a range of personal political views but still serve faithfully and carry out the law and the faithful orders of the Commander in Chief.

I know this is possible because it is exactly what we ask of the American military—my oldest son is a marine—and the military delivers that in a significant way. Every servicemember is allowed to vote, but whoever is duly elected—that is whose lawful orders they follow.

The bill is about basic fairness. The American people should have high expectations of Federal workers and should know that the people enforcing American laws aren't going easy on someone just because they happen to be a friend of the President, Democratic or Republican.

Some will argue that this is necessary because the Federal Government is too big and inefficient. In fact, the Federal Government is smaller today than it was during its peak in the post-World War II years, with more than 3 million Federal employees at that time.

So I am looking forward to working on this and making sure that we uphold this value that has stood the test of time since 1883—a professional civil service, not one placed on political loyalty or cronyism.

With that, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 399 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I am heartened to hear the historical references from my friend from Virginia and my friend from Maryland, but if we go back just a little bit further, to our Nation's founding, the Founders were very concerned about concentrations of power. That is why we have our system of federalism, three branches of government, separation of powers. All was meant to disperse government so that no one branch, no one person ever got too powerful.

But the underlying belief that would save this system of self-government was that people would be accountable to the people, that if you sent somebody up here and you agreed with them, you would send them back or you would send them home.

What we have seen, particularly in the last hundred years, is the growth of an administrative state that isn't accountable to anybody. That is the truth.

I was in Northwest Missouri a couple of years ago, and a farmer told me: Eric, I just don't ever remember voting for the Deputy Under Secretary of the EPA.

He had a point. A guidance letter—not even a rule and certainly not even a law—can destroy a farmer's livelihood in a farm they have had for generations. Or take for example the abuses we saw during COVID. The Supreme Court—I know something about this. I was the AG that brought the case. The vaccine mandate. They didn't have any authority to force a medical procedure on 100 million people, but they wanted to do it anyway. Student loan debt forgiveness. There was no authority to wipe away half a trillion dollars' worth of student loan debt with the stroke of a pen, but they did it anyway.

These are big, broad discussions. The Supreme Court has weighed in. The major questions doctrine. They have been reigning in the abuses of government now in unelected bureaucrats over the last decade.

Of course, with the overturning of the Chevron decision, the ball is now in our court to sort of reassert the article I branch's role that we are the ones—if you want to ban gas stoves, we should have to vote on it.

So this bill, what it does—it blatantly infringes upon executive prerogative to shape the executive workforce. So the courts have weighed in, and dare I say the American people weighed in just about a month ago. There is no secret that President Trump ran on greater government efficiency and reducing the size of government.

This is another effort to Trump-proof before January 20. We are seeing a wholesale auction of the border wall for less than 1 percent of its value. It is happening right now to thwart what is coming. These sort of efforts that are

happening behind the scenes and now here on the Senate floor are intended to do one thing, which is to prevent President Trump from executing on what he campaigned on, which is government efficiency.

About 16 percent of the Federal workforce right now is in any one of those buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue. I think that over the coming months, with the DOGE committee and some of those efforts—and I hope we can work in a bipartisan way. I agree, this shouldn't be a partisan issue. Saving money should not be a partisan issue. And there are some people that probably need to go. There are great Federal workers in our Federal workforce, but we are wasting a lot of money, and people aren't even willing to show up to work right now.

So having flexibility to deliver on the message that people saw cross their television screens and in rallies all across this country over the last 2 years during the Presidential campaign—that is what this is about. This bill would thwart those efforts, and that is why I am objecting.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, just a brief response.

My colleague from Missouri mentioned the fact that recent decisions of the Supreme Court have put more burden on the shoulders of Congress not to abdicate decision-making responsibility but to own it, and that is precisely what my bill would do. It would not block a President from trying to make reforms to the Federal civil service; it would just require that the President do so in consultation with the article I branch.

That article I branch, come January 3, is going to be two Republican Houses. I can't imagine why a Trump Presidency would be afraid of two Republican Houses. If any proposal with respect to the Federal civil service has merit, it would seem that the President should have some sense of confidence that he can convince the next Congress of the United States to go along with it. But if, in fact, he is worried about his ability to convince two Republican Houses to go along with plans with respect to the Federal Civil Service, I think that should tell us something.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, the past 4 years have been historic for the Sen-

ate Committee on Indian Affairs by almost any measure. We secured the largest investment in Native communities in American history, totaling more than \$45 billion. We had the committee's most productive 4-year period ever, passing more than a dozen bills into law. And, just this month, we passed another 10 bills in the Senate that are waiting for action in the House.

Taken together, these record investments and laws cover a wide range of priorities for native people—securing ancestral lands and waters, building safer communities for children and elders, and turning a new page on the boarding school era by promoting native languages, education, and healing.

But the numbers alone don't tell the story because behind each of these statutes and investments are real, tangible benefits for Native communities everywhere—from the homes they live in to the roads they get around on to the water they drink every day—and I am proud that we have been able to deliver such important investments in Indian Country, on Hawaiian homelands, and in Alaska Native villages, whose needs have been so often overlooked or even sometimes harmed by the Federal Government.

This progress means more people will have homes with working electricity and clean, piped water. Advance appropriations for the Indian Health Service, for the first time ever, means people don't have to worry about whether or not they can get to a doctor or not if the government shuts down. Significant investments in Tribal transportation and infrastructure means that communities are one step closer to making dirt roads and broadband deserts a thing of the past. And thanks to the provisions in the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization, Tribes can be in charge of their own safety again with the ability to keep their children and their neighbors safe.

The committee has also enacted three water rights settlements into law and secured \$2.5 billion to pay for these and the more than 30 other already enacted settlements. There is more work to do to get other settlements over the line, and we are going to continue to work with our House colleagues to get it done.

Rebuilding Tribal homelands, expanding broadband, building out transportation projects were key priorities for our committee on a bipartisan basis. We were also focused on helping Native communities unlock clean energy and adapt to a changing climate. Elsewhere, we put real resources into the Federal Government's efforts to revitalize Native languages and work to bring healing around the Federal Indian boarding school era.

From day one, our work was guided by the voices of Native leaders and community members—"nothing about me without me" as the saying goes—and we couldn't have done this without the incredible leadership of Native people across our great country, telling us

what matters and holding us accountable.

The progress, though long overdue, is still in progress. The bills we passed and the investments we have made will materially benefit people's lives—for American Indians, for Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives. Now, that doesn't mean we get to call it a day, because to say that this is the most productive period for Native people as it relates to congressional action in American history is to say two things: It is to say we did a lot. It is certainly to say we did a lot. We did it on a bipartisan basis. We did it with extraordinary staff from my Indian Affairs Committee staffers to LISA MURKOWSKI's staffers, to all of the Members and advocacy organizations. We did a lot. It is also to acknowledge that it was a damned low bar. Most Congresses not only didn't help Native communities much but actively harmed Native communities a lot.

The official position of the United States Federal Government was the extermination of Tribal governments. The official position with the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. military, the Department of the Interior, and other Federal Agencies and their representatives was to essentially dismantle Native cultures—language, access to water, access to land. They cut the children's hair. They punished them physically if they spoke their Native language. They removed these children from their parents and incarcerated them in something that they called boarding schools, but let's be clear. It wasn't a boarding school in the sense of "my kid is 16. We have some extra money. Maybe they are going to go to a good school on the east coast somewhere." They were incarcerated.

So it is true that we have done a lot. It is also true that we have done a lot—that we have harmed Native communities for centuries, and this 4-year period marks a change in the relationship between the U.S. Federal Government and Native communities from Hawaii to Alaska and all across the continent.

And so I am extraordinarily proud of the accomplishments of this committee, but I don't want anyone to mistake this for a victory lap. We have so much more to do to undo, literally, generations of injustice. No amount of work we are going to do in a year or even 4 years is going to suddenly and totally reverse generations of neglect and harm by the Federal Government. Yet this is a moment to recognize the great work we have done. It is broadband; it is water; it is economic opportunity; it is Native culture; it is Native language; it is Native music. It is people being in control of their own intellectual property, in control of their own destinies.

That is what this is about. This is about the right of people—the first peoples of the United States—to self-determination. I am proud to be a small part of that legacy.

I yield the floor.

(Mr. BROWN assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). The senior Senator from the great State of Ohio.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I am here at desk 88, honored to address my family and friends and Ohioans of the Nation.

I remember well my first speech 18 years ago. Illinois Senator Barack Obama was presiding over the Senate. Following parliamentary norms—and perhaps a bit presciently—I addressed him as "Mr. President."

A few desks away sat the senior Senator from Massachusetts, whose brother's desk I have now occupied for my entire three terms. Senator Kennedy, the chair of the Labor Committee, spoke after my remarks about his commitment and my commitment to workers. My speech, no surprise to anyone, was about workers and their dignity, raising the minimum wage, creating more opportunity for people who build this country with their brains and with their hands.

By some measure, my life began less than 3 miles from here. My dad, a family doctor from Mansfield, OH, and my mother a teacher from Mansfield, GA, met at a soldiers' dance in 1945 at the Mayflower Hotel. My father had returned from serving in the Army in the Middle East; my mother had moved to Washington to assist in the war effort to work at OSS. Their first date a few days later was at the Willard Hotel.

When they married the next year, my father moved to Mansfield, OH, then a prosperous industrial city where Ohioans made steel and manufactured cars and tires and appliances for young families returning from World War II.

When I was in high school, my mother, troubled by racism she saw in smalltown Georgia as a kid and in Ohio when she moved there, helped found the Ohio council of YWCAs. The 165-year mission of the Young Women's Christian Association is to eliminate racism and to empower women.

My dad was a family doctor with a working-class practice. He always took care of people, regardless of their ability to pay.

From them came my values and my desire to serve. From my parents—he a conservative, she a liberal; he a Republican, she a Democrat; he a northerner, she a southerner—taught me by their action and their admonition that the role of government was to help the little guy; the big guy could take care of himself.

I went to Johnny Appleseed Junior High—that was really its name—and walked the halls with the sons and daughters of autoworkers at GM, electrical workers of Westinghouse, steelworkers of Empire-Detroit, machinists at Tappan Stove, and the daughters and sons of the thousands of millwrights and electricians and laborers and pipefitters who kept those plants running. These workers, especially

those lucky enough to carry union cards, could buy a home, take a vacation, and join a growing middle class.

But by the time I graduated from Mansfield Senior High School, these plants were starting to shut down. Corporations searched the globe for cheap labor. First, they moved south to anti-union States; then they lobbied for tax breaks and bad trade deals to move jobs overseas. Always—always in search, Mr. President—of lower wages.

Compliant politicians were all too happy to oblige. They called it the North American Free Trade Agreement; they called it Most Favored Nation status with China—honest to God, that was its original name; they called it the Central American Free Trade Agreement; they called it the Trans-Pacific Partnership—until we put a stop to it.

And Wall Street rewarded those countries and those politicians over and over and over again. I saw what corporate greed and, frankly, Presidents of both parties did to my hometown and towns like it all over this country.

Through all my years in Congress, I have tried to be the voice in the megaphone for those workers and for those communities.

I think back to 2003. Every night, at the other end of this building—every night—I stood in the well of the House of Representatives reading letters from Ohioans opposing Bush's war in Iraq—from Cleveland to Cincinnati, from Dayton to Columbus, from Toledo to Athens. The White House, on flimsy evidence but with an itch to go to war, was sending working-class kids from Ohio to fight and, too often, to die in Iraq, a war that history tells us was a colossal mistake.

I drew inspiration from President John Quincy Adams who had returned to the House in his attack on slavery. To evade House rules that prohibited—believe it or not—that prohibited debating slavery, rules forced on the people's House by enslavers, by southern enslavers, he read letter after letter from his constituents about the evils of slavery and advocating for its abolition.

Then as now, our duty is to amplify the voices of the people whom we serve. To be that strong and effective megaphone, you start by listening.

I remember when I helped lead the opposition in my first year in the House to NAFTA. Bill Richardson, a pro-NAFTA Democrat from New Mexico, lamented the fact that Members would go home during congressional recess. He said, "You know, every time Members of Congress go home, my side loses votes."

Well, there is a reason for that. We are supposed to listen to our constituents. So almost every week, every Friday, Saturday, Sunday, I am in Ohio. I have crisscrossed this State, from Ash-Tabula to Athens, from Gallipolis to Zanesville to Portsmouth to Springfield to Van Wert to Toledo to Shelby—

all over this State holding roundtables, walking picket lines, touring plants, talking to workers in break rooms and on worksites and behind checkout counters.

On Monday afternoons, I return to Washington carrying a satchel of good ideas drawn from Ohioans. My job in both the House and Senate has been to represent those workers, to listen to them, to speak out for them, to fight for them; not to listen to Wall Street, not the drug companies, not the big railroads, but to fight for the people who make this country work.

Over the last few weeks, people have come up to me, since the election, at the grocery store, after church, at the airport, in the halls of the Senate asking how I am doing. There are two reasons I answer, "I am doing well." First is this team, the team around me. I have never been prouder of the public servants who work in this office, how they immediately went to work to help and support each other. All of them, all of them have dedicated themselves to making sure their colleagues land well and to making sure casework for Ohioans is handed off to other Members of Congress.

Over the last few weeks, I have been meeting with every single staff member—70 in all—to discuss their careers and their futures.

The second reason is that for me, this job has never really been about the title of being a U.S. Senator. Much of the important work we have done has been driven not by a bunch of Washington insiders but by ordinary Ohioans. I think about the fight to save workers' pensions. When Wall Street gambled away workers' retirement savings, we fought back.

Washington ignored Ohio workers, didn't take them seriously. Most people in Washington don't really even understand what collective bargaining is, that workers give up raises at the bargaining table for pensions and paid into them over a lifetime, all for the promise of a secure retirement for their family.

Ohioans put this on the agenda. They kept it there. They—we—never gave up, and together we passed the Butch Lewis Act, named for an Ohioan, saving the pensions of 100,000 Ohio workers and a million workers serving this country.

Or think how we expanded healthcare for veterans exposed to those football field-sized burn pits. Ohio veterans and their families came to us. They put it on the agenda. They forced—forced—Washington to listen. Veterans traveled to Washington. Many of them camped outside this door not far from here to make this happen. Because of them, the Heath Robinson PACT Act—again named for an Ohioan—is now law.

Those fights aren't quick, particularly when they require taking on powerful corporate interests.

Back when I was in the House more than two decades ago, we organized bus

trips for Ohio seniors to Canada to save money on prescription drugs. Three-hour bus ride from Lorain to Toledo to Detroit, across the river to Windsor, Ontario, so they could save money on prescription drugs.

Throughout my entire time in the Senate and before, we fought big Pharma and their lobbyists trying to lower the cost of prescription drugs. Two years ago, finally we won. This never happens fast. We capped the price of insulin at \$35 a month for Medicare beneficiaries. For the first time, Medicare was negotiating drug prices for seniors.

These victories, as I say, they don't come easy. Of course they don't, but they matter to millions of families. When we stand up to corporate special interest, when we guarantee workers a seat at the table, when we see decisions here through the eyes of workers, we all do our jobs a little bit differently and better.

We included a project labor agreement for 8,000 workers at a single construction site, ensuring a path to middle class for those families.

We expanded the childcare tax credit, giving more than 90 percent of American families a tax cut to keep up with the cost of living—2 million children in Ohio, 60 million around the country benefited, if only for a year.

We are on the verge of restoring the full Social Security benefits that police officers and teachers and firefighters and busdrivers and school cafeteria workers have earned.

With Finance Chair RON WYDEN, we created an industrial policy to build more manufacturing in our country. And we have fundamentally—fundamentally—changed the debate on trade in this country. Of course, this town is still full of people who think that way, whose arrogance won't allow their world view to be changed by all the evidence that corporate trade deals have failed our workers, failed our communities, and, frankly, poisoned our politics.

They no longer go unchallenged and unquestioned. They used to ridicule you if you spoke up for workers, if you dared to suggest that no amount of compensating the losers, no amount of compensation can replace the dignity of a good-paying, rewarding job—no longer.

I have always looked at things a little differently, perhaps, than some. To me, politics is not really left or right or liberal or conservative. It is really about whose side you are on and whom you are willing to fight for, whom you are willing to stand up to. That is what true populism is all about. True populism lifts all people. True populism doesn't tear others down. True populism doesn't play to race and division. True populism is essentially about the dignity of work, putting workers at the center of all we should be doing.

When I talk about workers, I mean all workers—whether you swipe a badge or punch a clock, whether you

work for tips or whether you work on salary, whether you are going to school or raising kids or caring for an aging parent. No matter who you are, no matter where you live, no matter what kind of work you do, your work has dignity. It ought to pay off for you and your family. We have that in common. With all the differences we have as a country, we have work in common. Work is really what binds us.

For too many people in Ohio and around the country, hard work hasn't paid off. Today, far too many workers don't see a path to the middle class, no matter how hard they work.

For almost a half a century—we know this, we know this—we should be challenging this. For half a century, the stock market soared; executive compensation has exploded; corporate profits have risen dramatically; worker productivity has increased, but workers' wages have been comparatively flat, and costs keep going up.

Until we solve the fundamental problem in this country, until hard work is valued, until everyone has a path to the middle class and the stability and security of a good-paying job, our work in this body, my work as a private citizen, come January, that work is unfinished.

If you want to know why so many workers think the system is rigged against them, just look at what happened 3 weeks ago in East Texas. It is a little fanfare. A single judge, appointed by President Trump, at the behest of the Texas Chamber of Commerce, struck down a Labor Department rule which guaranteed overtime for workers making \$35,000 or \$40,000 a year.

That ought to be a fundamental principle. If you put in extra hours, you ought to earn extra pay. You did the work; you earned it. One judge, one decision, four million workers lost their overtime. One judge, one decision, four million workers lost their overtime. That is why we make this fight.

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII wrote what is recognized as the first time an international figure acknowledged the rights of workers and the duty of employers to respect workers' inherent dignity. In *Rerum Novarum*, he wrote that "to respect in every man his dignity," required respecting workers' rights to fair compensation and safe humane working conditions.

Think about this. Seven decades later, in a segregated Tennessee, in a segregated city of Memphis, in a segregated neighborhood, amidst a torrential downpour, four sanitation workers climbed into—yes—a segregated garbage truck to shield themselves from the rain. Two White workers settled into the warmth and the safety of the cab. Two Black workers crawled in the back, amidst the garbage, where the compactor malfunctioned, and two young Black workers were crushed to death.

Dr. King went to Memphis twice that year. He went after that happened. The

second time, we know he was murdered. Both times, he was fighting for the dignity of work. He wove together better than anybody I know of in history—wove together civil rights, voting rights, and worker rights better than anybody ever has.

In a speech to ACME Sanitation workers, a month after the workers were crushed to death, he spoke at ACME on March 18 in Memphis:

So often we overlook the work and the significance of those who are not in professional jobs, of those who are not in the so-called big jobs. But let me say to you tonight—

Dr. King went on—

that whenever you are engaged in work that serves humanity . . . it has dignity and it has worth.

All labor has dignity. While the shape of our fight for the dignity of work may change, it will, of course, continue. And I count on my colleagues to do that.

I will close the same way I have closed so many speeches across Ohio because the values I fight for have not changed and will never change come January. On my lapel, I wear this pin. Some of you have one on today. Thank you. Many of you do.

I wear this pin—I know you don't wear it every day, but thank you for wearing it—depicting a canary in a birdcage. It was given to me at a workers' Memorial Day rally 25 years ago in Lorain, OH.

You know the story. At the turn of the last century, coal miners took the canary down into the mines with them to warn them of poisonous gases. They didn't have a union strong enough to protect them. They didn't have a government that cared enough to protect them. He was on his own.

But over the last century and a half, think about what we as a nation have done. Think of what we have done to change that. All those fights required going up against powerful special interests. I think about the lesson that any union organizer knows. They don't just give you fair wages and better benefits and retirement. They don't give it to you. You have to go out and take it. That is how progress works.

Wall Street didn't just wake up one day and say: You know, older people ought to have a pension. We ought to give them—no, we demanded Social Security, we fought for it, and we got it.

Companies 100 years ago didn't just all of a sudden think: You know, work is too hard; we ought to have an 8-hour workday. We ought to ban child labor. No. We fought for it. We demanded it. We got it.

Big insurance companies didn't just all of a sudden think: You know, there are a lot of seniors that just can't afford their healthcare. No. We fought for it; we demanded it; and we got Medicare.

In the 1960s, a bunch of Southern segregationists didn't say: You know, everybody ought to have the right to vote. No. We fought for it. We demanded it. We got voting rights in this country.

And then, just 2 years ago, the drug companies didn't all of a sudden say: Insulin costs too damn much. We have got to do something. Drugs are too expensive. No. We took them on. We fought for it. We got a \$35 insulin cap.

Those fights—progress didn't just happen on their own course.

So when I first came to the Senate, like all new Senators, they gave me a really cool, pretty expensive-looking piece of jewelry to say: I am a big shot. I am a Senator, and walk around. Well, I wore that for a couple days, and then I thought, you know, it didn't feel right. So I took it off. I put my canary pin back on. I have worn it every day since.

So when I walk off the Senate floor at the end of this year, nothing changes. I am not taking off this pin. I am not giving up my fight for workers. If you love this country, you fight for the people who make it work every day.

In January, I return to Ohio, close to the seven grandchildren who are sitting in the Gallery today. My wife Connie surprised me last night with their showing up at a dinner with their parents in tow. My grandchildren are in the Gallery—some sitting there patiently, some perhaps not so patiently. Leo and Jackie and Milo and Carolyn and Russell and Ela and Maribell sitting with Emily and Matt. Sitting with Elizabeth and Patrick and Caitlin and Alejandro. And Clayton, our oldest, is taking finals today, but their dad Andy is here. My journey has been a family affair.

With my brothers Bob and Charlie, for literally 50 years with the sacrifices that family members inevitably make to ambition, to service—yes, sometimes to ego—for a career of serving the public.

To my beloved Connie, how selfless she has been as I pursued this dream. Her exceptional talent is exceeded only by her kindness in spirit, as a wife and mother and grandmother extraordinaire. There is no one like her. How lucky I have been the last 22 years.

So to my colleagues, this is my last speech on the Senate floor. But it is not, I promise you, the last time you will hear from me.

Thank you.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

TRIBUTE TO SHERROD BROWN

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I know we have a number of colleagues who want to speak. I will be very brief.

I just want to start by saying how grateful we are for the service of SHERROD BROWN in the U.S. Senate and the great work that he has done. He reminded us to make sure that we wore the canary pin. And for me, it has a special significance, even though I haven't been wearing it all these years, but I wanted to wear it today. But it is especially significant because I have ancestors who worked, of course, in the

anthracite coal mines. But I think, in so many ways, it is emblematic of his service, that he never forgot where he came from, never forgot who sent him here, and you heard that throughout his remarks today about the work he has done on behalf of American working men and women and their families.

When the history of the labor movement of the United States—if it were ever written, of course, it wouldn't be one book. It would be a multivolume work by some scholar, maybe sometime in the future. But whenever that complete and comprehensive history is written, there will be a significant portion of that history written about the work of Senator SHERROD BROWN of Ohio because no one that I am aware of that has served in this body has done more for workers in the time he has been in the Senate.

The last thing I want to say is what he did—and there are too many to mention here today—but I want to thank him for what he did leading the effort, which culminated in 2021, March of 2021, at 5:34 a.m. in the morning, when the first vote was taken on the American Rescue Plan. Among many things that bill did was allowed us to take the child tax credit—an existing tax credit—and turbocharge it for America's children. As he said, 60 million American children—2 million in Ohio, a little more than 2 million in my home State of Pennsylvania. It would not have happened without his leadership.

So with that, I will yield the floor and thank Senator BROWN again for his service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, as another occupant of the back row, I just want to add my incredible thanks for not just his family but for SHERROD and what he stood for in this place. We are going to forever miss him.

We are going to miss—right, Senator CASEY—CHUCK looking back at this row and glaring at us because SHERROD was talking. "It is not us. It is not us."

(Laughter.)

I will forever cherish the note in my desk to BOB that says: Get him to be quiet now. They are going to throw us out.

Sherrod, you have made trouble, but it is a whole lot of good trouble on behalf of the people of this country.

I look up there at Connie, and I will forever love that story that I will not do justice to, but it is the story of when Connie was in an audience and SHERROD was speaking. And a guy she doesn't know turns to her and says: God, I hate that guy's voice.

And she says: Yeah?

And he says: Yeah. You know, it is a bit like fingernails on a blackboard.

And Connie says: Really, you don't like that guy's voice?

He says: Yeah.

And she says: I like his voice.

And he says: You like his voice?

And she says: Yeah. You know when I really like it?

She leans into the guy, the guy leans in, and Connie goes: I really like it when he wakes me up in the middle of the night and says in that gravelly voice: "I love you, baby."

(Laughter.)

Your love of Connie and the two of you together is something that is such a model for all of us here. Her success, your success is part of this U.S. Senate story.

And that pin you wear—that canary in the coal mine—this is not the last time we are all going to wear it. For me, it was not just about workers, which is about its glory, but it is also about what we have to confront in this place—the toxicity of this place sometimes—and that you, SHERROD—for us, you were that canary in the coal mine. You are the one reminding us why we are really here when, some days, you just can't believe that people are doing certain things or stopping certain good pieces of legislation for the people of this country.

You are that person for us who stood up not just when the cameras were on but behind closed doors. You reminded us and reminded your staff to carry on, and they are going to take that torch with them and those pins with them every single place they go. So thank you for giving us that inspiration, SHERROD. Thank you for your work.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. First of all, I am going to come out to the aisle because this is "doing the SHERROD," when you get far away from your desk. I literally think, if the leash were long enough, he would have opened the door and taken a couple steps out and come running in and down the aisle.

(Laughter.)

I stand today with a similar start because there was this moment in the cloakroom when I was a new guy in the Senate, and I talked about TESTER saying to me very loudly in the cloakroom: I didn't think I was going to like you when I first got here.

Then SHERROD chimed in right away—and you will remember this, SHERROD—and said: I didn't think I would like you either.

Now, I didn't care about JON TESTER because I don't like JON TESTER.

(Laughter.)

But I really cared that SHERROD BROWN would say that, at one point, he didn't like me. But I knew he liked me when he said it, because when I came to the Senate, he surprised me. He did something I never expected. I had great experiences when I first came here—friendships, colleagues stepping up—I see my chairman here—putting me under their arm, but SHERROD did it in a way that really surprised me.

He said: Hey, CORY. I want to work with you on something really important.

And I thought of all of these big issues in the Senate. Is it Social Security? Is it lowering prescription drug prices? I thought: What are we going to do for America?

SHERROD BROWN blew me away.

He said: I want to fight for fair wages for the cafeteria workers who work in the basement of the buildings we work in.

Immediately, it floored me.

I started working in this place in 2013—and I will never forget—it was the least diverse place I had ever worked. I came here, and on one of the first nights I worked past 10 p.m., I left out of the employees' entrance. I saw the line of employees walking in, and they were mostly Black and Brown people. When I went to the basement to get something to eat in the cafeteria, the cafeteria workers were mostly Black and Brown folks. They didn't have a Senator living in Washington, DC, but SHERROD was someone who stood up for their dignity.

SHERROD, I have been struggling all week because I feel emotional, like losing you. I had this poem that kept coming up over and over again—it is really short, and I know you know it—but I did not understand why this was the poem, and I want to try to explain it to you. It is a poem by Langston Hughes. It is entitled "I, too, sing America."

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes,

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

[Because] tomorrow,

I'll be at the table

When company comes.

[And] nobody'll dare

Say to me,

"Eat in the kitchen,"

Then.

Besides,

They'll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed—

I, too, [sing] America.

SHERROD, I have served with you for 11 years, and the thing I love the most about you is you see people. You see the folks who others walk past and don't even affirm their humanity. And you just don't see people; what you have shown me time and time again from my first week as a U.S. Senator is that you see the folks who are the most important to the very idea of America—the idea that people have sweat for and cried for and bled for. To me, that is the definition of what it means to represent people, all the people.

So I end with this, and it is a moment from American history because I know you are such a nerd.

(Laughter.)

You, frankly, just never fit my image of what I thought a Senator would look like. You are frumpy, and you are disheveled—and the only person who has messier hair than you is Bernie, for crying out loud.

(Laughter.)

But there are five words I think I want to say to you in my final farewell to you in an official capacity, standing in the aisle that you so defined. And it

is a simple story from history after Lincoln gave his second inaugural address: Malice towards none and charity towards all—the ideal that you live that there is no us and them. It is just us.

Lincoln retired to a reception afterward, and it was crowded. And people were pulling at him and trying to get his attention, and he was pushing through the crowds, looking for one person who almost didn't get into the reception. This guy had to be recognized by someone because he was Black and was pulled in to be allowed to be at this incredible reception. The President pushes by him. The historians say it was the Governor of Rhode Island who was trying to talk to him, but he kept pushing towards this man.

And he said to this man: My friend, what did you think of my speech?

This man, regal in stature, humble in spirit, looked at him and said: Mr. President, you should attend to your guests.

And President Lincoln is said to have waved him off and said: No. I want to know what you thought of my speech. I need to know, my friend, what you thought of my speech.

This would be the last time in American history that these two men would ever speak because Lincoln would soon be assassinated. These were the last words that they exchanged. And if you allow me these five words, I just want to say to you, in my last farewell to you after your farewell speech, as Frederick Douglass looked at Abraham Lincoln and simply said:

It was a sacred effort. It was a sacred effort.

Your 18-year career here was a sacred effort to see everyone in our great country as an American, to affirm their humanity, to affirm their dignity, and to elevate our highest virtues.

Thank you, my friend.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am saddened by the comment from SHERROD that this is his farewell speech.

As I said to several of my colleagues, we lose so many good ones here, and after we have lost them to retirement and to election results, the Senate really is an empty place, and it will be in that corner. For as long as I have been honored to serve here, that place has been occupied by SHERROD.

What makes such a difference in this man? Why is he viewed so differently? Why have so many showed up to hear his farewell speech? Well, what I am about to say you can say about him and about Connie, his wife.

There was a man named Jack Valenti, who used to be an adviser to the Presidents, and he gave President Lyndon Johnson a piece of advice. He said: Every good speech should include six words. Let me tell you a story.

Time and again, SHERROD BROWN told us a story. It was a story from a picket

line. It was a story from a clothes factory. It was a story that you picked from your home State of Ohio and as you traveled around this country. And those stories, much like the stories that Connie has told over and over again in her celebrated writing, really illustrate the values of this country. You can give a sterile speech about political science all you wish, but if you tell a story that touches the heart of the listener, it can make a difference in them as it has made in you. Time and again, SHERROD has told those stories. That canary in a cage is a classic example. It tells you that he not only saw injustice but he spoke out against it, and he has dedicated his life to stopping it. And that inspires all of us—to listen to these stories and to realize they are the true story of America.

Now, this troubadour—this speaker, this man who has inspired us so often—is stepping into a different place in life.

All I can ask is one favor: Tell stories. You have so many that you have lived and so many things that need to be shared. I know that you, like your wife, are a writer—you wrote a great book about the desk at which you are sitting—and I know that you know what history means. But there is another job for you. I am not sure what it is, but I hope it will tap into your talent and your values.

I remember that day. You said it many times. It was the greatest day in your service in the Senate. It involved the child tax credit, as BOB CASEY has talked to us about, and it also, I am sure, involved the idea of finally giving these retirees a fighting chance and a wage with which to sustain their families. Your fingerprints were all over that, SHERROD. It is the kind of issue that you run for office for and fight for—and make a difference in the history of this country.

So remember those words as you go forward. Your stories have inspired us. Keep telling those stories.

And, Connie, I know you will. I will look for your byline.

I wish you the best.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, when I was wrestling, along with Mary, my wife, about whether to run for the Senate, I had the chance to meet the Senator from Ohio and his wife at a gathering in Massachusetts, and I came away believing that service here could matter.

When I learned of your background and your fight, SHERROD, I thought that is my fight, too. I want to be here and join you in this effort.

You know, with my dad a mechanic and my mother a secretary, I don't know how the hell I ended up here on the floor of the Senate, but it is because of believing in the vision of America that you referred to at the close of your speech. While I can't quote it exactly, it was along the lines of: If you love America, you fight for America's worker—or: You fight for

the workers who make America function.

We are in a system now that is so rigged with liars and lobbyists and dark money, but the antidote is individuals like yourself who say: Public service matters. I am not here to help the rich become richer or the corporations become stronger. I am here to fight for the foundation for every family to thrive—on healthcare, on housing, on education, and on a good-paying job, with an honest day's pay for a fair day's work.

I then saw you in action on the Banking Committee. Now, ELIZABETH WARREN had this idea for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, but she wasn't here in the Senate yet. But on that committee, in working on Dodd-Frank, we collectively delivered that and so much more through that process, including taking on the false mortgages—the predatory mortgages—that were turning the dream of homeownership into a nightmare. There is probably a dozen powerful factors in there for America's workers. We made a difference in those years—you made a difference—and I was so happy to see you lead the Banking Committee.

I can't tell you what a loss it is to this Chamber and what a loss it is to the workers of America that I will no longer see you in that chair, but I know I will see you somewhere down the trail, fighting the good fight.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I have a little bit of a beef here with Senator BROWN because right before he spoke, I admonished him to try not to choke up during his speech, and, of course, this was a fool's errand. It was like asking the Sun not to shine; and, of course, it was highly predictable that what would cause that gravelly voice of his to get even more of a catch in it was when he was talking about his family and also about his staff—his work family.

The very first time I met SHERROD, I could see that this was a man with a huge heart and tons of energy.

I recognized in you, SHERROD, the Midwest populism that I come from, from the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party.

I sit in the seat that was once held by Paul Wellstone, as you know, who famously said, "When we all do better, we all do better." I know that has been the guiding light of your service.

There are plenty of people here in Washington watching out for the rich people, the powerful people, and the big corporations, but you have always been our guide in watching out for everybody else, the people who actually make this country work.

I saw this firsthand when you and I worked together on one piece of legislation—the Butch Lewis Act—to basically say that hard-working folks who earned their pensions, who lost their pensions through no fault of their own, deserve to be able to retire with dig-

nity. This is, of course, one of the most important promises of organized labor—a fair wage, safe working conditions, and to be able to retire with dignity. Because of your work, I had a chance to see what that really meant for people.

I will never forget one of the first meetings I did when I first was a U.S. Senator. I went up to Duluth, MN, an old industrial community on the shores of Lake Superior. It is a beautiful community—probably not unlike Mansfield—that in some ways had seen better days, as the shipping out of jobs happened and affected them. I talked to some of those hard-working teamsters, retired teamsters, about the importance of their pension and what we were doing, what I was doing with SHERROD BROWN to help to protect their pensions.

I will never forget this one woman. She described to me what it meant that she had paid in, she had done everything right, and now she was running the risk of losing that. She said to me: Tina, that is my plan A, B, and C. I don't have another plan. My other plan is to live under a bridge.

That work, just that one piece of work that you did, that you led us on to make sure those pensions were there for folks, is a legacy that all of us can aspire to.

Throughout your career, you always made sure that, while so many others were watching out for the folks who already had it pretty good, the people who make this country work had a voice.

I, too, am wearing my canary pin today, and I think that your legacy in this body will be all of us who don't forget your work but continue it.

You know, the hope that we can do better, that there is more work ahead of us, and that we have the energy for fight—I mean, hope is an act of will; it is not an article of faith. It takes the will of all of us. I know that you have inspired in all of us in this Chamber—at least many of us—the will to continue to fight with hope and optimism that we will make this country live up to its full promise.

I can't wait to see what you do next. As you have famously said—and I will leave out some of the adjectives—you are not dying here, you are just going on to the next thing. I know those of us who have heard this story are grateful that on the floor of the Senate, I am only giving an abbreviated version.

I know I am one of many who love you very much and can't wait to see what you do next.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I say to Senator BROWN: I have my pin. I am taking your desk. I am going to get your office. And I wouldn't mind having your hair and your eloquence.

(Laughter.)

For me, SHERROD BROWN—and for many of our colleagues—has always

been a role model, a friend, a voice for people who are often unseen, and also a real example of integrity. When you talk to SHERROD BROWN, you may not agree with him, but you know what he says is what he believes.

You know, we live in a day where politicians are often distrusted and demeaned, maybe as never before, but what you have done for me and for my family is to give politics a good name, to make sure that people understand that the word "politician" is not a four-letter word; it is something I am proud to say—I am a politician because I try to be like SHERROD BROWN.

You know, that kind of politician doesn't always win. It is just a fact of life that people often take stands; they espouse causes; they champion people or issues that may not be popular at that moment. But they are vindicated by history.

I have been proud to stand with you, SHERROD, for some of those causes, and I know they will be vindicated by history.

As I told your staff—some of them—in that office, the SHERROD BROWN office, we are going to have a conference room named after you. It is a trivial thing to do, but it will remind us that we will be asking ourselves at moments, tough moments, moments of crisis: What would SHERROD do? What would he think? What would he say?

I will continue to value you as a friend and as a role model. Thank you, SHERROD, for all you have done for all of us. Godspeed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I want to be brief, but I would like to briefly say something that might be an odd thing for the Senator from Colorado to say, which is how grateful I am to the people of Ohio for sending SHERROD BROWN to the U.S. Senate for all of these years and how much I wish that you had sent him back one more time.

I say that in part because I once lived in Ohio and was a young person there, learning something about politics in the late eighties and early nineties. SHERROD BROWN was my secretary of state. He was the same person then that he is today in all the important ways and a progressive voice for the people of Ohio.

It was an amazing thing for me to come to this place and meet SHERROD as a fellow Senator and to sit in that chair and preside, while SHERROD stood—I don't remember when that was, when it would have been; Barack Obama probably was in the early days of his Presidency—and listen to the names of cities and towns all across Ohio ricochet around the marble Chamber that we are in with such joy because I had been to those places myself.

I can remember hearing him fight against the characterization by outsiders of the place he lived and the place he grew up as the Rust Bowl of the United States instead of the indus-

trial heartland of the United States, for him to remind people in this Chamber of the important—as he was describing today—the critical contribution that working people make to this Nation every day, all day, over many years, whether they are living in the industrial heartland or anywhere else in America, because for SHERROD, workers in every State in this country count and matter.

But I want to just say thank you on behalf of the children that I used to work for in the Denver public schools. I was the superintendent when my friend CORY BOOKER was the mayor of Newark. We worked together in those days, and we have had the chance to work together here.

There are many times that I have been on this floor, Senator BROWN, when I worried about whether the children I used to work for in Denver, who are mostly kids of color, mostly kids living in poverty, whether anybody here had their interests at heart or whether anybody here could even see them or whether we had actually become really comfortable in the sense that we were treating our kids like they were someone else's kids, not even the country's kids. More than anybody else in this place, you have lifted their voices. You have seen the kids that I represented or worked for in the Denver public schools.

The chance for you and Bob and Cory and I to work together on the child tax credit, which went to 90 percent of America's kids and cut child poverty in half, is a symbol to all of us, I think, of what is possible if we dedicate ourselves to the idea that this country has to live up to its aspirations. That is something you never have let us forget. I know you have talked about it over and over again, how one of the happiest days of your time in the Senate was the day we passed that bill. Bob mentioned that.

I will say for a lot of us who are here today, this is one of the saddest days in the Senate because the contribution that you have made here is one that is so unique and so singular, and it is entirely unfinished.

I don't feel sorry for you, but I feel sorry for the rest of us. I know we are counting on you—counting on you—to make sure that you continue to fight the fight you have been fighting from the day you arrived here, the days you were secretary of state all those years ago in Ohio, for the rest of your life.

Thanks, SHERROD, for your leadership and your friendship and for everything you have done for the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

THE CALENDAR

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1607 and the Senate

proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 278, S. 1277; Calendar No. 333, H.R. 1727; Calendar No. 602, S. 3543; H.R. 6826, which was received from the House and is at the desk; H.R. 6843, which was received from the House and is at the desk; and H.R. 1607.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged of the relevant bill, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bills, en bloc.

Mr. CARDIN. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment, where applicable, be agreed to; that the bills, as amended, if amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

The bills passed, en bloc, as follows:

MAMMOTH CAVE NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2023

The bill (S. 1277) to modify the boundary of the Mammoth Cave National Park in the State of Kentucky, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 1277

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Mammoth Cave National Park Boundary Adjustment Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. MAMMOTH CAVE NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY MODIFICATION.

Section 11 of the Act of June 5, 1942 (56 Stat. 319, chapter 341; 16 U.S.C. 404c-11), is amended—

(1) in the second paragraph, by striking "the sum of not to exceed" in the first sentence and all that follows through the period at the end of the paragraph and inserting "such sums as are necessary."; and

(2) by inserting after the second paragraph the following:

"The Secretary of the Interior may acquire approximately 980 acres of the land and any interests in the land generally depicted on the map entitled 'Mammoth Cave National Park Proposed Southern Boundary Expansion Edmonson and Barren Counties, Kentucky', numbered 135/177, 967, and dated April 28, 2022, for inclusion in the Mammoth Cave National Park."

CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK COMMISSION EXTENSION ACT

The bill (H.R. 1727) to amend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Development Act to extend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Commission was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.