

time I was born. Our society began to leverage the security that earlier Americans won for tomorrow in order to avoid the challenges of the day. Courageous people don't do that.

Even a few years before I was born, I believe President Kennedy had already begun to detect the shift. In his inaugural address, he implored Americans to do one thing:

Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.

A nation that once rallied around sacrifice—in war, in rebuilding, in laying foundations for the future—gave way to a new cultural mood. Over time, we stopped asking “What can we build and leave for the ones we love?” and we began to ask “What can we claim for ourselves?” We became obsessed with what we as individuals are entitled to, and we forgot how to plant the seeds and nurture them until the harvest. The sense of shared responsibility that had defined generations was eroded. Our growing reliance on promises we felt others owed to us meant that we earned less and expected more.

We initially built a safety net to protect people in need and our most vulnerable citizens, which is a noble idea and one that I support, but, over time, that safety net stretched wider and wider until nearly everybody was lying in it.

As the cost of our promises ballooned, we lacked the will to either pay for them or the courage to pare them back. So what did we do instead? We did what previous generations refused to do: We passed the buck by handing the bill off to our children. Instead of sacrificing for the next generation, we passed the burden on to them.

It was a convenient deception. Congress created more programs that it wouldn't pay for. Public officials made promises they couldn't keep. They convinced their constituents that Americans who come of age after us would take care of tomorrow all by themselves. We also fought wars and engaged in foreign interventions without paying for them. It all adds up.

All the while, our national debt kept rising. I am not just talking about dollars; America began experiencing a real character deficit. We weren't just spending money; we were squandering trust, legacy, and time at the expense of the boys and girls who were too young to even vote or recognize a better path than the one we had chosen for them. We soothed ourselves by claiming that we were being compassionate, but we passed on the consequences of our choices to those not yet born. This is not compassion; it is generational theft.

In 1967, when I was born, the national debt stood at \$330 billion. Today, it is \$36 trillion—more than 100 times greater even after adjusting for inflation. In 2024 alone, we ran a \$1.8 trillion deficit. A baby born in America today inherits \$106,000 as their share of the national debt on day one.

So what happened to American ingenuity, resolve, and discipline? What

happened to it? How did a nation once defined by sacrifice for our kids—think about it—become one that was willing to pilfer their piggy banks?

We have some urgent challenges. Twenty-first century Americans are not being asked to storm Normandy's beaches or endure winters at Valley Forge. The task upon us may seem less heroic, but it remains both daunting and deeply patriotic. What is that task? To simply stop spending more than we are willing to pay for today.

The question isn't just “How did America's financial and cultural debt get so deep?” It is “How can we claw our way out of this financial and cultural hole?” The answer comes down to identifying what we value and what we believe is worth the sacrifice.

For me, that is my family and my country. I love them both, and I know many of you share those same sentiments. I believe that we only sacrifice for the things we love. I will repeat that. I believe we only sacrifice for the things we love. That is why it is crucial and consequential that we remind ourselves and instruct our children to love this country, reminding ourselves that this pattern and promise of American liberty forged a noble, innovative nation that is worth loving and worth fighting for, because why would anyone sacrifice for a nation they don't love or for neighbors they don't feel a patriotic affection for?

America has been self-aware from the beginning. We never thought we were perfect. But every generation is supposed to put in the sweat and tears to form a more perfect Union.

We were the first Nation rooted in the confidence that our rights come not from Kings or governments but from God, that we are endowed by our Creator with the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is a beautiful thought. That idea is exceptional. This country is exceptional. There are none like it in the world, and we must teach the next generation what our countrymen sacrificed to secure. And that is why this Nation is worth loving with an active and enduring patriotism.

Loving America doesn't mean agreeing with every policy or politician. It is not required. But it does require being confident in the idea of America and being willing to sacrifice for the cause of this Nation—not in the abstract but in real ways: by being good stewards of what was handed down to us and honoring those who came before us by adopting their discipline and by becoming the kind of neighbors who are willing to work a little harder, take a little less, and give a little more to preserve what has made this country great.

I stand here today as the beneficiary of those who sacrificed for me and for all of us. I was blessed to be adopted into a loving home where they taught me that faith, family, freedom, and hard work are the most reliable anecdotes for poverty and despair the world has ever known.

We are still a nation where a newborn can begin life in a foster home in Detroit, grow up in the rural Midwest, and have the honor of serving as a U.S. Senator.

As Americans, no matter our background, whether we come from abundance or struggle, we have all inherited the gift of freedom, passed down from earlier Americans. We stand on their shoulders.

Let's not force the next generation to remember us as the ones who broke the two-centuries-long chain of self-sacrifice but, rather, as the ones who reformed it.

To my colleagues and constituents, count me in as one who is willing to do my part, to work hard, forgo convenience, and reinforce that chain that will sustain our Nation for future generations.

I will listen to your ideas, and I hope you will listen to mine. I will operate from the principled belief that we must elevate liberty and personal responsibility above expediency and entitlement and that our children should not have to pay the price for our lack of discipline.

The America I aspire to serve is defined by courage and a love that refuses to take more than it gives.

As it has so many times in our history, may these convictions prevail in this Chamber and in the classrooms, boardrooms, break rooms, and living rooms of these United States. Consider this my prayer for our Nation, and may God work through us to make it so.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

TRIBUTE TO JON HUSTED

Mr. MORENO. Mr. President, I had the opportunity to meet Senator HUSTED when he was State Representative Husted about 15, maybe 20 years ago. I don't want to age myself. I was down in Columbus meeting a few State reps down there, and I see this guy and go: Man, who is that young guy who sounded really, really smart? I walked up to him and introduced myself. It was JON HUSTED.

In that period of time, what I have seen is a great person. He is not just a great public servant. This is somebody who could have spent his entire adult life making a lot of money. He is a very smart and gifted person. Instead, he has dedicated his entire time to actually making this country better. The reason for that you just heard today. He is somebody who is a deep person of faith, who is a great father, a great husband, and honestly a great friend.

So, look, don't take my word for it. The Senator does not know that I did this. So I think you owe it to hear.

So here is just a sampling of what the people in Ohio said based on a simple request: Tell me what you think of Senator HUSTED.

Let me start with the first one:

JON has excelled in every public office he has held . . . as a legislator, Speaker of the Ohio House, Secretary of State and Lieutenant Governor. I worked with JON on a daily

basis for the 6 years he served as Lieutenant Governor. No one understands Ohio better than JON. His work on economic development as Lieutenant Governor will have lasting impact for generations. He has had a great career of public service. However, I am convinced that his service as U.S. Senator will be his most important and most impactful for Ohio and for our country. His knowledge of Ohio, and his ability to work with others, will make him a great U.S. Senator.

Signed, Ohio Governor and former U.S. Senator Mike DeWine.

Second one:

Senator HUSTED embodies everything Ohioans are about: family, hard work, love of country, and service. Ohio is better because of his years of service.

Alex Triantafilou, chairman of the Ohio Republican Party.

Next one:

JON was the Speaker when I started in the Ohio House in 2007. I watched and learned from him and today I use that knowledge everyday in the Ohio legislature.

Eighteen years. Pretty impressive.

He's a great leader and a great U.S. Senator.

Current Ohio Speaker of the House Matt Huffman.

Next one:

From his beginnings in rural Williams County to his leadership in the legislative and executive branch of our state government, JON HUSTED made Ohio a better state at every stop. I have no doubt he will do the same for our entire country in the United States Senate.

Ohio Senate President Rob McColley.

Senator HUSTED is passionate about his faith, his family, his State, and his country. It has been a pleasure watching him grow throughout the years, and without question he will serve his Senate family with great pride and integrity.

That is from the current Lieutenant Governor and former Ohio State football head coach, Jim Tressell.

And the last one:

During his service at the state level, JON saw firsthand, in great detail, the many problems at the federal level—problems that he was powerless as a state officer to solve. He brings that detailed knowledge and his passion for the right thing to the United States Senate—and the country will be better for it.

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost.

I will end with this, Mr. President. Look at what he has already accomplished. I can say a little bit falls here in this Chamber. About 8 years ago, I remember sitting with Senator HUSTED—then-Lieutenant Governor, Candidate HUSTED, Nominee HUSTED—in a little office building in downtown Cleveland. He said: I have an idea that is going to be called Innovate Ohio.

JON, what is that?

We are going to put together leaders of the Ohio innovation ecosystem and make Ohio the most attractive State where you can build and grow a company.

And we had our first meeting. Who was in that meeting? Now-Senator JON HUSTED, now-Senator me, BERNIE MORENO, soon-to-be Governor Vivek

Ramaswamy, and our third Ohio honorary senator, Vice President JD VANCE—all hand-selected by Senator HUSTED to participate 8 years ago in Innovation Task Force.

So on nights when we go through vote-aramas and we are here 24, 30 hours, it is you whom I have to blame, Senator HUSTED, for encouraging me to seek public service.

I came to DC not knowing what to expect, and having somebody whom I consider a friend, somebody whom I know we can talk about anything and hash things out has made this job, very, very rewarding. Thank you for your service to Ohio. I look forward to serving with you in the U.S. Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, when Iran's proxies launched a full-scale war on Israel, October 7, 2023, President Biden pledged an unwavering commitment to Israel's security. That was the right message in the moment.

But as I warned publicly at the time, Israel needed more than just rhetorical solidarity. Like Ukraine, Israel needed precious time, space to maneuver, and materiel support to defeat a shared enemy. And yet, as in Ukraine, America's commitment has indeed wavered. Our support has not been ironclad.

Instead, under the previous administration, American support was delayed, restricted, and paired with attempts to micromanage Israel's operations and even interfere with Israeli politics. And at every turn, the progressive left and isolationist right hyperventilated about the specter of so-called forever war.

Fortunately, Israel held its ground. Israelis certainly weren't enthused about a ground war in Gaza. Their leaders knew that war would be difficult. But they knew it was unavoidable so long as Hamas terrorists still refused to release its hostages. They also knew lasting security meant changing Iran's calculus, not just responding to attacks from proxies.

So Israel decided to turn Iran's terrorist assets into liabilities. Despite the pearl-clutching here in Washington, our allies simultaneously decapitated Hezbollah and crippled Hamas. Their bold operations created a new opportunity for Lebanon to claw back its sovereignty from a terrorist state within a state.

Meanwhile, the collapse of the brutal Assad regime in Syria brought down a Russian vassal and Iran's favorite corridor of weapons and terrorist finance.

These are the circumstances President Trump inherited. What to do with them has been the subject of quite some debate. Some of his advisers and supporters came with Obama-Biden-era talking points, ready to urge him to continue his predecessor's policy of constraining Israel. Some had argued publicly that America had no vital or existential interests in the Middle East

or claimed the region was a distraction from other priorities. They warned of forever war.

Some seemed to push for nuclear negotiations with parameters eerily similar to the nuclear deal the President withdrew from his first term. They even proposed Iran could keep enriching uranium, until the President, rightly, correctly, quashed that idea.

These mixed messages emboldened Iran and its proxies. After all, why give up if administration officials saw the Middle East as little more than a distraction or if they seem as fearful of restoring deterrence as the previous guys?

So Hamas kept holding hostages. The Houthis kept targeting Israel and Red Sea commerce. And the Islamic Republic kept marching toward a nuclear weapon. And in response, Israel took the next logical step to restore deterrence.

Once again, innovative and decisive strikes destroyed Iran's air defenses and imposed immediate—immediate—costs on Tehran. Leaders across Israel's politics stood united behind the daring operations.

Ah, but here in America, the same restrainers, anti-Israel progressives, and self-proclaimed realists warned again of regional conflagration if the President intervened alongside or even supported Israel's strikes.

The President's own—his own—Director of National Intelligence traveled to Hiroshima to record a bizarre video, not as a warning against Tehran's nuclear ambitions but presumably against American or Israeli operations to blunt them.

Now, fortunately, the President rejected the pleas of appeasers and isolationists. The strikes he ordered dealt a massive blow to Iran's nuclear program, bolstered American credibility, and strengthened U.S. and Israel leverage to end Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and its support for terrorism for good.

Thanks to Israel's historic efforts for more than a year and a half, Iran's ability to threaten regional stability is massively degraded. Not since before the Islamic Revolution has there been such an opportunity for America, Israel, and our Arab partners to reset regional dynamics on such favorable terms.

Achieving it has required no large-scale deployment of U.S. ground forces. It required only supporting our friends. Israel is a close ally and a strategic asset, not a liability. And the strategic return on our investment in assisting Israel is incalculable. Standing with our Israeli friends offers a powerful lesson about American leadership, the value of alliances and partnerships, and the real nature of peace through strength.

And this lesson extends far, far beyond the Middle East.

If America refuses to apply it elsewhere—like Ukraine—we do so at grave risk to our own interests. But that is