

Godspeed and God bless.

With a sense of pride and gratitude, I will say for the last time, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, those of us who are leaving the Congress at the end of this year are given the opportunity to make a farewell speech. But more, it is an opportunity to say thank you to a lot of people to whom we owe a thank-you, and to colleagues, to family, to the staff here in the Senate and our state staff, and the people of North Dakota, in this case, who gave me the opportunity to serve. It is the opportunity for me to say thank you.

One of my colleagues the other day talked about the number of people who have served in the Senate. Since the beginning of our country, there have been 1,918 people who have served in the Senate. When I signed in, I signed on the line, and I was No. 1,802. There have been 212 Senators with whom I have served in the years I have been in the Senate. It is hard to get here and it is also hard to leave. But all of us do leave, and the Senate always continues. When finally you do leave, you understand this is the most unique legislative body in the world.

I arrived 30 years ago in Congress, and when we all show up the first day, we feel so very important and we believe the weight of the world rests on our shoulders. Then we begin getting mail from home.

I have long described a letter that was sort of leavening to me, sent to me by a schoolteacher early on after I arrived here. Her class was to do a project to write to DORGAN in Washington, DC. I paged through the 20 letters from fourth grade students, and one of them said: Dear Mr. DORGAN, I know who you are. I see you on television sometimes. My dad watches you on television too. Boy, does he get mad.

So I knew the interests of public service, of trying to satisfy all of the varied interests in our country. It is important, it seems to me, that we do the right thing as best we can and as best we see it. That dad from that letter showed up at a good many of my meetings over the years, I think. He didn't introduce himself. But in most cases, the people I represented over these many years were people, ordinary folks who loved their country, raised their families, paid their bills, and wanted us to do the right thing for our country's future.

I have a lot of really interesting memories from having served here, 12 years in the House and 18 years in the Senate. The first week I came to Washington, in the House, I stopped to see the oldest Member of the House, Claude Pepper. I had read so much about him, I wanted to meet him. I walked into his office, and his office was like a museum with a lot of old things in it, really interesting things. He had been here for a long, long time. I have never forgotten what I saw behind his chair—two photographs. The first photograph was of Orville and Wilbur Wright, December 17, 1903, making the first airplane flight, signed “to Congressman Claude Pepper with admiration, Orville Wright.” Beneath it was a photograph of Neil Armstrong stepping on the surface of the Moon, signed “to Congressman Pepper, with regards, Neil Armstrong.” I was thinking to myself, here is a living American and in one lifetime, he has an autographed picture of the first person who learned to fly and the first person who walked on the Moon. Think of the unbelievable progress in a lifetime. And what is the distance between learning to fly and flying to the Moon? It wasn't measured on that wall in inches, although those photographs were only 4 or 5 inches apart; it is measured in education, in knowledge, in a burst of accomplishments in an unprecedented century.

This country has been enormously blessed during this period. The hallmark, it seems to me, of the century we just completed was self-sacrifice and common purpose, a sense of community, commitment to country, and especially, especially leadership. In America, leadership has been so important in this government we call self-government.

There was a book written by David McCullough about John Adams, and John Adams described that question of leadership. He would travel in Europe representing this new country, and he would write letters back to Abigail. In his letters to Abigail, he would plaintively ask the question: Where will the leadership come from for this new country we are starting? Who will become the leaders? Who will be the leaders for this new nation?

In the next letter to Abigail, he would again ask: Where will the leadership come from? Then he would say: There is only us. Really, there is only us. There is me, there is George Washington, there is Ben Franklin, there is Thomas Jefferson, there is Hamilton, Mason, and Madison. But there is only us, he would plaintively say to Abigail.

In the rearview mirror of history, of course, the “only us” is some of the greatest human talent probably ever assembled. But it is interesting to me that every generation has asked the same question John Adams asked: Where will the leadership come from for this country? Who will be the leaders?

The answer to that question now is here in this room. It has always been in

this room—my colleagues, men and women, tested by the rigors of a campaign, chosen by citizens of their State who say: You lead, you provide leadership for this country.

For all of the criticism about this Chamber and those who serve in this Chamber, for all of that criticism, I say that the most talented men and women with whom I have ever worked are the men and women of the Senate on both sides of this aisle. They live in glass houses. Their mistakes are obvious and painful. They fight, they disagree, then they agree. They dance around issues, posture, delay. But always, always there is that moment—the moment of being part of something big, consequential, important; the moment of being part of something bigger than yourself. At that moment, for all of us at different times, there is this acute awareness of why we were sent here and the role the Senate plays in the destiny of this country.

The Senate is often called the most exclusive club in the world, but I wonder, really, if it is so exclusive if someone from a town of 300 people and a high school senior class of 9 students can travel from a desk in that small school to a desk on the floor of the Senate. I think it is more like a quiltwork of all that is American, of all the experiences in our country. It allows someone from a small town with big ideas to sit in this Chamber among the desks that were occupied by Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, and so many more, and feel as if you belong. That is the genius of self-government.

I announced about a year ago that I would not seek reelection after serving here 30 years, 12 in the House and 18 years in the Senate. I am repeatedly asked, as is my colleague Senator DODD, I am sure, who is leaving at the end of this year, what is your most significant accomplishment? While I am proud of so many things I have done legislatively, the answer is not legislative. I have always answered it by saying: Well, the first month I was here, 30 years ago next month, I stepped into an elevator on the ground floor of the Cannon Office Building of the U.S. House of Representatives. That step into that elevator changed my life. There was a woman on that elevator, and between the ground floor and the fourth floor, I got her name. And that is a pretty significant accomplishment for a Lutheran Norwegian. This year, we celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary. My life has been so enriched by my wife Kim and children, Scott and Shelly and Brendon and Haley; grandchildren Madison and Mason—they serve too. Families are committed too, to this life of public service, weekends alone, and I am forever grateful to the commitment and sacrifice of my family.

I wish to say two things about some other people as well.

First, there is our staff. All of us would probably say—but, of course, I

say with much greater credibility—I have the finest staff in the U.S. Senate. I have been so enormously blessed. I am so proud of all of them. They are talented, they are dedicated to this country, and I have been blessed to work with them. In fact, I have worked with most of them for many, many years.

Then I wish to say to the floor staff of the Senate that I come here, as do my colleagues, and we say our piece and we get involved in the debates, and the floor staff does such an unbelievable job. When we are done speaking, we often leave. They are still here. They are the ones who turn out the lights. They refrain from rolling their eyes when I know they want to during these debates. Boy, are they professional, and all of us owe them such a great debt of gratitude.

To my colleagues, I kind of feel like Will Rogers: There is nobody in here I do not like.

It is a great place with some terrific colleagues, especially Senator KENT CONRAD. We have been friends for 40 years. For 40 years we have been involved in the political fights and the political battles in North Dakota. He is a great Senator. I said last night at a reception: He is the best Senator in the United States Senate come January. But what I should just say right now is, he is an outstanding Senator and makes a great contribution to this body. Congressman POMEROY, with whom I have served, the other part of Team North Dakota, three of us who worked together on campaigns 40 years ago, in North Dakota and who then for 18 years were the only three members of North Dakota's Congressional Delegation. It has been a great pleasure. We will continue these friendships. But I say thanks to Senator CONRAD especially for the work we have done together.

Now, you know—and it shows—I love politics. I love public service, always have. John F. Kennedy used to say every mother kind of hopes her child might grow up to be President, as long as they do not have to be active in politics. But, of course, politics is the way we make decisions about America. It is an honorable thing. I have always been enormously proud of being in politics. I have run 12 times in statewide elections since age 26. I have served continuously in statewide elective office since the age of 26—never outside of statewide elective office—for a long time, 40 years. It has been a great gift to me to be able to serve, and I am forever grateful to the people of North Dakota who have said to me: We want you to represent us.

Now it is time for me to do some other things that I have long wanted to do. That is why I chose not to seek reelection this year.

Let me be clear to you. I did not decide not to run for the Senate because I am despondent about the state of affairs here. That is not the case. These are difficult and troubling times. But I

did not decide not to run and to criticize this institution, although there is plenty of which to be critical. I do not want to add to the burdens of this institution. This institution is too important to the future of this country.

I could talk, by the way, for hours about the joys of serving here with all of my colleagues.

I was thinking about the late Ted Kennedy, when I was jotting a few notes, standing at his desk back in that row for many years. I know no one will mind me saying this: I think he is the best legislator I have ever seen in terms of getting things done. Ted Kennedy, full of passion, and on certain days when he was agitated and full-throated, you could hear him out on the street fighting and shouting for the things he knew were important for America.

I think of Bob Dole who would saunter onto this floor, and he almost seemed to have an antenna that knew exactly what was going on, what the mood was, and what he could and could not do and how you must compromise at certain times. He had a knack like that, unlike any others I have seen.

I think of Strom Thurmond, who left us at age 101. If anybody could know his life story, what an unbelievable, courageous story. One of the things that I remember about Strom Thurmond is my involvement with legislation for organ transplantation to save people's lives. I did a press conference on a bill I was introducing on organ transplants, and Strom Thurmond showed up. I think he was 90 years old. He signed an organ donor card. He said after he signed the organ donor card at age 90: I do not know if I've got anything anybody wants, but if I am gone, they are welcome to it.

Robert C. Byrd, who sat where my colleague is sitting now—they do not make them like Robert C. Byrd anymore. I recall one day when another colleague was on the Senate floor, Robert C. Byrd got very angry about what the other colleague was saying. He believed it was disrespectful. So he rushed up to the Chamber, and the other colleague had left by that time. I do not know that our colleague ever understood what happened to him. But Senator Byrd, being very angry at what the other Senator had said, said simply this: I have been here long enough to watch pygmies strut like Colossus. He said: They, like the fly in Aesop's Fables, sitting on the axle of a chariot observe, my, what dust thy do raise. Then he sat down. And I thought, you know, they do not make Senators like that anymore. The Senator who left did not understand what Senator Byrd had just done, cutting him off at the knees.

But I take a treasury of memories. I should mention as well one of my best friends, Tom Daschle, who served here, a wonderful friend and a great leader for a long while as well. I just take a treasury of memories from this place.

This place, however, has substantial burdens ahead of it, and will have to

make good decisions, tough decisions, and exhibit the courage needed for the kind of future we want; we are going to have to put some sacrifice on the line for our country's future.

I want to talk for a bit about a couple of those issues. While there are always big issues, and I have always been interested in debating the big issues, my principal passion has been to support family farmers, small business folks, and the people who go to work every morning at a job; the family farmers out there who live on hope, plant a seed, and hope it grows, who risk everything; the Main Street business owner who this morning got up and turned the key in the front door and went in and waited because they have everything in their financial lives on the line, hoping their small business works; and the worker who goes to a job in the morning every day, every day, and they are the ones who know "seconds," those workers at the bottom of the economic ladder. They know second shift, secondhand, second mortgage. They know it all. The question is, who speaks for them? The hallways outside the Chamber are not crowded with people saying: Let me speak for those folks.

In the first book I wrote, the first page, a book called "Take This Job and Ship It," about trade, on the first page of that book I describe a story that was told about Franklin Delano Roosevelt's funeral. As they lined up in this Capitol to file past the casket of the deceased President, a journalist was trying to capture the mood of people who were waiting in line. He walked up to a man, a worker who was holding his cap in front of him standing there with tears in his eyes, and the journalist said to this working man: Well, did you know Franklin Delano Roosevelt?

The man said: No, I didn't. But he knew me.

The question is, it seems to me, for every generation in this Chamber, who knows American workers? Who stands up for the people who go to work every morning in this country? As I said, there are big issues that relate to workers and farmers and businesspeople and others in this country.

Let me just mention a couple. We know that for America to succeed we have to fix our schools. Thirty percent of the kids going to schools are not graduating. That cannot continue. We cannot have schools that are called dropout factories. We need the best schools in the world with the best teachers in the world if we are going to compete. We need substantial education reform.

We also have to get rid of this crushing debt. We know we cannot borrow 40 percent of everything we spend. We know better than that. All of us know that. We have been on a binge, and it has to change. We cannot borrow money from China, for example, to give tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans. Somehow we have to change all of

these issues. It is time for this country to sober up in fiscal policy and leadership from this Chamber as well.

We need a financial industry that stops gambling and starts lending, lending especially to those businesses that want to create jobs and want to expand. We need a fair trade policy that stands up for American workers for a change and promotes “made in America” again. We are not going to be a world economic power if we do not have world class manufacturing capability. It is dissipating before our eyes. This is all about creating good jobs and expanding opportunities in this country. It is not happening with our current trade policy. It is trading away America’s future, and we know better than that.

On energy, we have ridden into a box canyon. Sixty percent of the oil we use comes from other countries, some of it from countries that do not like us very much. That holds us hostage, and we cannot continue that. We need to produce more of all kinds of energy at home. We need to conserve more. We need more energy efficiency. We need to do all of these to promote stability and security in this country.

Another issue that I have spent a lot of time working on deals with American Indians. They were here first. We are talking about the first Americans. They greeted all of us. They now live in Third World conditions in much of this country, and we have to do better. We have to keep our promises and we have to honor our treaties. In this Congress, I have had the privilege of chairing the Indian Affairs Committee. This Congress, however, as tough as it has been, has done more on Indian issues than in the previous 40 years. We passed the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, the first time in 17 years. We passed the Tribal Law and Order Act that I and others helped write, which is so very important. We just passed yesterday the special diabetes provisions that are so important to the Indians. We put \$2½ billion in the Economic Recovery Act to invest in health care facilities and education and the other things that are necessary in Indian Country.

We just passed the Cobell settlement which deals with a problem that has existed for 150 years in which looting and stealing from Indian trust accounts went on routinely. President Obama signed the bill last night at the White House.

Those five things are the most important elements together that have been done in 40 years by a Congress dealing with Indian issues. But the work is not nearly over, and we have to keep our promises and honor our trust agreements.

We face some pretty big challenges. But the fact is, our grandparents and great-grandparents faced challenges that were much more significant as well, and they prevailed.

All of us in politics especially know the noise of democracy is unbelievable. It is relentless, incessantly negative,

and it goes on 24/7. We have bloviators all over the country who are trying to make sounds from the chest seem like important messages from their brain. They take almost everything they can find in any paper from any corner of this country that seems stupid and ugly and just way out of line, and they hold that up to the light on their program and they say: Isn’t this ugly?

Sure it is ugly, but it is not America. It is just some little obscene gesture somewhere in the corner of our country. It is not America. There is this old saying, “bad news travels halfway around the world before good news gets its shoes on.” That is what is happening all the time. This country is full of good. It is full of good things, good people, and good news. Every day people go to work to build, create, and invent, and they hope the future will be better than the past.

There was a book titled “You Can’t Go Home Again” by Thomas Wolfe. He said there is a peculiar quality of the American soul, a peculiar quality of the American soul that has an almost indestructible belief, a quenchless hope that things are going to be better, that something is going to turn up, that tomorrow is going to work out, and somehow that has been what has been the hallmark of American aspirations.

When I graduated college with an MBA degree and got my first job in the aerospace industry at a very young age, the first program or project I worked on was called the Voyager Project. We were, with Martin-Marietta Corporation, building a landing vehicle for Mars. That was 40 years ago. That program was discontinued after about 4 years.

But 5 years ago, the new program resulted in firing two missiles, two rockets from our country, 1 week apart. We aimed them at Mars. One week apart the rockets lifted off with a payload. When they landed, 200 million miles later, they landed 1 week apart on the surface of Mars. The payload had a shroud and it opened and a dune buggy drove off the shroud and started driving around on the surface of Mars. First one did, and then a week later the second arrived. They were named Spirit and Opportunity. Five years ago, we began driving Spirit and Opportunity on the surface of Mars. They were American vehicles. They were supposed to last for 90 days. We are still driving those dune buggies on the surface of Mars 5 years later.

Spirit, very much like old men, got arthritis of the arm. So they say it hangs at kind of a permanent half salute.

Spirit also has five wheels, and one wheel broke. So the wheel didn’t break off, but now it is digging a trench about 2 inches deeper on the surface of Mars and the arthritic arm just barely gets there, but it does. It gets back to sample even a slightly bit deeper into the soil of Mars to tell us a little bit about what is going on. Spirit, by the way, also fell asleep about 1 year ago.

They couldn’t reach it. It takes 9 minutes to communicate electronically, by radio, with these dune buggies on Mars. So they sent a signal to a satellite we have circling Mars and had the satellite send a signal to Spirit and Spirit woke right up. So two dune buggy-sized vehicles are traveling on the surface of Mars driven by American genius.

My point in all this is, first of all, they are very aptly named during challenging times—“Spirit” and “Opportunity,” manufactured to last only 90 days but still driving around on the surface of Mars 5 years later. If American invention and American initiative can build rockets and dune buggies and drive them on the surface of Mars, surely we can fix the things that are important on planet Earth. I was going to say this isn’t rocket science, but I guess it is.

This country is an unbelievable place. This is all a call to America’s future. Where we have been and what we have done, all these things together ought to inspire us that we can do so much more.

George Bernard Shaw once said:

Life is no brief candle to me. It is a splendid torch which I am able to hold but for a moment.

This is our moment. This is it.

About 15 years ago, I was leading a delegation of American Congressmen and Senators to meet with a group of European members of Parliament about our disputes in trade. About an hour into the meeting, the man who led the European delegation slid back in his chair, leaned across to me, and he said: Mr. Senator, we have been speaking for an hour about how we disagree. I want to tell you something. I think you should know how I feel about your country. I was a 14-year-old boy on a street corner in Paris, France, when the U.S. liberation Army marched down the Champs-Élysées. An American soldier reached out his hand and gave me an apple as he marched past. I will go to my grave remembering that moment, what it meant to me, what it meant to my family, what it meant to my country.

I sort of sat back in my chair, thinking, here is this guy telling me about who we are and where we have been and what we have meant to others. It was pretty unbelievable. Our problems are nothing compared to where we can go and what we can be as a country, if we just do the right thing.

This Senate has a lot to offer the American people. I know its best days are ahead. That splendid torch, that moment, that is here. That torch exists in this Chamber as well.

I feel unbelievably proud to have been able to serve here with these men and women for so long. I am going to go on to do other work. But I will always watch this Chamber and those who will continue to work in this Chamber and do what is important for this country’s future. I will be among the cheerleaders who say: Good for

you. Good for you. You know what is important, and you have steered America toward a better future.

I thank my colleagues.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

Mr. DURBIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, we have just heard from Senator DORGAN, an extraordinary Senator and even more extraordinary as a friend. He has served in the Congress for 30 years. He has served in public office in my State for more than 40 years. It has been my privilege to call him my best friend for 42 years. We just heard the remarkable ability he has, a gift, to paint word pictures that communicate with people, that help us understand the consequences of the actions we take here.

In recent weeks, I have become very interested in the universe and the vastness of what surrounds us. One of the things I have found most striking is that 1 light-year takes light 1 year, it goes 5.8 trillion miles and the universe is 12 to 15 billion light-years across. This is a vastness that is hard for us to calculate. Scientists tell us it all started with a big bang almost 14 billion years ago. Now scientists are saying it may not just be one big bang but there is a cycle that takes place over 1 trillion years that leads to repeated big bangs. BYRON DORGAN has been a big bang in the Senate. He has made a difference here. He has made an enormous difference in our home State of North Dakota. He helped build a foundation that has made North Dakota, today, the most successful State in the country—the lowest unemployment, the best financial situation, the fastest economic growth. BYRON DORGAN helped build a foundation that has transformed our State. We are forever in his debt.

As his friend and colleague, we are forever grateful to the contributions he has made to North Dakota and to the Nation.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I associate myself with the remarks of the Senator from North Dakota and add my voice as well to celebrate Senator DORGAN's tenure in the Senate. I wish he was going to stay. He has been someone about getting things done. As somebody who has sat in the presiding chair a number of times, I have heard Senator DORGAN. Even when I don't fully agree with him, no one is more persuasive in arguing his case.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTES TO RETIRING SENATORS

ROBERT BENNETT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am sorry I was tied up in other matters today and not able to hear speeches of some of our Senators who are departing. I will have more to say at a later time. I did want to say on two of the Senators, I watched some of their remarks.

Senator BENNETT from Utah is a very dear friend of mine. We have traveled around as Members of the Senate, visiting places all over the world. His wife Joyce is an accomplished artist. She is a flutist. She is well known here and in Utah. Senator BENNETT is a very courageous man. What a disappointment he was not reelected. I am not usually giving speeches for my Republican colleagues, but it is a real loss to the country that Senator BENNETT will not return to the Senate. He is a very courageous man. He represents the ideals of the State of Utah. He is a very devout member of his church. He is a person who calls his political issues the way he sees them. His having been criticized for supporting his President, a Republican President, on the Toxic Asset Relief Program is unfair. This was one of the most important issues we faced in ages in this country, and I think the proof is in the pudding. Of the hundreds of billions of dollars—almost \$1 trillion—that were put out for that fund, all but \$25 billion is paid back and most of the economists say we will get more than that back from some of the things that were invested in.

I admire the public service of Senator BENNETT. It has been outstanding. It meets the accomplishments of his father who also served very well in the U.S. Senate. I am going to miss him a great deal. What a wonderful human being. He is an author. He has in the past been a very successful businessman, and I think one of the most accomplished legislators I have had the pleasure to deal with.

BYRON DORGAN

BYRON DORGAN from North Dakota is such a fine person. He for many years has had the same job I had under Senator Daschle, the head of the Democratic Policy Committee, and he rendered valuable service to the caucus, to the Senate, and the whole country in his capacity there. We served together in the House of Representatives. We have traveled together. His wife Kim is such a fine human being. I am going to miss BYRON. He is and has been one of my close advisers, close friends. I hope I am not being boastful here, but I don't think Tom Daschle had two bet-

ter friends in the Senate than DORGAN and REID. We were very close to him. We admired our friend Tom Daschle and did everything we could to make his life here as pleasant as possible.

As far as being a good speaker, he is very good. He has a unique way of communicating that very few people I have known have had. He is someone who, as far as the finances of this country and the world, is without peer as a legislator. He knows it all, and he has a way of articulating his views that is unique and I think very powerful. So I am going to miss BYRON DORGAN very much. He is a wonderful human being. I care a great deal about him. I have watched his son and daughter grow up. They are in college now. I remember them when they were little kids. In fact, my son Key, who was a fine athlete at the University of Virginia, when he was playing on those national champion soccer teams at the University of Virginia, gave BYRON's son Brendon a few soccer lessons. So I am grateful for the friendship of Senator BENNETT and Senator DORGAN.

JIM BUNNING

Senator BUNNING, I of course admire because of his great athletic skills. He is a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame. To think I have had the opportunity to serve in the Senate with one of the great pitchers of all time. I love talking to JIM BUNNING about his baseball days. Some of the stories he has told I have repeated many times and I will never forget them. One of the things he said that I have repeated on a number of occasions—JIM BUNNING was a great pitcher, an All-Star with no-hitters in both leagues. But he has some humility, because he said there was Sandy Koufax and there was the rest of us. He and I don't vote often the same way, but he is a man who has a strong opinion, and I am going to miss JIM BUNNING and the ability for me to talk to him about his athletic feats. I certainly wish him well in whatever his endeavors may be in the future.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

Mr. REID. Mr. President, discrimination has never served America very well. When it applies to those who serve America in the Armed Forces, it is both disgraceful and counterproductive.

The theory behind don't ask, don't tell is a thing that happened way in the past. The theory behind this should be a thing of the past, and we should put the policy behind us. It is obsolete, it is embarrassing, and it weakens our military and offends the very values we ask our troops to defend. We need to match our policy with our principle and finally say that in the United States, everyone who steps up to serve our country should be welcomed. That is the only argument that is right and it should be enough.