

INOUE, Hawaii's senior Senator, a speedy recovery and return to the Senate.

I rise today to say aloha to this institution. I have been honored to be a Member of the U.S. Senate for 22 years. It has been an incredible journey that I never imagined.

As a senior in high school going to Kamehameha School for Boys, which was noted as a military school, my life was changed forever when I saw Japanese fighter planes attacking Pearl Harbor. Like most men in my generation, I joined the war effort. My path was forever altered.

When the war ended, I believe I was suffering from PTSD. It was an act of Congress that allowed me, and the veterans of my generation, to build a successful new life. Congress passed the GI bill, and I say with certainty that I would not be standing before you today without the opportunity the GI bill gave me, not only to get an education but to have structure and a path forward—and the feeling that there was a way for me to help people. This proved to me that when Congress acts responsibly, it can build a better America.

That is why, when I was blessed with the opportunity to lead the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I dedicated myself to helping our servicemembers and veterans and their families, and worked with my colleagues to expand VA services and pass a new 21st-century GI bill.

So I want to take this moment to urge all of my colleagues and all of the incoming Senators and Representatives to do everything they can for our veterans and their families because we ask them to sacrifice so much for us. They put their lives on the line while their wives and husbands watch over their families. Caring for them is one of our most sacred obligations as a nation.

Not everyone on the front lines making our Nation stronger wears a uniform. In many critical fields the Federal Government struggles to compete with the private sector to recruit and retain the skilled people our Nation needs: experts in cyber security and intelligence analysis, doctors and nurses to care for our wounded warriors, and accountants to protect taxpayers during billion-dollar defense acquisitions. These are just a few examples. After I leave the Senate, it is my hope other Members will continue to focus on making the Federal Government an employer of choice. We need the best and brightest working for our Nation.

The work of the Congress will never end, but careers come to a close. Like the great men whose names are etched in this desk, I am humbled to know I have left my mark on this institution. I am proud to be the first Native Hawaiian ever to serve in the Senate, just as I am so proud to be one of the three U.S. Army World War II veterans who remain in the Senate today.

The United States is a great country. One of the things that makes us so great is that though we have made mis-

takes, we change, we correct them, we right past wrongs. It is our responsibility as a nation to do right by America's native people, those who exercised sovereignty on lands that later became part of the United States. While we can never change the past, we have the power to change the future.

Throughout my career I have worked to ensure that my colleagues understand the Federal relationship with native peoples and its origins in the Constitution. The U.S. policy of supporting self-determination and self-governance for indigenous peoples leads to native self-sufficiency, resulting in our continued ability to be productive and to contribute to the well-being of our families, our communities, and our great Nation. That is why I worked to secure parity in Federal policy for my people—the Native Hawaiians.

The United States has recognized hundreds of Alaska Native and American Indian communities. It is long past time for the Native Hawaiian people to have the same rights, same privileges, and same opportunities as every other federally recognized native people.

For more than 12 years now, I have worked with the Native Hawaiian community and many others to develop the Native Hawaiian Reauthorization Act, which has the strong support of Hawaii's Legislature and Governor as the best path forward toward reconciliation.

My bill has encountered many challenges, but it is pono—it is right—and it is long overdue. Although I will not be the bill's sponsor in the 113th Congress, it will forever bear my highest aspirations and heartfelt commitment to the Native Hawaiian people, the State of Hawaii, and the United States of America.

I know I am just one in a long line working to ensure that our language, our culture, and our people continue to thrive for generations to come. I believe Hawaii has so much to teach the world and this institution. In Congress and in our Nation, we are truly all together, in the same canoe. If we paddle together in unison, we can travel great distances. If the two sides of the canoe paddle in opposite directions, we will only go in circles.

I urge my colleagues to take this traditional Hawaiian symbol to heart and put the American people first—by working together.

I want to say mahalo nui loa—thank you very much—to my incredible staff. After 36 years there are far too many individuals to name, so I will just thank all of my current and former staff members in my Senate and House offices and on my committees, including Indian Affairs, Veterans' Affairs, and the Subcommittees on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia.

I want to thank the hundreds of employees who work for the Architect of the Capitol and the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Without the hard work they do every day, we could not do what we do in the Senate. Mahalo. Thank you to the floor and leadership staff as well.

I also want to thank Senate Chaplain Barry Black, who has provided me so much guidance and strength and has done more to bring the two sides of the Chamber together and find common ground than just about anyone. I want to thank our colleagues who join together every week for the Prayer Breakfast and Bible study as well. All of these have helped to shape me and the things I do here.

There is no one I owe more to than my lovely wife of 65 years, Millie. She is literally there for me whenever I need her. Nearly every day that I have served in the Senate for the past 22 years, Millie has come to the office with me. She helps me greet constituents, she makes me lunch, she keeps me focused, and she makes sure I know what is happening back home. She means the world to me. Every honor I have received belongs to her and to my family, my children, my grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. This speech is their farewell speech too. So mahalo, Millie and my ohana, my family.

In life there are seasons. While leaving Congress is bittersweet, I am looking forward to spending more time with our five children and getting to know our 15 great-grandchildren, and—can you believe this—we are expecting our 16th great-grandchild next year, and I will be home to see it.

I am looking forward to speaking with students and mentoring up and coming leaders and visiting places in Hawaii that I have worked for over my career. My goal was to bring the spirit of aloha to our Nation's Capital in everything I do. In Hawaii, we look out for one another, we work together, and we treat each other with respect. I hope I succeeded in sharing a little bit of Hawaii with all of you.

As I come to the end of 22 years in this Chamber, and a total of 36 years serving in Congress, I offer my profound gratitude and humble thanks to the people of Hawaii for giving me the opportunity to serve them for so many years. It truly was an experience of a lifetime. All I ever wanted was to be able to help people, and you gave me that opportunity. So mahalo nui loa. Thank you very much.

In Hawaii, when we part, we don't say goodbye. Instead, we say a hui hou, which means until we meet again.

Although I am retiring, I see this as the start of a new chapter, a new season. And I am blessed to have made friendships and partnerships that will last forever.

God bless Hawaii, and God bless the United States of America with the spirit of aloha. A hui hou.

Madam President, I yield the floor.
The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Indiana.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. LUGAR. Madam President, I rise today to address my colleagues on a

number of issues important to the future of the United States and to offer some perspective on Senate service.

In a few weeks, I will leave the Senate for new pursuits that will allow me to devote much deeper attention to a number of issues that have been a part of my Senate service. Among these are preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and developing more efficient ways to feed the world. I am especially pleased that I will be serving on the faculty of the University of Indianapolis and helping that institution establish a Washington internship program. I look forward to announcing additional endeavors of service in coming weeks.

My service in the Senate would not have been possible without the encouragement and constant support of my loving wife Char, our four sons—Mark, Bob, John, and David—and the entire Lugar family. Their strength and sacrifices have been indispensable to my public service. I also am indebted to a great number of talented and loyal friends who have served with me in the Senate, including more than 300 Senators, hundreds of personal and committee staff members, and more than a thousand interns. In my experience, it is difficult to conceive of a better platform from which to devote oneself to public service and the search for solutions to national and international problems. At its best, the Senate is one of the Founders' most important creations.

A great deal has been written recently about political discord in the United States, with some commentators judging that partisanship is at an all-time high. Having seen quite a few periods in the Congress when political struggles were portrayed this way, I hesitate to describe our current state as the most partisan ever. But I do believe that as an institution we have not lived up to the expectations of our constituents to make excellence in governance our top priority.

Many of us have had some type of executive experience as Governors, mayors, corporation chiefs, and cabinet officials. I had the good fortune of serving two terms as the Mayor of Indianapolis prior to my Senate service. For the last 36 years, I have attempted to apply lessons learned during those early governing experiences to my work in the Senate. As mayor, my responsibility for what happened in my city was comprehensive and inescapable. Citizens held the mayor's office accountable for the prosaic tasks of daily life, like trash collection and snow removal, but also for executing strategies for the economic and social advancement of the city.

In legislative life, by contrast, we are responsible for positions expressed through votes, cosponsorships, interviews, and other means. It takes courage to declare dozens or even hundreds of positions and stand for office, knowing that with each position, you are displeasing some group of voters. But

we do our country a disservice if we mistake the act of taking positions for governance. They are not the same thing. Governance requires adaptation to shifting circumstances. It often requires finding common ground with Americans who have a different vision than your own. It requires leaders who believe, like Edmund Burke, that their first responsibility to their constituents is to apply their best judgment.

It is possible to be elected and re-elected, again and again and gain prominence in the Senate while giving very little thought to governance. One even can gain considerable notoriety by devoting one's career to the political aspects of a Senator's job—promoting the party line, raising money, and focusing on public relations. Responsibility for legislative shortcomings can be pinned on the other party or even intractable members of one's own party. None of us are above politics, nor did the Founders expect us to be. But, obviously, we should be aspiring to something greater than this.

Too often in recent years, Members of Congress have locked themselves into a slate of inflexible positions, many of which have no hope of being implemented in a divided government. Some of these positions have been further calcified by pledges signed for political purposes. Too often we have failed to listen to one another and question whether the orthodox views being promulgated by our parties make strategic sense for America's future. The result has been intractably negative public perceptions of Congress. A Rasmussen Reports poll conducted this month found that only 10 percent of likely voters gave Congress a rating of "excellent" or "good."

For me, the irony is that having seen several generations of lawmakers pass through this body, I can attest that the vast majority are hardworking, genuinely interested in public service, and eager to contribute to the welfare of our country. Often, the public does not believe that. It is easier to assume that Congressional failings arise from the incompetence or even the malfeasance of individual legislators. Or perhaps, as some believe, Washington, D.C. itself is corrupting. It is far more disconcerting to think that our democracy's shortcomings are complex and defy simple solutions, but the Founders were realists who understood the power of factionalism, parochialism, and personal ambition. They understood that good intentions would not always prevail. Accordingly, they designed a system to check abuse and prevent power from accumulating in a few hands. But they knew that the efficient operation of such a republic would require a great deal of cooperation. They knew that it would require most elected officials to have a dedication to governance, and they trusted that leaders would arise in every era to make their vision work.

The Senate has a unique role to play in good governance. We have attributes not possessed by the executive branch,

including staying power. Administrations turn over every 4 or 8 years. But Senators can have careers spanning decades that allow them to apply expertise and political understanding to problems over many years, even as administrations come and go. We also can confer a bipartisan framework on a policy. Even a small bipartisan group of Senators cooperating on a difficult problem is a powerful signal of the possibility for a unifying solution.

My hope is that Senators will devote much more of their energies to governance. In a perfect world, we would not only govern, we would execute a coherent strategy. That is a very high bar for any legislative body to clear. But we must aspire to it in cooperation with the President because we are facing fundamental changes in the world order that will deeply affect America's security and standard of living.

The list of such changes is long, but it starts in Asia with the rise of China and India as economic, political, and military powers. The Obama administration has conspicuously announced a "pivot" to Asia. At the center of this pivot is China, which exists as both an adversary to certain U.S. interests, and a fellow traveler sharing mutual goals and vulnerabilities on others. The ongoing challenge will be for the United States to discern, sometimes issue by issue, whether China is an adversary or a partner. This calibration will impact America's relations with the rest of Asia and may ultimately determine prospects for war or peace in this world.

While visiting Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines in October, I was reminded of the economic vitality of Southeast Asia and the fact that the ten countries comprising ASEAN represent the fourth largest export market of the United States. These countries are center stage to the circumstances with China. We must stand firm with our friends throughout Asia and actively pursue prospects for free trade with open sea lanes and other policies that will strengthen America's economic growth.

More broadly, we face the specter of global resource constraints, especially deficiencies of energy and food that could stimulate conflict and deepen poverty. We have made startling gains in domestic energy production, but we remain highly vulnerable to our dependency on oil. Perhaps equally important, even if we are able to produce more energy at home, we cannot insulate ourselves from energy-driven shocks to the global economy. In other words, we have to cooperate with other nations in improving the global system of manufacturing and moving energy supplies. Currently, a key to this is helping to ensure the completion of the southern energy corridor serving Central and Southeastern Europe and unleashing our own liquified natural gas exports to address the energy vulnerabilities of our closest allies.

The potential global crisis over food production is less well understood.

Whereas research is opening many new frontiers in the energy sphere, the productivity of global agriculture will not keep up with projected food demand unless many countries change their policies. This starts with a much wider embrace of agriculture technology, including genetically modified techniques. The risks of climate change intensify this imperative.

Even as we deal with potential resource constraints, our country remains vulnerable to terrorism and asymmetric warfare. Access to the internet and social media has deeply altered international politics, in most cases for the better. But it also has contributed to instability through sudden upheavals like the Arab Spring; it has allowed destructive terrorist movements like al Qaida to franchise themselves; and it has intensified risks of cyber-attacks, espionage, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The potential catastrophe remains of a major terrorist attack on American soil employing weapons of mass destruction. If that happens, in addition to the lives lost, our expectations for economic growth and budget balancing could be set back by a decade or more. Having devoted considerable time to this problem, my experience is that there are no silver bullets. Protecting the United States from weapons of mass destruction is a painstaking process that every day must employ our best technological, diplomatic, and military tools.

Amidst all these security risks, we must maintain the competitiveness of the United States in the international economy. We should see education, energy efficiency, access to global markets, the attraction of immigrant entrepreneurs, and other factors as national security issues. My own view is that the fundamentals of American society still offer us the best hand to play in global competitiveness. No other country can match the quality and variety of our post-secondary education. We have the broadest scientific and technological base and the most advanced agricultural system. Our population is younger and more mobile than most other industrialized nations. We still can flourish in this global marketplace if we nurture the competitive genius of the American people that has allowed us time and again to reinvent our economy.

But we must deal with failures of governance that have delayed resolutions to obvious problems. No rational strategy for our long term growth and security, for example, should fail to restrain current entitlement spending. And no attempt to gain the maximum strategic advantage from our human resource potential should fail to enact comprehensive immigration reform that resolves the status of undocumented immigrants and encourages the most talented immigrants to contribute to America's future.

Faced with immense responsibilities, there is a need to elevate our Senate

debate. It is vital that the President and Congress establish a closer working relationship, especially on national security. This is not just a matter of process. It is necessary to undergird national unity in the event of severe crises, such as war with Iran or another catastrophic terrorist attack.

This cooperation depends both on Congressional leaders who are willing to set aside partisan advantage and on administration officials who understand that the benefits of having the support of Congress is worth the effort it takes to secure it. Currently, the national security dialog between the President and Congress is one of the least constructive that I have ever witnessed. There is little foundation for resolving national security disputes or even the expectation that this can occur. Before the next 9/11, the President must be willing to call Republicans to the Oval Office to establish the basis for a working partnership in foreign policy. And Republicans must be willing to suspend reflexive opposition that serves no purpose but to limit their own role in strategic questions and render cooperation impossible. All parties should recognize the need for unity in the coming year when events in Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, North Korea, and other locations may test American national security in extreme ways.

I commend each of you, my Senate colleagues, for the commitment that led you to stand for election to the United States Senate. Running for office is a difficult endeavor that is usually accompanied by great personal risk and cost. Each one of you is capable of being a positive force for changing the tone of debate in our country. Each one of you has a responsibility not only to act with integrity and represent your constituents, but also to make the informed and imaginative choices on which good governance for our country depends.

I am optimistic about our country's future. I believe that both internal divisions and external threats can be overcome. The United States will continue to serve as the inspiration for peoples seeking peace, freedom and economic prosperity. And the United States Senate should and will be at the forefront of this advancement.

May we seek each day from God our creator, the wisdom and the will to do our best in the governance of our country. And may God continue to bless the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN). The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the service of Senator RICHARD LUGAR and to pay tribute to his legacy. I served alongside Senator LUGAR as the junior Senator of Indiana during my two tours of service in the Senate. All of us who seek public service want to make a difference, and most certainly Senator LUGAR has done that.

At an early age DICK LUGAR developed a passion for knowledge. A native of Indianapolis, he was valedictorian at Shortridge High School. It was then and is still a distinguished institution where knowledge is at the forefront of everything done in that school. One of our former Members, Ted Stevens, was also a graduate of Shortridge High School.

DICK LUGAR went on then to become valedictorian in college when he graduated from Denison University with a bachelor's degree in economics. He went on to attend Pembroke College at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar and obtained a second bachelor's degree and master's degree in politics, philosophy, and economics. Today he is one of the most decorated scholars in the Senate with 46 honorary degrees from 15 States and the District of Columbia.

Following these most impressive academic achievements, Senator LUGAR spent several years in the U.S. Navy ultimately serving as an intelligence briefer for ADM Arleigh Burke, Chief of Naval Operations. The Navy and Admiral Burke chose the best person they could for that particular job. DICK LUGAR quickly became well known for not only his hard work but his leadership ability and his intellectual prowess. Senator LUGAR then returned to Indiana where at the young age of 35 he became the mayor of Indianapolis, serving two terms from 1968 to 1975. There is no question that DICK LUGAR is recognized as one of the most influential and visionary mayors Indiana has ever seen, and maybe the country has ever seen.

Having just left military service myself, I was working full time attending Indiana Law School at night. That didn't leave much time for Marsha and me to enjoy the amenities of Indianapolis but, frankly, there were very few amenities to enjoy at that particular time. It was then that our newly elected mayor began a remarkable transformation of Indianapolis into now what has become one of the most attractive and livable cities in America.

As mayor, DICK LUGAR worked carefully with the Indiana General Assembly and then-Governor Ed Whitcomb to extend the boundaries of the city and merge the governments of Indianapolis and Marion County to provide common essential services more efficiently—a concept then called Unigov. Unigov wasn't without controversy, but because of DICK LUGAR's vision, careful negotiations, and decisive action, Indianapolis became a model for other cities across the Nation.

When the law took effect in 1970, Indianapolis's population rose from 476,000 to 793,000. Indianapolis moved from the 26th largest city to one of the Nation's largest dozen cities literally overnight. When I think of the numerous positive changes in Indianapolis over the past 40 years, I see the fulfillment of the vision of then-Mayor DICK LUGAR.

The Midwest has a way of producing men and women of sense and decency. However, not all of us fall into that category. Sometimes that sense is questioned, but we do have individuals who have the ability to see to the heart of the matter and to find a way to resolve a problem. Such skill is extremely valuable in the U.S. Senate, a body that by its very design is supposed to foster compromise between legislators on issues before the Nation. So it was a natural progression that following his success as mayor, DICK LUGAR's next job would be serving Hoosiers as a U.S. Senator.

Since 1977, Senator LUGAR has represented Hoosiers and served our Nation admirably. Without question, Senator LUGAR is the type of lawmaker and leader who works hard to bring both parties together, find common ground, and pass needed legislation. Although his contributions are many—including his long and valued service on the Senate Agriculture Committee—Senator LUGAR's most important role in the Senate has to be his leadership on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As a two-time chairman of this committee, he has been one of the most influential minds on foreign policy in the Senate's history. He has worked tirelessly on policies and legislation to promote arms control, control and dismantle nuclear arms, and to address the global food crisis.

Among his many accomplishments in the field of foreign relations, his signature piece of legislation, no doubt, is the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, more commonly known as Nunn-Lugar. When Senator LUGAR joined the Foreign Relations Committee in 1979, he traveled to the former Soviet Union on multiple occasions to gain a better understanding of how the United States could secure and dismantle weapons of mass destruction.

His experiences led him to champion the landmark legislation that successfully resulted in the deactivation of nuclear warheads, making this world a safer place. To date, the Nunn-Lugar program has deactivated more than 7,500 nuclear warheads that were once aimed at the United States. It is a contribution to which Americans can never give enough thanks.

Over his 36 years in this institution, Senators from both sides of the aisle have considered DICK LUGAR a trusted resource when it comes to foreign policy and many other important issues. He has been a consistent resource for those who seek thoughtful answers to difficult political questions.

When I first arrived here in 1989, Senator LUGAR and I operated a unique joint office arrangement in Indiana. We shared office space and staff in our State. Many of our colleagues were surprised by this arrangement, but DICK LUGAR and I like to tell Hoosiers that they are getting twice the service for half the price. All those who work in this Chamber can learn from DICK LUGAR's passion for public service. His

sincere desire to reach across the aisle and find common ground complements his unique talent for forging coalitions and bringing people together to accomplish big things.

A tribute to Senator LUGAR would be incomplete without recognizing the support of his wife Charlene, his four sons, and his extended family. Public service places unique demands on our families, and their sacrifice and support plays an important role in any Senator's success.

It has been an honor for me to work with Senator LUGAR. I am thankful for his service to Indiana and to our country.

My wife Marsha and I wish Senator LUGAR, Char, and his family nothing but the best as my dear friend begins this next chapter of his life. Senator LUGAR has dedicated so much of his service to our country. He has outlined many other ways in which he will be continuing to do that and that is a great benefit to our Nation and to our State. I am certain we will continue to learn and benefit from the Senator's lifetime of public service.

I know my colleagues join me in thanking Senator LUGAR for his many years of dedicated and distinguished service. It has been a pleasure to serve as a junior Senator from Indiana under the Senator's leadership.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, let me add my words of commendation to those of Senator COATS for Senator LUGAR. I have often joked with him that he has been my Secretary of State while I have served here in the Senate. We could count on Senator LUGAR to give good, unbiased advice on complicated foreign relations issues, and we will very much miss Senator LUGAR's voice here in the Senate, and also his better half, Char Lugar, who I think we all know is a bright light. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve with Senator LUGAR, and I know his voice will continue to be heard on the important issues of the day.

In both Indiana and North Dakota, agriculture is a pillar of the economy. Senator LUGAR fully understands the importance of farming, and it has always been near his heart. He still manages a 600-acre corn, soybean, and tree operation back home. Here in the Senate, he has been a champion for his State's farmers, serving on the Agriculture Committee since his first term. I have worked with him as a member of that committee since I joined the Senate a decade later. He twice served as chairman, most notably during the passage of the 1996 farm bill.

I had the privilege to work with Senator LUGAR in crafting numerous farm bills. During the Agriculture Committee's debate of the last farm bill, Senator LUGAR and I teamed up to fund rural energy programs. We both understand the importance of getting more energy from the Midwest instead of the

Middle East. Rather than sending our dollars outside of the country to buy oil, we can invest in renewable energy that is produced at home. Without DICK's support, the Senate's version of the farm bill would have lacked these important provisions.

When the history books are written about our era, Senator LUGAR will be remembered as one of the Senate's leading voices on foreign policy. A proven leader, DICK has been recognized by his colleagues for his clear-eyed analysis and practical solutions to global problems. His expertise has been invaluable to the Senate, whether it was regarding the threats of the Soviet Union during the Cold War or Islamic terrorism today. One of Senator LUGAR's brightest achievements was the creation of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, commonly known as Nunn-Lugar. Through this program, the United States helps partner countries destroy and secure weapons of mass destruction. It has deactivated over 7,600 nuclear warheads that once threatened our Nation. Our world is undoubtedly a safer place because of Senator LUGAR's unwavering commitment to secure nuclear material.

DICK has been one of the most pragmatic Members of the Senate. He understood that compromising with others does not mean betraying one's beliefs. He was willing to work with Members on both sides of the aisle to achieve sensible solutions to our Nation's problems. At a time when our country desperately needs to set aside inflexible partisan rigidity in order to advance the common good, Senator LUGAR will be greatly missed.

I thank Senator LUGAR for his service in the Senate, to his State and the country. I thank him for being a friend to me, and I wish him and his family the very best in the future.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. President, we have this long tradition in the Senate of Senators giving farewell remarks. I want to alert colleagues that mine will be especially long, so they might want to go have lunch and then come back. I don't consider this my final speech because I am still hopeful we will reach an agreement on the farm bill. The distinguished Chair is here. I hope we can reach agreement on averting the fiscal cliff because that is important to the country. I hope we will have additional chances to communicate with colleagues and the public before we are done.

These are my farewell remarks and observations of 26 years of service here, and it has been an incredible experience.

The first thing I want to do is say thank you to the people of North Dakota for having confidence in me when I was only 38 years old in sending me to represent them in the Senate. I was 38, but I looked about 25, and the people of North Dakota elected me in a stunning upset of a long-established incumbent. I treasure the confidence they have had in me.

I also want to thank my colleagues for the responsibilities they have given me. I also want to thank the leadership team of Senator REID, Senator DURBIN, Senator SCHUMER, and Senator MURRAY and the confidence they have had in me. I have been so blessed to have people who have been with me on my staff in many cases for more than 20 years. My chiefs of staff, include Jim Margolis, who is one of the top media gurus in the country. He has done much of the advertising for the President in this last campaign. Also, my thanks to David Herring and Mary Wakefield, as well as Kent Hall, who died an untimely death while working for me.

Thank you to Sara Garland, Bob Van Heuvelen, and Wally Rustad. Thanks also to Tom Mahr, who was my legislative director for than 20 years.

I also wish to thank my executive assistant, who has been with me more than 20 years; Geri Gaginis, who we all fondly call Mom in my office because she cracks the whip and makes sure the trains run on time; Mary Naylor, my long-time director on the Budget Committee and who has also been with me more than 20 years.

My Budget Committee deputies John Righter and Joel Friedman have done extraordinary work on behalf of the people of this country. Stu Nagurka is here with me today and is going to help me with charts and has been my long-time communications director.

There are so many more people I want to thank. Most of all, I want to thank my family. My wife Lucy, who has been my great partner through all of this. She was my campaign manager when I first ran for the Senate. My daughter Jessie, who has in many ways, perhaps, sacrificed the most, because when a person is in this job they miss birthdays and other important events. She has been a great daughter. She was here last night for our farewell party and we had a lovely time. Our son Ivan and his wife Kendra, who are in Oregon where they have a small farm called Tipping Tree Farm. We wish they could be here today. Our grandson Carter, who is a proud member of the University of Oregon marching band, The Ducks, and who served as an intern for me—not at government expense, by the way, it was at our expense; and our little dog Dakota who has become sort of a mascot of the U.S. Senate. Brian Williams, when he did a show on “A Day in the Life of the Senate,” concluded that program by calling Dakota the “101st Senator.” I think he will be missed perhaps more than I am as I leave the Senate.

In 1964, I came here. I sat up in the gallery—in fact, it was the gallery right up there—I was 16 years old, and I watched a debate on civil rights. Hubert Humphrey was leading that debate. It so inspired me that I thought, you know, someday I would like to be down on that floor and I would like to debate the great issues of the day and I would like to represent the people of

North Dakota. So I went home and wrote out on the back of an envelope that I would run for the U.S. Senate in 1986 or 1988, and I ran in 1986 and was successful. That is the power of a plan. To the young pages who are here, if any of you seeks to be in the U.S. Senate someday, have a plan, because there are so many people who sort of drift through life without one. If you have a plan, you will be light years ahead.

In that race, as I indicated, my now-wife Lucy was my campaign manager. We won what was then believed to be the biggest political upset in the history of our State. I was proud of that victory and proud to have a chance to represent North Dakota here.

I think we all know our country needs a plan now, and we know plans have worked before. I was here in 1993 when we had just come off the largest deficit in the history of the United States. The country was in the doldrums. The economy was just plugging along, not doing very well, we had a weak recovery from a deep recession, and we passed a plan to get the country back on track. We did it the old-fashioned way. We made tough decisions, some that were unpopular, but it was the right thing to do and it worked. We balanced the budget. We had the longest period of uninterrupted economic growth in the Nation's history. Twenty-three million jobs were created, and we were actually paying down the debt of the United States at the end of the Clinton administration.

We did it again when disaster struck my State in 1997. We had one of the worst disasters ever in North Dakota, a 500-year flood that followed the worst winter storm in 50 years. Many of my colleagues may recall the images from that disaster when firemen were fighting an enormous conflagration in downtown Grand Forks in the middle of a blizzard and there was also a massive flood. Grand Forks was devastated.

Again, we had a plan, a \$500 million disaster recovery plan that became a \$1 billion plan, and it worked, and we did it the old-fashioned way. We made tough decisions, some that were unpopular, but it was the right thing to do and it worked. The community held a recognition event for me last week-end. The leadership of the community was there, and many people from of the community reported on the remarkable recovery in Grand Forks. It is, I think, an example of what can be done when government responds and does so intelligently and effectively.

Now we face a new challenge. We have a fiscal cliff or a fiscal curb or whatever one terms it, but what we know is that if we fail to act, we could be pushed back into recession. Our country needs a plan—a plan to get us back on track, to revitalize economic growth, to secure our long-term economic future, and to get the country moving again, and we can do it. We have done much tougher work in the past.

Sometimes I hear people being critical of this institution when they leave here. Let me say I am not in their ranks. I leave this institution with enormous respect. The U.S. Senate is the greatest deliberative body in the world, and I sincerely believe the vast majority of my colleagues are serious-minded and have the best interests of the country at heart. I believe the vast majority of my colleagues want to do what is right for the country. We have differences—enormous differences—about what is the right thing to do, but I have no doubt most of our colleagues are well intentioned.

In many circles it is fashionable now to bash government and play down its importance. I personally think we would do well to remember what it has accomplished. I can remember so clearly being called to an emergency meeting in this building in the fall of 2008. I was handed a note saying I was urgently requested to come here. It was about 6 o'clock in the evening. I was the last one to arrive. When I walked into the leader's office, there were the leaders of the House and the Senate, Republicans and Democrats, the Secretary of the Treasury from the Bush administration, and the Chairman of the Federal Reserve. I instantly understood something very serious was afoot. They closed the door and told us they were going to take over AIG, the large insurance company, the next day. They weren't there to ask for our approval or seek our agreement; they were there to tell us they were taking this step and they told us they were taking this step because they believed if they did not, there would be a financial collapse in this country within days, and they gave great specificity as to what would happen if there was a failure to take the action they were about to take.

The public reaction was harshly negative. The notion of the Government of the United States bailing out a large private insurance company created controversy and criticism from almost every corner. Ultimately, the rescue of that company cost \$180 billion—a staggering sum. But do my colleagues know what. We have learned this week that the taxpayers will make money on the deal. Yes, it cost us \$180 billion, but the taxpayers are going to make \$22 billion on the transaction. If we hadn't done it, we would have risked going into a depression.

So when people say there is no role for government or it should be a limited, shrunken roll, I say, Really? Would we have wanted to stand by and risk this country going into another Great Depression? Let's recall what that was like. More than 20 percent of the people in this country were out of work. I know my own grandfather, who refused to take bankruptcy, owned stock in the local bank. In those days people had unlimited liability if they owned stock in a bank. So when there was a run on the bank, as there was, he was called to bring money to the bank,

which he did. He did it over and over, and it took him 9 years to recover. People were hungry. People were desperate. That is what a depression is about.

So when I reflect back to those decisions, I believe they were the right decisions to make. It is not just my view; that is the view of two of the most distinguished economists in this country, Mark Zandi, who was a key economic adviser to Senator JOHN MCCAIN in his Presidential race, and Alan Blinder, the former Deputy Chairman of the Federal Reserve. Here is what they say: Without that Federal response, we would have had 8 million fewer jobs and a 16-percent level of unemployment in this country, and we would have been in the second Great Depression. They call it "Depression 2.0."

So let's remember where we were when President Obama came to office. The Nation was facing the worst economic catastrophe since the Great Depression. In the fourth quarter of 2008, the economy shrank at a rate of almost 9 percent. After the Federal actions, positive economic growth returned in the third quarter of 2009 and we have now had 13 consecutive quarters of economic growth. We have come a long way. This is a remarkable turnaround in a very short time, measured against previous financial crises. In fact, there has been an academic study just completed that suggests typically it takes 8 to 10 years to recover from a financial crisis. So the recovery here, while not everything we would have hoped, is a dramatic turnaround.

At the same time, our constituents know, and we know, the price has been high. We know we are currently borrowing 31 cents of every dollar we spend. That is somewhat of an improvement, because we were borrowing 40 cents of every dollar we spend. So this is an improvement, but we have a long way to go. And the public understands we face both a spending and a revenue problem. Spending is near a 60-year high, as this chart shows. The red line is the spending line; the green line is the revenue line. But for those who say it is just a spending problem, I don't think the facts bear that out, because the revenue is near a 60-year low. I think most logical people would say we have to work both sides of this equation.

When we look at our debt, we see that our gross debt has now surpassed 100 percent of our gross domestic product. There was a landmark work done a couple of years ago by Rogoff and Reinhart. They looked at 200 years of economic history and they concluded that once our debt exceeds 90 percent of GDP, our future economic prospects are reduced, and reduced quite significantly: future economic growth reduced by 25 to 33 percent. So this is not just numbers on a page; this is a question of future economic opportunity.

This growing debt is why many of us called for action a long time ago. In fact, it was 6 years ago this month that

Senator Gregg and I came up with the idea of a commission to tackle the debt. That idea ultimately led to the President appointing the Bowles-Simpson Commission. Its bipartisan report recommended \$4 trillion in deficit reduction in a balanced way, and I think in a fair way. It protected low-income programs, it actually improved the progressivity of the tax system quite significantly, and it was balanced between revenue and spending. Other bipartisan groups have concluded the same, that we need spending restraint and we need revenue. So there is a critical role for government here. We have seen it in the past and we will find it in the future.

But I think we also have to acknowledge there are problems here. There are problems in this Chamber. As proud as I am of this institution, and I will forever be, I have detected over the 26 years I have been here, a change. It has happened kind of gradually, but it has clearly happened. We now spend too much of our time seeking partisan advantage, and it happens on both sides, and it is all understandable. I understand it. I am not being critical of individuals. We spend too little time trying to solve problems. We spend too little time in our caucuses, in our meetings, focused on how to solve the problems facing the country. I deeply believe this observation is true.

I believe we can do better than this. The institutions of our government have a proud history. The genius of our Founding Fathers can be found in every part of our history. Whether it was conquering the last Great Depression or winning World War I and World War II or launching a man into space or conquering dread diseases, over and over our country has organized to better the plight of mankind. We need that same kind of focus and effort now to address our challenges. I am confident we can do this, but it is not enough to be confident. It is not enough to be hopeful. It requires a plan, and I would like to take the next few minutes to lay out my belief of what that plan should include.

Much of what I will talk about reflects the work of the Bowles-Simpson Commission, the Group of 6 that I have been a part of, and the Group of 8.

It starts by looking at what both sides have laid down. Republicans have laid down the spending cut plan; the President has laid down a revenue plan. My own belief is we should take them both. We should take what the Republicans have proposed on spending, with some modest modifications which I will discuss, and we should take the President's plan on revenue.

The President laid down a plan that said we ought to raise \$1.6 trillion over the next 10 years. Boy, that sounds like an awful lot of money, doesn't it—\$1.6 trillion. Not billion, not million, trillion. And people will be quick to say: Oh, my God, that is the biggest tax increase in the history of mankind. Terrible. We cannot do that.

Well, we need to put it in perspective. The first thing we should recognize is this will take us to a revenue level that is 19.9 percent of our GDP. The last five times we have balanced the budget in this country, going back to 1969, we have been at 19.7 percent, 19.9 percent, 19.8 percent, 20.6 percent, and 19.5 percent. Does 19.9 percent fit in? These are the only times we balanced the budget going back to 1969.

To put it in even more perspective, how much revenue are we going to raise over the next 10 years without any change? Well, here is the number: \$37.4 trillion. Nobody ever puts these things in perspective. These big numbers are in relationship to what; \$1.6 trillion is what in relationship to \$37.4 trillion? As a percentage that is an increase of 4.3 percent. My goodness, we cannot increase the revenue by 4.3 percent in this country over the next 10 years? Of course we can. Of course we can, especially if it means we get our house in order and put the country on a more firm fiscal footing.

It does not just matter how much money we raise; it also matters how we raise it. We have a Tax Code now which I cannot defend. I cannot defend it. I took a study that was done by a man named Martin Sullivan last year. He did a very interesting thing. He looked at one building on Park Avenue in New York, and he was able to do it because they happened to have the statistics that isolated that one building. Do you know what he found? The average income in that building was \$1,167,000 for the year—\$1,167,000. The average tax rate of the people in that building was 14.7 percent.

The janitor in that building had an income of \$33,000. He paid a tax rate of 24.9 percent. Is this fair? Is it fair that people making \$1.1 million paid a tax rate of 14.7 percent, and the janitor who served them earning \$33,000 a year paid a tax rate of 24.9 percent? Well, I personally do not think so.

I know all of the arguments. I have served on the Finance Committee. I have heard it all. The biggest reason for this differential, by the way, is not the earned-income tax rate, which has had almost all of the attention in this national discussion. Almost all of the attention has been on the earned-income tax rate and raising it from 35 percent to 39.6 percent.

Almost no attention has been paid to the unearned-income tax rate on capital gains and dividends. The unearned rate is currently at 15 percent. That is what allows very wealthy people to pay a tax rate that is a fraction of those who work full time and are paying rates of 25 percent.

So I hope as we move to conclusion we will pay a little more attention to the unearned rates. The truth is, we would not have to have as much of an increase as is being proposed on the earned-income side and have more of an increase on the unearned-income side, and we would make the Tax Code fairer and we could raise the same

amount of revenue. That is the revenue side.

But the spending side Republicans have down. They have put out a proposal that asks for savings out of entitlements and other discretionary spending. And if we look at their proposal and break it down—again, let's look at health care. We are going to spend \$11 trillion over the next 10 years on health care. Republicans are proposing saving \$600 billion. If we had a compromise between Republicans and Democrats let's say at \$500 billion, that would be a savings of, again the magic, 4 percent.

We are going to increase revenue 4 percent. If we had savings in health care of 4½ percent, we would save \$500 billion. Now, I have had conversations with colleagues who tell me we cannot possibly save \$500 billion out of health care, just like people say, well, we cannot possibly increase revenue \$1.6 trillion.

Really, we cannot save \$500 billion out of a pot of money where we are going to spend \$11 trillion? I do not think that is true. I think we can save \$500 billion. And I will tell you, there is someone sitting on this floor who has a pretty good idea of how to do it. Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE has said to us over and over and over: We are spending more than any other country in the world as a share of our national income on health care. We are spending 18 percent of our GDP on health care. No other country spends more than 11½ percent.

The best minds in this country have told us we are wasting hundreds of billions of dollars in health care that do not improve health care outcomes at all. If we would save money in overall health care, 40 percent of that savings would flow through to the Federal Government. Senator WHITEHOUSE is right about this. We ought to focus like a laser on where the waste is.

We do not need to increase the eligibility age for Medicare. We absolutely do not have to do it to save \$500 billion. But what it would do, if we save \$500 billion, is it would keep the growth in health care spending about equal to the growth in the overall economy. That would stabilize the growth of health care spending. That would be a huge contribution to the economic competitive position of the United States.

Republicans have also said: Hey, let's save \$300 billion on domestic discretionary savings. Now, I will be the first to say we have already had lots of savings on the discretionary accounts. We have saved over \$1 trillion in the discretionary accounts. But they say, ok, let's save another \$300 billion. I think we should say we will do it if they go with us on the revenue. We will do it because that represents a savings of 2.6 percent of the \$11.6 trillion we are going to spend in the discretionary accounts over the next 10 years.

Now, I think we have gotten into a situation where we use numbers that are absolutely big numbers, but we do

not put them in perspective. We cannot save 2.6 percent out of discretionary accounts. Well, I believe we can. I absolutely believe we can. I believe we can save more out of defense.

I have supported every penny—I did not vote for going to war in Iraq. I thought that was a huge mistake. But I have supported every dollar of spending for our troops in the field. I can tell you as the Budget Committee chairman, we can save more money in defense. There are lots of Republicans who know we can do it too.

Other mandatory. That is another category the Republicans said to save \$300 billion there. I think they are \$100 billion too high because we are already saving over \$100 billion out of other mandatory programs to offset the cost of extending certain policies just last year. So let's save \$200 billion. That would represent, again, 4 percent of what we are projected to spend over the next 10 years in other mandatory spending; \$5.1 trillion is what we are programmed to spend. Two hundred billion dollars of savings there would represent 4 percent.

Again, I have had colleagues tell me we cannot possibly save \$200 billion. I have had staff people tell me we cannot save \$200 billion. So I say, how much are we going to spend? How much are we going to spend? That \$200 billion represents 4 percent of what we are going to spend. We cannot save 4 percent? Yes, we can. Yes, we can.

I was elected on the slogan, in 1986, of "Yes We Can." And somebody else used that slogan a few years later. President Obama used that slogan, "Yes We Can." He called me up.

He said: Do I owe you royalties?

I said: No, I am glad you are using it.

But, yes we can. We need more of a yes-we-can attitude around here.

So when I rack it all up and I look at what we have already done, we have saved \$1 trillion in the Budget Control Act of last year. Here is other mandatory savings I just talked about: more than \$100 billion that we have already done to offset the cost of extending certain policies, \$900 billion of other discretionary savings already done. So we put that in the bank. We use that as the base.

We put it all together and here is what we have: We save another \$200 billion on defense; we have revenue of \$1.6 trillion, which is the President's proposal; we have \$100 billion of non-defense. That gets us the \$300 billion the Republicans have asked for.

On health care we do \$500 billion. That is close to what they have asked for, \$100 billion less. Other mandatory, \$200 billion; that is close to what they asked for. The \$100 billion difference reflects what we have already done.

Interest savings. Because we are spending less and we have more revenue, we save interest, \$400 billion. That gives us a total of spending cuts of \$1.4 trillion. We add in what has already been done \$1.050 trillion, and we have a total of \$2.450 trillion. We add

that to the \$1.6 trillion of revenue, we have \$4.050 trillion of savings.

Then I personally would extend the payroll tax holiday because CBO tells us, on the tax side, that holiday is the biggest bang for the buck in giving a lift to the economy. It will cost us \$200 billion, for a net deficit reduction of \$3.850 trillion. For those wondering what happens to AMT and what happens to the doc fix, we have those in the baseline so they are covered in this proposal. We can correct the alternative minimum tax. We can eliminate the doc fix and be done with them.

This magnitude of package is precisely what was called for in the fiscal commission. In The Moment of Truth report, this is what they called for. I think they were right to call for it. I was proud to be part of that effort. I believe this is precisely what we need to do now. So that is the plan. Now we need action. We should do it the old-fashioned way. We should make tough decisions, even some that will be unpopular.

It will be the right thing to do, and it will work. It will stabilize our debt and begin to bring it down. It will provide certainty to our economy. I believe it will unleash the \$1.7 trillion that is in the balance sheets of our corporations, and it will unlock the investment potential that lies all across this country.

Let me end as I began by simply saying thank you. Thank you to the people of North Dakota, thank you to my colleagues, thank you to my staff and, most of all, thanks to my family—to my wife Lucy, to my daughter Jessie, to our son Ivan and his wife Kendra, and to our grandson Carter. To all my family members, my cousins, who have been with me in every campaign, I will never forget your support and your help. I will always consider serving here the honor of my life.

I also thank my colleague Senator HOEVEN, who, in the 2 years he and I have overlapped, has been a good colleague. I have enjoyed working with him very much.

I just close by noting, because as many of you know, I am sort of a numbers guy, that I started these remarks in the 12th hour of the 12th day of the 12th month of 2012. I am sure numerologists will make much of those relationships. I began this speech in the 12th hour of the 12th day of the 12th month of 2012, and I leave here forever grateful for the opportunity to serve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Ms. STABENOW. I wish to take a moment to thank our distinguished colleague and my dear friend for his wonderful service. We serve on three committees together. It has been my honor to serve on the committee Senator CONRAD chairs, the Budget Committee, and to have him serve as a senior member of the Agriculture Committee, which I chair. Both of us sit on the Finance Committee together.

Today he has done what he has always done for us, which is to provide vision, common sense, intelligence, and a lot of numbers. They add up, and they make sense. In listening to Senator CONRAD's farewell speech, I want to thank him again for giving us a path forward. He is someone who will forever be in Senate history as one of the great statesmen of our country, someone with intelligence, respect on both sides, compassion, and a fighter from North Dakota like I have never seen. He is someone who serves in the best tradition of what it means to be an honorable public servant.

He has been a role model for me all the way through to this point and a dear friend. I wish him, Lucy, and Dakota—he is, in fact, the 101st Senator—wonderful opportunities going forward in the future. The Senator from North Dakota will be greatly missed, but his contributions will forever be a part of the positive tradition of this great body.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I yield to the distinguished chairman of the Judiciary Committee, the Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. I thank the Senator. I will be speaking later on to the senior Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. President, I have had the privilege to serve with several hundred Senators since coming here. I have put in a very small list those who are extraordinary both for their talents and for our personal friendship, and KENT CONRAD is in that short list very easily. In fact, he defines it in many ways. Because of what we heard here, as I whispered to him a minute ago, it was nice to hear a grownup speak on the floor.

I have seen him reach across the aisle. We have been privileged, both of us have been privileged to serve with fine Senators from both parties. But KENT CONRAD is unique. Marcelle and I value more than I could possibly say here our friendship with Kent and his wife Lucy and the 101st Senator, Dakota.

As I said, I will speak later about this Senator, but what we heard today was a real giant of the Senate speaking, and I hope all Americans will listen to the lesson he gave us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Before the junior Senator from North Dakota speaks—and I appreciate his courtesy in allowing us to make a few brief, personal remarks before he speaks—I wanted to say to my friend and my chairman, the senior Senator from North Dakota, that, yes, in the most obvious respect, he is leaving the Senate, and we will be a smaller Senate for his departure. But in some very important ways, KENT CONRAD is not leaving the Senate. I can assure him that for as long as I remain a U.S. Senator and have the privilege to serve in this body, KENT CONRAD will remain in this Senate as an example

that I will never forget as a young Senator tutored by him in the Budget Committee. I can speak for myself when I say that, and I will only speak for myself when I say that, but I am absolutely confident there are dozens of other Members of this body who can say exactly the same thing. In that sense, KENT CONRAD will continue to be an important part of this Senate, and the effect he will have in those years through the example he has set, echoed down the hallways of time by people who had the opportunity to serve with him, is going to be an immensely valuable one.

He displays the characteristics of diligence—an underrated attribute but an important one—of courtesy, of determination. It is an interesting combination, courtesy and determination, but Chairman CONRAD knows very well when to yield and when to fight. There was a politician hundreds of years ago in another country who said, "One ought not to be obstinate," and then he continued, "unless one ought to be, and then one ought to be unshakable." On the things that count, Senator CONRAD has always been unshakable. Where progress can be made, he has never been obstinate. It has been my honor to serve with him.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. HOEVEN. I rise to speak on behalf of the senior Senator from North Dakota and to thank him for his dedicated service on behalf of the people of North Dakota and on behalf of the people of this great Nation.

I think this is 26 years that he has served in the Senate, and he has always served with great distinction and great commitment. He has been a leader in agriculture, in energy, and in fiscal efforts and many other areas.

I have to say on a personal note that since I came to the Senate last year, he has reached out to me and to my family in a very warm and positive way, both personally and professionally, and I would say the same about his wife Lucy. I think this is in the finest tradition of the Senate, in the tradition of bipartisanship, in the tradition of working together, and in the tradition of truly caring and being committed to getting things done. It wasn't just that he reached out on a personal level and said: All right, how can I be helpful, how can we work together; when I had questions or needed assistance, he was there. He was more than helpful.

In terms of working on legislation that matters, a farm bill, working together on the Agriculture Committee—Senator CONRAD has an amazing knowledge of agriculture and obviously incredible experience over the past 26 years building good farm policy for this Nation. So to work with him on the Agriculture Committee was not only rewarding but really an opportunity to craft good long-term policy for this country that will make a difference.

I start with that example because when you look at it, here we are at a

time when we need good policy for our country, but at the same time we need to find savings, real savings that will help us address the deficit and the debt. So we went to work on a farm bill—a farm bill that is not only responsive to the farmers, the ranchers, and the producers of this country who produce the highest quality of food supply in the world at the lowest cost—every American benefits from that. They wanted more crop insurance, and we went to work. We improved the farm bill in terms of the kind of crop insurance it provides, but at the same time we saved \$23 billion to help with the deficit and the debt. That is doing it the right way.

If you think about it and you went across all aspects of what we are doing here, all of the different types of policies that we have, if we could do the same—craft good policy and find real, meaningful savings on a bipartisan basis that empowers the very people who are impacted by that policy, the farmers and the ranchers who do such a great job producing food, fuel, and fiber, but at the same time grow our economy, create a favorable balance of trade and an incredible number of jobs—that is what we have to do, whether it is agriculture, whether it is energy, whether it is disaster assistance when we have floods and hurricanes, whether it is our military.

I am very pleased and honored to have had the opportunity to work with Senator CONRAD on those types of issues to try to make a real difference for the people of this country. As Senator CONRAD departs the Senate after 26 years—think about it: 26 years here, conducting himself in a professional manner with respect to this institution. He built relationships with Senators on both sides of the aisle but always with a commitment to the people of North Dakota and this country.

As I look at the legacy he leaves, I think one of the most important right now is his willingness to work in a bipartisan way to get things done. He brings a practical, pragmatic approach that recognizes solutions are imperfect but that we have an obligation in a bipartisan way to come together and find real solutions for the people of the greatest Nation on Earth. It is that legacy, that willingness to be bipartisan and work together that I saw up close and personal here every day. I believe it is that legacy, as well as many others, that will continue here in this body when we think about Senator KENT CONRAD and his service to North Dakota and his service to this great country.

I rise to say thank you on behalf of the people of North Dakota and this country to my distinguished colleague for 26 years of dedicated service. Thank you, good luck, and God bless in your future endeavors.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. I want to thank Senator HOEVEN, my colleague, for his

kind words. I have really enjoyed the relationship. I think you can tell we worked together very well, and I hope that serves as an example to others of our colleagues. Even if you are on other side of the political aisle, you can work together, and you can get things done.

I also thank Senator LEAHY, my dear friend. He and his wife are very close friends of mine and my wife's.

To Senator STABENOW, the distinguished chairman of the Agriculture Committee, and Senator WHITEHOUSE, who served with me on the Budget Committee, I want to take special note of the friendships we have enjoyed. Senator STABENOW and Senator WHITEHOUSE will be friends of ours for as long as we are on this Earth.

I look forward to our continuing relationship with the Leahys, who, as I have indicated, have become very dear personal friends.

In closing, to Senator HOEVEN, the best part of service here is getting things done. And Senator HOEVEN has come with that attitude to this Chamber—to get results for the people we represent—and I appreciate that attitude, and I appreciate the friendship.

Finally, I say to the distinguished occupant of the chair, we have had a very good relationship as well. I thank him for his service and for this opportunity to have my farewell remarks before the Senate on this the 12th day of the 12th month of 2012. That is a remarkable set of coincidences.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. 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. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, my fourth and final term as a U.S. Senator will soon come to an end. As I reflect on that reality, I am, of course, filled with many emotions, but the one I feel most is gratitude—gratitude first to God, creator of life and law, without whose loving kindness nothing would be possible; gratitude to America, the extraordinary land of opportunity which has given someone like me so many opportunities; gratitude to the people of Connecticut, who have entrusted me with the privilege of public service for 40 years, the last 24 in the Senate; gratitude to my Senate colleagues, whom I have come to know as friends and with whom it has been such an honor to serve; gratitude to all the people without whose help, hard work, and support I never would have made it to the Senate or stayed here, the gifted and hard-working staff in Connecticut and Washington who supported, informed, and enriched my service here,

and the volunteers in my campaigns who gave so much and asked for nothing in return except that I do what I believed was right; gratitude to all those who labor out of view in the corridors of this Capitol Building, from the maintenance crews to the Capitol Police and everybody else anywhere in this building—thank you for keeping our Capitol running and keeping us safe; and gratitude most of all, of course, to my family for the love, support, and inspiration they have given me every day of my life—my parents, grandparents, and siblings, my children and grandchildren, and Hadassah, my wife of almost 30 years now, the love of my life, who has been my constant companion, supporter, and partner through this amazing adventure.

So I want to begin this farewell speech by simply saying thank you all. I have a lot to be grateful for. But, Mr. President, being a Senator, and since this is my farewell speech, I do have a few more things I would like to say.

I am leaving the Senate at a moment in our history when America faces daunting challenges both domestic and foreign and when too often our problems seem greater than our government's ability to solve them. But I can tell you I remain deeply optimistic about America's future and constantly inspired by the special destiny I am convinced is ours as Americans.

My optimism is based not in theory or hope but in American history and in personal experience. I think particularly about my time in public life and especially the changes I have witnessed since I took the oath of office as a Senator on January 3, 1989. The fact is that over the past quarter century, America and the world have become freer and more prosperous. The Iron Curtain was peacefully torn down, and the Soviet empire defeated. The eternal values of freedom and opportunity, on which America was founded and for which we still stand, have made global gains that were once unimaginable. We have seen the spread of democracy from Central Europe to Southeast Asia and from Latin America to the Middle East. Hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty in places such as China, India, and just about every other corner of the globe, and technological advances have transformed almost every aspect of our daily lives.

When I started in the Senate, a BlackBerry was a fruit and tweeting was something only birds did. No more. None of these extraordinary developments happened by accident. In fact, to a significant degree, I would say they were made possible by the principled leadership of the United States, by the global economy and international system America created with our diplomacy and protected with our military and by the unique culture of freedom, innovation, and entrepreneurship that flourishes in our country and that remains the model and inspiration for the rest of the modernizing world.

We have every reason to be proud of the progress of humanity that has happened on America's watch and here at home to be grateful for the countless ways in which our own country has been benefited in the process. We live in a world whose shape and trajectory the United States, more than any other nation, is responsible for. It is certainly not a perfect world. I know that. But it is a better world than the one we inherited. In my opinion, it is actually in so many ways a better world than has ever existed before.

Here at home, over the past quarter century, we have moved closer to the more perfect union our Founders sought—becoming a more free and open society, in ways I would guess those same Founders never could have imagined.

Barriers of discrimination and bigotry that just a few decades ago seemed immovable have been broken, and the doors of opportunity have been opened wider for all Americans—regardless of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or disability.

During my time in Washington, we have had our first female Secretary of State nominated and confirmed and our first African-American President elected and reelected. It will forever remain one of my deepest honors that—thanks to Vice President Gore—I was given the opportunity to be the first Jewish American nominated by a major political party for national office—and, incidentally, thanks to the American people, grateful to have received one-half million more votes than my opponent on the other side. But that is a longer story.

While there is still much work to do and many problems to be solved, I believe we can and should approach our future with a confidence that is based on the real and substantial progress we have made together. What is required now to solve the real urgent problems we still have is leadership—leadership of the kind that is never easy or common but which we as Americans know we can summon in times of need because we have summoned it before.

Today, I regret to say, as I leave the Senate, the greatest obstacle I see standing between us and the brighter American future we all want is right here in Washington. It is the partisan polarization of our politics which prevents us from making the principled compromises on which progress in a democracy depends and which right now prevents us from restoring our fiscal solvency as a nation.

We need bipartisan leadership to break the gridlock in Washington that will unleash all the potential that is in the American people. So I would respectfully make this appeal to my colleagues—especially the 12 new Senators who will take the oath of office for the first time next month. I know how hard each of you has worked to get elected to the Senate, and I know you worked so hard because you wanted to