

But I look forward to continuing to help Senator THUNE, the next whip, and the conference and the Senate in any way I can. He has my telephone number.

Of course, when you are whip—like any job—you rely on your team members. I couldn't have gotten through these 6 years without a lot of help. First and foremost, I owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to my mentor and friend, Leader MCCONNELL. There is no one in the country who has done more to advance the conservative cause in recent times than Senator MCCONNELL—no one. Robert Caro called LBJ the Master of the Senate. I would like to nominate another one: MITCH MCCONNELL.

Under MITCH's leadership in the last 2 years alone, we have bolstered our Nation's economy, fixed our Tax Code, and achieved real regulatory reform. We have transformed our Judiciary, improved veterans' healthcare, and addressed critical public health needs like the opioid crisis. And that doesn't even begin to scratch the surface.

We have certainly had our fair share of nail-biters—I seem to remember a certain debt ceiling vote, for example—and those accomplishments I mentioned were not easy, given the slim margins. But with Senator MCCONNELL's leadership and more than a few prayers along the way, we did it together. I am proud of our record, and I am grateful for his trust and confidence.

Of course, we couldn't have been successful without a strong and reliable team of deputy whips led by Senator MIKE CRAPO. I leaned on my deputy whip team regularly, and time and again, they delivered. So to Senators BLUNT, CAPITO, CRAPO, FISCHER, GARDNER, LANKFORD, PORTMAN, SCOTT, TILLIS, and YOUNG, thank you.

I also want to thank my whip staff, both current and former. This includes John Chapuis, Sam Beaver, Noah McCullough, Jody Hernandez, Emily Kirlin, Jonny Slemrod, and my first chief of staff, Russ Thomasson.

What has been so amazing to me is how seamlessly my whip staff also worked with my Texas official staff as well. We all worked, literally, as one team. I thank all of my Texas staff for their contributions to our successes.

We all rely on our staffs around here a great deal, and that is doubly true of my entire staff over the last 6 years. I have come to think of the whip operation as really an intelligence operation. These outstanding men and women have been my eyes and ears. They are all incredibly smart. They are devoted and hard-working.

I say to all of them: Thank you for everything you have done to serve the conference and the Senate as a whole.

As whip, you are provided with a security detail comprised of Capitol Police officers. These men and women are extraordinary professionals who have become like family. Their work often takes them away from their own fami-

lies and friends as they travel around the country and sometimes miss holidays and special occasions. They, like all of the Capitol Police, keep the people who work here and visit here safe. We all appreciate what they do for us each and every day.

Finally, I want to say a few words about my chief of staff, Monica Popp, who is the chief of staff of my whip office.

Monica is often the first person and the last person on my staff I talk to each day. If Beth Jafari, who is my chief of staff in my Texas office, is the glue that keeps our operation together and operating at maximum efficiency, Monica is the spark plug of the operation.

As impressive as her knowledge of the Senate is and of how the U.S. Government functions, that is not what sets her apart. She often, in her own gentle but determined way, has pressed me to make just one more call, to meet just one more time with a colleague, or to try just a little harder to nail down the winning votes. She is exactly the type of person you need to have in your corner, but it is her sunny disposition—her optimism—that is infectious. In addition to her extraordinary competence, that makes her indispensable.

Monica is known for cultivating and maintaining strong relationships not only in the Senate but in the House and in the executive branch. It is not just limited to my party; some of her closest colleagues work in the leadership offices of our Democratic colleagues. The big bipartisan achievements I mentioned earlier could not have happened without Monica and her ability to lead a team and work across the aisle. Part of the reason she is so effective is she wants to know everything. She even wants to know what Members have for breakfast because she knows how circumstances and small events can sometimes provide insight in unexpected ways.

Here is how our staff describes her:

"She is a problem solver."

"When you think you're stuck, she'll find creative ways to get a solution."

The most instructive, I think, is this: "You want to be around her just to learn."

I couldn't agree more.

To Monica, I say thank you. We couldn't have done it without you.

Even though I will no longer be serving as the majority whip, I am not going anywhere. Believe me—serving 28 million Texans here in the Senate is a big enough job for anyone. To borrow a phrase from a great American leader, our late President George Herbert Walker Bush—he said: I am a Texan and an American. What more can a man ask for?

Indeed, it is an honor and a privilege to represent the great people of Texas, and I believe my time as whip has only taught me to be a better representative of my fellow Texans. As an elected leader, I have learned that sometimes you have to do things nobody else

wants to do because they are controversial or they are risky, but I stand ready to continue to take risks and accept controversy in the pursuit of worthy causes.

I close simply by saying it has been a privilege to serve as the whip for Texas, for the Republican conference, and for the Senate.

Often, when I am introduced to audiences here and at home, the introducers will refer to me as the No. 2 person in the Senate. Occasionally, they will call me the second most powerful person in the Senate—obviously an exaggeration. Yet I have never been quite able to bring myself to correct them in public if only to save them the embarrassment. Let me just say I will now return to my previous life as the second most powerful person in my household and to my continued service to Texas and the world's greatest deliberative body.

I yield the floor.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question occurs on the confirmation of the Maguire nomination.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Maguire nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise for a couple of moments in morning business to pay tribute to the Senate and what we have done this past year. We think we are easing towards going home. We think we are easing towards finishing the year, and everybody is excited about that. We have talked about a lot of things we haven't done. Let's talk about what we have done, because I think this has been the most successful time I have had in Washington for 20 years.

As chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, we have had the best success we have ever had for the most important people in the country we love—our military in the United States of