

Howard Baker—a great Tennessean and the former majority leader of this body—once remarked about the nature of the Senate: “[And] if we cannot be civil to one another, and if we stop dealing with those with whom we disagree, or that we don’t like, we would soon stop functioning altogether.”

With that in mind, my time in the Senate is going to be focused on action and accomplishment—things that will lead to positive change.

Many times, people have asked me: What is one of your strengths? What do you think helps you in the political process?

I have repeatedly said: I am a pretty good change agent.

That is something we need to do to fully function and to serve our Nation.

Tennessee has constituencies across every sector of our Nation’s economy, and they are wanting change. They want fair and free markets, less regulation, less taxation, and less litigation. Our industries are in agriculture, energy production, financial services, national security installations, veterans hospitals, world-class universities, healthcare, manufacturing, technology, entertainment, and communications.

In Tennessee, we are a logistics hub, with great networks and intermodal facilities. As a member of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, I am going to work with them to make certain that when the Federal Government shows up, it is there to be a help and not a hindrance.

Tennessee is a cultural leader and is the Nation’s center for music, songwriting, and religion. The people want protection of the works they create and of the sermons they preach.

Tennesseans also tell me that as their Senator, they want me to be aware they are concerned about the future of the Nation. It is unimaginable to Tennesseans that nearly three decades after the end of the Cold War, there is a debate in Washington about, are you for socialism or are you for freedom? They cannot believe this is happening. They want to make certain we are going to continue to push forward and protect this Nation and protect our freedoms that we have. We will continue to do that and to push back.

We have a lot of challenges we are going to face. Tennesseans want to make certain that we are going to be there to focus on prosperity and leadership for future generations. This is going to require our paying attention to technology. My colleagues will find that I am going to work to push for 5G and next-generation technologies for both our commercial and military space.

Senator BALDWIN and I are introducing bipartisan legislation to advance rural broadband, and I have joined Senators GARDNER and CORTEZ MASTO on the ACCESS BROADBAND Act to make resources available to rural communities. Technology is not

only enabled by freedom, it enhances freedom.

Make no mistake, our technology and our power are being challenged by all of our adversaries. Primary among them is Communist China, which is a threat to our country because it steals our technology, our innovations, and in its unfair trading practices and monetary policy. We should all be united in taking on the Chinese. Our Tennesseans talk to me regularly about their concerns about some of the theft that takes place by China. We have other enemies as well—from Maduro in Venezuela to the Ayatollahs in Iran, to Kim Jong Un in North Korea. We must stand together as Americans if we are to advance the cause of freedom.

Tennesseans have been clear in what they want and in what they expect from their U.S. Senator. They want somebody who is going to listen to them and be concerned about the stories of their lives, not the DC story of the day. Tennesseans are ready for bold ideas on how the Federal Government should spend their taxpayer dollars.

They don’t want tweaks around the edges of bills; they want something bold. They are concerned about how we are going to fund the military. They are concerned about what we are going to do to further our presence in this land.

Tennesseans want a Senator who will respect freedom and the rule of law. It is a beautiful and diverse State. It represents the best of what this Nation has to offer. Our history reflects a common set of values that are based on faith, family freedom, hope, and opportunity, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to preserve these values and to fight back against those who would attempt to undermine them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that all postcloture time on the Wyrick nomination expire at 5:30, Tuesday, April 9; further, that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action. I further ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Stanton nomination be waived; finally, that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the cloture motion on the Abizaid nomination be withdrawn and the Senate vote on his confirmation at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, on April 10, 2019.

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

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

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

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.’S LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL

Mr. JONES. Madam President, I rise today to honor a great American, an American whose words lit a flame of hope in the hearts of those souls who had become weary with the weight of injustice, an American whose struggles, ideals—and, yes, his dreams—are etched in the foundation of our Nation.

On April 12, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was arrested in my hometown of Birmingham, AL. His crime? Leading a peaceful march to protest the indignity suffered by the Black community in the Jim Crow era. He had violated Birmingham public safety commissioner “Bull” Connor’s ban on public demonstrations, which targeted the growing resistance of African Americans to the injustices they were suffering.

While in solitary confinement in Birmingham, Dr. King wrote what became known as the “Letter from Birmingham Jail”—a stinging response to a group of White clergy in Alabama who had denounced his tactics and questioned the wisdom and timing of his arrival in Birmingham.

They insisted that he was an outside agitator coming to Alabama to instigate trouble. Dr. King responded famously: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

In his letter, he rejected the idea that African Americans should be more patient for change in the face of the daily indignities inflicted by segregation and in the face of violence and threats and intimidation. He wrote: “There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over.”

While I did not experience this struggle as a young child—a young White child growing up in the nearby Birmingham suburb—I spent much of my adult life and career as a lawyer and former U.S. attorney examining the history and absorbing its lessons. I have often returned to Dr. King’s letter to understand the forces at play at the height of the civil rights struggle. Each time I read his words, I am in awe of his courage and resolve in the face of such incredible personal risk.

While we have come so far and while we have made great progress in loosening the binds of racial injustice that have constrained and suffocated our Nation for so many years, we have not yet fully relieved the weight of our country’s abominable history of slavery, segregation, and racial discrimination.

That is why I rise today. It is our civic duty and I believe our moral obligation to remember Dr. King’s words and his deeds, to tell his story, to appreciate that 1963 was not all that long ago, and to reflect on how many things have changed and how many have not. Our obligation is to honor Dr. King’s