

accident left her in a wheelchair just days after Hurricane Katrina reshaped the coast of Mississippi, Jeanne didn't stop. She kept working. She continued her work with an unwavering commitment to the values she held dear, always finding a way to move forward.

Jeanne's influence went far beyond politics. Jeanne cared deeply about education and the people of Mississippi. As a member of the board of trustees for the Institutions of Higher Learning, she worked tirelessly to make Mississippi's universities stronger and more inclusive, especially for those with disabilities. Always focused on serving others, her contributions will be felt for generations.

What truly defined Jeanne was her strength of character. She was a woman who made others better. Her husband always said it best:

She made me a better person than I otherwise would have been.

Those of us who had the privilege of knowing her can attest to that. Her wisdom, her kindness, and her ability to bring people together left a permanent mark on everyone she met.

Jeanne leaves behind a lasting legacy that will continue to inspire those whose lives she has touched. My heart goes out to her husband Alwyn, to their two daughters Laurel and Taylor, and to her grandchildren Cornelius and Toxie Ray.

Mississippi has lost an amazing woman and a true leader, but Jeanne's spirit, her passion for life, and her commitment to making our State and country a better place will endure.

#### TRIBUTE TO TIM WOLVERTON

Madam President, today, I am pleased to commend and bid farewell to my longtime legislative director, Tim Wolverton, who has loyally served the Senate and the great State of Mississippi for more than 15 years. Tim has not only been a trusted member of my staff but a dear friend.

Born and raised in Starkville, MS, Tim attended Mississippi State University where he began his political career, winning an election to serve as student body president.

Apparently, Tim enjoyed being an elected official so much that he decided to move to the one place in the country where elected officials are everywhere: Washington, DC. It was here that Tim interned for one of his home State Senators, the late, great Senator Thad Cochran. If Tim hadn't caught the bug before that summer, he definitely had it now. A year later, Tim moved to the Nation's Capital to begin his professional career by accepting a job in Senator Cochran's office right after graduating with a degree in communications and a minor in leadership studies.

Tim started his career as many of our aides do—fresh out of college, wide-eyed, and ready to make a difference. Under the leadership of Senator Cochran, Tim quickly rose through the ranks and grew from the eager, young staffer into an effective legislative aide and a valuable member of Senator

Cochran's office. Throughout that time, Tim continued his studies, completing a program from the Air Command and Staff College and earning his master's from the U.S. Naval War College.

When Senator Cochran's career was coming to an end and I was appointed to the difficult task of carrying forward his legacy and representing all the people of Mississippi, I made the smart choice of asking Tim Wolverton to stay on as my legislative director, and I am forever grateful that he said yes. Even now, 7 years later, I couldn't imagine having anyone else guiding the legislative priorities of my office with as much skill, dedication, and integrity as Tim Wolverton. His steady hand and deep understanding of the legislative process have been instrumental in advancing the policies that matter most to Mississippi and to our Nation.

Tim approached every challenge with the same unwavering commitment to help create a better Mississippi, whether it was working to secure disaster recovery funds for storm-ravaged areas of the State, advancing military installations to provide well-paying jobs and security for my constituents, or championing infrastructure projects to expand economic opportunity. His ability to navigate complex issues, deliver meaningful results, and do so with humility and grace speaks volumes about his character.

Beyond Tim's many professional accomplishments, he has been a volunteer in his community and a mentor to younger staff members in the office. Although this is just one of the many examples of Tim's generosity, he coached a boys basketball team from their third grade all the way to their senior year. Tim dedicates his time and energy for the betterment of others.

In the office, Tim is no different. He always keeps his door open to staff, listens, gives good advice, and passes on his many years' worth of knowledge and experience to others. They say a true leader's legacy is not measured by their achievements but by the achievements of those who he prepared to lead after he is gone. By any measure, Tim Wolverton stands out among the best.

While his coworkers and I regret to see Tim move on, we are equally excited about the opportunities that await him. The skills he has honed, the relationships he has built, and the impact he has made will undoubtedly serve him—and whoever is fortunate enough to work with him next—extraordinarily well.

To Tim, thank you for your years of dedicated service. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to Mississippi and to the United States. Most importantly, thank you for your good counsel and your friendship, which have undoubtedly helped me serve Mississippi and our Nation in the best way possible over the past 7 years. Now, I wish you every success in all of your future endeavors.

I yield the floor.

#### DISASTER RELIEF FUNDING

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, if the 118th Congress were a baseball game, we would be nearing the bottom of the ninth. As every Senator is well aware, our to-do list for the next 2 weeks is long.

There are very important issues we need to resolve before the last vote of the year. We need to keep the government open. We need to extend the farm bill and vote on the NDAA. And critically for Vermont and for so many States around the Nation, we must pass the comprehensive disaster aid package.

Legislating is a team sport. If we work together and find common ground, we can send a bill to the President's desk before the end of Congress and deliver for those communities that desperately, desperately need action from the U.S. Senate.

Despite our differences, whether they are political or geographic, communities from Montpelier, VT, to Mankato, MN; from Houston, TX, to Asheville, NC, to Maui, HI, are all asking for Congress to help with the devastation that has happened in those communities.

For months, bipartisan Members of Congress from States that have been affected by floods, fires, hurricanes, and tornadoes have approached our colleagues in the time of our need. We have asked publicly and privately for the assistance and financial support that our homeowners need, our farmers need, and businesses, towns, and local governments urgently need, because when it comes to these extreme weather events, we all know that if it is not us now, it may be us tomorrow, because there but for the grace of God, go I, when the extreme weather events decide to descend upon any community.

I found in the conversations I have had with my colleagues—Republican and Democrat—about Vermont's recovery needs, there is an unspoken acknowledgement that they are not in the Vermont situation or in the Asheville, NC, situation, but it could change.

The climate change that we are experiencing all around the country requires that, No. 1, we be ready to respond; two, we be more resilient and prepared; and, three, that we have better funded responses to recovery so that it can be faster, locally driven, and more efficient.

In July of 2023, Vermont experienced torrential rains and severe storms. For a week, the rain didn't stop. That rain quickly led to catastrophic flooding and landslides. Many homes, many of our farms and businesses and communities were absolutely destroyed, and the damage to infrastructure was fierce. Roads, rail lines, dams, bridges, wastewater plants, the capital city's post office, which after 14 months finally reopened, those were destroyed.

Nine States around Vermont came to our aid, and we are grateful. They sent

personnel. They sent resources. But a year after that flood, in July—to the same date in July—we had another round of flooding, and many of those same homes and businesses and farms were impacted.

The last time Congress passed a comprehensive disaster aid package was December of 2022. Since then, we have had more than 50 climate disasters around our country that each caused more than \$1 billion in damages—a total of \$155 billion in damages and rising. We know that that number is only going to grow when we have the final losses from Hurricane Milton and Hurricane Helene, and they are continuing to be calculated. This is an environmental and an economic disaster.

These disasters have impacted communities from Vermont to North Carolina, to Minnesota, to Texas and Hawaii, and more than 40 States and Territories total.

As we all know, extreme weather does not discriminate based on State lines or political preferences. In a crisis, we are all neighbors in need.

Since Congress last passed a comprehensive disaster aid bill—this is just to give a sense of how repetitive this is and how what had been an outlier event is now becoming a common event in different places around our country—these are disasters that have happened: Flooding in North Dakota between April and May of 2023. Flooding near West Point and the Hudson Valley area of New York in 2023. Hurricane Helene caused damage across Georgia and South Carolina in September of 2024. Flooding in 2023 in Central California, with enormous damage in the Central Valley. Hurricane Milton slammed Florida in October of 2024. Southeastern Iowa saw devastating tornadoes in 2024. Tornadoes and severe storms hit Nebraska in April and June of this year. And 110 tornadoes ripped across Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Kentucky in May, killing 16. And more than 40 tornadoes caused damage across Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee in March of 2023.

These events are all too common, and they are going to accelerate, not diminish. So we do need to fund FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund, and we need to do that for the benefit of all Americans. We need to provide those farmers and producers and ranchers with dedicated recovery assistance to help them with their losses so they can farm and ranch again. We need to get our communities the flexible funding—and I emphasize “flexible” and locally driven funding—that they need through programs like the community development block grant disaster recovery funding, something that Senator SCHATZ from Hawaii has been leading on.

We need to rebuild our infrastructure. We have to reimburse our States, whose budgets have been hammered, and reimburse our communities that have spent big to get folks back on safe roads. We need to fix our wastewater

and drinking water systems for the health and well-being of our citizens. And we have to help those small businesses.

That aid has to come sooner rather than later. The delay has already been really brutal on their ability to keep the lights on. The longer we wait to help disaster victims, the more disaster victims we will have. The list of needs will only grow. Delay hurts. It doesn't help.

That is why I am asking my colleagues in the Senate and in the House to act now and act quickly for Vermont and for every State hit by a disaster since we last passed a disaster bill so many storms ago. We cannot wait.

As I said, we have common ground in our common crisis. We must send a disaster bill to President Biden's desk.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

#### FOREIGN POLICY

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, today, I rise to really talk about a source of great concern for me and, I think, the American people, and that is the dangerous world that President Biden and his administration are leaving behind. We see a world engulfed in the flames of war in Europe and the Middle East and teetering on the brink in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. Our adversaries are testing us as Americans—our resolve—in ways that we haven't seen in decades. That instability puts us, I believe—the American people—at risk.

We see that, I believe, President Biden has been a weak Commander in Chief who has sort of slept through this whole global order and led us into some chaos. Joe Biden may be temporarily tasked with steering the ship of state through these crises, but Joe Biden did not inherit this world; he has created it.

Joe Biden's foreign policy? Well, he really doesn't have one that is consistent that I can see, aside from some flip-flops, some half-measures, and weak conciliations in place of strong deterrence—strong deterrence; whereas, as we look at the incoming President, President-elect Donald Trump, we see someone who has led and will lead with strength, someone who defeated the ISIS caliphate, who paved the way to peace in the Middle East with the Abraham Accords, exerted a maximum-pressure campaign on Iran, and got tough on China. And he is still talking in the same voice that he had, 4 years now later.

President Biden's weakness has fueled violence and aggression the globe hasn't experienced in decades.

On January 20, President-elect Trump is set to take the oath of office and once again assume the mantle of Commander in Chief. The task ahead of him and for all of us is monumental. Joe Biden is leaving us a messy world here, and it is up to the incoming administration and this Congress to be able to clean it up.

Let's look at China. Over the last 4 years, China has aggressively expanded its military capabilities, including a massive increase in conventional and nuclear weapons. In 2020, the Defense Intelligence Agency assessed that China had about 200 nuclear weapons, which would reach about 400 by the year 2030. Those were the projections. Now, 4 years later, what do we see? The same Agency counts about 500 nuclear weapons in China and predicts that it will be more than 1,000 by 2030.

Chinese military spending has surged, with 2024 being the third year in a row where its military saw a growth of more than 7 percent. At the same time, President Biden's Department of Defense requested four consecutive military budgets that actually cut defense if you look at it in light of inflation. While China continues to build the biggest navy in the world, Biden's defense budget called for us to shrink our Navy from 296 ships in 2024 to 294 ships in 2030. China knows these investments have consequences. President Xi knows that our failure to invest weakens America's ability to protect and to project power abroad.

During its unprecedented buildup, China increased its assertiveness in the South China Sea and escalated its incursions into Taiwan's airspace. China's cyber capabilities are also emboldened. We see this regularly. Attacks like Volt Typhoon or Salt Typhoon reveal a brazen attempt, an intention to burrow deep into our critical infrastructure and threaten the American people. Yet the Biden administration has appeared more focused on seeking meetings and chasing down diplomacy with China.

China recognizes hard power, and rebuilding ours will be a day-one project for the Trump administration.

Let's pivot to the Middle East and our adversary Iran, which has also seized on the openings from President Biden's leadership. Under Joe Biden, Iran has been able to supercharge its support for terrorist proxy groups by increasing its lucrative oil exports without consequence. Under Biden's watch, Iran has used these billions of dollars to arm Hezbollah, to ship advanced weapons like ballistic missiles to the Houthis, who are attacking our American ships. And we see these attacks orchestrated across the region. Let me repeat: Iran-sponsored attacks on our own American forces. Our troops have faced hundreds of assaults on the ground and on the sea. Iran-backed aggression has killed U.S. servicemembers in Jordan and in the Red Sea. And let's not forget that there are still American hostages remaining held in Gaza, thanks to Iran's support of Hamas.

All this should be completely unacceptable.

What is more, Iran is closer to a nuclear weapon today than it was under President Trump. In 2020, Iran's so-called breakout time to produce enough fuel for a nuclear weapon was 3 months. Now it is under a week.