

has long recognized that public service is a public trust. Today there is greater trust in our Government and in this institution as a result of Victor Baird's service on the Senate Select Committee on Ethics.

I will miss calling Victor at home at night, trying to find out where he is because there is a question that has to be answered immediately. I am sure in some ways he will miss me. But I certainly wish Victor the very best in his retirement. He has been a public servant I will always admire.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, first, I wish to sincerely thank my distinguished colleague and my dear friend from Nevada—Searchlight, NV, by the way—Senator REID, for his very kind comments.

It has been a team effort in behalf of Senator REID and myself as we have tried to serve—some people would say sentenced to—the Ethics Committee. But we have been very conscientious in fulfilling this duty, and I think we have done so with Senator REID's unique ability to not only come up with what is right, according to the ethics manual, but what is basically common sense. As a matter of fact, Senator REID has this notion that continually is expressed: Gee, PAT, we ought to sit down and really see if we can rewrite the ethics manual to make it actually understood by Members of the Senate and reform it, make it adhere to a criterion—a yardstick, if you will—of common sense.

I always tried to dissuade him from that. No. 1, I did not want to undertake that mountain to climb, and it would be a big mountain to climb, because just as soon as you start that, why, other Members add other mountains.

At any rate, Senator REID has been a joy to work with. I admire his leadership. He is soft spoken and, as I have indicated, has brought a lot of common sense and has tried to make the Ethics Committee proactive and very helpful to Members. As a matter of fact, with every new class of Senators that comes in, we have a briefing, and HARRY always points out: Ask; ask first before there is any problem. And that is certainly good advice.

I thank Senator REID for his very kind remarks. I do not know about the decades of public service that I have accrued. Gosh, decades sounds like a long time. I may be fossilized here before we are through with these remarks. I am an old piece of furniture around here, I guess, in the House and Senate.

With that experience comes at least some expertise and some real appreciation in behalf of certain staff. We are only as good as our staff, I do not care whether you are an individual Member's staff, committee staff, select committee staff, whatever. It is a real honor for me to offer a few brief remarks for our outgoing Senate Ethics staff director, Mr. Victor Baird.

He has 16 years of service, and he now leaves this to enter retirement and, doubtlessly, what will be a new phase of life. His retirement is certainly well deserved, but his absence will be a great loss to the Senate.

Sometimes the most important positions are the ones that go unacknowledged. This is certainly true with the staff director of the Ethics Committee. It is one of the few positions where accolades do not really accrue. Only when a storm or controversy presents does the spotlight focus on the staff director. When this occurs, the director faces intense challenges from all angles, including media scrutiny, public outcry, and, yes, even partisan bickering. Yet he endures all this for one supreme objective, and this is what Victor did—to preserve the integrity of this institution we call the United States Senate.

For almost a decade and a half, why, Victor Baird has assumed this thankless but important job. It is a job requiring keen attention to detail, mastery of the rules, and a precise level of foresight on how ethics rulings affect the Senate, not only in the present but for future generations. Just as the Sergeant at Arms and Capitol Police guard the physical structure of the Senate, Victor Baird guarded the reputation of these halls. He accomplished this by insistence that Members adhere and remain accountable to high ethical standards.

During his tenure, he guided the Senate through some very tumultuous times that often really threatened the reputation of the Senate. As we all know, a compromised reputation will diminish credibility, and diminished credibility threatens a mandate to govern. It is that important. With this loss, our whole system of checks and balances would suffer which is vital to the strength of our democracy. All of us, regardless of what side of the aisle we sit on, should understand this.

Thankfully, Victor handled all ethics proceedings, and particularly those with intense media focus, judiciously, without staining the dignity of the Senate. He safeguarded us. This is not an easy task, and all of us should be very grateful.

The Senate is unlike any other governing body in the world. Deliberative by design, it exists to make sure we thoroughly consider our actions. In a town fueled by hotly charged emotions that often makes decisions for the moment, thankfully Victor was always available for advice and counsel.

My friend and colleague, Senator REID, and I often sought his well-reasoned, objective legal opinions. We respected his vast institutional knowledge and understanding of how this body should conduct itself. When dealing with ethics issues, it is important Members rise above partisan politics, which is hard to do sometimes, and examine each issue on a case-by-case basis. This is what our Founding Fathers intended. Maintaining the Sen-

ate's distinguished legacy is a task all of us must assume, regardless of politics. Victor knows this; Victor knew this, and always kept this premise at the forefront of his responsibilities.

His most important contribution was understanding that the committee's ultimate goal was proactive and preventive in nature. He made sure that all Members and their staff knew the rules of acceptable conduct at the outset. In public office, innocent mistakes can quickly break a career. This is why the Ethics Committee, and in particular the staff director, is so important. He is the gatekeeper. He is the adviser. He is the counselor to us all. Victor Baird certainly filled each of these roles with the utmost professionalism and integrity.

On behalf of the entire Senate, we thank you for your service and your dedication, Victor. Your influence has preserved the reputation of this governing body for the past 16 years, and we salute you.

In the U.S. Marine Corps, we always conclude by saying: Semper Fi. That means always faithful.

You have been always faithful, Victor. Semper Fi.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I join my colleagues, the distinguished minority floor leader from Nevada, who is a dear friend of the distinguished Senator from Kansas, and my dear friend from Kansas, in paying tribute to Victor Baird. That is one of the most miserable, tough jobs I think in the whole Senate. As both of them have said, there is not a lot of thanks for doing it. I personally thank him for the efforts he has put forward, and those who worked with him, because this is a very difficult job. He has always been straightforward, honest, and decent in all of the experiences I know about. I join my colleagues in their remarks and ask that I be associated with their remarks. I wish him the very best.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. If my friend will yield—and I have already cleared this with the distinguished chairman of the Judiciary Committee—when the Senator from Utah finishes his statement and we go into executive session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Vermont be recognized following the statement of the Senator from Utah for up to 12 minutes.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.