

## **Farewell to the Senate Speech, June 11, 1996**

**(Transcript by The Associated Press)**

I appreciate very much the resolution (renaming the balcony off his office for him) just passed. Will it be in big letters or neon? I know it can't have any political advertising on it, but just have the name out there in lights the next few months might be helpful.

Well, I want to thank all of my colleagues. And I want to go back 136 years ago this summer, a committee arrived in Springfield, Illinois -- Senator Simon probably knows the story -- to formally notify Abraham Lincoln that the Republican Party had nominated him to run for president. And history records that Lincoln's formal reply to the news was just two sentences long.

And then, as he surveyed the crowd of friends, as I survey the crowd of friends here in the galleries and on the floor, who had gathered outside his home, he said, "And now I will no longer defer the pleasure of taking each of you by the hand."

So I guess as Lincoln said then, 136 years ago, if all of us who are leaving this year -- and I'm only one -- I know we have the same thoughts and the same emotions, if we could all go out and shake hands of all the people who are responsible for us being here, it would take a long, long time.

You begin with your family. You obviously begin with your parents, your brothers, your sisters, and you think about all the support they've provided and all the good things that happened.

And you think about the Senate. You think about your family, your remarkable, wonderful wife and daughter, who have seen victories and seen defeats, and put up, as all our spouses and children do around here, with late hours and not being home on weekends, and all the demands that go with serving in the Senate.

I am very honored to have my wife Elizabeth and my daughter Robin in the gallery today. Thank you very much.

And I know they join me in expressing our deep appreciation to everyone here and to the people of Kansas. And as all of us go back who are leaving this year, or thinking about leaving in a couple of years, whatever, you think about the people who sent you here -- and the people who tried not to send you here.

But once you're here, you forget about those -- and they're all your constituents, whether Democrats, Republicans or independents. And four times my friends in Kansas, Republicans and Democrats and independents, I believe, gave me their votes in the House of Representatives, and five times they've given me their votes in the United States Senate.

And I think to all of us, such trust is perhaps the greatest gift that can come to any citizen in our democracy. And I know I'll be forever grateful, as everyone here will be forever grateful to our friends and our supporters who never gave up on us, who never lost their confidence in us. Maybe they didn't like some of our votes, or maybe they didn't like other things, but when the chips were down, they were there.

And we all think of all the phone calls and all the letters and all the visits of people who come to your office with big problems and small, or you think about the town meetings you've attended -- and I've attended, as some others have here, town meetings all over America, and they're pretty much the same. They're good people. They have real questions and they'd like real answers.

And I always thought the differences were a healthy thing, and that's why we're all so healthy because we have a lot of differences in this chamber. I've never seen a healthier group in my life.

And then there are those on our staff. Sometimes we forget to say thank you. I've had one member of my staff for 30 years, and others for 19 and so on. And they've been great, and they've been loyal, they've been enthusiastic.

And I think their idealism and their intelligence and their loyalty certainly meant a lot to me and I think a lot to other people in this body and to other staff members and the people they worked with on a daily basis. And many are on the Senate floor or in the gallery today. So I would just say, thank you very much.

We've had a little fun along the way, too. It gets kind of dull around here from time to time. You've got to have a little fun. When you really want to have fun, to get away, you go out to the beach, which is now my beach and I'll try to pack it up this afternoon.

And all those who served in the Senate, and I see some of my former colleagues here today, and all those who served the Senate -- be the parliamentarian or the page -- we thank you, I thank you for all of us for your tireless service.

And I don't want my friends in the press gallery to fall out of their seats in shock, but let me add, in acknowledging those who have worked here in this building, I also salute you.

And I think it's fair to say that we didn't always agree with everything you said or wrote, but I know that what you do off this floor is as vital to American democracy as anything we do on it, and we have to keep that in mind.

So I would say that it's been a great ride. A few bumps along the way. I've learned a lot from people in this room. I've even gone to Sen. Byrd. when I was the majority leader to ask his advice on how to defeat him on an issue.

And if you know Robert Byrd as I do, he gave me the answer! But it wasn't easy. I mean, this man's determined! And I know that in his book, in his great works about the Senate,

in the first book, when I became the majority leader he very candidly writes in his book, he had his doubts about this Bob Dole because I might be too partisan, or I might not work with the minority leader.

But as I've heard him say a number of times since, I demonstrated that I wasn't that partisan; and B, if I understood one thing, as my successor will understand, is that unless the two leaders are working together, nothing is going to happen in this place.

We have to trust each other, as Sen. Daschle and I have, as Sen. Mitchell and I have, as Sen. Byrd and I have. And I have also great respect for Sen. Mansfield, Sen. Baker, though I didn't have the privilege of -- I wasn't in the leadership at that time. And I would say to all those who have been in the leadership positions, it's a difficult life. And after 2 p.m. today, when somebody calls me about bringing up their amendment, I'll say, 'It's all right with me. Bring it up any time you want and I'll not stand in your way.'

And I'm looking at one of the giants in the Senate right now, Sen. Thurmond. And I looked at others on the way in -- Sen. Byrd. And I thought about Sen. Baker and Sen. Dirksen and Sen. Russell, and many, many more, Democrats and Republicans, who loved this place, who made it work.

And I repeat frequently the statement -- I don't know whether Sen. Dirksen made it on the floor, but he made the statement, 'A billion here and a billion there soon add up to real money.' If only he'd come back today, it would be, 'A trillion here and a trillion there soon add up to real money.'

And then there was my friend Hubert Humphrey. Nobody ever understood how Bob Dole and Hubert Humphrey could be such good friends. We didn't have a problem at all. And he used to say of his own speeches, 'I never thought they were too long. I enjoyed every minute.'

And I remember in the hallway one day we were talking about talk shows, and of course I was only watching talk shows in those days, but he was on every Sunday. It used to be issues and answers for the normal guest; for Hubert, it was issue and answer, and the time was up.

And then there was Sen. Mansfield, just the reverse. When he was on a Sunday show, it was 'Yep,' 'Nope.' 'Maybe.' And 10 minutes into the program, they were out of questions.

I remember Russell Long. I remember during the Reagan landslide I became -- I was going to be chairman of the Finance Committee, and I didn't know how to tell Russell. And I didn't. I said, 'Who's going to tell Russell?' 'Nobody's going to tell Russell.'

And Dave Durenberger then, I remember the first vote we had when -- I got to sit in the chair, but when they called the roll, they called the minority side first and then the other

side, and then, 'Mr. Chairman.' And I was all ready. This was my first ..., and he voted aye. And that's a true story.

And then there's Phil Hart and Dan Inouye. We all met in Battle Creek, Mich., Percy Jones General Hospital -- Lt. Col. Hart, Lt. Inouye and Lt. Dole -- where we were all patients. The best bridge player at Percy Jones Hospital was Dan Inouye. Probably one of the best men I ever knew was Phil Hart. He had a flesh wound in his right elbow area, and from morning to night, he spent his time running errands or getting tickets to patients to the Detroit Tigers games.

His wife is Jane Briggs -- Briggs Stadium -- Briggs owned the Tigers at that time. And there wasn't anything that Phil Hart wouldn't do, not only there, but when he came to the United States Senate. So I've left my proxy -- the last of the Percy Jones General Hospital Caucus is Dan Inouye. I wrote him a letter today, I said you've got my proxy. If anything comes up regarding Percy Jones General Hospital -- which is closed -- vote me present. So.

And I could go on and on and I could -- I'm not as -- not like Sen. Byrd, because nobody can do the -- the way Sen. Byrd does it. But you think of all these people who have come and gone, and all the new bright stars that are here today on both sides of the aisle. And one thing you know for certain, it's a great institution.

As far as I know, everybody that I know on either side has observed that rule. It's true in any business, any profession, but it's more true in politics, because the American people are looking at us and they want us to tell the truth. Doesn't mean we have to agree. Doesn't mean we can't have different motivations. And I learned that leadership is a combination of background and backbone.

And I learned a lot, as I said, from the likes of Sen. Byrd and others I'd watched and watched. And I know that Sen. Warner, the first person who ever mentioned to me that -- one day I think we were having -- or we were both in the same place having lunch and he said, you ought to think about running for leader. I said, "Me?" So I thought about it. Except I thought Ted Stevens was going to be the leader.

Where's Ted? But something happened on the way to the vote. And I walked out of there surprised. When Howard Green held up his hand, I knew I must be the leader. So I would just say that we all know how the political process works. And some people are cynical and some people think it's awful and some people don't trust us. But the people who watch us, I think, day in and day out have a better understanding.

And some people who tell -- ask me, and I remember the speaker, and the speaker's present somewhere, telling me just 10 minutes ago, he really understands now more about the Senate. We have different rules. I love the House of Representatives -- I've never wanted to be the House of Representatives, here, I want to be the Senate, I want to be in the Senate, where you can have unlimited debate, where any senator on either side

on any issue can stand up and talk until they drop. And the record is held by the presiding officer, Sen. Thurmond, 20 --

Sen. Strom Thurmond: You're going to go out in 18 minutes.

Dole: And that's why you're seldom asked to be an after-dinner speaker, too, I might add. But -- but-- And I think sometimes around here we think we have to have everything, we've got to have total victory. 'I won't settle for less, it's got to be my way or no way.' Well, Ronald Reagan said once, if I can get 90 percent of what I want, I'd call that a pretty good deal. Ninety percent isn't bad, you get the other 10 percent later.

It's a small amendment then. Some people never understand that -- take the 90, then work on the 10.

I want to say, too, that I -- and I've read that my resignation and my decision to leave caused astonishment in some quarters. And I don't begrudge anybody their surprise. But I just want to disabuse anybody about the Senate. This is a great opportunity. There are hundreds and hundreds and thousands and thousands of people who would give anything they had to be a member of this body. And that's the way it should be -- very competitive.

So, I said the truth is that I would no more distance myself from the Senate than I would from the United States itself. This -- the body -- is a reflection of America. It's what America is all about. We come from different states and different backgrounds, different opportunities, different challenges in our life.

And, yes, the institution has its imperfections and our occasional -- or occasional inefficiency. And we're like America. We're still a work in progress in the United States Senate. So, I would say to my colleagues -- I remember way back when I ran for the Kansas Legislature, we had a Democratic law librarian who thought young people ought to get involved in politics. So, she found two Republicans and two Democrats, and talked us into running for the state legislature.

We didn't know anything about politics; didn't even know what party we were in. We were students, veterans, going to school under the GI bill. And I thought about which party to belong to.

And I said in jest, from time to time, I went back to my hometown and went up to the courthouse, and found out there were more Republicans than Democrats, and I became a committed Republican. That's not quite accurate. But my parents were Democrats.

And I remember the first time I was ever approached by a reporter. Here I was a brand new -- I was a law student, a brand-new... I didn't know anything about anything. And he said, 'Well, what are you going to now for your district?' or something on that case. I said, 'Ah, I'm going to sit around, watch for a couple of days, and then stand up for what's right.' Well, that's what we all do around there. And I hope I've done it over the years.

And I would not -- I'd just take a minute or two to indulge in, you know, some of the things -- we all have different interests. I've been deeply involved in agriculture, as many of you have here, because Kansas is a farm state. And when I came to Congress, I was on the House Ag Committee, and I've been on the Senate Ag Committee ever since. And so, I'm proud of having served the farm families of Kansas and around America, who make a lot of sacrifices. This year, we didn't have a wheat crop hardly at all, in Kansas, because of the drought.

I've been advised by Sen. Dorgan they're not going to have much of one because of the wet -- the water. So, farmers make a lot of sacrifices.

And I remember back in the Vietnam debate, some of us were here and some were on each side of the issue, the so-called Cooper-Church amendments, they went on and on and on, week after week after week, on whether we ought to withdraw our troops or shut off funding, which I thought was wrong.

And as I look back on it, I think I was right, because we had courageous men like Bob Kerrey and John McCain and others in this chamber, who were risking their lives and they deserved our support. And that was the big debate at the time.

And I've also been proud to be involved in nutrition programs. Somebody mentioned that earlier today. I remember working with Sen. McGovern, and that crops up now in then in conservative articles, saying that I can't be a conservative because I know George McGovern. I think George McGovern is a gentleman and has always been a gentleman.

But we worked together on food stamps. And I'll confess, when we first -- when I made my first tour with George McGovern, I said this guy's running for president. I wasn't convinced. There are a lot of skeptics in this chamber, probably some on each side. But you can't have pure motives, it's always something political. But after being on that trip about two or three days, I changed my mind.

And Sen. Hollings was in the forefront of that effort. He remembers how bad it was, in South Carolina. And so we worked together on food stamps and the WIC program and the school lunch program, particularly when it affected low-income Americans.

And I think, as I look at it, no first-class democracy can treat its people like second-class citizens. And I remember standing on this floor, managing the Martin Luther King holiday bill. We had the majority. It was a proud day for me. It's now a national holiday.

And the first speech I ever made on the floor was April 14, 1969, about disabled Americans. And I -- there are a lot of people in this room who've worked on that program, and I know Sen. Kennedy and Sen. Harkin and Sen. Durenberger, when he was here, and Sen. Jennings Randolph, before -- before many of you came, was in the forefront.

We stood with many who couldn't stand on their own, and the highlight was passing the Americans with Disabilities Act. Forty-three million Americans -- they're not all seriously disabled, but there are many in wheelchairs, many who can't even sit up, and it was a very impressive sight to be at the White House the day that bill was signed by President Bush.

And I'm forever grateful. I know Sen. Kennedy and Sen. Harkin and others are. Have you ever seen so many wheelchairs at the White House at a signing ceremony? Never. And now more and more Americans with disabilities are full participants in the process. They're in the mainstream.

So I remember 1983, and I know Pat Moynihan remembers. We were standing right over in this aisle. We had a bipartisan commission on Social Security. We had met week after week, month after month, and it was about to go down the drain. We'd about given up. Everybody ... disgusted. We were getting short-tempered.

And we were Democrats and Republicans. The late John Heinz was a member of that commission, as chairman of the Finance Committee. I was members -- a member. Sen. Moynihan was a member. And Sen. Moynihan and I, I think just by chance or fate or whatever, happened to meet in this aisle on my right. And we said, 'We got to try one more time to rescue Social Security -- one more time.' It wasn't a partisan issue. And we did.

That afternoon we convened more people. We had five in the commission. And it wasn't long. We were back on track, and we finally made it happen. And 37 million people have gotten their checks on time. And I think I read in the Washington Post, just this weekend, Social Security's going to be in pretty good shape until the year 2029. So that's a pretty good fix. And it may be a pattern, as I said earlier today, we can follow on Medicare, for the long-term solution. Take it out of politics, as we did on Social Security, make it work, make it solvent, and the people who get the credit are the people who get the checks -- 37 million of them.

So we'd reached across partisan lines.

So I -- I worry a little about the future. I worry about our defenses. I know there are a lot of very talented people here who are going to continue to do that. I'm not here to make a partisan speech or even a partisan reference. But I would hope that we will keep in mind that there are still threats around the world. And also keep in mind that we're the envy of the world. I learned, meeting with a lot of leaders, foreign leaders, as leaders get to do in this business, and chairmen of the Foreign Relations Committee, Sen. Helms, Sen. Pell and others, Sen. Lugar when he was chairman.

I remember when the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Empire collapsed, a lot of people started coming to America and they were leaders. And they were young and they were old and they were men and they were women. And they didn't come for foreign aid.

The cynics said, Oh, they're coming after more of our money. They knew we didn't have any.

But for the first time, in 70 years in some cases, they had a right to travel. They could get on an airplane without checking with the government and waiting for a year or two years or three years. They could go to church, they could vote, and all these basic rights that we take for granted. And they came to America.

And I can still recall, some are now presidents or -- like Lech Walesa; some are leaders of their party, as they came to our offices and I'm certain it was true in every other office, they didn't ask for money. They wanted to come to America to see America. They wanted to take a look at America. And I can recall almost everyone who left my office, sometimes with tears streaming down their cheeks, saying, We want to be like America. We are the envy of the world. That's why so many people want to be like we are.

So we have lit liberty's torch with a glow that can truly light the world. That's what America is all about. We're much more than a place on a map, we're the United States. And we're a beacon of hope, we're a magnet for the oppressed and a shield against those who would put the soul itself in bondage. And I think we did that in Kuwait. And we may be called on to do it again.

But I would guess the one thing I would hope, when they catalogue all the amendments and all the bills and do all the commentary, is that whenever it's all over for us here, that we've left our children something other than a legacy of debt. I mean, our children are important.

And none of us have a perfect solution. But there's got to be some solution of where we can come together, Republicans and Democrats, because everybody loves their children. Everybody loves their grandchildren. We have all these young pages here. We have an example every day of young people who want to get ahead, who are willing to work. They just want the opportunity.

And I think that if I could hope that anything might happen -- it probably won't happen today, but this year or next year -- and I felt strongly about the balanced budget, but not enough people did. But that'll be around.

And so, I would close with, again, thanking all of my colleagues. I don't believe -- I'm just trying to think back -- I don't think we've ever had any real disagreements. I remember one time -- I'll remind the Democratic leader -- that I offered an amendment that you thought you were going to offer. And I made a mistake. I wasn't trying to one up the senator from South Dakota, so I withdrew my amendment. Then he offered the amendment. I think that's called civility.

So, I would close with -- my hero was Dwight Eisenhower because he was our supreme commander. He also came from Abilene, Kansas; born in Texas, but quickly moved to



Kansas. I'd say to Phil, he was only two years old. It took a while. But in any event this is his quote:

`As we peer into society's future -- we, you and I and our government must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering for our own ease and convenience the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow.'

And I think those words are just as good today as they were 35 years ago when President Eisenhower spoke them. We can lead or we can mislead, as the people's representatives, but whatever we do, we will be held responsible. We're going to be held responsible and accountable. I'm not talking about 1996; I'm talking about any time, or the next century.

So the Bible tells us to everything there is a season, and I think my season in the Senate is about to come to an end. But the new season before me makes this moment far less the closing of one chapter than the opening of another. And we all take pride in the past, but we all live for the future. And I agree with the prairie poet Carl Sandburg, who told us, `Yesterday is a wind gone down, a sun dropped in the West. I tell you that there is nothing in the world, only an ocean of tomorrows, a sky of tomorrow.' And like everybody here, I'm an optimist. I believe our best tomorrows are yet to be lived. So again, thank you. God bless America, and God bless the United States Senate.

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