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Ben Nelson

U.S. SENATOR FROM NEBRASKA

TRIBUTES

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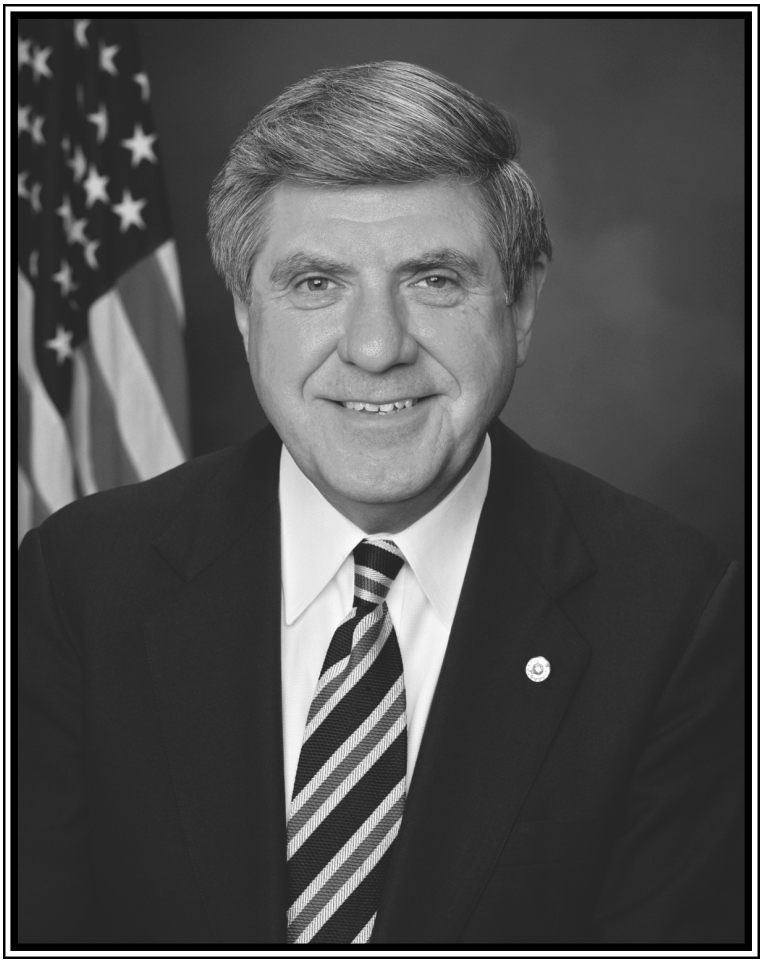
THE UNITED STATES



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Ben Nelson

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Tributes
Delivered in Congress

Ben Nelson

United States Senator
2001–2013

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BIOGRAPHY

BEN NELSON was born on May 17, 1941, in McCook, Red Willow County, NE, to Benjamin and Birdella Nelson. He attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, earning a bachelor's degree in philosophy in 1963, a master's degree in 1965, and a law degree in 1970.

He entered law practice in 1970 and began a career in insurance and politics. He was named the director of the Nebraska Department of Insurance in 1975, and gained political experience by serving as State campaign manager for Democratic Presidential candidates in 1976 and 1980. From 1980 to 1981 he served as president and chief executive officer of the Central National Insurance Group, and he served as chief of staff and executive vice president of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners from 1982 to 1985. His law career continued in 1985 when he joined Kennedy, Holland, DeLacy and Svoboda, one of Nebraska's prominent legal firms. He served as Governor of Nebraska from 1991 to 1999.

He was elected to the Senate in 2000, was reelected in 2006, but was not a candidate for reelection in 2012.

Senator NELSON chaired the Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch, and served on the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, the Veterans Affairs Committee, the Committee on Rules and Administration, and the Armed Services Committee. He chaired the Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

One of the first bills Senator NELSON cosponsored was boosting production of ethanol and other renewable fuels. Under his leadership Nebraska had moved to the forefront of ethanol production, increasing production from 15 million gallons in 1990 to more than 300 million gallons by the time he left office as Governor in 1999. Due to this growth more than 4,300 Nebraskans were employed directly or indirectly in ethanol production.

As an advocate for fiscal responsibility, Senator NELSON strongly believed that Federal spending must be brought under control and that budget cuts should be based on

shared sacrifice, not politics. He successfully won a 5 percent cut in spending across the board on Capitol Hill in the FY2011 budget.

Among his other accomplishments in the Senate, he worked to make disaster relief a part of the budget so that producers do not have to turn repeatedly to emergency measures to get help. His work on the farm bill brought together his fiscal conservatism and his commitment to American farmers. Senator NELSON authored legislation to ensure farm payments go to farmers and ranchers, rather than to people who do not farm. He also worked to cap crop insurance payments to level the playing field for small farmers while cutting subsidy spending for all American taxpayers.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee he worked to ensure that U.S. armed services and military personnel have the modern equipment, training, and resources they need to protect their safety and succeed in their missions. He advocated for Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue, NE, and U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM), a unified command center headquartered at Offutt, which provides global security for U.S. national security interests including space, cyberspace, global strike and deterrence, and combating weapons of mass destruction. He worked closely with STRATCOM officials to ensure the command was successful in its mission.

Senator NELSON's commitment to strengthening the U.S. military went beyond active duty personnel with his support to keep America's promise to its veterans. He pushed to preserve access to health care for veterans and expand the Veterans Administration's use of clinics to provide quality care.

Senator NELSON and his wife Diane live in Omaha. They have four children and five grandchildren.

Farewell to the Senate

Wednesday, December 12, 2012

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today to thank the people of Nebraska. It is a tremendous honor to have had the opportunity to serve the State for 20 years—8 as Governor and 12 as Senator. The people of Nebraska are generous and hard working and it has been a true privilege to represent them.

I also want to thank my parents—Birdella and Benjamin. Raising me in McCook, NE, they instilled in me the values I have tried to embrace and which serve as guiding principles for me in both public and private.

I especially want to thank my family for their unwavering love and support. As my colleagues know, public service requires our families to sacrifice—sacrifice privacy and sacrifice the ability to determine their own schedule among many other things. So I sincerely thank my wife Diane, our four kids and five grandkids for their patience and understanding. While it is hard to walk away from this body, I look forward to spending more time together with family.

As a public official the lens through which I have always tried to view decisions is: How will this policy, this vote, or this decision impact my community, my State, and my country? This focus and advocacy for my home State has resulted in both praise and criticism at various times but I stand before you today proud of the accomplishments achieved over the last 12 years and grateful for the opportunities afforded to me by the people of Nebraska. Arriving in the Senate in 2001 I recall thinking about what one of my predecessors in this body, Ed Zorinsky, used to say. Senator Zorinsky said that the biggest problem in Washington, DC, is there are too many Democratic Senators and there are too many Republican Senators. There are not enough U.S. Senators. Unquestionably my proudest moments in the Senate are those efforts that were bipartisan and pursued by a collective motive to get the best possible result while maintaining the dignity of this institution.

Probably the most straightforward example of this work is the compromise achieved by the Gang of 14. As many of my colleagues will recall, in 2005 there were several judicial nominees presented to the Senate for its consideration but which had not yet received an up or down vote. The majority leader at that time, Senator Frist of Tennessee, was considering what became known as the so-called "nuclear option" which would have changed the Senate's rules so that the minority party couldn't filibuster a judicial nominee.

There was a great deal of concern about how this would impact the Senate's long-standing tradition of majority rule while recognizing minority rights—and what this would mean to the way the Senate conducted its business in the future. At that time, Senator Lott and I convened 12 of our colleagues—6 additional Democrats and 6 additional Republicans. Together we met and exchanged ideas about how to find a sensible way forward that would satisfy all 14 Senators such that each would agree the Senate was dutifully carrying out its "advise and consent" responsibility without unduly restraining the ability of the minority to assert itself in instances when it found a nominee truly and substantively objectionable or unfit to serve.

Ultimately an agreement was reached by this bipartisan group. There was not a rules change, and in the midst of a highly partisan environment, the Senate moved forward in a positive way and I believe we did the right thing. Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia was a critical member of the Gang of 14. In addition to his many accomplishments—everyone knew then and knows now that there is not anyone more well versed in the history of the Senate or who was more protective of it as an institution. I will never forget after the agreement was finalized Senator Byrd said that he was proud of the work accomplished and that we had "saved the Senate."

Hearing those words from Senator Byrd was undoubtedly one of the proudest moments of my career. Besides Senator Byrd, I have had the opportunity to serve with so many public servants in this body, and I thank all of them. I would start naming names, but I know I will leave someone out. So I want to thank all present and past Members of the Senate that I have worked with for the occasions we have had to work together so closely.

I also share the sentiment that many of my colleagues have noted in their farewell addresses, and that is the appreciation for the efforts of staff. Over the last 12 years I have

worked with an incredibly dedicated and talented collection of individuals. We call on our staff to do a lot of work, often in a very stressful environment. I thank everyone in my office back home and at the office in DC for the work they have done on behalf of the State of Nebraska.

If I were to leave this body with one thought and hope for the future, it would be this: Congress needs to change its math, and by that I mean the Members of Congress should be more concerned about addition and multiplication and less involved in division and subtraction which seems to overtake this institution at times. My hope is that in the process of doing this, Congress and our Nation will have a stronger desire to find solutions for the country's greatest challenges more so than any effort to try to drive our citizenry apart.

With that, I will say one more time: Thank you to my family, my staff, my colleagues, and most especially to the people of Nebraska.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTES

TO

BEN NELSON

Proceedings in the Senate

MONDAY, *December 10, 2012*

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise to honor our colleague the senior Senator from Nebraska, BEN NELSON, upon his retirement from the Senate. This will become effective after the first of the year.

For 12 years BEN has been a valued member of the Democratic caucus and an exemplary Senator for Nebraska and the country. His life in public service dates back to his youth. He spent his college days serving his Nebraska community in another way—as a lay minister. Eventually he chose law over ministry and went to law school. He attended law school at the University of Nebraska, where he got his bachelor's and master's degrees.

He spent many years practicing insurance law. He served as director of the Nebraska Department of Insurance and as president of the Central National Insurance Group. Then, in 1990, he was elected Governor of Nebraska. Four years later, he was reelected—with almost 75 percent of the vote—to become the first Nebraska Governor in 20 years to win a second term. So it was not a surprise when he ran for the Senate in 2000. He won, even though President Bush took Nebraska handily.

It is easy to see BEN NELSON truly possesses the same independent spirit as his Nebraska constituents. He served his constituents with distinction in the Senate and, of course, when he was Governor and as insurance commissioner. He has always provided a strong voice for fiscal responsibility, and he has been terrific for the State's energy industry, agricultural sector, and even tourism.

Similar to many of his Nebraska constituents, BEN is an avid hunter, fisher, and outdoorsman.

As a sidelight, one of the things we learn as kids—and as we get older it is something we must adhere to—is that one should not be envious. Envy isn't something that is very becoming of human beings, especially in an adult. But I think if the truth were known, many Senators would be very envi-

ous, as I am—and I would even think the Acting President pro tempore would be—about that hair of BEN NELSON's. I mean that is a mop of real hair.

Often people call his office and they believe he has a toupee, but it is his hair. He will pull it for you anytime just to show you it is real. I mean, he has hair like a 15 year old. So I have to acknowledge I am a little envious of his hair, and I think, if the truth were known, maybe others are as well.

My wife has said on many occasions—and she tells me this all the time—how handsome Pat Leahy is and she is so glad he doesn't do a comb over.

Anyway, BEN NELSON is an avid hunter, fisher, and outdoorsman. He has bagged pheasants and turkey, and one time, to the consternation of all of us, he decided he was going to take Senator Schumer from New York hunting for pheasants. He did that. Everybody survived it alive, and BEN NELSON still boasts about that; that he was able to bring Schumer back all in one piece. More important, the people who went hunting with them all came back in one piece. The story goes that Senator Schumer even shot a bird or two.

A lot of us have some trouble accepting that, but that is what BEN says and I will take him at his word. He has bagged all kinds of game birds—dove, quail, pheasants, turkey—but he has also had the opportunity to hunt all over the world and has bagged some of the most exotic game that is possible for a hunter to hunt. He is the epitome of a sportsman.

BEN isn't just a great hunter, though. He is also an accomplished practical joker and a wonderful singer. That may surprise some people. In our caucus, I proved to everyone that he could sing, and sing quite well. He recorded a few years ago a song called "Western Town" to raise money for visually impaired children. He was one of a dozen Nebraskan celebrities to record songs for this charity. I obtained a copy of this and played it at a Democratic caucus a few years ago. It was a hit. He was singing—it is his voice—and it was very good. Here is how it goes:

> I'm from a western town in Nebraska. Don't know why I left so long ago. All I know is this western town in Nebraska lives in my heart and in my soul.

He did a great job of that song, as he has done everything since I have known him.

I am sure BEN is looking forward to going home to the western town—Omaha—where he lives with his wife Diane.

She is wonderful. She was a great First Lady and a wonderful Senator's spouse. I like her for lots of reasons, the smile she has, but also she makes some of the best chocolate chip cookies I have ever eaten. They have four children and five grandchildren. As he departs for Omaha, he will be sorely missed here in the Senate.

He has always been a loyal and dedicated member of this caucus, even when he was showing loyalty by questioning the wisdom of the party sometimes. He is arguably the most conservative member of the caucus. And while there are a few things BEN and I disagree on, we agree on most everything. Through the last 12 years he has been a valued member of the team. He has made many of our accomplishments possible through his dedication to country first and State second. That is how it should be.

Edwin Chapin, a North American preacher and poet, said, "No more duty can be urged upon those who are entering the great theater of life than simple loyalty to their best convictions."

BEN NELSON lives by his convictions, even though it may put him at odds with his party or his constituents. His highest duty is to country and his conscience.

We had a retirement party a week ago tomorrow, and when it was over, I grabbed BEN and we embraced. I care a great deal about him. He has made some extremely difficult votes, but he did it because it was the right thing to do. His duty is to country and his conscience, and I repeat, I have such high respect for BEN NELSON. I will miss him. I have enjoyed working with him.

I congratulate BEN NELSON on his career in public service, including his service in the Senate, and wish him the very best in his retirement.

WEDNESDAY, *December 12, 2012*

Mr. JOHANNS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to my colleague BEN NELSON. In fact, when we visited with each other last night, I said to Senator NELSON that I have spent a significant part of my career following jobs he had done. I was the mayor of Lincoln when BEN NELSON was the Governor of Nebraska, I became the Governor of Nebraska as he was completing his two terms, and then I joined him in the U.S. Senate. Before all of that, I worked with BEN as the Secretary of Agriculture.

I can say from firsthand experience that BEN NELSON always had the best interests of our State at heart. He was enormously hard working. In fact, I don't hesitate to admit for a second that when I came to the Governor's office, I found the State to be in excellent shape. He often joked about how he was tighter than three coats of paint, and I think that is absolutely true.

He tended to business, balanced the budget, and made sure that money was set aside in the Rainy Day Fund because we in Nebraska know there are going to be days where it might rain. He did a great job as Governor. We worked hand in hand on a number of issues when I was Governor and he was a U.S. Senator. When we became colleagues in the Senate, that working relationship continued.

I am very pleased to rise today and say to the people of Nebraska that there was never a time where partisan differences ever impacted or interfered with our ability to work together. Senator NELSON was always looking for a way to move the State forward and move our country forward.

I just wanted to come to the floor today and thank my colleague BEN NELSON for his service. We appreciate everything he has done. We wish the Senator the very best, and I have a sense we are going to have an opportunity to work together in future years.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to and recognize the achievements of Senator BEN NELSON, who, like me, will be leaving the Senate at the end of this year. I consider Senator NELSON, who has represented Nebraska in the Senate since 2000, a friend and an excellent colleague.

Senator NELSON has had a long and impressive career, spanning both the private sector as well as State and Federal Government service. After graduating from law school at the University of Nebraska, Senator NELSON spent roughly two decades working in the insurance industry, both as a legal practitioner and in leadership roles at the Central National Insurance Group, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, and the Nebraska Department of Insurance.

It was upon this impressive background that Senator NELSON launched his career in public service when, in 1990, as a moderate Democrat, he was elected Governor of Nebraska. As a testament to his dedicated service and popularity, he was reelected to a second term in 1994 after garnering nearly three-quarters of the vote. Nebraskans then sent him to

the U.S. Senate in 2000. Senator NELSON was reelected in 2006 in a landslide.

Nebraska and my State of North Dakota share a great deal in common. Both States are populated by residents who value hard work and who possess an independent streak that places pragmatism above partisan politics. Senator NELSON is a product of his Nebraska roots—he brought those same characteristics to Washington and, as a direct result, was able to work across the aisle and within his party to benefit his State in ways more partisan legislators likely never could have done.

Rural States such as ours also face unique challenges, particularly those involving the agriculture industry, which often go unnoticed by those who live in densely populated areas. I have worked closely with Senator NELSON over the years on farm legislation and know first hand his passion for the industry and his drive to see family farmers succeed. Nebraskans should be very proud of Senator NELSON's hard work on the Agriculture, Appropriations, and Armed Services Committees.

I will greatly miss having Senator NELSON as a colleague, but I also know that his wife Diane as well as his children and grandchildren will be excited to have him back home in Nebraska. My wife Lucy and I wish BEN and his family many happy years ahead.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I rise to comment about some wonderful men in the Senate who are retiring on both sides of the aisle. Earlier today I spoke about my deep affection and sorry-to-see-go friends Olympia Snowe and Kay Bailey Hutchison, but I want to rise as the dean of the women in the Senate to say some very special words about very special men on both sides of the aisle. Because when I came to the Senate, it was only Nancy Kassebaum and me, and yet we worked on so many issues together. There are really wonderful men here who supported me, supported our issues, but really stood up for those States and their communities. . . .

I wish to say goodbye to BEN NELSON of Nebraska, a brother appropriator. We salute him for his work for the people of Nebraska and the Nation. Using those committee assignments on Appropriations, Agriculture, and Armed Services, he looked out for rural communities and he stood up for men and women in the military. I knew he took as a personal responsibility the issues around our military per-

sonnel—that they had the right pay, the right equipment, and we protected their benefits. . . .

I wanted to be sure that the day would not end without my acknowledging these wonderful people who have given a big part of their lives to making this country a better place. I want to, in the most heartfelt way—I am so sorry we did not have a bipartisan dinner or party to be able to express this. I would have liked to have been in the same room, breaking bread with them, in order to be able to tell them how much we appreciate them, across party lines, across those lines that ordinarily divide us. They came from different parts of the country, they arrived in the Senate with different objectives, they will leave under different circumstances. But I want to again let them know that each and every one of them had a positive impact on me and I think a wonderful impact on the future of this country. So I wish them well. God bless and Godspeed.

THURSDAY, *December 20, 2012*

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, with the retirement of Senator BEN NELSON at the close of the 112th Congress, the Senate will lose one of its most respected members, and a distinguished career in formal public service will come to an end. I use that adjective "formal," because it's hard to imagine BEN NELSON not finding new avenues for public service as a private citizen in the years ahead.

Senator NELSON and I come from neighboring States in the rural, upper Midwest, and we have much in common. But we differ in at least one respect: I come from the small town of Cumming, IA, population 351; BEN comes from the big city, McCook, NE, population 8,000.

Senator NELSON is often described as one of the most conservative Democrats in the Senate, frequently voting with the minority party. I prefer to describe him simply as the most independent Democrat in the Senate, a progressive at heart who—like so many from our part of the country—is also deeply imbued with respect for traditional values and fiscal prudence.

As we all know, Senator NELSON prides himself on reaching across the aisle to get things done. He is a pragmatist, not a partisan. He has never allowed ideology or party to stand in his way of doing what he believes is right for Nebraska and the United States of America.

As my colleague on the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, Senator NELSON has been a passionate advocate for family farms and rural America, and he has been a leading advocate for increasing the use of clean, renewable biofuels in order to decrease our Nation's dependence on foreign energy sources.

As a member of both the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, no one has been a stronger supporter of both active duty and retired servicemembers.

BEN NELSON has been a successful CEO of an insurance company, a popular two-term Governor of Nebraska, and, for the last 12 years, an accomplished and effective U.S. Senator. He has been a wonderful hunting colleague of mine on more than one occasion.

Our friendship, of course, will continue. I wish BEN and Diane the very best in the years ahead.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. First, I want to thank my colleague and neighbor Senator Harkin for his timely remarks, and particularly for noting that we have been hunting partners. As a matter of fact, that has been in the news today. Not only has Senator Harkin noted our exploits together, but in this morning's *Washington Post* the senior Senator from New York noted that I have taken him pheasant hunting in Nebraska as well. I am going to be known not only for my hair but perhaps for hunting as well, so I appreciate that.

Mr. HARKIN. Would the Senator yield?

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Of course.

Mr. HARKIN. The Senator has been a great friend. I enjoyed hunting with my friend before, and I read that in the paper before about Senator Schumer going out.

Here is a real test for my friend from Nebraska: Aren't I a better shot than Chuck Schumer?

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. He noted that he learned to shoot at camp and that he was a marksman, so that is probably a dispute I should not get in the middle of.

Mr. HARKIN. No, the Senator doesn't want to get in the middle of that.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. I thank the Senator very much for his kind remarks.

It is, obviously, a difficult time to speak about leaving the Senate, and I did that earlier. I leave with a great deal of

melancholy and with a lot of friends and a lot of hope for the future of our country.

Mr. REED. Madam President, at this time, I wish to take a few minutes to salute my colleagues who are retiring at the end of this year with the conclusion of the 112th Congress: Daniel Akaka of Hawaii, Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, Scott Brown of Massachusetts, Kent Conrad of North Dakota, Jim DeMint of South Carolina, Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, Herb Kohl of Wisconsin, Jon Kyl of Arizona, Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, Richard Lugar of Indiana, BEN NELSON of Nebraska, Olympia Snowe of Maine, and Jim Webb of Virginia. They have all worked ceaselessly to give their constituents the best representation and give the country the benefit of their views, their wisdom, and their experience. They are men and women who are committed to the Nation, and they have every day in different ways contributed to this Senate and to our great country.

I wish to thank them personally for their service, and, in so many cases, their personal kindness to me; for listening to my points and for, together, hopefully, serving this Senate and this Nation in a more positive and progressive way. . . .

I could go on with all of my colleagues, just thanking them for their friendship, for their camaraderie, and for their commitment to the Nation and the Senate. As they depart, they have left an extraordinary legacy. Now it is our responsibility to carry on in so many different ways, and I hope we measure up to what they have done. If we do, then we can go forward confidently.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, there are few issues we deal with on the Armed Services Committee in which the stakes are so high or the policy questions so complex as in dealing with our Nation's strategic forces and capabilities. The fearsome power of our strategic weapons, the urgency of avoiding mistakes, the difficult strategic calculations they require, the advanced technologies involved, all of these combine to make strategic forces complicated and of paramount importance.

It has also been the signature issue for Senator BEN NELSON during his service on the Armed Services Committee. Chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee since 2009, Senator NELSON has long been one of the Senate's most thoughtful voices on issues related to our nuclear arsenal, space programs, missile defense, and other strategic issues. As he prepares to leave the Senate, we are losing an out-

standing contributor to our Nation's strategic thinking and decisionmaking.

Certainly the presence of Offutt Air Force Base and U.S. Strategic Command in Senator NELSON's home State give him firsthand evidence of the importance of these issues. Appropriately, he brings a commonsense Nebraska viewpoint to our consideration of them.

Senator NELSON's efforts were important to the Senate's 2010 approval of the New START Treaty, a significant step forward in our nuclear arms reduction efforts. He made it clear in that debate that he is a firm believer in the need to ensure that the Department of Energy's nuclear weapons laboratories are modernized and able to support the existing nuclear stockpile so that we do not have to return to nuclear testing.

His commonsense approach has been especially noticeable in issues involving management of the nuclear weapons laboratories as they balance the science behind stockpile stewardship and meet day-to-day problems with the deployed nuclear forces.

As chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, he has helped ensure strong oversight of and support for the development, testing, and deployment of effective ballistic missile defenses, including the phased adaptive approach to missile defense in Europe that is already providing protection for our forward deployed forces, our allies and partners against Iran's current and emerging ballistic missiles.

He has been an advocate for improving our deployed and planned homeland ballistic missile defense capabilities, including efforts to understand and correct the problem that led to a flight test failure of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense System in December 2010. In this regard, he has supported rigorous and operationally realistic testing of our missile defense systems.

Of course, strategic issues are not Senator NELSON's only concern. On the Armed Services Committee, before he chaired Strategic Forces, he was chairman of the Personnel Subcommittee, where he demonstrated a keen understanding of the issues and a deep concern for the men and women of our military and their families. He has been a tireless advocate for the National Guard and for Nebraska's farm families, and a fighter for working families across America, advocating for a reasonable minimum wage and for important workplace protections. He has been among our most pas-

sionate voices for an end to the partisan gridlock that has marked Washington, and the Senate, for far too long.

None of these issues is simple. All of them are vitally important. Senator NELSON's thoughtful, careful contributions have without question made our Nation safer, made our military forces more effective, our use of precious taxpayer dollars more effective. He has earned the respect and affection of the people of Nebraska, and he will be sorely missed on the Armed Services Committee and in the Senate. Barb and I wish all the best for BEN and Diane as they continue their efforts to serve their State and our Nation.

FRIDAY, *December 21, 2012*

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, at the end of each session of Congress, as is our tradition, we take a moment to express our appreciation and acknowledge the many contributions each retiring Senator has made to the day-to-day work of the Senate. We will miss them when the gavel brings to a close the 112th Congress—especially Senators like BEN NELSON who have made an important difference during their service.

Since he is from Nebraska, BEN is a neighbor to my home State of Wyoming and he understands more than most the inherent problems and challenges faced by rural America. The people of Wyoming, Nebraska, and the West, have taken on a rugged way of life and it shows itself in their independence, their unique spirit, and their great love of their community and their country.

BEN's upbringing and his ties to his State of Nebraska gave him an important understanding of the issues that surround our rural way of life. He took an active role in the Senate's work on agriculture and energy issues because he understands how great a concern they are back home.

BEN learned at an early age that he could make a difference if he worked hard and dedicated himself to the people of his State. It was a plan of action he put into everything he has ever done in life.

It helped him to make a successful run for Governor, after which he decided to run for the Senate. He knew it wouldn't be easy, and it wasn't, but when the votes were counted he had won an important Senate seat and was headed here to represent his beloved home State.

Soon after he began his Senate career he cast a vote to lower everyone's taxes. That took courage. In the years since

then, he has shown that he has a lot of that important quality in abundance.

Since we are neighbors and share an appreciation and understanding of rural America and our unique way of life, it shouldn't come as a surprise that we have a great deal in common. We both love our great outdoors, and there are places in Nebraska that are almost as beautiful as Wyoming.

We both love to hunt, and BEN has had some very interesting opportunities to pursue his hobby all over the world. My hunting has all taken place in Wyoming. Because of our love of hunting and my great affection for fishing, BEN and I cochaired the Sportsmen's Caucus. We have also worked together on a number of issues related to the great outdoors. They are matters that mean a lot to us and to our constituents back home.

Thanks, BEN, for your service and for your determination to make the position of your constituents known here in Washington. You have made a difference in many ways and you can be very proud of your legacy of service. Thanks, too, for your friendship. I have enjoyed coming to know you. Whatever you have planned for the future, I hope you continue to enjoy the great adventure of your life.

THURSDAY, *December 27, 2012*

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as a Senator from a rural State, supporting our Nation's farmers is something close to my heart. Senator BEN NELSON shares that commitment, and has been a longtime champion of legislation to protect American agriculture and our Nation's farms in a rough economy. Senator NELSON's work for rural communities has benefited his home State of Nebraska, but his support of agriculture has helped Vermonters, too. These are among the legislative issues on which Senator NELSON has had an impact since he came to the Senate in 2001.

As a member of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, Senator NELSON has been an active participant as we have tried to move the 2012 farm bill through Congress, one of the most pressing pieces of legislation before us today. He has fought tirelessly for Nebraska's interests in that bill, as well as the interests of the Nation's agricultural industry as a whole.

While he has worked on a number of legislative matters in the last decade, I particularly appreciated Senator NELSON's

support for my effort to give the National Guard a seat at the table of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a former Governor. He understood that this multiyear effort was done to recognize that the men and women of the National Guard serve our country with unmatched loyalty and that they and their families make sacrifices every day. He recognized that they are indeed deserving of full representation at the highest levels of the Pentagon. In 2010, Senator BEN NELSON was awarded the Harry S. Truman Award for his commendable work with the Guard. Since the National Guard has taken on an increased role in overseas conflicts, Senators like BEN NELSON have stepped up to give them the recognition and support they deserve.

I commend BEN's loyalty to Nebraska and to economic sustainability across the country. His dedication to sustainable energy is rare in our modern political climate. Rather than folding to the issues that divide us and ignoring the future of our farms and environment, Senator NELSON has taken a strong stance on controversial and difficult issues and has managed to open the minds of many of his colleagues with time, bringing people together around the possibility of creating positive change. Through it all, he has kept the needs of his State in mind, even as he has worked to create a brighter future for the entire country.

Senator NELSON is an honest man, a level-headed public servant, and a friend to many. True to his roots, he has built a legacy in the Senate that will last after he has moved on from the halls of the Capitol. I wish him the best in his retirement from Congress.

FRIDAY, *December 28, 2012*

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I would like to pay tribute to the Senators who will not be returning when the 113th Congress commences next month. I have already spoken about Senator KYL and about Senator Inouye, one of the truly great Americans and giants of this institution. At the time of his death, Senator Inouye was just a few weeks short of celebrating 50 years of Senate service. Only Senator Byrd served in this institution longer.

Turnover is a natural occurrence, but it's important to acknowledge that the Senators who are departing have served in the Senate for a combined total of 237 years, or nearly 20 years per Senator, on average. Add Senator

Inouye, and the total is close to 300 years. That service represents an enormous amount of expertise on issues ranging from national defense and foreign affairs to the Federal budget to energy policy. The departing Senators will also take with them vast institutional knowledge and bipartisan friendships and working relationships that will leave a void we will need to fill. . . .

Mr. President, Senator BEN NELSON is a native Nebraskan who earned his B.A., M.A., and J.D. degrees from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. He embarked on a highly successful career in the insurance industry, working for Central National Insurance Group of Omaha. In 1975 he became Nebraska's State insurance director before going back to work for Central National Insurance, first as an executive vice president, and then as president.

With regard to politics, Senator NELSON decided to start at the top. In 1990 in his first run for office he was elected as Governor of Nebraska. In 1994 he was reelected with 74 percent of the vote. During his tenure, he cut spending relative to the previous administration by 64 percent, promoted legislation to cut crime through the Safe Streets Act and juvenile crime bill, advocated for low-income families through the Kids Connection health care system, enacted welfare reforms, and cut taxes for over 400,000 middle-income Nebraska families. He was forced to step down because of term limits, but then he successfully ran for the Senate seat vacated by Senator Bob Kerrey. While that race was close, he was reelected in 2006 with just under 64 percent of the vote.

Senator NELSON is a moderate to conservative Democrat, which is fitting given the conservative tilt of Nebraska voters. For the past 12 years he has frequently reached out to Republicans to try to get things done. For instance, he was a member of the Gang of 14 that helped to resolve the judicial nominations controversy in 2005. He has worked hard to protect and promote the State's agricultural interests, becoming a champion of ethanol and farm-based alternative energy sources. He is a member of the Armed Services Committee and has been at the center of shaping our Nation's defense policies, securing a new headquarters for STRATCOM, and a new Veterans Administration hospital for Nebraska's veterans.

Senator NELSON has always been true to his beliefs and true to his word, and it has been a pleasure to work with him. His desire to seek bipartisan compromise is a noble one. He likes to quote Henry Ford, who said, "Coming together is

a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." Senator NELSON has always heeded those words; we would be well served to do likewise in his absence. . . .

Mr. President, these men and women who will be leaving the Senate soon have made extraordinary sacrifices to serve our Nation. We are fortunate that they have chosen to spend significant parts of their lives in public service. All Americans owe them a debt of gratitude. Those of us who will be in the Senate next month when the 113th Congress convenes can best honor the legacy of our departing colleagues by reaching across the aisle as they have done so many times to forge bipartisan consensus and solutions to our Nation's most vexing problems. The men and women who will be leaving the Senate at the end of this Congress understand that compromise isn't a dirty word; it is the genius at the heart of our political system. We will miss them.

MONDAY, *December 31, 2012*

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I wish to recognize my colleague BEN NELSON for his many years of distinguished service and leadership on behalf of our country and the people of Nebraska.

It has been an honor to serve with BEN over the past 6 years. He is a true statesman and a champion for the people of Nebraska. During his time in the Senate, BEN has earned a reputation as a pragmatist who values problem solving over partisanship, and I have admired his sensible, commonsense approach to legislating.

BEN seemed to be destined for public service from an early age, winning his first election at the age of 17, and he is known for his consistent record of putting Nebraska first. No matter what the issue, BEN has always stood up for his State and he has improved the lives of people across Nebraska. At a national level he has been a strong voice for fiscal responsibility and shared sacrifice.

Having grown up in a small town in Nebraska, BEN has never forgotten his roots. While serving on the Senate Agriculture Committee with BEN I saw first hand his deep appreciation and respect for the farmers, outdoorsmen, and rural communities that are vital not just to our economy but to our way of life in the Midwest.

He was instrumental in crafting both the 2008 and the 2012 farm bills, and he has been a clear and consistent advo-

cate for homegrown energy, leading the way on policies to help our country achieve energy independence.

He has also been a champion for our men and women in uniform, helping to ensure that members of the Armed Forces and our veterans receive the support they need and deserve.

Senator NELSON, it would be impossible to do full justice to your legacy in a single statement. So instead let me simply say this: The State of Nebraska is better because of your leadership, and so is our country. You will be missed in the Senate, but given everything you accomplished before you were elected—as Governor of Nebraska and as a successful businessman—I know in your retirement you will continue to find ways to improve our great country and work for the people of Nebraska.

THURSDAY, *February 7, 2013*

ORDER FOR PRINTING OF TRIBUTES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be printed as a Senate document a compilation of materials from the *Congressional Record* in tribute to the retiring Members of the 112th Congress.

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

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