

workers by owning and operating small businesses.

Republicans have a better proposal and other good ideas to help American workers. I believe we need to get on the Ledbetter bill, as I said a few minutes ago, and have an open debate about it so the American people can hear Republican alternatives and the Senate has an opportunity to vote on more than what our good friends on the other side have offered.

#### FAREWELL TO SENATOR BIDEN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I turn now to the issue of the moment, which is the celebration of the career of our good friend from Delaware and wishing him well in the future. I remember being sworn in, in January of 1985, thinking I had gotten to the Senate at a pretty early age. I was 42 years old. I thought: Gee, I have gotten here at a pretty early age. At the same time I was sworn in for my first term, the Senator from Delaware was being sworn in for his third time. He was barely old enough to vote when he got here. We were born in the same year, but you got a 12-year head start on me, I would say to my friend from Delaware, and has had an extraordinarily distinguished career.

When we think about Senator BIDEN, certainly we think about his marvelous personality, his demeanor, his friendliness. He can have a good riproaring debate without being disagreeable, as we all say. He has been a pleasure to work with. I say that as somebody who has rarely voted on the same side as he has. We say goodbye today to an outstanding individual who has been a fixture in the Senate for 36 years and a friend to everyone in the Chamber. He now, of course, is going to enjoy an even greater achievement as he becomes the Vice President of the United States.

I remember right from the beginning in 1985, as I was discussing a few minutes ago, that Senator BIDEN made everybody feel comfortable. Although we were born in the same year, as I indicated, he certainly got here at an early age, and it has allowed him to spend most of his adult life in the Senate.

America got to know JOE pretty well over the course of the last year. They got a chance to witness his humor, his compassion, and, yes, his extraordinary decency. They learned firsthand his not entirely undeserved reputation for loquaciousness. They met his wonderful family. Barack Obama decided he liked what he saw in JOE BIDEN as well and invited him to be his running mate in what turned out to be a spirited Presidential campaign.

So next week, after the peaceful transition of power from one political party to another that has distinguished our democracy since 1801, JOE BIDEN will become the 47th Vice President of the United States. This inauguration marks the first time in almost 50 years that two Senators moved directly into

the offices of President and Vice President. So no matter what outcome some of us may have hoped for in the election, I think my colleagues and I can feel a little institutional pride at that accomplishment—the fact that two Senators will be sworn in as President and Vice President.

Everyone knows by now JOE's famous loyalty to his beloved Amtrak and his regular commute by rail 80 minutes each day from his home in Wilmington to the Capitol. We know of his commitment to being home with his family every night.

I am sure every single one of my friends in this Chamber has a story to tell of working with JOE. For my part, one of several efforts JOE and I worked together on is the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act passed in 2006. After the election of the Hamas-dominated government in Gaza, JOE recognized, as I and others did, the threat that situation posed—and continues to pose as we have seen up close over the last weeks—the threat it poses to peace in the region. Thanks to his efforts, we were able to pass and have signed into law this important bill which restricts U.S. and foreign assistance to the Hamas-led government unless and until it takes serious steps to renounce terror and publicly recognizes Israel's right to exist. That bill was the right thing to do to confront terrorism. I am proud of my work with JOE BIDEN on it, and I know he is too.

I have also worked with JOE on tightening sanctions on the dictatorial, illegitimate regime currently ruling in Burma. Among other efforts, the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE Act, which we collaborated on, restricts the importation of Burmese Jade into America through other countries. That takes a large bite out of every lucrative source of profit for the Burmese regime.

JOE is well versed in these issues and many others, thanks to his years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, with much of that time as either chairman or ranking member. I know he is particularly proud of his role in pushing for NATO expansion in Central and Eastern Europe in 1998 and in 2003.

We will all certainly miss JOE's presence as 1 of 100. It will take some getting used to, to have a Senate without him, but the good news is he is not going very far. Obviously, Senator BIDEN's election as Vice President is a great honor and a fitting tribute to his 36 years of public service. I look forward to working with him as a key player in the incoming administration, as Congress and the new President work together to tackle the many difficult issues this Nation faces.

Let me say, on a personal basis: JOE, it has been a pleasure knowing you and working with you over the years. Elaine and I wish you and Jill the very best in the coming years.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business until 12 noon.

The Senator from Delaware is recognized.

#### FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, let me begin by thanking the leaders for their kind comments. It is true that I have been here a long time, I say to my friend from Kentucky. As a matter of fact, I say to my friend from Hawaii, I remember the first time I stood on the floor as a Senator of the United States. It was the desk directly to your left, Senator, the top row, second in. It was temporarily my desk. I remember standing and being told that the desk on my right was the desk of Henry Clay and on my left Daniel Webster because the senior Senators from the respective States got those desks. I say to my friend from California, it was the only time I can remember being speechless when I stood there, as a 30-year-old kid, thinking: Oh, my God.

Well, I never thought I would be standing here today. I never believed serving in this Chamber was my destiny, but it always was a big part of my dreams.

I remember vividly the first time I walked in this Chamber, I walked through those doors, but I walked through those doors as a 21-year-old tourist. I had been down visiting some of my friends at Georgetown University. I went to the University of Delaware. I had a blind date with a young lady from a school they used to call Visi Visitation—which is now part of Georgetown. My good friend, a guy named Dave Walsh, was there. After the evening, staying at his apartment, I got up and—I shouldn't say this probably, but I will—I don't drink. Not for moral reasons, I just never had a drink. There is nothing worse than being a sober guy with a bunch of college guys who have a hangover the next morning.

So I got up and decided to get in the car—this is a true story, Senator CARPER—and I drove up to the Capitol. I had always been fascinated with it. In those days, you could literally drive right up to the front steps. I was 21 years old. This was 1963. I say to my friend from Iowa, I drove up to the steps and there had been a rare Saturday session. It had just ended. So I walked up the steps, found myself in front of what we call the elevators, and I walked to the right to the Reception Room. There was no one there. The glass doors, those French doors that lead behind the Chamber, were open. There were no signs then. I just walked