

cared most deeply about the people of Maine. She has gone through great efforts over the years to talk to her constituents directly. She once said:

I've made main street tours across this state a hallmark of my tenure in public office. They are like my secret poll.

It is through these tours that OLYMPIA decides which problems to fix—whether it was storm relief after the 1998 ice storm, the fight I already mentioned to keep Maine's military facilities open, or reauthorization of the Northeast Dairy Compact on behalf of Maine's dairy farmers.

Of course, this isn't to downplay OLYMPIA's penchant for independence or for joining gangs. Senator SNOWE's maternal grandparents immigrated to the United States from Sparta, which may help explain her fighting spirit. Just like the Spartan King Leonidas, she has never been afraid of a fight—even with members of her own party.

She headed the Centrist Coalition with Senator Breaux. She cochaired the Common Ground Coalition with Senator LANDRIEU. In 1999 she was one of five Republicans to vote to acquit President Clinton in both articles of impeachment. And in 2005 she joined the bipartisan Gang of 14, which helped defuse an earlier dispute about threats to change the Senate rules.

Yet what many fail to mention is that despite her vaunted independence, OLYMPIA has always been a very proud Republican. She recently said:

We believe as Republicans that the individual is more important than the state. We believe that the great days of our past can be a stepping stone to an even greater future. We believe a job is preferential to a handout and independence is better than dependence. We believe that the private sector is more productive than big government will ever be.

When it comes to a balanced budget—a top priority for the party—Senator SNOWE has been a true leader. She has been a long-time supporter of a balanced budget amendment. As far back as 1993, when she was still serving in the House, she was one of four initial sponsors of the legislation that would have mandated a balanced budget. One of her first acts as a Senator was to deliver a speech before a Senate committee in support of a balanced budget amendment.

OLYMPIA's many accomplishments have attracted broad notice outside of Washington. In 2004 *Forbes* named her "one of 100 most powerful women in the world," rating her even more influential than J.K. Rowling or Oprah. In 2006 *Time* named her one of the "ten best senators," noting that she is "in the center of every policy debate in Washington."

I do not think anything compares with the honor that was bestowed on Senator SNOWE by the townspeople of Bethel, ME, who, in 1999, created the "Olympia SnowWoman," a 122-foot tall snowman that still ranks as the tallest snowman—or woman—ever built. It required 13 million pounds of snow, took more than 1 month to build, wore a 100-

foot-long scarf, had two entire 27-foot evergreen trees for arms, and required 16 pairs of skis for eyelashes.

"It's just my luck," Senator SNOWE said of the monument, "I'd have a world record breaking monument named after me, and it will be gone by summer."

OLYMPIA, you have had a truly remarkable career. We thank you for your service to this Chamber and most especially to the people of the great State of Maine. We wish you all the best in the next phase of your life and, as you think of what to put in your memoir, I would only ask one thing: Please, go easy on us.

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 previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 2 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the first hour equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half.

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Madam President, I commend the minority leader for his nice tribute to Senator SNOWE.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Madam President, I rise to give my closing floor speech for this session of the Senate.

From the date of my swearing in on February 4, 2010, until the last day I serve in this great Chamber, which is 1 month shy of 3 years serving, I still say and believe that, aside from my marriage to my wife Gail of 26 years and the birth of my two children, Ayla and Arianna, serving in the greatest deliberative body for the Commonwealth of the Massachusetts, in the people's seat, has been the greatest honor I ever had in my life. I thank the people of Massachusetts for that opportunity. To think that someone such as myself, whose parents were married and divorced 4 times each, who lived in 17 houses by the time he was 18 and was subjected to various forms of abuse growing up, still has the honor to serve in one of the greatest deliberative bodies, as I said, in the world is something I will not soon forget.

To the young people sitting here and who may be watching, take it from me that in this country, even when it seems that you are fighting against all odds, anything is possible for you. There are no obstacles that cannot be overcome so do not give up and always follow your dreams.

As I have said before, people have no business in politics unless they respect the judgment of the voters. If you run for office, you have to be able to take victory or defeat in a gracious manner. I do respect the judgment of the voters. I accept their decision in this election with the same attitude and sense of appreciation I held when I arrived in this Chamber almost 3 years ago.

When I was sworn in, I was the 1,914th Senator accepting the oath of office by signing the book right up at the clerk's table. There were many Senators who served before me and there will be many Senators who serve after my service is over. That my name is listed amongst them is very humbling.

To all the people of Massachusetts, I greatly appreciate the confidence you placed in me for the past 3 years in allowing me to represent them in the Senate. To my colleagues, I thank them for the courtesy and friendship they afforded me during my time here. When I arrived, I promised I would read the bills, see how they affected Massachusetts, see how they affected our country, our debt and our deficit and I would vote in an independent manner based on the merits of that issue rather than political partisan politics. I am proud I did keep that promise to be independent. I am proud my voting record has identified me as the second most bipartisan Senator in the Senate, as referenced by Congressional Quarterly, and that I was named as the least partisan Senator in the Senate by *Washingtonian* magazine.

It was that independent and bipartisan approach that provided me with an opportunity to stand with the President at the White House on three separate occasions in the past 2 years to see bills I had either sponsored or played a key role in securing their passage signed into law. I was honored to work with my colleagues—many who are here today and many who are listening—on both sides of the aisle on legislation that was signed into law to move our country forward, including the STOCK Act to ban insider trading by Members of Congress—I know the Presiding Officer played a key role in that as well—the hire a hero veterans bill to help our veterans who are fighting for jobs actually have opportunities to be hired by employers who are looking for those heroes; the crowdfunding legislation which will help young entrepreneurs get access to new capital and create jobs, something I hope the SEC will immediately come up with a rule on so these people can start creating jobs and raising money; legislation to reform Wall Street, where I was the deciding vote to strengthen our country's financial system; legislation to eliminate an onerous 3-percent withholding tax; eliminating a stealth tax that would have affected government contractors—that is also gone; legislation to ensure our fallen heroes receive the dignity and respect they deserve at the Arlington National Cemetery, that

is something now that is also fixed; and many other congressional actions that have made a difference not only in Massachusetts but in this great country. These are all shared successes, and I was proud to be part of each and every one of them.

I have always said in order to do our business as our country's leaders we must do our work in a bipartisan, bicameral manner to ensure the actions taken by Congress benefit all Americans, not just those of one political party or one political ideology. During my time here and now as I am leaving, I have been and still am deeply concerned about the lack of bipartisan efforts to solve our country's most pressing economic challenges and in turn move our country forward. Many times political party and personal gain is put before the needs of our country. I know we can do it better. The American people expect us to do it better. As I leave, I challenge the leadership on both sides of the aisle to make the process more open and transparent. I challenge Members to work with each other in a more open and honest manner, and I challenge the President and the congressional leadership to also work together immediately to address the concerns and needs of our country because, after all, we are Americans first and our country deserves better.

In closing, I see my staff here. Many of them were here from the beginning. They came from applicants, over 4,000, for a very select few jobs. I thank Vanessa Sindors, my chief of staff, and each and every one of the staff for the amazing work they have done in very interesting times. To come here as the 41st or the 60th Senator and have the media scrutiny and all the commentary from every special interest group around the country, in the middle of a Senate that was gridlocked—to come here and have an opportunity to make a difference and do it well without making any mistakes is something I think benefited Massachusetts but also benefited this great country. It allowed for the debate to resume once again to eliminate a supermajority so one side could ram through things in which the other side had no play or no involvement.

That is not what our country is about. That is not what this Chamber is about. We deserve better. The people of Massachusetts and the people of this country deserve better. They deserve to have their voices heard. Every person in this Chamber has one vote. To think that one side or the other, depending on who is in charge, is going to stifle that one Senator, from whatever part of the country, not to let him or her have their moment to express their views on something that is important to them and their constituency, to shut that off and put your thumb on it is not the way we should be doing it.

I am deeply concerned about any changes in the rules that are being proposed to eliminate the ability for both sides to do battle in a thoughtful, re-

spectful manner. If you see the movie "Lincoln," you see that even back then they were battling most of the time to convince each other to go one way or the other. Since when has it been a problem to have vibrant debate in the Senate, in this great Chamber? Since when? What is everybody scared about? I don't understand that. I am hopeful the leaders will come together and recognize we need to have that vibrant debate. That is what makes this Chamber unique among any other form of government around the world. To take that away and limit it I think is a big mistake.

I wish to say thank you, obviously, to the people of Massachusetts for entrusting me to sit in the people's seat for the past 3 years. I thank my colleagues who are here, with whom I have had some great friendships and opportunities to work together. As I said many times before, victory and defeat is temporary depending on what happens and where we go. All of us, obviously, may meet again, but I am looking forward to continuing on with those friendships, continuing on working with my staff.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to honor my colleague, Senator SCOTT BROWN, who will leave the Senate at the conclusion of the 112th Congress. Senator BROWN won a special election in 2010 to fill the seat of the late Senator Edward Kennedy, but his service to the State of Massachusetts began many years ago.

Senator BROWN began his career in public service in 1992, working as a real estate assessor for the town of Wrentham, MA. In 1998, he was elected to the Massachusetts House. Six years later, he was elected to the State senate, where he was known as a strong advocate for veterans issues. As a State senator, he championed legislation that created a check-off box on State income tax forms for veterans to indicate service in Iraq or Afghanistan so that they could be efficiently notified of benefits.

His work on behalf of veterans is not surprising considering Senator BROWN has proudly served in the Army National Guard since enlisting at age 19 when he attended college at Tufts University. Once elected to the U.S. Senate, his commitment to military and veterans issues continued as he served on the Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs, Armed Services, and the Veteran's Affairs Committees.

Although his time in the Senate was short, Senator BROWN advanced several initiatives, including several that assist servicemembers and their families. He successfully included a provision in the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, which made certain that members of the National Guard and their families receive a fair housing allowance when deployed overseas. Senator BROWN also worked across the aisle on legislation that demonstrated

his commitment to our troops. He fought to provide greater oversight at Arlington National Cemetery, ensuring proper burials of America's fallen heroes and secured a provision to create the Office of Service Member Affairs at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to help returning servicemembers avoid financial fraud.

The hard work and dedication that Senator BROWN has shown during his years of public service will surely bring him continued success in the future. I thank Senator BROWN for his service in the Senate and wish him the best.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MIDDLE-CLASS TAX RATES

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the House of Representatives is back, and we welcome them. It is good to have them back in business in Washington. I hope the first order of business this week is to pass a bill that we enacted in July of this year which would protect 98 percent of American families from any increase in income taxes because of the fiscal cliff. I hope both Democrats and Republicans in the House agree these working families don't need a tax increase. Those who should pay an additional amount are those in the highest income categories. That is what President Obama said.

When we voted in the Senate, we said those families making \$250,000 or less should have no increase in income tax. I appeal to Speaker BOEHNER—before he takes another recess in the House—please call this measure and pass it. It will give peace of mind to literally millions of American families who are wondering what is going to happen January 1. These are many families who struggle from paycheck to paycheck. I have several letters.

From Lansing, IL, Linda wrote:

Please vote to keep middle class taxes from rising. \$2,000 will help me to keep food on the table and gas in my car. It could even help me help someone else. Please vote for the middle class.

I will.

This letter is from Jeremy in Princeville, IL:

I am reaching out to you to ask you to continue to push for extensions of middle class tax cuts. We are a family of four making one hundred thousand annually. A two thousand dollar increase will hurt our family in many ways. Our family is trying to better ourselves but a \$2,000 tax increase will hurt our bottom line and the chances of enhancing our children's lives.

Joan from Naperville writes: