

a.m., and we were starting off about 7 in the morning.

I came down the elevator, and as happened, the elevator door opened up. Across from me was Luther. He said: How did you sleep, Mr. Chairman? I said: As well as could be expected. Finally, I told him what happened.

After all of that, I had probably one of the best days in my service in the Senate, visiting a State I had not visited before. I talked to every commodity group, every farm organization representative. We went out to many different farms. I learned firsthand that a big export factor to China is peanuts. If we are going to be making friends with China—or at least getting to a situation where we have a better relationship with any country—as you know, agriculture can be a tool for peace. It is a stabilizing factor. It becomes a national security situation. We talked about this at length.

I must say I was very impressed with the folks I met there and the respect they had for you, Luther, for wanting to be on the Ag Committee, obviously, and for your record as attorney general and your public service. To a person, they were committed to you and thanking you for your service on the Agriculture Committee.

So wherever you go, whatever you do, I know you are an Aggie. I know you will continue to fight for your farmers, and, as you know, we are going through a pretty rough patch.

Personally, I want to thank you for your friendship, and, personally, I want to thank you for the message you gave to all Senators here, which I think should be mandatory in our quest to see if we can't achieve a better situation in working together to find solutions. The Senator from West Virginia and I feel the same way, and I know whatever you are going to do, you will do so with dignity and with respect and with strong leadership.

Thank you, my friend.

Mr. STRANGE. Thank you.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to bid farewell and to express my gratitude to Senator LUTHER STRANGE as he leaves the U.S. Senate. During his too-brief tenure here, he established an admirable reputation for hard work, dedication to his State of Alabama and our Nation, and a commitment to principles.

Senator STRANGE was appointed to the Senate last February to fill the vacancy created when Senator Jeff Sessions became Attorney General of the United States. From the start, it was clear that Senator STRANGE's pride in his home State was matched only by his humility at being selected to represent the State he loves.

Building on the reputation he earned as attorney general for Alabama, Senator STRANGE established himself here as a determined advocate for the rule of law and defender of our Constitution. From preserving the Senate traditions that foster full and open debate to supporting our veterans and

strengthening our national security and our economy, Senator STRANGE has worked on a number of important initiatives.

Senator STRANGE has met the obligations of his office with energy and dedication, and it has been an honor to serve with him in the U.S. Senate. I wish him and Melissa all the best in the years to come and look forward to many more contributions and accomplishments from this distinguished American.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I just want to say on the record how much I have enjoyed serving with the Senator from Alabama. He has meant a great deal to this institution, to this body during his short time here, and it is sad to see him go.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session, as under the previous order.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Joseph Balash, of Alaska, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 1 hour of debate equally divided in the usual form.

If no one yields time, the time will be charged equally.

The Senator from Minnesota.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, a couple of months ago, I felt we had entered an important moment in the history of this country. We were finally beginning to listen to women about the ways in which men's actions affect them. The moment was long overdue. I was excited for that conversation and hopeful it would result in real change that made life better for women all across the country and in every part of our society.

Then the conversation turned to me. Over the last few weeks, a number of women have come forward to talk about how they felt my actions had affected them. I was shocked. I was upset, but in responding to their

claims, I also wanted to be respectful of that broader conversation because all women deserve to be heard and their experiences taken seriously. I think that was the right thing to do. I also think it gave some people the false impression that I was admitting to doing things that, in fact, I haven't done. Some of the allegations against me are simply not true, others I remember very differently.

I said at the outset, the Ethics Committee was the right venue for these allegations to be heard and investigated and evaluated on their merits; that I was prepared to cooperate fully and that I was confident in the outcome.

An important part of the conversation we have been having the last few months has been about how men abuse their power and privilege to hurt women. I am proud that during my time in the Senate, I have used my power to be a champion of women and that I have earned the reputation as someone who respects the women I work alongside every day. I know there has been a very different picture of me painted over the last few weeks, but I know who I really am.

Serving in the U.S. Senate has been the great honor of my life. I know in my heart that nothing I have done as a Senator—nothing—has brought dishonor on this institution, and I am confident the Ethics Committee would agree.

Nevertheless, today I am announcing that in the coming weeks, I will be resigning as a Member of the U.S. Senate. I, of all people, am aware that there is some irony in the fact that I am leaving, while a man who has bragged on tape about his history of sexual assault sits in the Oval Office, and a man who has repeatedly preyed on young girls campaigns for the Senate with the full support of his party, but this decision is not about me; it is about the people of Minnesota. It has become clear that I can't both pursue the Ethics Committee process and, at the same time, remain an effective Senator for them.

Let me be clear. I may be resigning my seat, but I am not giving up my voice. I will continue to stand up for the things I believe in as a citizen and as an activist, but Minnesotans deserve a Senator who can focus with all her energy on addressing the challenges they face every day.

There is a big part of me that will always regret having to walk away from this job with so much work left to be done, but I have faith the work will continue because I have faith in the people who have helped me do it.

I have faith in the dedicated, funny, selfless, brilliant young men and women on my staff. They have so much more to contribute to our country, and I hope that as disappointed as they may feel today, everyone who has worked for me knows how much I admire and respect them.

I have faith in my colleagues, especially my senior Senator, AMY KLOBUCHAR. I would not have been able to