

be saying farewell to one of our most popular Members, Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN of Arkansas.

During her 12 years in this body, at a time when the Senate has become increasingly partisan and ideologically divided, Senator LINCOLN has charted an alternative course. She has cultivated friendships and collaborations on both sides of the aisle, and has been skilled in forging bipartisan agreements on a wide range of issues.

Last year, Senator LINCOLN succeeded me as chair of the Agriculture Committee. I would note that she is the first Arkansan and the first woman to serve in that position.

She has used that position to champion causes that have been her passion for many years, including revitalizing rural communities, supporting family farmers, promoting biofuels and other forms of renewable energy, and advocating for better nutrition for our school-aged children.

Senator LINCOLN is leaving the Senate at the very top of her game. Just this week, President Obama signed into law the Claims Resolution Act of 2010, the culmination of Senator LINCOLN's efforts to provide justice for African-American farmers who suffered decades of discrimination in agricultural programs.

Also this week, President Obama signed into law the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which will become a major part of Senator LINCOLN's legacy as a Senator.

When I handed over the gavel of the Senate Agriculture Committee to Senator LINCOLN last year, much work had been done on the child nutrition bill but much remained to be done. Senator LINCOLN did a fantastic job—a masterful job—of taking over the child nutrition authorization and shepherding it to a unanimous approval by the Senate. Thanks to her leadership, low-income children will have increased access to Federal nutrition programs, the nutritional quality of the programs will improve, and the financial foundation of the National School Lunch Program will be greatly reinforced.

Senator LINCOLN also exhibited extraordinary leadership earlier this year in the Wall Street reform bill. Again, as the chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, she was able to forge bipartisan consensus for strong reform of the derivatives market. Indeed, the provision she championed will help to restore integrity to the derivatives markets, it will allow companies to safely use derivatives to manage their business risk, and it will help to prevent future financial crisis. I was proud to support her in those efforts.

For the last 12 years in this body, Senator LINCOLN has been a tireless advocate for the people of her State of Arkansas, for American agriculture, for rural Americans, and for families with small kids. She has been an outstanding Senator and a wonderful friend. I join with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in wishing

BLANCHE and Steve and their twin boys Reece and Bennett the very best in the years ahead.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I thank my colleague for his forbearance.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Before Senator HARKIN leaves the floor, let me say I am so pleased that I was literally able to be here on the floor and hear you talk about our colleagues. What a wonderful thing to do, and to single out Democrats and Republicans and to reflect upon their service to their States and to our country. I had to mention that.

You mentioned BLANCHE LINCOLN. A lot of people say I respect my colleague, I think highly of my colleague, but here in the Senate we love BLANCHE. We love BLANCHE and her family. She is such a joy to work with. Always up, even during the course of the tough year she has had. I remember her more than once saying what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. And she has come through this with a smile and such grace, it is just remarkable. I loved working with her on the Finance Committee, especially on the health care bill that is designed to provide better outcomes for less money.

BOB BENNETT

You mentioned BOB BENNETT. He and I served on the Banking Committee for a number of years. In the end, he lost his seat I think because of his willingness to do what we were rewarded for in Delaware, and that is to reach across the aisle and find ways for Republicans and Democrats to do things together. We will certainly miss him.

RUSS FEINGOLD

RUSS FEINGOLD may be best known for his work on campaign finance reform, but I admire his work very much on helping to strengthen the President's rescission powers. I think the seeds he has planted there will bear fruit maybe next year.

So to him and the others who are leaving us, I say what a joy it was to serve with them, and I especially want to commend and thank you for remembering them as you have done today.

Mr. HARKIN. I thank the Senator very much.

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, in November 1948—that was 1 year after my birth—President Harry Truman issued a highly controversial Executive Order. It called for beginning the process to bring to an end the longstanding policy of racial segregation in the Armed Forces of our Nation.

Just a few years earlier, my father and three of my uncles had served on active duty for much of World War II. One of them—Bob Patton—was killed in a kamikaze attack on his aircraft carrier, the USS Suwannee in 1944. But

all four of them—my dad and three uncles—were born and raised near the coal mining town of Beckley, WV, where my sister and I were born after the war.

Neither my father nor my uncles ever discussed with us the implication of President Truman's Executive Order. Having said that, I later learned that many of the people in my native State opposed it, as did many people in Danville, VA, the last capital of the Confederacy and the place where my sister and I would grow up.

The transition that followed President Truman's actions was not an easy one, but history would later show the steps he ordered 62 years ago this year were the right ones for our military and for our country.

Twenty years after Truman's historic action, I was commissioned an ensign in the Navy and headed for Pensacola, FL, to begin the training that would enable me to become a naval flight officer. I had just graduated from Ohio State University—the Ohio State University, I guess—which I attended on a Navy ROTC scholarship. My sister was not in our ROTC unit at Ohio State. In fact, there were no women in that unit, and to the best of my knowledge there were no women in any of our ROTC units across the country nor in our military service academies in America either.

A lot of people thought that was fine, and while there were women who served then in our Armed Forces, they were denied the opportunities that I and a lot of other men had that enabled us to advance in rank and to assume positions of ever greater responsibility. I went on to serve in Southeast Asia and retire as a Navy captain after 23 years of active and reserve duty. No women served with us in my active-duty squadron, but as the years passed that began to change. Young women gained admission into ROTC programs in colleges and universities across America and into our service academies as well. They became pilots, they flew airplanes, helicopters, served on ships, and someday, before too long, they will serve on some submarines as well.

Today, women are admirals and they are generals. While there is still resistance to the transition that continues to this day—and much of that is understandable—most of us who have lived through it would agree this change has helped to make our military and our Nation stronger.

Today, we face a different kind of transition—a challenging one, too—and that is whether to end the policy of don't ask, don't tell. Confronted with this question and how to answer it, I have sought the counsel of a number of people over the past year whose wisdom I value. Foremost among them has been our Secretary of Defense Bob Gates. He has graciously shared his thoughts on this difficult and contentious issue with me and with many of my colleagues, both in private and in public forums.