Century of Service

Honoring the Service of
Former Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker (R-TN) and
Former Senator Bob Dole (R-KS)

Introduction:
Former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD)

Speakers:
Vice President Joe Biden;
Former U.S. Senator Trent Lott (R-MS);
Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV);
Former U.S. Senator Bill Frist (R-TN);
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY);
President Bill Clinton;
Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN);
Jason Grumet,
President,
Bipartisan Policy Center,
And Others

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MR. : Please welcome former Senate majority leader and Bipartisan Policy Center founder, Tom Daschle. (Applause.)

TOM DASCHLE: (Off mic) – Trent Lott and Bill Frist, along with the president of the Bipartisan Policy Center, Jason Grumet, it is my pleasure to welcome each of you here tonight.

Tonight we’re here to honor two distinct and different Republicans. And no, I’m not talking about Mitt Romney – (laughter) – I’m talking about two great men in every sense of the word, Howard Baker and the senator from Kansas he didn’t marry, Bob Dole. (Laughter.) (Cheers, applause.)

It is – it is a real tribute to both of them that this amazing crowd to be gathered in this extraordinary venue tonight. It’s always exciting for me when I can speak to more people than the entire state of South Dakota. (Laughter.) But it is truly an honor to pay tribute to two men whom I admire and from whom I’ve learned.

It’s been a long – (applause) – it’s long been my view that it is easy to be brave from a distance. On the battlefield and in the heat of political battle, the two men we honor tonight have demonstrated bravery at the front, consistently putting country ahead of self and often strengthening their party by putting ahead of party.

I would like to recognize some very special guests we have here tonight, two outstanding members of the Cabinet whom I’m very proud to call friends, Leon Panetta and Kathleen Sebelius, are here. And we’re grateful to them for their presence and thank them for their leadership and their service to their country. (Applause.)

We have many former members of Congress, as well as members of Congress and the Senate here tonight, and I’m grateful – we are all grateful that you took – taken time out of your busy schedules to be here, especially our majority and minority leaders from the Senate. I want to thank especially the men and women of Walter Reed Medical Center who have joined us tonight. We thank them for being here especially. (Applause.) And most importantly, perhaps, our gratitude to Senators Elizabeth Dole and Nancy Kassebaum and their families. How special it is that they are here as well. (Applause.)

Almost exactly five years ago, our two honorees, along with Senator Mitchell and I, founded the Bipartisan Policy Center. We did so with a belief that the vision need not be destiny. We felt that if Democrats and
Republicans who had been in the arena could speak with one voice on issues of policy, it would help still those in the arena do the same. We wanted an organization that would combine real scholarship with effective advocacy. There are plenty of great studies produced in this city that are being used as doorstops. We wanted the BPC to undertake projects with purpose. We’ve been gratified to see the work of the BPC reflected in the national conversations on health care and energy, the national debt and national security. Our court tenet is that collaboration is actually a form of strength. We reject the idea that pursuing shared solutions require sacrificing values. In fact, we would argue that there is no greater achievement than building a lasting consensus among disparate voices and views.

Tonight we celebrate two men who embody these ideals of principled leadership. For more than 50 years a piece, Senators Baker and Dole did more than just help lead this country, they defined what’s best about it. Before he became Harry Truman’s vice president, Alben Barkley was faced with the prospect of leading the majority in the Senate. His outlook was grim. No one can lead the Senate, he said, I have nothing to threaten them with. Howard Baker succeeded in leading the Senate precisely because he did not threaten. And if he promised anything to his colleagues, it would be that he would listen, that he would keep an open mind. And if he could find some common ground, well, that was enough.

As the story goes, a reporter once said to a Democratic senator, you know, if the Democrats had to elect one of their colleagues president, Howard Baker would probably win a plurality of the votes. You’re wrong, the Democratic senator said, he’d win a majority. Whether it was representing Tennessee in the Senate or America in Japan or steering the Reagan White House, Howard Baker was able to help everyone find common ground – (applause) – without anyone feeling they were sacrificing sacred ground, because he is a true conciliator.

Bob Dole served Kansas in the United States Senate for 27 years. But the truth is had he stopped serving his country at age 21, that would have been enough – more than enough. We all know the story. Fighting in northern Italy in 1945, Bob was wounded severely, in fact, near fatally. For nine hours, he was left unattended and willed himself to survive. Maybe that’s why the enormous challenges he faced in the Senate were always ones he faced with such inner confidence. But it also should give you a sense, as it gives me, the quiet courage that Bob has always demonstrated.

During the 18 months we served together as leader, I have to say I was always impressed when he insisted on coming to my office for a
meeting; the seasoned leader coming to the newcomer, the majority leader coming to the minority leader’s office. Only later did I realize that there was a strategic move in his part. When he wanted the meeting over, he could just get up and leave. (Laughter.) Of course that didn’t stop me from following him, as I did after leaving the Senate to join him in private life. Bob Dole is one of my heroes, a mentor and a very special friend. Our country – (applause) – our country, Republicans, Democrats and independents, have been richly blessed by his extraordinary leadership now for a half century.

So let me say, Bob and Howard, in a country where there are so many positions of leadership but too few leaders, in a world where there is so much polarization and so little conciliation, we all of us here tonight, this whole crowd, thank you for your wisdom, for your courage, for the extraordinary leadership you have shown all of us for over 50 years. As modern statesmen, you are models to us all. And tonight we thank you. (Applause.)

It is now my pleasure to introduce another very special guest. When Joe Biden left the Senate after 36 years to continue his service as our nation’s vice president, he went to the floor, as we all do, to give his farewell address. That day he told the story of Hubert Humphrey’s last days, as cancer was wasting him away, and the moment Barry Goldwater, the man who Humphrey, as his vice – as his party’s vice president in 1964, had successfully tried to keep him from the presidency, came over and embraced him. Senator Biden said friendship and death are great equalizers. Death will seek us all at some point, but we must choose to seek friendship.

Part of what makes the men we honor tonight such great leaders is that they have constantly sought friendship. And part of what makes Joe Biden such a national treasure is his boundless capacity for friendship.

Please join me in welcoming my friend and our vice president, Joe Biden. (Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN: Tom (sp), thank you very much. It’s good to see so many of my former colleagues. Whether you believe it or not, I miss you. (Laughter.) I do not expect you to miss me, but I miss you. (Laughter.)

You know, both Bob and Howard’s life bear witness to the Greek philosopher who said that this century character is destiny. Character is destiny. You know, there is a lot of incredible leadership qualities that Bob Dole has, and many of you in this room have served, like I did, with Bob for
a long time. But Bob, the thing I’ve admired about you most, in addition to your incredible physical courage, has been your absolute sense of decency. I’ve never witnessed a single time – and we spent many times together; we traveled together. And I say to the Senate – the other Senator Dole and to Senator Kassebaum, both good friends, that when we traveled together, no matter where we were, I watched. I witnessed every single time all the years we worked together that – where you did one thing always: You always afforded the other man or woman, whether a political foe or friend, an ordinary citizen, the dignity they deserve.

The first speech Bob made in the United States Senate, the Senate floor, was April 14th, 1969. And it was about disabled American veterans. He championed their cause, and ultimately the result was an American – the Americans with Disability Act. Forty-three million Americans were granted the dignity, the dignity they deserved.

The examples abound in Bob’s career – the Social Security Act – the Social Security Commission with Pat Moynihan – 37 million Americans not having to worry about whether they’d lose their dignity because they couldn’t afford to maintain themselves. 1992, Bob, you were the clarion voice in the United States and around the world to stop the butchery of Slobodan Milosevic and – and restore the dignity of so many tens of thousands of people who had it stripped from them. In 1983 you managed the Marin Luther King holiday bill, and you said – and I was there as you managed that bill – and you – you said something very straightforward. You looked out at everyone, and you said no first-class democracy can treat people like second-class citizens. No first – it was simple for you. It was about decency. When that bill passed, I remember what else you said. You said, I was proud – it was a proud day for me. It’s now a national holiday.

Well, I think I speak for everyone here who served with you. It was a proud day for me when I made your acquaintance. It was a proud day for me to be able to work with you. And I genuinely, genuinely appreciate the way you treated me when we worked together, and I admired the way you treated every single solitary person you dealt with.

Howard, you know, I’ve said this before: I’ve never served with any man or woman who possessed more wisdom and integrity than you. I’ve never known anybody who possessed more wisdom and integrity than you. You heard me say it many times, Howard, and I do look back in retrospect, and I realized I probably hurt you back home, literally, at the time. (Laughter.) But I said, there’s no one I’d rather work with or enjoyed
working with in my entire career than I did with you. It was one of the best experiences of the 36 years I served in the United States Senate.

I think you made such an exceptional leader, Howard, because of your ability to put yourself in the other guy’s or other woman’s shoes. I watched you, whether we were – traveled abroad together or watched you on the Senate floor. It was always from the perspective of the other guy, the other woman and how could you work out an honorable compromise.

My dad used to have an expression, he said, never back another man in a corner where his only way out is over you. (Laughter.) You never did that. And what an incredible talent you have. And even though you weren't around at the time Harry Truman said what I’m about to say, I think he could have been talking about you – and he was saying – in a different context – when he said it’s understanding that gives us the ability to have peace. When you understand the other fellow’s viewpoint and he understands ours, then you can sit down and you can work out your differences.

I watched you do it time and time and time and time again. When you saw a problem, your initial instinct, at least from my perspective, was how do we fix it. 1970, you teamed up with Ed Muskie to pass the Clean Air Act – the Clean – yeah, the Clean Air Act in ’70, the Clean Water Act in 1972, you and Muskie. 1973 when you were on the Watergate committee with Danny Inouye, one of the most honorable men I’ve ever known in my whole life, you did something really critical. You restored for the American people the confidence in the integrity of the system, at no small price to you. 1978 I watched you risk your career – I watched him risk his career as he made sure the Panama Canal Treaty passed.

1987 I watched with admiration. You changed your career, leaving the private sector after having left the Senate, coming back to become the chief of staff for Ronald Reagan. As we used to say in the Senate, you give me – for a point of personal privilege, I’d like to – I’d like to share a story with you. And you remember this, Howard.

Robert Bork had been defeated in the Senate. The president had sent up another nominee, which he subsequently pulled down. And I’m confident it’s because Howard told the – you know, call Biden to the United States – or to the White House and ask his opinion and then give him the 10 names you think you should – that you’re considering. So the president, God love him, called me down. I sat there in the chair I now sit in as vice president. You were sitting on the couch.
And President Reagan, who was one of the most charming guys – (inaudible) – pulled out these cards, and he said, Joe, could you tell me what you think the prospects of these people are? I said, look – I said, Howard knows the Senate better than I do; he can tell you. He said, oh, I want to know from your perspective. So we started reading down the list. And he started off with a very conservative judge from the 5th Circuit, and I said, no, I don’t think that’ll fly, Mr. President. And he went down the list, and he came up with Wade McCree – remember I said he’d go through like a hot knife through butter, and we went down the list. And he got to – he said, Tony Kennedy? I said, California, their appeals court, their supreme – I said, yeah. I said, well, Mr. President – and I know he’s a – he’s a straight conservative, but – I said, I think he passed. He said, you’re for him then, aren’t you?

Remember that? (Laughter.)

And I said, no, I didn’t say that, Mr. President. (Laughter.) I said – I said, based on what I know, I think he’d pass, and I’d probably vote for him. He said, well, you’re for him then. (Laughter.) He said, I can tell him you’re for him? And I said, no, no, Mr. President, I said, I don’t know enough about him to make these – I got down that road once before. (Laughter.)

And I said – I turned to you, and I said, Howard, tell him, tell him.

And Howard said something accommodating and, with that, President Reagan said to me, Joe, you got an extra minute? I said, sure do, Mr. President. We stood up; he grabbed me under the arm, walked around the couches to the side door that goes into the private dining room that’s there, opened the door, and who was standing there but Tony Kennedy. (Laughter.) He said, Tony, Joe’s for you! (Laughter.)

Do you remember that, Howard?

And I went back to Howard, and I said, whoa, man! (Laughter.) This man’s good, and I don’t think it was all the president’s idea. (Laughter.) But you picked a good one – (laughs) – and I was for him.

Look, the fact of the matter is that I can say, without fear of contradiction by the press, (by anybody?) who’d ever served with you, by historians – and I presume to speak for every man and woman you ever spoke for – you ever served with – that it was a great honor and a genuine privilege to serve with each of you, to learn from each of you.
I know you’d wished I’d learned more, Bob – (laughter) – but to learn from each of you.

And, quite frankly, just simply to know you both. It’s an honor to be here tonight. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. : Ladies and gentlemen, former Senator Majority Leader and BPC’s senior fellow, Trent Lott. (Applause.)

TRENT LOTT: Well, first, let me say, thank you to Vice President Biden. I was told that he had 20 minutes, and I could have all the time that he yielded back – (laughter) – and he yielded back some time. So I really do appreciate that.

Howard and Bob and Nancy and Elizabeth, so great to be here with you, and I’m so thrilled that you’re being honored like this. And to all the friends of the Doles and the Bakers, thank you for being here tonight.

I want to thank the Bipartisan Policy Center for making this event possible and to providing the leadership to recognize these outstanding former Senate majority leaders. I felt like they deserved it and, in a way, they even needed it because they’d been so overshadowed all these years by Nancy and Elizabeth. (Laughter.) They needed this additional recognition.

You know, the thing that many of us remember about Bob Dole – and there are many great things and the vice president and Tom Daschle have already enumerated so many wonderful and serious things – but one of the things that made Bob Dole so special and made the Senate so much fun to be in was his wit and his humor. He always found a way to see the funny side of the serious things we were dealing with. And we’ve all heard some of his stories and laughed with him.

I remember – I think he spoke at Howard Baker’s retirement – and I don’t know – maybe he had some Viagra jokes; I don’t remember that part. (Laughter.) But I do remember one time he testified at Elizabeth’s confirmation to be a Cabinet secretary. And of course, he quoted, on that occasion, Nathan Hale when he said, I regret that I only have one wife to give to my country’s infrastructure. (Laughter.)

But Bob’s best stories were on Bob. There were a lot of them. Of course Jay Leno always had a lot of fun with Bob.
But one of my favorite ones he told on himself was about how he was a young congressman and he was on the campaign trail. And he wound up somehow or another in Ohio and, of course, nobody really knew him there. And this was one of those Lincoln Day dinners, and they wanted to try to get the crowd up a little bit. So they got him on a local radio program and, when they started to – introducing Bob, it was quite an experience because they said, we want you to get to know our special guest that’s going to be speaking at the dinner tonight, and I’d like to tell you a little bit more about Bob Doyle. First of all, the tickets have been cut from $3 to $1. We wanted to have a good crowd for this young congressman, and we are going to give away a free TV set. (Laughter.) But that won’t occur until our speaker quits speaking, and you have to present to get the TV. (Laughter.)

Now, about his background, he’s from Kansas. He was in premed before he served in World War II. There he suffered a head wound and went into politics. (Laughter.) That was what Bob Dole told on himself and many other stories like that. So I could tell stories about Howard Baker and Bob Dole and the inspiration that they have been to so many of us here in this room, as friends and colleagues and as former staff members. I’m just so thrilled that we are recognizing them here tonight.

But in the true spirit of the bipartisan nature of this event, I have been given the opportunity to introduce the next speaker and that is the current majority leader, Harry Reid, the 21st Senate majority leader.

I’ve known Harry for 30 years. We served in the House together. We served in the Senate together. When I had the honor and privilege of being majority leader, Harry was the whip on the Democratic side in the minority, and he and Tom had a great relationship. And Tom quite often would be busy, and he’d have Harry on the floor, and every time I’d call up a bill, there’d be a hundred amendments – not 79, a hundred. It was always, quite often, the same amendments. So I’d mosey over to Harry and say, Harry, we gotta clear the deck a little bit here. And he’d say – (imitating Harry Reid’s voice) – well, we’ll work on it. And he’d go off, and he’d get rid of about 70 of them, and we’d accept 10 or 20 of them. And then we’d vote on three or four, and the day was done. We had a great relationship.

But one of the things I did, in keeping with what you’re supposed to do as a leader, is find out what really matters to the leaders of the other side of an issue or the other side of the aisle in this case. Well, it didn’t take me long to find out what really mattered to Harry Reid. It was his family, his faith and a nuclear-free Nevada – (laughter) – not necessarily in any particular order. (Laughter.) Once I realized that – (chuckles) – how much
you cared about his family and his faith and the – (chuckles) – nuclear waste-free Nevada, everything else worked out fine. (Laughter.)

Most of you know that Harry, actually, was an amateur boxer and then, of course, turned into Senate majority leader, which is appropriate training for that position. And I can tell you that Harry would come on the floor and after touching gloves, he then would try to “float like a butterfly and sting like a bee” for the rest of the day. He’s soft-spoken, nattily dressed of course, but with a powerful punch.

Ladies and gentlemen, pound for pound, the best Democratic leader around is my friend, Senator Harry Reid. (Applause.)

SENATOR HARRY REID (D-NV): First of all, I’m happy to be here today. We’ve had a – our usual easy time at the office today. (Laughter.)

First of all, Senator Daschle, thank you very much for doing this, asking me to come. You and George Mitchell asked me to be here. I was disappointed he’s not here. So that should tell us everything, shouldn’t it?

No, actually, he told me he wasn’t going to be here because they’re making a movie of George Mitchell, about his work in Northern Ireland, and I’m sure it’ll be a – it’s a documentary, and I’m sure it’ll be terrific. I admired George so much when he was the leader.

He sent Senator Daschle (and I ?) on a couple of fool’s errands. We were a couple of young senators there, and we’re trying to pass that budget deficit reduction act of, I think it was, 1993. And he looked around the Senate. He couldn’t find two bigger dopes than Daschle and Reid. (Laughter). So he said here’s your – here’s your job: Go get Bob Kerrey’s vote. (Laughter.) So we looked at each other. And Bob Kerrey knew we were coming. He went to a movie that afternoon. (Laughter.) So – Tom will remember that. He agreed to come and vote with us on a couple of conditions, one of which, he got to speak first. And he wasn’t really complimentary of our chief executive officer at the time, but he voted the right way, so we fulfilled our obligations to Senator Mitchell.

I also want to just take a word to express to everyone here publicly about my affection for Senator Daschle. Those of us who have been around the Capitol for a long time in the Senate know that when he was the majority leader, he trusted me, and I never – I always did things I thought that would fulfill his trust in me. As Senator Lott has said, he basically turned the floor over to me. And he was doing a lot of other things and we worked together.
And I have said to him personally on a number of occasions, I say to everyone here publicly tonight, Tom Daschle’s like a brother to me and I so appreciate all he’s done for me, including helping me become the whip and now the leader. So thank you very much, Tom. (Applause.)

Trent Lott introduced me, and I appreciate that very much. Trent was a terrific leader. He was as conservative as anyone has ever been. He came to Washington from Mississippi. But I admired Trent so much because he was conservative but pragmatic. He worked to get things done. And he’s right, we would have lots of amendments, and he would ask me what I could do to get rid of some of them, and Daschle told me to get rid of some of them, so between the two of them we got a lot of amendments disposed of fairly quickly and finished our legislation. So Trent, thank you very much for the nice introduction. I have great respect and admiration for you.

I was happy to see Bill Frist here. Bill Frist and I had some extremely difficult times in the Senate; not personally, because there isn’t a nicer person in the world than Bill Frist, but there – times were difficult. And I remember a lot of things about Dr. Frist. And I say Dr. Frist because he did everything he could to make the Senate run as smoothly as he could. And sometimes, as we all know, that’s sometimes not very smoothly.

But the one thing that I will always remember about Bill Frist, whenever a problem came up that related to medicine, he had a glint in his eye that you could see for a mile away. He loved medicine. And of course, his career before he came to the Senate was one of significance. So Bill, thank you very much for your friendship and all you’ve done for Tennessee and our country. (Applause.)

I enjoyed Senator Biden’s remarks. He, of course, was always a Senate guy and we all understand that. (Laughter.)

Mitch McConnell. I know that people talk about Mitch McConnell and Harry Reid: Aw, they’re always up there fighting with each other. But Senator McConnell and I have a very warm personal relationship. We are friends. We do things for each other as much as we can, and it’s more often than people think.

And I’ve had so many people come to me and say, you know, the Senate is dysfunctional; it’s just not working; it’s the worst it’s ever been. And if I have time, I tell them the following:
The Senate is the way it is not because of McConnell and Reid, it’s because of the Founding Fathers. That’s the way they set up this country. You know, the great compromise in July of 1787 came about because the Founding Fathers had tried the Articles of Confederation. They were a flop. They didn’t work. They were trying to work through a new constitution. They couldn’t get it done. And one of the delegates from Connecticut came to Philadelphia and he said, I have an idea. It was a revolutionary idea for some revolutionaries.

He said, here’s how we should handle the problems of Rhode Island and New York, which were the big stumbling blocks: little, tiny Rhode Island, very small in area and no people; and New York, huge in area, lots and lots of people. He’s the one that came up with the idea of the bicameral legislature. And remember, in doing that it was really, really a radical move, because whoever heard of a legislature composed of two separate bodies? You had separate but equal branches of government, and that’s true.

But remember, this equality in the Congress comes pretty hard. When we were in the majority and the – Pelosi was the speaker, you know, things weren’t always pleasant with us. That’s the way things are. The House is always vying to have more power than the Senate. The Senate’s always vying to have more power than the House. And when you have two bodies, one run by Republicans and one Democrats, it gets more difficult.

So, you know, you look back over the history of this country, because of the way the Constitution is set up, we have had some difficult times. Henry Clay, the great compromiser, he worked for 30 years to try to solve the problems of slavery. He had a number of compromises, they worked, but ultimately it didn’t work anymore. And prior to that, as we know, a congressman came over – a southern congressman, he didn’t like what a congressman from Massachusetts said – he came over with his cane and nearly beat him to death on the Senate floor. He missed work for two years. He was always – he was permanently disabled as a result of that beating that he took.

So we know the battles during World War I. We know the battles that took place trying to get our military together for World War II. We had the civil rights difficulties. So Mitch McConnell and I are working in a situation that the Founding Fathers set up for us. And it’s – times are difficult now, but it’s all going to be fine. The glass is really half-full, it’s not half-empty. We’re going to work our way through all these issues.
We, of course, all – we know – and that’s the reason for this event – we need no – we need more bipartisan cooperation and less partisan competition. And we’re working that in our own way. (Applause.)

I’ve had the good fortune of serving with both Senator Dole’s wife and Senator Baker’s wife. When I came to the Senate, there were two women in the Senate: Senator, of course, Nancy Kassebaum, and Barbara Mikulski, who – by the way, today we honored her on the Senate floor by noting that she has served longer in the United States Congress than any person in the history of this country as a woman. (Applause.) She came – she beat a record of a woman from Massachusetts who came here in 1925 and left in 1960, and Barbara Mikulski has broken that record.

So – and I, of course, served with Bob Dole also. I heard very closely what Senator Biden said about Bob Dole. I was a relatively – relative newcomer during most of the days of Senator Dole, because you’re always a newcomer unless you’ve been there 25 years. (Laughter.) But Senator Dole, just like Senator Biden said, never, ever tried to do anything to embarrass a new member. In fact, he went out of his way. If there was a problem he saw that he could alleviate, he would take care of that.

I have such admiration of him, for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the friendship that is unsurpassed between him and Dan Inouye. These two men were both badly injured in northern Italy. They spent years together at a hospital in Minnesota or Michigan, someplace like that. (Laughter.) They both start with “M,” I can tell you that. (Laughter.) They’re such fine men, and they became – I’m sure they were always wonderful human beings, but the battles of war brought them close together and allowed them to be the distinguished, important people they have for our country.

Bob Dole only asked me for one thing that I can remember during all the time that he was our leader. He asked me – he asked to come in to see me, and he – as some may know, the doctor that took care of him in a veterans’ hospital was an Armenian, and he had learned from somebody that I was one of Kirk Kerkorian’s lawyers before I came to Washington. And he said, could you arrange a meeting for me and Kirk Kerkorian? And I was happy to do that. I was happy to do that. Kirk was happy to have that meeting. And it led to a lot of good things. Kirk was very, very generous with the other Senator Dole when she was head of the Red Cross. And so I was happy to have done that one small thing for Bob Dole.
Howard Baker, most of the things I know about him come from people from Nevada. Paul Axel (ph) – Paul Axel (ph) cared a great deal about Howard Baker. They had the same really kind of personalities. They were very soft-spoken. They were very good at what they did. They were not bullies. And so Alan Bible, Howard Cannon, Paul Axel (ph) speak very, very highly of Howard Baker.

I’m so grateful to have the opportunity to be here, recognizing that the purpose of this is to do whatever can be done to establish more bipartisan cooperation in the Senate, and I’m going to continue to do everything I can to establish that. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. : Ladies and gentlemen, former Senate majority leader and Bipartisan Policy Center senior fellow Bill First. (Applause.)

BILL FRIST: On behalf of the BPC, I am pleased to be here tonight and to see so many great friends, having been away from about four years formally from the United States Senate but working every week here at the BPC.

As a co-leader of the BPC health project with Senator Tom Daschle, we strive, we work hard to fulfill that principle, to fulfill that example of what Senator Baker and Senator Dole were hoping to achieve when setting up – when they first envisioned this organization of the BPC.

I’m here tonight really to introduce my close friend Mitch McConnell, but first to tell you my Howard Baker story.

The year was 1993; the place, the beloved Tennessee. A cold wintry night. I’d driven four hours from Nashville to Huntsville, his beloved home. The purpose, to seek advice – a doctor to seek advice from the dean of public service in Tennessee.

Senator Baker, I’m considering running for the United States Senate, and I’m a doctor.

Senator Baker: You’re not a politician.

Senator Baker, I have to be honest, I’ve really never put out very many yard signs.

Senator Baker: You’ve not paid your political dues?
I was shrinking each time. (Chuckles.) It was a long four-hour drive over.

Senator Baker, I’ve never run for political office, really have never served in political office.

Senator Baker: You’re a doctor with no political experience.

Senator Baker, I understand, and I really just wanted to come over and ask for your advice, and I understand. I’ll come back in four years, and I’ll earn my stripes.

Senator Baker: No, Bill Frist. Come back here. You are going to run for the United States Senate.

And I said, Senator Baker, but why?

Because the Senate should be the seat of citizen legislators.

I tell that story because it was ingrained – it had a great impact on me personally, but Senator Baker, he is the epitome of the citizen legislator, the public servant from a background – a humble background, going to the United States Senate, coming back to Huntsville, Tennessee, hearing the call once again in many different fields, but going to Japan as ambassador and coming back home, coming back on a trip, envisioning the BPC with Senator Dole and Senator Daschle and George Mitchell – the ideal, the embodiment of the citizen legislator. Howard Baker, thank you for your embodiment of what makes this country great. (Applause.)

It is my honor to introduce my very close friend and confidante, in many ways, in the four years I served in the United States Senate as majority leader, my closest friend, the longest-serving senator in Kentucky, the second Kentuckian to lead his party in the United States Senate, my friend and your friend, Republican Leader Mitch McConnell. (Applause.)

SENATOR MITCH MCCONNELL (R-KY): Well, good evening. And Bob and Howard, what a wonderful honor for both of you tonight. I’m happy to be a part of it.

The presence of so many distinguished guests from across the political spectrum testifies not only to the high esteem we all have for Bob and Howard but also for the growing reputation and influence of the Bipartisan
Policy Center, which, of course, these two helped create. It is also a powerful validation of the senators’ mission.

It’s a genuine honor and a humbling one to be able to participate in the celebration of two truly remarkable men, to reflect on the century of service between them and to draw lessons from that service as we inch toward the bipartisan solutions that we know will be needed if we’re ever to address the looming crisis that casts a longer and longer shadow over all the other work we do in Congress these days. At some point, we have to come together. We all know that. And Bob and Howard have helped show us the way.

But let me just add this: Congress always appears to be broken right up until the moment it isn’t. (Laughter.) What matters is that we all acknowledge the problems we face, which we all do, and that we keep talking and listening to each other, which we are. It might surprise some people to hear it, but Harry and I actually get along very well. We’ve got a good working relationship, and I daresay the strength of that relationship is one reason I believe that a bipartisan solution to some of our most pressing problems is within reach. The sense of urgency is there. The relationships are there. The desire is there. But as Bob and Howard will tell you, timing is everything in this job. So we’ll keep at it. And as I say, we’ll have much to learn as we do so from the example and leadership of Bob Dole and Howard Baker.

Now, it’s fitting that we are marking this year a century of service of Senators Dole and Baker since next year marks the 100th anniversary of the formal creation of the office of Senate majority leader. For the trivia buffs in the room, the office of minority leader would have to wait another four years. (Laughter.) And as a party leader myself, I have to agree with those who say that you can’t really appreciate the unique challenges of the job until you’ve had it yourself. But I’ll take a shot at it anyway.

One way to think about the job of party leader in the Senate is to imagine that by some mysterious process, you’ve been chosen to lead this group. And they’re all class president types. They all have big egos and sharp elbows. And of course, on a daily basis they all think they can do the job better than you.

Imagine that leadership challenge. It’s the challenge of leading a body whose animating principle is individuality, where everyone has equal power and where none of the people who belong to it are either accustomed to or eager to be led. Bob Dole once put it this way; he said if you’re hanging
around with nothing to do and the zoo is closed – (laughter) – come on over to the Senate. (Laughter.) You will get the same kind of feeling, and you won’t even have to pay. (Laughter.) Howard describes the Senate as polite anarchy. (Laughter.) And it’s from him that we got the image of herding cats, which became the title of Trent Lott’s book.

All of this is said with the deepest love and affection, of course, for colleagues and for the institution, the same way that people from big families talk about each other. It might look like dysfunction from the outside, but it’s our dysfunction. And somehow, by some mystery of design and human nature, it not only works but it’s the glory of the republic. And none of us would change a thing about it.

But I do think we have an obligation to explain it a little better to people, so let me make just a couple of observations. First of all, as Trent likes to point out, there’s no rulebook for leading the Senate. This means every leader has to interpret the job on his own and in slightly different ways. Some may view their role as being the president’s enforcer, and they focused all of their energies on ramming his agenda through Congress as quickly as possible. Joel Robinson perfected this role so well that in the early days of the New Deal Will Rogers could say: Congress doesn’t pass legislation anymore; it just waves as – to the bills as they go by. (Laughter.)

Others have been a little more judicious. Alben Barkley started out in the mold of Robinson, but seven years in he was so enraged by Roosevelt’s veto of a tax bill that he had helped negotiate, that he gave an impassioned speech on the Senate floor, urging his colleagues to override the president’s veto. And they did it, after which Barkley promptly resigned as majority leader. Interestingly, Barkley’s colleagues were so impressed by this unexpected burst of independence and institutional pride that they re-elected him unanimously – (laughter) – the same day. And so from that point on, Barkley was seen as speaking not too the Senate for the president, but the other way around.

Howard Baker, as the vice president indicated earlier, showed similar independence during Watergate and in getting the Panama Canal treaties approved while he was leader. I hesitate to even isolate similar moments of courage in Bob’s career, since his entire life has been one of continuous acts of courage, but there were many. And let me just add in this connection that one of the lasting legacies of Howard and Bob is the lesson that politics is indeed an honorable profession.
Different leaders have also brought different personalities to the job. It’s something that the times have sometimes called for. And in every case, it’s something the institution has accommodated. If Joe Robinson ruled by fear, then Charles McNary was the pragmatist – a friend to all, who rarely ever spoke on the Senate floor. Mike Mansfield, on the other hand, didn’t speak much anywhere. To him, every senator was equal and they loved him for it. Alben Barkley evidently never shut up. One of his contemporaries put it a little more politely. He says that Barkley had no terminal faculties. (Laughter.)

Everett Dirksen didn’t just have a magnificent voice; he had a genius for bringing people together – a trait that his son-in-law clearly picked up. One journalist said Howard Baker could bring together a bull weevil and a cotton planter. (Laughter.) Bob Taft was famed for his preparation and his conviction, Robert Byrd for his command of history and Senate rules, and Bob Dole for his timing and his matchless wit. And LBJ, of course, transcends categorization. He was every personality rolled into one.

Here’s my point: Every one of the men who’s held this job has been very different, just as their times have been. What unites the great ones, including the men we honor tonight, isn’t brute power or charm or affability, it’s a devotion to the institution, an ability to listen, the character to defer to others and share the credit, and ability to see opportunities where others only see chaos and confusion, and when the moment requires it, the willingness to put the country and the national interests ahead of party interests alone. Humor doesn’t hurt either. And if you look back over the writings of the great leaders of the past, something else stands out. They all married very well. And that’s certainly true of Howard and Bob.

Now, if the founders had wanted an efficient government – (laughter) – if the founders had wanted an efficient government, they certainly would never have created the Senate. They would have shuddered at the thought of efficiency. They’d never have given a senator as much power on the day he or she is sworn in as it takes House members decades to acquire. And America would not be America. The genius of the Senate is that it was designed to be slow and painful, so legislation would reflect a national consensus and thus have the durability to last.

The men we’re honoring tonight understood that. It’s not an easy job. But as Bob has observed before, the good news is, once you’re out of office people start to like you again. (Laughter.) And after a few years go by, they entirely forget why they were mad at you. In Bob and Howard’s case it didn’t require a cooling-off period. They’ve always had the public’s respect,
and all of ours. And as we search for solutions in the years ahead, we would all do very well to look at every step along the way to the extraordinary example of principled leadership that both of them have set. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. : Ladies and gentlemen, Bipartisan Policy Center President, Jason Grumet. (Applause.)

MR. GRUMET: Well, good evening, everybody. As am I’m sure you can probably imagine, promoting bipartisan solutions can at times be a somewhat lonely pursuit. So it is incredibly gratifying to be surrounded tonight by several hundred national leaders, public servants and proud, pragmatic partisans. It’s now my privilege to introduce a brief video from a special guest who couldn’t be with us this evening.

(Begin video segment.)

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON: Good evening. I’m sorry I can’t be with you in person tonight, but I’m very grateful for the opportunity to honor two extraordinary public servants – Senators Bob Dole and Howard Baker. Their vision in establishing the Bipartisan Policy Center is testament to their lifetime commitment to collaboration and dialogue. It’s a vision we need today more than ever.

It’s been a real honor to know and to work with both Bob and Howard over the years. I’m always impressed by their leadership and their dedication to getting things done. Even when we disagree, I never once doubted our common desire to make America stronger, to make progress across a whole range of issue. The Baker-Dole Leadership Fellows program will honor their service and ensure that more people in leadership roles are willing to work together to build a stronger America.

I also want to thank my friends James Carville and Mary Matalin for inviting me to this event, and of course for demonstrating, in the best possible way, that two people of very different political minds can commit to a common future. Thanks to all of you. Congratulations to Howard and to Bob, and enjoy the evening. (Applause.)

(End video segment.)

MR. : From the state of Tennessee, Senator Lamar Alexander.
SENATOR LAMAR ALEXANDER (R-TN): Good evening. My job tonight is to introduce a short film about Howard Baker, but I want to do that the way he would do it – with a story. I was thinking that – I believe the very last time I appeared anywhere with both Senator Baker and Senator Dole was almost exactly 16 years ago. It was just before the Tennessee Republican primary. Bob had run me clean out of the presidential race. I was trying to do the only graceful thing, which was to support him.

And so Howard held a press conference at the Knoxville Airport, and I did what I thought was a good thing to do. I presented Bob Dole with one of my red and black plaid shirts and my endorsement, whereupon Howard Baker said loud enough for everybody in the news media to hear him: I hope that’s Lamar’s last red and black plaid shirt. (Laughter.)

Howard Baker loves a good story. He especially loves a story about his maiden address. He spoke a little too long. His father-in-law, the late Senator Dirksen, walked over to congratulate him. And Howard said, well, Senator Dirksen, how did I do? And Senator Dirksen looked down and said, Howard, perhaps you should learn to occasionally be guilty of an unexpressed thought. (Laughter.) From that he learned eloquent listening.

My favorite story of his was when he suddenly found himself the majority leader after the Reagan sweep in 1980, and no one was more surprised than him except Bob Byrd, who suddenly found himself the minority leader.

So Howard went to see Bob Byrd, and he said, Senator Byrd, I’ll never learn the rules of the Senate as well as you know them. So I’ll make a deal with you. I won’t surprise you if you won’t surprise me.

Senator Byrd said, let me think about it. (Laughter.) But he called him the next morning and said yes, and they worked beautifully together for four years, effectively, with the Senate.

Senator Baker, when he was the chief of staff to President Reagan, every single morning – so he tells me – would begin his day with the president sitting down, just the two of them, each of them telling the other one a little story. That got to be a lot of stories. But it always made me feel a lot better about our country to know we had a president and his chief of staff who were so secure in their own skin that they could sit down at the beginning of each day and tell each other a little story. That was one of Howard Baker’s secret weapons.
His other secret weapon is that he remembers Roy Blunt’s advice: People start getting into trouble when they stop sounding like where they grew up. (Laughter.)

Howard Baker has never stopped sounding like where he grew up, because he never stopped living where he grew up, the little town of Huntsville, Tennessee.

Earlier this week a student asked me, what’s the best way for me to get into politics?

And I said, I can tell you exactly how to do it. Pick out the person you admire the most, volunteer to go to work for them without any pay, carry their bag, drive them wherever they want to go, baby-sit their children, write their speeches for them, even if they don’t give your speeches. I know that works, because that’s what I did. I did it for the very best. And 45 years ago, I went to work in the United States Senate for Howard Baker, in the very same office that I occupy today.

So I agree with Dan – (applause) – I agree – (chuckles) – I agree with Senator Dan Quayle, who once said, there’s Howard Baker, and then there are the rest of us senators. (Applause.)

(Begin video segment.)

FORMER SENATOR HOWARD BAKER (R-TN): I’ll tell exactly you what I think. I increasingly believe that the essence of leadership, the essence of good Senate service is the ability to be an eloquent listener, to hear and understand what your colleagues have to say, what your party has to say, what the country has to say.

And the ability follows, then, to try to translate it into useful policy.

FORMER SENATOR NANCY KASSEBAUM BAKER (R-KS): There was a quietness there that was a part of his demeanor and absorbing what was going on. I’ve come to really realize how much he absorbs sometimes that you think he isn’t.

SENATOR LAMAR ALEXANDER (R-TN): Mr. Baker – his dad had been our congressman. My dad actually took me to the courthouse to meet Congressman Baker Sr. when I was 10 years old, and I always thought I’d just met the most respected man I was ever likely to meet, other than the preacher and my father.
And then young Baker was a good-looking young guy trying to get ahead in politics. When he went to Washington, I came with him.

MR. BAKER: I really never thought that I’d be there. Even when I began running, I never thought I’d be there.

SEN. ALEXANDER: The very idea that he would run and try to be the first Republican ever elected in Tennessee to the United States Senate was a huge leap of faith.

MR. BAKER: And when I got there, I had the impression that I was accepted as a colleague, as a member of the Senate.

SEN. ALEXANDER: When I came here, I was his legislative assistant, and he wrote his speeches. And of course, like most young aides, I thought my speeches were pretty good. So after a while I went to hear him deliver my speeches, and the first one I went to, he didn’t say a word of it. So I worked hard on the next one, gave it to him. He didn’t say a word of it.

He never complained about them, so I asked to see him, and I said, Senator, I think we have a real problem here. He said – I mean, I’m working hard on these speeches, and I give them to you, and I’ve gone to hear you, and you don’t say one word of my speeches. And he leaned back and laughed and said, Lamar, we have a perfect relationship. You write what you want to write, and I’ll say what I want to say. (Chuckles.)

(Laughter.)

FORMER SENATOR FRED THOMPSON (R-TN): Lamar Alexander introduced me to Senator Baker. I was assistant U.S. attorney, and I was – I’m 29 years old, I guess, at the time, and he said Senator Baker wanted to talk to me about being his middle Tennessee campaign manager for his re-election. And I said OK. I said, how much does that pay? He said, nothing. I said, I’ll take it. (Laughter.)

We got acquainted during that period of time, so when Watergate happened, right after the campaign was over with, he asked me if I’d be interested in coming up. They were going to form a Watergate committee. He was going to be the ranking member, the vice chairman of the committee, and he would select the minority counsel to represent the three Republicans on the committee.
SENATOR DANIEL INOUYE (D-HI): I had the privilege of serving with him on Watergate. You would think this type of hearing, which had tons of political consequences, that he would be the vindictive, fighting type. No, he was reasonable and rational about it.

MR. BAKER: Well, I had no intention of being – (inaudible). I had been a friend and political supporter of Richard Nixon’s, and it hadn’t been long till we realized that we had real mess on our hands; that in fact there was a lot of smoke but also a lot of fire there.

MR. THOMPSON: Senator Baker had the most difficult job of all because he had to balance all the interests involved. You don’t have to worry about the Democrats, when they’re investigating Nixon, having a bipartisan investigation. The question is, what are the Republicans going to do?

The pressure on Senator Baker during those Watergate days was unbelievable. It was not only pressure from the White House but from Tennessee, from Republicans, from the press, who’s watching everything: Is Howard Baker going to participate in a cover-up? Is he – is he going to be soft on the White House?

I’m sure inside the Senate itself, inside his own caucus, there was a lot of concern. He handled it with the equanimity that he’s known for, and the patience and analysis and coolness.

He developed a personal relationship with Sam Ervin. They were both country lawyers, and they were able to navigate those waters together. That was probably the last committee that really had a bipartisan investigation, and that was because of Senator Baker and his leadership.

The lodestar was a simple one, as it usually is, when you get right down to it.

MR. BAKER: And I said to Fred, you know, this testimony’s wandering all over the lot. But what we need to know, really, is the president’s involvement. I think I’ll ask some witness to elaborate on what he feels the president knew about this in advance.

SENATOR HOWARD BAKER (R-TN): (From Watergate hearing in 1973.) What did the president know and when did he know it?
MR. THOMPSON: It was kind of like ringing a bell on a – on a cold winter morning. It was clarity there, and it was a common-sense question, because that’s what everybody wanted to know.

SEN. ALEXANDER: The Panama Canal – (chuckles) – is a big deal in American history. Teddy Roosevelt built it and connected to the two oceans. We paid for it. We built it. We owned it. That’s what Ronald Reagan said. What Senator Baker and Senator Byrd were saying, and President Carter proposed, was, let’s give it back to Panama, and we’ll keep the right to use it.

FORMER SENATOR PETE DOMENICI (R-NM): He decided that it had to be done in the interests of the orderliness in that part of the world, and fair play. And that was a tough vote.

MR. FRIST: The people of Tennessee said, no way. You got to be kidding. To give up control of this tremendous global resource?

MR. BAKER: That was a difficult time for me. It was – it was difficult politically. It was a difficult intellectual decision. And it had difficult consequences. But as I went into it, it was clear that it couldn’t stay the way it was. Panama was a sovereign nation. And they still owned the property. And it was also important to understand that the canal was fundamentally important to us as well.

MR. DASCHLE: You know, you had every veterans organization not mildly opposed; they were in the streets. You had pressure groups unlike you see very often, politically united in opposition to this treaty.

SEN. ALEXANDER: It takes 67 votes to confirm a treaty. So here you are, unpopular president, Republicans wanting to get in office, Howard Baker running for re-election, Ronald Reagan going about the country. What you’re really doing is taking a risk of throwing away your political future by going against your party on such a big issue. And he not only went against it, he corralled enough other Republicans to get to 67 votes.

MR. DASCHLE: Well, I remember Senator Byrd one night as we were discussing great moments of political courage. It had nothing to do with the Panama Canal. But almost out of the blue, Senator Byrd said, you want to know courage? Courage is Howard Baker. Courage is the Panama Canal and Howard Baker. Courage is doing what he did against incredible odds and pressure. That’s courage.
SEN. DOMENICI: It took a long time for the conservatives who were part of Ronald Reagan’s team to get over the Baker vote. But it’s interesting. It’s – got over it; got over it to the extent that when he needed somebody to take over the White House when things were troublesome, he picked Howard Baker.

SEN. ALEXANDER: Reagan was in big trouble over the Iran-Contra problems. And the president called down to Miami to talk to Howard and got Joy Baker on the phone. And he said, Joy, I’d like to talk with Howard. And she said, he’s at the zoo with the grandchildren. And President Reagan said, wait till he hears about the zoo I’ve got for him. (Chuckles.) And that’s when he asked him to come up and be his chief of staff, President Reagan did, which took him out of any chance of running for the presidency in 1988, which he probably wanted to do.

SEN. INOUYE: I thought President Reagan was brilliant when he appointed Howard Baker to be his man because here was a person who can deal with members of Congress, Democrat or Republican, and they all trusted him.

MR. DASCHLE: Howard Baker has the right stuff, and it’s called courage, it’s called empathy, it’s called organization, and it’s called leadership.

MR. BAKER: I think it’s your basic instincts to – if it’s right or wrong – (because ?) your political position will dictate how you handle that. But it’s terribly important to take account of both things. You can’t just do the right thing, quote-quote, all the time. You got to take account of what the position of the country and the people that you’re representing and the (industry ?). Otherwise, there’s no point in having representative government.

MR. FRIST: He always told me about the importance, when I was considering of running for the United States Senate, of being a citizen legislator. I didn’t know exactly what that meant, but now I have a pretty good feeling for what it meant. And it means listening. It means taking counsel. It means, yes, having strong convictions and strong principles, but listening to differing views and dissonant views and taking those into consideration. So the real essence of Senate leadership is the ability to be an eloquent listener. And that’s an interesting phrase because there’s a difference between hearing and understanding what people are saying. You don’t have to agree, but you’ve got to hear what they’ve got to say. And if you do, the chances are much better that you’re going to be able to translate that into a useful position and even useful leadership.
(Video ends.)

(Extended applause.)

MR. : From the state of Kansas, Senator Pat Roberts.  (Applause.)

SENATOR PAT ROBERTS (R-KS): Bob, Elizabeth, Howard, Nancy, somebody took away my teleprompters.  (Laughter.) I have a cold, so please forgive me. It’s called grandchildren, little petri dishes running around my house.  (Laughter.)

Ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests all, my name is Lamar Alexander.  (Laughter.) I think I’ve the wrong script.  (Laughter.) Lamar – wait a minute. I’ve got it. It’s down here. It says here, I am Pat Roberts, senior senator from Kansas. Did Bob leave?  (Laughter.) Did that Brownback guy leave too? Well, Nancy, what do you know?  (Laughter.)

Why am I introducing the movie about the great man? Unknown to most – and before tonight this was classified – I have been Bob Dole’s bucket-toter. I tote buckets. First as a staffer, then as a member of the House, now serving in the Senate, I have toted buckets of all shapeses (sic) and sizes here, there and everywhere. I ran through the briars and brambles and the bushes in places where a rabbit or a Democrat would not go.  (Laughter.)

Now, Bob, I did spill some. I admit to that. But you, sir, truly carried the water for Kansas and our country. It has been quite a ride. Thank you. And tagging – (applause) – and tagging along your side with my bucket gave me insight. I was somebody, you know? I witnessed firsthand the change, the coming, the shining, from Bob Dole, partisan man, to Bob Dole, bipartisan man.  (Laughter.)

Now, I know the song. You know the song. And I’m going to need a little help from the audience here. I’m going to need a lot of help from the audience here. With apologies to Neil Diamond – now, this is coming from a monotone. Where it began, he can’t even begin to know. But he knew it was going strong. Was in the House, and the House became the Senate. Who’d believe the Democrats would come along?

(Singing.) Hands touching hands – (laughter) – reaching out touching you – this next part is going to be hard – touching me – (laughter) – now here comes your part. Sweet Robert Dole.  (Laughter.) Bob, Bob, Bob.
That was pathetic. Let’s try that again. You got your lines. It’s pretty easy. B-O-B, B-O-B, B-O-B, OK? (Laughter.)

(Singing.) Sweet Robert Dole. Bob, Bob, Bob!

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Bob, Bob, Bob!

SEN. ROBERTS: (Singing.) Good times never seemed so good. So good, so good, so good!

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: So good! So good! So good!

SEN. ROBERTS: You know the song. All right. (Laughter.) (Singing.) I’ve been inclined –

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Bob! Bob! Bob!

SEN. ROBERTS: All by yourselves. (Laughter.) To believe that there never would – but they did, and the country was the better for it.

Searching for Page 5. (Laughter.)

Ladies and gentlemen, the movie “The Future of You,” the tribute and movie starring Senator Elizabeth “stand by your man” Dole – (laughter) – Senator Danny Inouye, his right and left arm; Sheila Burke – Sheila, what’s his mood? What do you think? – (laughter) – the Cecil B. DeMille of Dole extravaganzas, one through five, now six, Richard Norton Smith; still the most humorous and missed man in the Senate, Al Simpson; the former majority leader, Tom Daschle, whom you’ve heard from – most eloquent; substituting for Henny Youngman, former congressman, secretary of agriculture and a man for all seasons, Dan Glickman; star of stage screen, the Senate, “Law and Order” and reverse mortgages – (laughter, applause) – Senator Fred Thompson; the former whip of the House, majority leader of the Senate and singing bass in the hit song “Elvira” 257 times – (laughter) – Trent Lott; and of course the man himself, Bob Dole.

So let’s play it again, Sam. Roll it. (Applause.)

(Begin video segment.)

ELIZABETH DOLE: June 11th, 1996, was one of the most emotional days of my life and one of the most beautiful days of our lives, because of all
the tributes and the warmth and the love that was in that room for Bob Dole. It was quite an event, because he was not only stepping down from his role as majority leader of the Senate, he was giving up his Senate seat. And he loved the Senate.

MR. DOLE: We didn’t grow up in a rich family or a family interested in politics. We were taught the work ethic of our parents. And we did a lot of things like mowing lawns for people and shoveling snow. It instilled in you a certain responsibility. I think it made me a better public servant.

MS. BURKE: They moved him to the basement of their home and rented up the upper portion of the home for a period of time. It, I think, brought to him a keen appreciation for the balance between the role government plays and the role individuals play.

MR. SMITH: The experience of going without, the experience of pedaling your bike just ahead of an oncoming dust storm, you know, those are defining experiences. And I think it gave him a very real empathy with have-nots.

SEN. INOUYE: He and I were infantry platoon leaders. He was wounded on April 14th, 1945, in northern Italy and just about two miles away from where I got wounded on April 21st, 1945. And we ended up in the same hospital.

MS. DOLE: When he was on the battlefield, as I understand it, he was there about eight hours, and he said his hands were above his head, and he wasn’t sure he had arms.

DR. FRIST: And Senator Dole felt a burning shrapnel hit in the back of his right shoulder. And with that, he had 39, almost 40 months of rehabilitation. And to me, as a doctor, that meant something.

MS. DOLE: For four years lying in a hospital bed after World War II, you know – I mean, you probably reach a point that you’re just relying on yourself and you’ve got to have the will and strength and – to make the comeback.

SEN. INOUYE: He should’ve complained. He never did. I asked him – when I was ready to leave the place, I asked him: Well, Bob, I’m going to be leaving, but what are your plans? Here he was all banged up. He says: I’m going to be county attorney. First opening in the state legislature, that’s
where I’ll go. First opening in Congress, that’s where I’ll go. And off to the Senate after that. He had his plan made right then.

MR. SMITH: The Bob Dole who came to Washington in 1961 was a faithful representative of his part of Kansas. He arrived in Washington a classic partisan. He outgrew the limitations of partisanship.

MR. DOLE: I was a consensus builder. I had as many friends on the Democratic side as I had on the Republican side. And it’s not because I was some kind of a genius, it’s just that I was willing to listen.

MS. DOLE: I have to say that one day I dropped in Bob’s office, and I walked in and here were four meetings going on in four rooms within his Capitol office. And Bob was presiding over all four. (Chuckles.)

MS. BURKE: There’d be one in my conference room, one in his conference room, possibly one in his office, one out in the reception area. And he’d go through and – you know, his common phrase was, “Work it out.”

MS. DOLE: And maybe you’re not coming out till you work it out. (Chuckles.)

MR. SIMPSON: He’d come in and say: Got it all settled haven’t you, gang? Well, it’s – it was settled – you might have, you know – and he’d just come in and do that cool approach, say; Glad you got it all done, guys. That’s great. We’d say: Get out of here, we’re not – he’s say: Well, get it done then. You know, I’m waiting. He had an impatience, but always tinged with kindness. But he was strong.

MS. DOLE: He was one of the seven lawmakers who was appointed to the National Commission on Social Security Reform. And they had hit a snag.

MR. DASCHLE: It involved decisions involving raising taxes on Social Security. It involved reducing benefits. It involved changing eligibility.

MR. DOLE: That’s not just politics. I remember my mother telling me: You know, don’t vote against Social Security. That’s all I have. And there were millions like my mother who had to live from month to month on Social Security.

MS. BURKE: So the challenge was, was there a solution that Democrats and Republicans could agree upon?
MR. DOLE: Senator Moynihan, a Democrat, a wonderful senator, and I got together, and we almost said at the same time: We can't fail, because there are 30 million seniors counting on us to produce. One by one, we were able to build a consensus for a compromise on Social Security.

MR. GLICKMAN: And so the classic case of what our framers had in mind in getting people together to work together, to reach a common solution to a very difficult problem.

MS. BURKE: I mean, one of the things that I think was dearest to him and a constant reminder was a cigar box that he kept in his desk. And it was the box that the people of Russell, Kansas, collected money for him when he was about to have surgery after the war. I mean, a lot of his work around disability was how did you give people the tools to allow them to get back to the workplace and allowed them to gain essentially the confidence and the self-respect.

MR. DASCHLE: The one particular legislative project that we will talk about a century from now is the Americans with Disabilities Act. Everybody thought it was an impossible mission.

MR. DOLE: Every year we had talked about it. In fact, every April 14th I’d make a speech on the Senate floor about people with disabilities.

MR. MITCHELL: At the time, it was very controversial. It was very strongly opposed.

MR. DOLE: We were like bulldogs. We weren't going to let it go. And we felt it was time for passage.

MR. DASCHLE: Now the disability community is not powerless. But compared to virtually any other constituency I can think of, they don’t have the resources. They didn’t have the people to articulate their positions. They didn’t have much going for them, but they had Bob Dole.

MR. SIMPSON: Keep a sense of humor. That’s what’s missing now. There’s no humor. Dole is a guy of rare good humor. He’s just who he was.

MR. THOMPSON: And he can defang people with perfect timing and with - with succinctness. He could - he could cut through almost anything with a comment or a look, you know, if he was in the mood to do that, that would just roll you over and totally disarm you.
MS. DOLE: And it comes, he says, from working in Dawson’s Drug Store in Russell, Kansas. The two Dawson brothers would sort of throw these one-liners back and forth all day.

BOB DOLE: I picked up a lot of – you know, often wisecracks in the drug store.

MR. DASCHLE: There were many people who said if he could have shown how quick-witted and how humorous he was on the campaign trail, he’d have been president in 1996. He has a wonderful line that he said. He used to have bumper stickers that say “Dole in ’96,” and he said most of the people thought Dole was 96. (Laughter.)

SEN./MR. : The able majority leader, Senator Dole of Kansas, is recognized.

MR. DOLE: I appreciate very much the resolution just passed. Will it be in big letters or neon or – (laughter) – I know it can’t have any political advertising on it, but – (laughter) – just to have the name out there in lights the next few months might be helpful. (Laughter.)

MR. LOTT: I never will forget the day that he left the Senate. It was – it was very emotional for all of the Senate.

MS. : Those of us on the staff at the time were surprised but not surprised that he made the decision.

MS. DOLE: But he felt he ought to give full time to the campaign and just give it his very best effort.

MS. : I remember thinking, sitting in the well at that point next to him, how remarkable as an institution it was and the extraordinary respect that members held, the fact that they all came to the floor, the fact that it was an emotional transition for all of them. And it was just hard to imagine what the next step was going to be. This is somebody who fundamentally beloved so deeply in public service. And that plays out in a variety of ways.

MS. DOLE: He has been, of course, very active in raising the funds with Fred Smith, the CEO of FedEx, $185 million to build the War War II Memorial.
SEN. INOUYE: He put in his heart and soul in the World War II Memorial.

MR. DASCHLE: It simply wouldn’t be there today were it not for the fact that Bob Dole, almost, at times, single-handedly, continued to press to get that accomplished in spite of extraordinary odds to the contrary.

SEN. INOUYE: He led the process. When the time came to put up a plaque and – you know, the rule says you got to do it, I said to hell with that rule. (Laughs.) Here’s the guy who built that.

MR. DASCHLE: He was very much of a generation who believed that at the end of the day you were judged by the electorate on what you delivered, and that meant what you got done. It meant what bills you wrote, what programs you created.

MR. DOLE: You do what is right, and if you fail, you fail. But you’ve got to have your heart into it. You can’t just be half-hearted approach. You’ve got to put it all on the table. And mistakes are high sometimes, and you better be good at counting votes or you’ll lose. And I didn’t like to lose.

(End video segment.)

(Applause.)

JASON GRUMET: Well, ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you with the welcome opportunity to impart three I think magnificent facts. The first is that I am the last tribute this evening. The second is that after I share a few thoughts, we will have the opportunity to hear from our honorees. And the third is that the (bars, the band and the room?) are paid for until 2:00 this morning, so (we hope?) – (laughter) – that some of you will stick around.

Like so many of you in this room, I am very proud of my association with Senators Baker and Dole, and deeply grateful to them for everything they’ve done for the Bipartisan Policy Center for the last five years, from the early days of designing the institution and launching it with Senators Mitchell and Daschle, to the advice that they continue to offer on our policy projects, to the simple esteem and grace that they bring to so many of our events. We could not have created this institution without you.

But more than, I think, any tangible gift, it has really simply been the opportunity to know Bob Dole and Howard Baker that has been the greatest
for us at the BPC. Being around the two of them simply makes you want to try harder. It forces you to listen a little closer. And it also really reminds you of the great opportunity that we all have to work with colleagues we care about on issues that are important to us.

Senator Dole has taught us to embrace the value of a good argument, not to settle for the thin compromise or the simple solution, but to really dig into the meat of an issue in the hopes that you can find a lasting solution that represents and reflects the best ideas of both parties. No matter what else is happening, Senator Baker always asks how we’re doing. And it’s not a simple throwaway line. He has helped us understand the importance of approaching every day and any problem with both resolve and optimism, and the insight that, you know, good humor is always a key to a good result. They have set the bar high for us and we are much the better for it.

When we first conceived of this event, each senator had two reservations. Fortunately, they were the same. The first was they didn’t want too much attention. The second was they didn’t just want to focus on the past. So Senators, I apologize for the attention. There was simply no way around it. (Laughter.) But I am happy to say a few words about the work we are doing together and the future.

In addition to his work with the Bipartisan Policy Center, Senator Dole represents a wide variety of clients at his firm Alston & Bird. He’s also a forceful recruiter of new clients. As some of you, I imagine, in this room are aware, he’s still a really hard guy to say no to. He is a tireless advocate for veterans and a stalwart supporter of the Honor Flight Network, which is just a terrific program which brings thousands of veterans from all over the country to Washington to see the World War II Memorial. He’s also made a hundred or more visits to greet these delegations and share the admiration we all have for their service.

Senator Dole is also continuing to work on pro bono cases for individuals with disabilities. And finally, he remains deeply engaged in politics. He is a sought-out adviser on issues that affect the inner workings of Washington. He plays a very active role at the Dole Center, where he has the courageous task of trying to restore the notion that politics is in fact a noble profession.

And he is, I think I would say, notoriously active in the Republican primary. I think that’s because he cares deeply about the party. And I think he also recognizes that if we have a brokered convention, they may
look to experience and he could be perfectly positioned – (laughter) – to lead the country once again.

Senator Baker is the senior partner, as you most know, at Baker Donelson. He is presently co-chairing, with our energy team, a project on nuclear fusion, along with the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. When he finds nuclear fusion to be a bit pedestrian, he moves over to the other project he’s working on at Oak Ridge, which is on supercomputing. He is co-chairing with Senator Bennett Johnston a panel on the National Parks Second Century Commission. I resent their gratuitous efforts to out-century us, but I believe it is a good cause nonetheless.

Senator Baker is a long-standing ally of the nation of Japan. He continues to work with them on the U.S.-Japan Roundtable on nuclear power. He is, of course, a driving force at the Baker Center. And finally, something I did not know, he is an artist. He photographs everything. And I am told that he takes great pleasure in showing friends and some strangers around his studio in Tennessee.

No matter what the tasks or challenges or opportunities, Senators Baker and Dole bring forward a charisma and a characteristic and a leadership that has really been unique to this country. As we think about the problems facing this country and we start to think about who may be those future leaders, the people who will bring that unique ability to unite a divided country around a common purpose. And one thing that I think we are sure of is these folks are going to have to be Baker-Dole good.

So with the active support of our friends and majority leaders, Senators Baker, Dole, Daschle, Mitchell, Frist and Lott, we are very proud today to announce the Baker-Dole Fellowship Program. This program is going to provide an opportunity for talented individuals from around the country to come work with us for a year at the Bipartisan Policy Center on issues of importance to the senators, to themselves and to the nation. It’s also going to provide, we hope, a terrific chance for these leaders to test their own abilities and wrestle with the opportunities to serve the public.

More information about this fellowship is probably hanging around here somewhere. If any of you are personally interested in applying or eager to help out a future leader, the application deadline is in September, and I’m sure that more information is available on our website.
And now it is truly my great pleasure and my honor to recognize the honorees tonight who we’ve all come to see, Senators Baker and Dole, for their century of service to this country.

Senators, thank you. (Applause.)

HOWARD BAKER: Bob Dole, may I thank you for giving me the opportunity to share this honor with you. I have long admired you, I continue to, and I’m pleased to be here tonight with you.

There are enormous events that have occurred since you and I, we had talked about national issues and local issues. But you’ve never, ever, to my knowledge, failed to consider (different perspective ?) as you (consider ?) them in terms of their real relevance and importance.

I was pleased that Lamar Alexander remembered the remarks – (inaudible) – I enjoy the occasional luxury of unexpressed thoughts. (Laughter.) (At home I have ?) remembered that all along: It’s dangerous to a cause to say too much as to say too little.

But I want particularly to say that I acknowledge your achievements. I (have memorialized the remarks here that run several pages ?). (Laughter.) But I was also mindful – (inaudible) – other remarks that – (inaudible) – made. Actually, I spoke – (inaudible) – for a long time, and he pointed out that the attention span of a senator is measured by the willingness of the – of his – (inaudible) – to listen. Well, my friends, it’s the best traditions in the Senate.

And with highest regards for Bob Dole and for those who participated tonight and to this organization, may I say you make a great contribution to the future – (inaudible) – debate and thus to the future course and direction of the country.

But to spare you the details of these remarks, having enjoyed all of them so far, in the best traditions of the Senate, if the vice president is still here – (laughter) – I ask unanimous consent that my remarks be included in the record – (laughter, inaudible). (Applause.)

MR. DOLE: Next. (Laughter.)

Jason, thank you very much. Thanks for your efforts and the efforts of your staff. You’ve done an outstanding job in the past five years. And Howard and I are very proud, and Nancy and Elizabeth are all very proud to
have some association with you and with your wonderful staff and all the
good things you’re doing.

And Howard and I come from a school where we believe and still believe that some of the tough issues can be resolved if you can find people that you can trust on both sides of the aisle. And I think that is the bottom line. If you don’t trust your counterpart, you’re probably not going to be very successful.

But I want to say about Howard Baker, you know, I came to Congress, and my parents weren’t involved in politics, and it was – you know, my dad was a working man who wore his overalls to work every day and was proud of it. But once I got a taste of it, I ran for the state legislature and then the county attorney, and then Congress, and then in ’68, the Senate. It’s been a great experience, and I learned a great deal about people, and I learned a lot about America and about what’s good about America.

I don’t believe there’s any problem that cannot be solved if you have willing men and women come together. It may not be easy, it may not be possible, but in some cases it’s necessary. It was mentioned about Social Security. Had we not acted – and actually, Pat Moynihan was the driving force; I was just his – (inaudible) – and had we not been able to bring the committee back together, I’m not certain what saved Social Security at the end of the day. But we predicted Social Security would last until – I think – (inaudible) – say, but – (laughter) – well into this century. And that means that 30-some million American will get their check on time. And again, as my mother used to say, that may be all that millions of people have to live on, and they want to continued, and they want it on time.

So, you know, we’ve had so many possibilities. Howard was a great leader, and he was sort of my mentor. And I was a bit surprised when he left the Senate after four years, but he did so for a good reason, that he wanted to go to Tennessee and make a little money. (Laughter.) And I stayed in the Senate a while, and then I leave to try to make a little money.

But one thing that was said tonight is true. Once you leave politics, your approval rating goes straight up. (Laughter.) And people write you letters saying, I never liked you, you so and so while you were in the Senate, but now I think you’re a pretty good guy. (Laughter.) And please send me an autographed picture – (laughter) – of Elizabeth. (Laughter, applause.) Oh, God. We have a lot of photos that – I’ve got a lot of mine, but there’s not many left of Elizabeth. (Laughter.) So if you need any or want any or just like to have one lying around, just call my office. (Laughter.)
So I speak for my colleague Nancy. We thought we had a pretty good thing going in our relationship in the Senate. We believed that most issues could be resolved. And I learned from her, and I learned from Elizabeth, who’s like a bulldog when she gets hold of an issue – (laughter). I mean, she works night and day, and did in the Cabinet post she held and done an outstanding job. So my time is not up. I still have about 45 minutes. (Laughter.) But Howard keeps saying stop. (Laughter.) So I’m going to stop and thank you all for coming. And I wanted to particularly thank – I know he’s not here – Joe Biden for speaking, and speaking at a – you know, a fairly limited time. (Laughter, applause.) Thank you and good night. (Laughter, applause.)

OK. Are we done?

MR. : So please stick around, everybody. Thanks for coming.

(END)

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