

1996 Speeches

MARCH

03/16 NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, KEARNEY

APRIL

04/15 MID-AMERICA CONFERENCE ON AGING, OMAHA

MAY

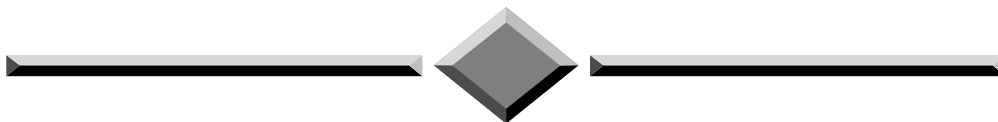
05/19 DOANE COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS, CRET

JUNE

06/29 NEBRASKA AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT CONV

OCTOBER

10/18 NEBRASKA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION SALUTE TO



SPEECH BY
SENATOR J. JAMES EXON (D-NE)
AT THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
WEST CENTRAL REGION
SPRING RIVER CONFERENCE
KEARNEY, NEBRASKA
MARCH 16, 1996

I APPRECIATE YOUR KIND WELCOME
AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITH YOU
HERE TONIGHT. PAT AND I HAVE HAD A
WONDERFUL VISIT TO THE RIVER. IT
DOES A SOUL GOOD TO GET OUT TO A
BLIND AND WATCH THIS INCREDIBLE
SPECTACLE OF NATURE.

OVER MILLIONS OF MILES AND
THOUSANDS OF YEARS, THESE AMAZING
CREATURES HAVE PERSEVERED. YEAR
AFTER YEAR AFTER YEAR THEY SHOW UP
ON OUR DOORSTEP AS TRAVELERS IN
NEED OF A BREAK --- A CHANCE TO
REPLENISH THEIR STRENGTH BEFORE
MOVING ON.

WHAT A THRILL IT IS..... A CHANCE
TO SEE THEIR MAJESTIC MOVEMENTS
AND HEAR THE WIND IN THEIR WINGS
AND THEIR OVERWHELMING BANTER ---

TO KNOW THAT THIS MIGRATION IS A
MAGNIFICENT THING. I PREDICT THEY
WILL BE AROUND LONGER THAN EVEN
RON KATSKE OR OUR OWN FRED
THOMAS. PAT AND I HAVE BEEN ALWAYS
INSPIRED BY HIS WRITINGS.

THERE IS MUCH WE COULD DISCUSS
TONIGHT. BUT BEFORE WE GET INTO
THE MEAT OF THE ISSUES, I WANT TO BE
MORE PHILOSOPHIC FOR A MOMENT. AS
MOST OF YOU ALREADY KNOW, I WILL BE
RETIRING FROM THE SENATE AT THE END

OF THIS TERM. PUBLIC SERVICE, FOR ME, WITH PAT'S PATIENCE, HELP AND UNDERSTANDING, HAS BEEN FULFILLING IN WAYS I CANNOT COMPLETELY EXPLAIN. NEBRASKANS HAVE BEEN GOOD TO ME. AND I HAVE SOUGHT TO REPAY THEIR TRUST AND CONFIDENCE WITH HARD WORK AND COMMON SENSE. THIS WORK HORSE EXPECTS TO CONTINUE THAT APPROACH RIGHT UP TO THE VERY END. AND GOODNESS KNOWS THAT, WITH THIS CONGRESS, IT'S GOING TO TAKE LOTS OF HARD WORK AND

COMMON SENSE.

I WOULD ALSO SHARE WITH YOU THE FACT THAT I CONSIDER SOME OF "OUR" ISSUES AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT I HAVE WORKED ON FOR 18 YEARS IN THE SENATE, AND BEFORE THAT 8 YEARS AS GOVERNOR. THE PLATTE RIVER IS A MAGNIFICENT RESOURCE AS WE ALL KNOW. AND THE NIOBRARA TO OUR NORTH IS A CROWN JEWEL OF A DIFFERENT SORT. THESE RESOURCES DESERVE OUR RESPECT AND ATTENTION

AND ABIDING CARE. WE MUST FIND
WAYS TO BALANCE OUR NEEDS AND
ENSURE THAT THESE NATURAL
WONDERS CAN BE PASSED ON
UNDIMINISHED TO FUTURE
GENERATIONS.

NOW THERE ARE LOTS AND LOTS OF
PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON WHO PRESUME
TO SPEAK FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. I
DO IT MYSELF ON OCCASION. BUT
SOMETIMES I HAVE TO WONDER HOW
FAR AHEAD SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE

REALLY THINKING. ARE THEY REALLY
THINKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT
GENERATION, OR ARE THEY SIMPLY
THINKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT
ELECTION CYCLE? TIME WILL TELL.

AS MOST OF YOU KNOW, 1995
BROUGHT SOME DRAMATIC CHANGES TO
THE POWER STRUCTURE IN
WASHINGTON. SPEAKER GINGRICH AND
HIS BAND OF UNHAPPY WARRIORS
SWEPT ONTO THE SCENE WITH LIGHTS
FLASHING AND SIRENS SOUNDING. THEIR

RALLYING POINT WAS SOMETHING CALLED THE "CONTRACT WITH AMERICA". SOME OF US CALLED IT THE "CONTRACT ON AMERICA". WHATEVER YOU CALL IT, ONE HAD TO ADMIT THAT IT HAD SOME GOOD-SOUNDING THEMES. BUT THEMES CAN'T BE ENACTED INTO LAW. AND THEMES DON'T SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS. AND THEMES BY THEMSELVES DON'T BUILD A NATION OR PROTECT OUR CHILDREN OR CARE FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT. AS THE OLD ADAGE GOES, THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS.

AND IT IS THOSE "DETAILS" THAT
DESERVE OUR ATTENTION.

ONE "DETAIL" THAT WAS VERY
QUIETLY SLIPPED INTO THE FARM BILL IS
OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO THE
PLATTE RIVER. THIS "DETAIL" WAS
PORTRAYED AS AN AMENDMENT TO KEEP
THE FOREST SERVICE FROM USURPING
WATER RIGHTS FROM COLORADO
COMMUNITIES. BUT ITS EFFECT COULD
HAVE REPERCUSSIONS ON WATER
MANAGEMENT THROUGHOUT THE PLATTE

RIVER BASIN AND ON A HOST OF WATER BASINS THROUGHOUT THE NATION. WE ARE TRYING TO SHINE SOME LIGHT ON THIS "DETAIL". IN SHORT, IT WOULD DIMINISH THE FOREST SERVICE'S ABILITY TO MANAGE WATER IN THE ROCKIES. IT WOULD ALSO CHANGE THE DYNAMIC OF ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN COLORADO AND NEBRASKA AND WYOMING FOR A BASIN-WIDE APPROACH FOR PROTECTING THE PLATTE RIVER. IT IS YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF HOW DETAILS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE AND

THIS IS ONE THAT WE NEED TO WATCH
VERY CLOSELY.

I ALSO WANT TO GIVE YOU AN
UPDATE ON THE NIOBRARA RIVER. I
HAVE WORKED WITH SOME OF YOU FOR
A LONG, LONG TIME ON THIS TOPIC.
MORE THAN A DECADE AGO I
INTRODUCED THE FIRST BILL TO
PROTECT THE RIVER. AFTER FITS AND
STARTS THAT SOME OF US REMEMBER
ALL TOO WELL, THE NIOBRARA SCENIC
RIVER BILL WAS FINALLY ENACTED INTO

LAW. THANK YOU, AUDUBONER, FOR
YOUR KEY ROLL OF SUPPORT.

IT WAS A CAREFUL BALANCE OF
PROTECTION FOR THE RIVER AND
PROTECTION FOR LOCAL LANDOWNERS.
OUR GOAL WAS TO FIND A WAY THAT
LOCAL PEOPLE, IN COOPERATION WITH
THE STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT,
COULD PRESERVE THIS AMAZING RIVER.

LOTS OF PEOPLE HAVE SINCE BEEN
WORKING ON THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR THE RIVER. LATER THIS MONTH,
THAT PLAN WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR
PUBLIC COMMENT. AFTER THAT, THE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WILL ISSUE A
“RECORD OF DECISION” WHICH WILL
BRING THIS PROCESS FULL CIRCLE.
THAT ACTION WILL FINALIZE THE
DESIGNATION AND SET FORTH THE
FRAMEWORK SO THAT THIS “CROWN
JEWEL” CAN BE PASSED ON TO FUTURE
GENERATIONS. IT HAS BEEN AN
ARDUOUS JOURNEY BESET WITH
CONTROVERSY. BUT A DECADE FROM

NOW AND THE DECADES THAT FOLLOW
ALL WILL CELEBRATE IN THE KNOWLEDGE
THAT OUR WORK MADE THE DIFFERENCE.
FIRM IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT
OPPOSING CAMPS CAN WORK TOGETHER
FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

AND SPEAKING OF THE COMMON
GOOD, LET ME REKINDLE YOUR INTEREST
IN ONE OF THE TRULY AWESOME
THREATS TO THE ENVIRONMENT THAT
HAS ONLY BEGUN TO BE FULLY
ADDRESSED. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT I

HAVE, OFTEN TIMES ALMOST SINGLE
HANDEDLY IT SEEMED, DEVOTED A
GREAT DEAL OF TIME, ENERGY AND
LEADERSHIP TO WITHOUT FANFARE. IT'S
A PROBLEM OF THE FINANCIAL
MAGNITUDE OF \$500 BILLION.

I AM NOT SURE WHO WILL FOLLOW ME
IN THIS EFFORT SINCE MY CLOSE CO-
WORKER AND FRIEND IN THIS REGARD,
SENATOR MARK HATFIELD OF OREGON,
IS ALSO RETIRING. MAYBE IT WILL BE MY
CLOSE ASSOCIATE SENATOR CARL LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN WHO HAS SAT ADJACENT
TO ME FOR 18 YEARS ON THE ARMED
SERVICES COMMITTEE. HE IS RUNNING
FOR REELECTION AGAINST A
MILLIONAIRE REPUBLICAN. OR MAYBE
OUR OWN BEN NELSON WHO I HAVE FULL
CONFIDENCE IN AND IS ALL BUT CERTAIN
TO TAKE MY SEAT ON THE COMMITTEE.

IF YOU HAVE NOT GUESSED, I AM
TALKING ABOUT MILITARY NUCLEAR
WASTE, PRIMARILY IN THE FORMER
SOVIET UNION AND RIGHT HERE IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. IN
SCHLEBUNTZ 65, IN THE INTERLAND OF
RUSSIA, THE LOCATION OF THE
INFAMOUS "ATOMIC LAKE", AT
CHERENOBLE IN UKRAIN, IN KAZACKSTAN
AND MANY OTHER SITES.

IN OUR COUNTRY AT ROCKY FLATS IN
COLORADO AND AT OUR PANTEX PLANT
IN AMARILLO, TEXAS AND AT HANFORD
ON WASHINGTON STATE TO MENTION
ONLY THREE AT RANDOM. MILITARY
WASTE IS SO AWESOME AND

DANGEROUS THAT, AS MUCH AS A
SERIOUS ISSUE CIVILIAN WASTE OF A
LOW-LEVEL VARIETY MAY BE IN BOYD
COUNTY IN NEBRASKA, THE PROPOSED
LOCATION FOR DISPOSITION OF SUCH
MATERIAL, THAT FACILITY, BY
COMPARISON, IS A SAFE CHILD PLAY PEN,
COMPARED WITH THE WORLDS HIGH
LEATHAL MILITARY NUCLEAR WASTE.
WHILE A MAJOR ACCIDENT IN THE
IMMEDIATE FUTURE AT ROCKY FLATS,
FOR EXAMPLE, IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY ITS
NOT IMPOSSIBLE SUCH A DISASTER, OF

MAJOR PROPORTIONS COULD LEAVE
DENVER DESERTED AND SINCE ITS IN
THE PLATTE RIVER WATESHED COULD
HAVE THE POTENTIAL OF FOREVER
SOLVING ANY FURTHER CONCERNS
ABOUT THE HABITANT OF THE WHOOPING
CRANE. AT LEAST IT WOULD MAKE MUTE
THE QUESTIONS OF RELEASES FROM
MCCOUGHNEY. ROCKY FLATS IS NO BIRD
WATCHERS PARADISE!

HOW SERIOUS IS ALL OF THIS? VERY
SERIOUS.

I WISH YOU ALL COULD HAVE BEEN WITH ME WHEN I LED A SENATE DELEGATION MORE THAN ONCE TO RUSSIA. A FRIENDSHIP I HAVE REALIZED OVER TIME WITH DR. VICTOR MAKALIHOV, THE PREMIER RUSSIAN NUCLEAR SCIENTIST AND FOR YEARS THE RUSSIAN ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION, PAID OFF. HE ARRANGED, OVER OBJECTIONS FROM THE MILITARY, FOR OUR DELEGATION TO VISIT THE HIGHLY SECRET RUSSIAN NUCLEAR CITY OF SCHLEBENTZ 65, WHICH IS SURROUNDED BY A WALL AND

BARBED WIRE. IT WAS AMAZING AND SCARY. HERE, IN A BUILDING THE SIZE OF THREE BASKETBALL ARENAS. WE STOOD ON SLATTED STEEL FLOORING AND PEERED TWENTY-FEET DOWN INTO THOUSANDS OF GALLONS OF WATER MIXED FOR "SAFEKEEPING" WITH PLUTONIUM AND URANIUM. IT WAS A SOBERING EXPERIENCE TO SEE THAT CAVERNOUS POOL. ITS MORE SOBERING TO REALIZE THIS POOL IS ONLY ONE OF MANY.

LIKEWISE I WISH THAT YOU COULD
HAVE BEEN WITH ME WHEN I LED TWO
SENATE DELEGATIONS TO OUR HIGH
CLASSIFIED NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY
NORTH OF LAS VEGAS. OVER THE YEARS
WE HAVE SET OFF THOUSANDS OF
MOSTLY UNDERGROUND "TESTS". WHEN
YOU FLY OVER IT IN A CHOPPER YOU GET
THE IMPRESSION THAT THIS ENTIRE 50
SQUARE MILE AREA OF OUR EARTH HAD
A HORRIBLE DOSE OF SMALL POX. MORE
MOUNDS THAT THE EYE COULD COUNT.

SUDAN CRATER

I AM NOT A PACIFIST AND GENERALLY
VIEWED AS A "HAWK" BUT I HAVE LED
THE FIGHT AGAINST NUCLEAR TESTING.
THANK GOD FOR BILL CLINTON, ^{let's} HOPE
NEBRASKA AND AMERICA ARE LISTENING.

AS WE LEAVE HERE TONIGHT, I HOPE
ALL OF US ARE MOVED BY WHAT WE
HAVE SEEN AND HEARD DURING THIS
CONFERENCE --- NOT ONLY IN OUR
MEETINGS AND SPEECHES, BUT ALSO IN
THOSE QUIET TIMES AND

CONTEMPLATIVE MOMENTS OUTDOORS.
IT IS THEN THAT WE RECOGNIZE WHAT
A SOLEMN DUTY IT IS TO BE GOOD
STEWARDS OF GOD'S MAGNIFICENT
CREATION. WE HAVE TO THINK
CRITICALLY AND ACT WITH COMPASSION
AND LOGIC. AND TO BE GOOD
STEWARDS, WE HAVE TO PAY ATTENTION
TO THE DETAILS.

THERE WILL BE POLITICIANS AND
PUBLIC SERVANTS OF EVERY STRIPE
VYING FOR YOUR ATTENTION IN THE

MONTHS TO COME. ENVIRONMENTALIST
HAVE POLITICAL MUSCLE. SOMETIMES IT
IS DIFFICULT TO SORT THROUGH THE
SOUND AND THE FURY. IT CAN BE
DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE THE WHEAT
FROM THE CHAFF IN PROMISES TO
PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT. BUT WE
OWE IT TO OURSELVES AND OUR
CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN TO DO
NO LESS THAN THAT.

BEFORE I CLOSE THIS EVENING, I
WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO

THANK EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU,
AND YOUR LEADERSHIP, FOR YOUR MANY
YEARS OF DEDICATED EFFORT, VISION
AND SUPPORT OF ME AND MY EFFORTS.
TOGETHER WE HAVE ACHIEVED SOME
PERMANENT AND SIGNIFICANT
ACCOMPLISHMENTS ON BEHALF OF
FUTURE GENERATIONS. WE HAVE MUCH
MORE TO DO.

SO, AS I MAKE MY EXIT FROM THE
SENATE, I SALUTE YOU AND LOOK BACK
ON TWO AND A HALF EXCITING AND

FULFILLING DECADES OF SERVICE TO
NEBRASKANS AND THE NATION. AND I
LOOK TO THE FUTURE WITH THE HOPE
THAT ALL OF US WILL REDOUBLE OUR
EFFORTS TO PROTECT THAT WHICH IS
THE BEST IN US AND MANKIND AS A
WHOLE.

GOD BLESS AND GOD KEEP! THANK
YOU!

SPEECH BY
SENATOR J. JAMES EXON (D-NE)
TO
MID AMERICA CONFERENCE ON AGING
OMAHA, NEBRASKA
MONDAY, APRIL 15, 1996

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO SPEAK BEFORE YOU TODAY. I WISH THAT I COULD TELL YOU THE NEWS IN CONGRESS IS GOOD. UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS TROUBLING, AND WE ARE BATTLING HARD JUST TO STAY AFLOAT.

A STORY IN THE MORNING PAPER SAYS SENATOR DOLE IS PREPARED TO REDUCE, WHATEVER THAT MEANS, LAST YEAR'S

REPUBLICAN "HIT" ON MEDICARE. IT'S AN
ELECTION YEAR.

LAST YEAR, WE WERE CONCERNED
ABOUT THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE
MEDICARE PROGRAM WHICH THREATENED
OUR SENIORS ESPECIALLY IN RURAL STATES.
IN CLAIMING TO SAVE THE MEDICARE
SYSTEM, SOME IN WASHINGTON WERE
TRYING TO MAKE CHANGES WITHOUT
EXPOSING IT TO THE LIGHT OF DAY. VERY
FEW IF ANY HEARINGS WERE HELD TO
DETERMINE HOW THE PROPOSED CHANGES

WOULD ACTUALLY AFFECT SENIORS OR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS. THE REPUBLICAN MAJORITY PUT MEDICARE ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK TO HELP PAY FOR A \$245 BILLION TAX BREAK PRIMARILY FOR THE WEALTHIEST AMERICANS. THE PROPOSED REDUCTIONS IN MEDICARE WERE REAL. THEY WOULD HAVE CREATED REAL REDUCTIONS IN SERVICE, AND REAL INCREASES IN OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES.

THE REPUBLICAN PROPOSAL WOULD HAVE CUT \$270 BILLION FROM FUTURE

MEDICARE REQUIREMENTS WHILE IGNORING THE REAL REASON FOR INCREASING COSTS -- THE SKYROCKETING COSTS OF HEALTH CARE TO ALL AMERICANS, ESPECIALLY SENIORS. IF WE WERE TO GET A HANDLE ON THE RISING COSTS OF HEALTH CARE, THE RISING COSTS OF MEDICARE WOULD ALSO SLOW. NOT TO MENTION HELPING TO ACHIEVE ADDITIONAL DEFICIT REDUCTION.

THOSE WISHING TO UNFAIRLY SLASH MEDICARE ARE MARCHING UNDER THE BANNER OF INCREASED CHOICE. I CALL IT

COERCION!! COERCION IS NOT CHOICE, AND CHOICE IS NOT BULLYING OUR SENIORS INTO SUBMISSION. AND WE WILL NOT BE BULLIED! THE ONLY CHOICE IN THE REPUBLICAN PLAN IS THAT YOU WILL PAY MORE OR GET LESS. UNDER THE REPUBLICAN "VOUCHER" IDEA THEY KEEP TOUTING, BENEFICIARIES WHO WISH TO KEEP THEIR FEE-FOR-SERVICE PLAN AND THEIR OWN DOCTORS WILL HAVE TO PAY MORE IN COPAYMENTS AND DEDUCTIBLES. CHOICE IS FINE IN THE URBAN AREAS WHERE SENIORS REALLY DO HAVE A CHOICE BETWEEN MANAGED CARE AND FEE-FOR-

SERVICE. WHAT ABOUT SENIORS IN RURAL AREAS? WHERE IS THEIR CHOICE? THEIR ONLY CHOICE IS TO PAY MORE FOR FEE-FOR-SERVICE PLANS, BECAUSE LITTLE OR NO MANAGED CARE EXISTS.

HOW CAN RURAL HOSPITALS SURVIVE ON SUBSTANTIALLY LESS MEDICARE PAYMENTS? WHEN ANYWHERE BETWEEN 50 TO 80 PERCENT OF THEIR PATIENTS RELY ON MEDICARE FOR THEIR HEALTH INSURANCE. MOST OF THESE HOSPITALS ARE TEETERING ON THE EDGE NOW. MANY COULD CLOSE.

WHERE WILL THE CHOICE BE FOR THOSE
RURAL RESIDENTS? THE REPUBLICAN
PROPOSAL IS CLEARLY A DAGGER AIMED
ESPECIALLY AT RURAL HOSPITALS WHO
DISPROPORTIONALLY SERVE SENIORS.

I'M CONCERNED THAT WE AMERICANS
HAVE A VERY SHORT MEMORY. WE FORGET
WHY PROGRAMS LIKE MEDICARE AND
MEDICAID WERE CREATED. WHY DID WE
CREATE PROGRAMS LIKE THE OLDER
AMERICANS ACT? THE REASONS ARE THAT
SIGNIFICANT PORTIONS OF OUR POPULATION

WERE NOT HAVING THEIR BASIC NEEDS MET. THE ELDERLY COULD NOT GET HEALTH INSURANCE, THEY WERE GOING INTO NURSING HOMES BEFORE IT WAS REALLY NECESSARY AND FAMILIES WHO WERE STRUGGLING TO HELP SICK PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS SOMETIMES DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH MONEY FOR FOOD AND SHELTER. THE WORST OF THESE HORROR STORIES HAVE GONE BY THE WAYSIDE AND WE MUST NOT RETURN TO THOSE DARK DAYS. MANY OF THESE PROGRAMS ARE THERE TO MAKE SURE THAT BASIC NEEDS ARE BEING MET.

YES, REASONABLE AND RESPONSIBLE AND FAIR CHANGES COULD AND SHOULD BE MADE TO MEDICARE. I COULD SUPPORT THAT BECAUSE OF THE NEED TO BALANCE THE FEDERAL BUDGET WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME. A \$5 TRILLION NATIONAL DEBT IS A DISGRACE. BUT SOME OF THE PROPOSALS WHICH PASSED THE HOUSE AND SENATE FAILED THE "REASONABLE" SMELL TEST. INSTEAD, THEY REEKED OF THE ROT OF SELFISHNESS. THANK GOD FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL VETO WHICH STOPPED THIS ANTI-SENIORS EXPRESS TRAIN DEAD IN ITS

TRACKS.

I PROMISE TO KEEP DOING MY BEST AS THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER ON THE BUDGET COMMITTEE. BUT REMEMBER WE ARE NOT THE ELECTED MAJORITY. WE MUST NOT TURN BACK THE CLOCK ON THE MEDICARE PROGRAM AND ON THOSE PROGRAMS WHICH HAVE REALLY SERVED TO KEEP OUR CHILDREN, SENIORS AND FAMILIES HEALTHY.

LET ME BRING YOU UP-TO-DATE ON OTHER RECENT ACTIONS IN THE SENATE.

WE HAVE FINALLY BEEN ABLE TO PASS
LEGISLATION TO INCREASE THE CAP ON THE
EARNINGS TEST FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
RECIPIENTS WHO ARE AGE 65-69.
CURRENTLY THE CAP THAT SOCIAL SECURITY
RECIPIENTS CAN EARN IS \$11,520 PER YEAR
WITHOUT HAVING THEIR SOCIAL SECURITY
BENEFITS REDUCED. SOCIAL SECURITY
BENEFITS ARE REDUCED \$1 DOLLAR FOR
EVERY \$3 DOLLARS EARNED IN EXCESS OF
THE CAP. THAT CAP WILL NOW INCREASE TO
\$30,000 BY THE YEAR 2002. TOO MANY OF
OUR SENIORS MUST WORK TO MAKE ENDS

MEET. I HAVE LONG SUPPORTED EFFORTS
TO INCREASE THE CAP AND AM PLEASED
THAT THIS CHANGE IS NOW THE LAW OF THE
LAND.

THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT MAY BE
CONSIDERED BY THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR
AND HUMAN RESOURCES THIS WEEK. ITEMS
INCLUDED IN THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT
ARE MEALS ON WHEELS, SENIOR
EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS LIKE GREEN
THUMB, AND ELDER RIGHTS PROTECTION
PROGRAMS.

PROPOSED CHANGES INCLUDE BLOCK GRANTING THE MONEY TO THE STATES SO THAT THEY CAN RUN THE PROGRAMS. MEALS ON WHEELS MAY BE SUBJECT TO A SORT OF MEANS TESTING WHERE WEALTHIER SENIORS WOULD HAVE TO CONTRIBUTE MORE TO THE COST OF THEIR MEAL. I THINK THIS A REASONABLE PROPOSAL. LOWER INCOME SENIORS WOULD HAVE TO CONTRIBUTE LESS, BUT ALL WHO NEED THEM WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO RECEIVE THEIR MEALS. ADDITIONALLY, PROGRAMS LIKE GREEN THUMB WOULD NOW HAVE TO

COMPETE AT THE STATE LEVEL TO PROVIDE SERVICES.

I WILL BE CAREFULLY FOLLOWING WHAT THE LABOR COMMITTEE DOES IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. I AM NOT OPPOSED TO CHANGE, BUT WE NEED TO BE VERY CAREFUL THAT PROGRAMS UNDER THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT CONTINUE TO SERVE SENIORS. THESE HAVE BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN KEEPING SENIORS AT HOME A LITTLE LONGER, PROVIDING THEM WITH EMPLOYMENT WHEN NEEDED,

INFORMATIONAL SERVICES, ELDER RIGHTS PROTECTIONS, AND MANY, MANY OTHER BENEFITS.

WE CAN'T KEEP PICKING ON THOSE WHO HAVE THE HARDEST TIMES FIGHTING FOR THEMSELVES LIKE THE ELDERLY, CHILDREN AND THE DISABLED. IF THE GOVERNMENT DOESN'T PROTECT THEM, WHO WILL?

I'M SURE THAT IDEAS WILL CONTINUE TO BE PUT FORWARD ON HOW WE CAN CHANGE THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM SO THAT IT

REMAINS STRONG FOR THE RETIREMENT OF THE BABY BOOMERS AND BEYOND. THE SAME IS TRUE FOR THE MEDICARE PROGRAM. LET'S HOPE THAT THE MAJORITY IN CONGRESS WILL ALLOW FOR A THOROUGH AND PUBLIC AIRING OF THESE IDEAS. I HOPE THAT WE CAN WORK ON A BIPARTISAN BASIS TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR INVITING ME HERE TODAY AND TO SPEND A FEW MOMENTS WITH YOU. AS I CONCLUDE OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY OF SERVICE TO NEBRASKANS AND

THE NATION IN PUBLIC OFFICE, I WANT TO EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION TO ALL OF YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OVER THESE MANY YEARS. IT HAS BEEN MY HIGH PRIVILEGE TO SERVE AND REPRESENT YOU. THE BEST PART OF PUBLIC SERVICE IS THE PEOPLE YOU GET TO MEET AND HELP. GOD BLESS YOU ALL. KEEP THE FAITH!

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
BY
U.S. SENATOR J. JAMES EXON (D-NE)
DOANE COLLEGE
CRETE, NEBRASKA
MAY 19, 1996

REVEREND COLEMAN, PRESIDENT
BROWN, DR. PEGGY WAY, MY FRIEND OF
MANY YEARS, CHAIRMAN TAYLOR GREER,
AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF
TRUSTEES, FACULTY, STUDENTS, FAMILY AND
GRADUATES, WHOM WE HONOR FOR THEIR
SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, LADIES
AND GENTLEMEN.

IT IS A GREAT HONOR FOR ME AND MY WIFE, PAT (NEBRASKA'S FORMER GRACIOUS FIRST LADY), TO BE WITH YOU TODAY TO HELP SALUTE AND CELEBRATE THE GRADUATION OF THESE FINE STUDENTS FROM THE CRETE AND LINCOLN CAMPUSES OF DOANE COLLEGE.

FIRST LET ME TELL YOU THAT I KNOW IT IS HOT UNDER THESE CAPS AND GOWNS AND THAT ALL CAME HERE NOT TO HEAR ME BUT TO "GET ON" WITH THE DIPLOMA GRANTING. THIS MAY NOT BE THE GREATEST COMMENCEMENT SPEECH YOU HAVE EVER

BEEN BORED WITH BUT IT WILL BE THE
SHORTEST.

AS YOU KNOW, THIS COLLEGE HAS A RICH
HISTORY IN ACADEMICS AND ATHLETICS. IN
FACT, DOANE COLLEGE CAN EVEN BRAG
ABOUT BEATING THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEBRASKA IN FOOTBALL. BACK IN '91, '92
AND '94, DOANE DEFEATED THE UNIVERSITY
OF NEBRASKA BIG REDS. OF COURSE THIS
WAS IN 1891, 1892 AND 1894, BUT LETS NOT
GET BURDENED DOWN WITH DETAILS AND
DATES. THE POINT IS THAT DOANE IS A
PROVEN WINNER AS ARE ITS GRADUATES.

NEBRASKA HAS DONE WELL IN THE 20TH CENTURY AND HAS AN EVEN BRIGHTER PROMISE FOR YOUR CENTURY, THE 21ST, NOT JUST FOR YOU BUT YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR GRANDCHILDREN WHO WILL FOLLOW. ONE OF MY HIGHEST PRIORITIES AS A UNITED STATES SENATOR HAS BEEN EDUCATION, SUPPORTING PROGRAMS THAT ASK THE MOST OF OUR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS AND SUPPORTING THE ABILITY TO LEARN. HIGHER EDUCATION MUST REMAIN STRONG AND ACCESSIBLE TO ANYONE WHO WANTS TO ATTEND. AS THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER ON THE SENATE

BUDGET COMMITTEE, I REPORT THAT WE
FOUGHT LAST WEEK AGAIN FOR EDUCATION
AND WILL BE AT IT AGAIN TOMORROW
MORNING AT 10:30 ON THE SENATE FLOOR.
AS A FISCAL CONSERVATIVE OF SOME
RENOWN I SEEK A BALANCED BUDGET BUT
NOT AT THE UNFAIR EXPENSE OF
EDUCATION. WE MUST FIGHT FOR AMERICA'S
FUTURE BECAUSE WITHOUT A DOUBT
EDUCATION REPRESENTS THE SEED CORN
OF THE NEXT GENERATION AND THOSE
GENERATIONS TO FOLLOW TO ASSURE
LEADERSHIP. IN THE LONG TERM EDUCATION

IS A SOUND INVESTMENT NOT AN
UNNECESSARY EXPENDITURE.

I HOPE THAT AS GRADUATES OF DOANE
COLLEGE YOU TAKE WITH YOU THE ABILITY
TO LEARN AND COMPROMISE. THE ANSWERS
TO COMPLEX PROBLEMS CANNOT BE FOUND
IN TELEVISION SOUND BITES. IN FACT, ONE
OF THE FEW REGRETS I HAVE AS I LEAVE THE
SENATE THIS YEAR IS THE EVER-INCREASING
VICIOUS POLARIZATION OF THE ELECTORATE
THAT HAS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE
COUNTRY. THE US AGAINST THEM
MENTALITY. THE TRADITIONAL ART OF

WORKABLE COMPROMISES IS BEING LOST.
THAT IS THE ESSENCE OF DEMOCRACY.
LEADING IS NOT A MATTER OF SHUTTING OUT
PEOPLE AND THEIR IDEAS. BUT RATHER
LEADERSHIP IS ASKING THEM TO FOLLOW BY
TAKING THEIR CONCERNS AND EXPERTISE
INTO ACCOUNT. LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT
WINNER TAKE ALL AND IT IS NOT ABOUT
ALWAYS TAKING CREDIT. RATHER
LEADERSHIP IS BRINGING THE BEST OUT IN
PEOPLE AND MARSHALING THEIR TALENTS
FOR A COMMON PURPOSE, A COMMON GOOD.
THIS IS TRUE NOT JUST IN POLITICS BUT IN
EVERY IMAGINABLE ENDEAVOR.

AS YOU PROCEED WITH THE CAREERS OF YOUR CHOICE, EVEN WITH YOUR FRESH AND EXCITING PERSPECTIVES, I ASK YOU TO PONDER AND BE THANKFUL FOR THOSE WHO HAVE HELPED YOU ALONG THE WAY.

YOUR GRANDPARENTS AND THEIR GENERATION BATTLED AND LICKED THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND BEAT BACK THE WORST ENEMIES OUR COUNTRY EVER FACED IN WORLD WAR II. YOUR PARENTS AND THEIR GENERATION SURVIVED AMERICA'S SOCIAL TURMOIL AND AN UNPOPULAR WAR IN THE 1960s AND 1970s. TREMENDOUS SACRIFICES

HAVE BEEN MADE ON YOUR BEHALF--FROM PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS, SOME OF WHOM NEVER RETURNED FROM WAR, TO THOSE AT HOME WHO HAD TO WORK TWO OR MORE JOBS TO MAKE A FAMILY BUDGET WHOLE, SO CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN HAD WHAT THEY NEED TO GET A GOOD START ON LIFE.

I CONSIDER ONE OF MY MOST IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENT, AS YOUR SENATOR, WAS THE PART I PLAYED IN HELPING WIN THE COLD WAR, THE WAR WE WON WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT. WHILE IT IS RAPIDLY

BECOMING A DISTANT MEMORY, OUR EIGHT GRANDCHILDREN CALL IT THE "OLD DAYS". WHEN MANY OF YOU WERE BORN, THOUSANDS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS WERE AIMED AT ALL OF US AND WE WERE AIMING THOUSANDS OF OUR OWN NUCLEAR WEAPONS AT RUSSIAN NEWBORNS. THE ARMS RACE OF DEATH WAS ESCALATING AT FULL TILT.

FORTUNATELY, BECAUSE OF THE PERSEVERANCE AND SACRIFICE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THE SUPERIORITY OF OUR FREE MARKET DEMOCRACY, THAT

THREAT IS RECEDING. IT WILL BE UP TO YOU
TO NOW MAINTAIN THE PEACE THROUGH
STRENGTH AND HARD WORK. I WARN YOU....
TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED. WE STILL LIVE
IN A DANGEROUS WORLD.

WE ARE NOW IN A WORLD WHERE YOUNG
MEN AND WOMEN OF ALL RACES HAVE MORE
OPPORTUNITY THAN ANY PRECEDING
GENERATION. AS YOUR CELEBRATION
CONTINUES TODAY, TOMORROW AND THE
DAYS THAT FOLLOW, I ASK THAT YOU EACH
TAKE A MOMENT ONCE IN A WHILE TO THANK
ALL OF THOSE WHO GAVE SO MUCH AND ARE

HOPING AND PRAYING FOR YOUR SUCCESS IN
LIFE.

I ALSO ASK THAT YOU REMEMBER THE
THINGS IN LIFE WHICH ARE MOST
IMPORTANT. IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO
THINK OF WHAT YOUR LEGACY IN LIFE
SHOULD BE. A NEW CAR, A NEW HOUSE AND
ACQUIRING CREATURE COMFORTS HAVE
THEIR PLACE, BUT THERE IS SO MUCH MORE
TO LIFE. TAKE A MOMENT ONCE IN A WHILE
TO DO SOMETHING FOR OTHERS. FIND A
SENIOR CITIZEN IN A NURSING HOME TO
CHEER UP, OR SEEK OUT A CHILD IN NEED TO

NURTURE. THINK OF THOSE WORDS AND DEEDS WHICH INSPIRED YOU AND BECOME AN INSPIRING FORCE YOURSELF.

BE STRONG BUT COMPASSIONATE.
LISTEN BEFORE YOU ACT. NEVER BETRAY YOUR PRINCIPLES. LET HONESTY AND DOING THE RIGHT THING BE YOUR GUIDEPOSTS.
TRY TO REMEMBER THAT WE ARE ALL MORTAL BEFORE OUR GOD. RECALL THE TRUE MEANING OF LIFE AND WHY WE ARE ON THIS EARTH. HELP MAKE IT A BETTER PLACE.

I ASSURE YOU THAT YOU WILL FIND SUCH
A CREED OF LIFE TO BE THE MOST
REWARDING OF ALL.

FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, YOU WILL
HAVE MORE RESPONSIBILITY AND POTENTIAL
OF FULFILLMENT THAN YOU EVER DREAMED
OF ATTAINING. LIFE IS SHORTER THAN WE
THINK. I KNOW AND TRUST THAT YOU WILL
BE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL GRADUATES OF
AMERICANS EVER. THE FUTURE IS TRULY IN
YOUR HANDS WHETHER YOU ARE ABOUT TO
BEGIN YOUR LIFE'S CAREER OR ARE WELL
INTO IT.

I SALUTE YOU ALL AND THANK YOU FOR
THE HONOR OF BEING YOUR SPEAKER
TODAY. GOD BLESS EACH AND EVERY ONE
OF YOU, WITH PEACE, KNOWLEDGE AND
UNDERSTANDING.

KEYNOTE SPEECH
BY
U.S. SENATOR J. JAMES EXON
AT THE
ANNUAL DEPARTMENT CONVENTION
OF THE
NEBRASKA AMERICAN LEGION
GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA
JUNE 29TH, 1996

GOOD MORNING. I WANT TO RECOGNIZE
DEPARTMENT COMMANDER ROBERT ZERSON,
DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT BOB CRAIG AND ALL
THE LEGION MEMBERS WHO WORKED
TIRELESSLY TO ORGANIZE THIS YEAR'S 78TH
ANNUAL CONVENTION. YOUR HARD WORK
AND THE EFFORTS OF COUNTLESS
VOLUNTEERS HAS ONCE AGAIN RESULTED IN

AN IMPRESSIVE ASSEMBLY OF MEN AND
WOMEN WHO SERVED THEIR COUNTRY, MEN
AND WOMEN WHO LOVE THEIR COUNTRY,
AND MEN AND WOMEN DEDICATED TO
PRESERVING THE FREEDOM AND LIBERTIES
WE ENJOY AS A PEOPLE.

FOR THE PAST 18 YEARS, I HAVE
REPRESENTED THE PEOPLE OF THE GREAT
STATE OF NEBRASKA AND COME BEFORE
YOU AS A UNITED STATES SENATOR. BUT
FOR THE PAST HALF-CENTURY I HAVE COME
BEFORE YOU AS A BROTHER, A BROTHER IN

ARMS, A MAN NO DIFFERENT FROM ANY
OTHER MAN IN THIS ROOM WHO HAS SERVED
HIS NATION IN THE TIME OF WAR. THE FACES
IN THIS ROOM MEAN A GREAT DEAL TO ME.
YOUR FRIENDSHIPS HAVE ENRICHED MY LIFE
IN THE SAME WAY MY WARTIME SERVICE TO
AMERICA AS A YOUNG ARMY ENLISTEE
ENRICHED MY CHARACTER. BOTH HAVE
MADE ME A BETTER PERSON, AND BEFORE I
GO ANY FURTHER WITH MY REMARKS I WANT
TO PERSONALLY THANK YOU AND THE
AMERICAN LEGION ORGANIZATION FOR WHAT
YOU HAVE MEANT TO THIS ONE VETERAN

OVER THESE MANY MEMORABLE YEARS.

AS VETERANS, WE HAVE FOUGHT SIDE-BY-SIDE IN EUROPE AND THE PACIFIC AND THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL AMERICA TO DETER AGGRESSION AND THE EVIL THAT MEN DO. THE VICTORIES HAVE COME AT HORRIBLE COST, HOWEVER, AS THE LENGTHY HONOR ROLL OF FALLEN PATRIOTS ATTESTS. THE EMPTY CHAIRS ARE TOO MANY AND THE HEADSTONES TOO STARK TO EVER FORGET WAR'S SAVAGERY AND PAINFUL PRICE OF OBTAINING PEACE. WHEN THE GUNS FALL

SILENT AND THE EARTH CONSUMES THE
STILLED BODIES ONCE BRIMMING WITH HOPE
AND PROMISE, WE ARE LEFT TO CARE FOR
THE WOUNDED AND ATTEND TO THE
BEREAVED. BUT OUR RESPONSIBILITIES GO
BEYOND THE LIVING. THE LEGACY LEFT
BEHIND BY THOSE WHO FOUGHT AND DIED
FOR THEIR COUNTRY MUST BE CARED FOR
AS WELL.

BY THE WAY WE SUPPORT OUR TROOPS NOT
ONLY DURING WAR BUT ALSO PEACETIME, WE
SHOW OUR HIGH REGARD FOR THIS RICH

LEGACY OF HEROISM. BY THE WAY WE
OBSERVE MEMORIAL DAY AND VETERANS
DAY EACH YEAR, WE RENEW OUR
COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING THE LEGACY.
BY THE WAY WE RESPECT AND PROTECT
OUR AMERICAN FLAG AGAINST THOSE WHO
WOULD DESECRATE AND DEMEAN IT, WE
REAFFIRM THAT THE BLOOD SPILLED AND
THE FLESH TORN ASUNDER TO PROTECT THE
IDEALS EMBODIED IN THE SIMPLE CLOTH WAS
NOT IN VAIN.

WHILE, AS A NATION, WE MUST CONTINUE TO

REVERE AND RESPECT THE PAST SACRIFICES
OF OUR VETERANS, WE MUST ALSO
CONCERN OURSELVES WITH THE FUTURE,
SPECIFICALLY THE FUTURE HEALTH AND
WELFARE OF OUR VETERANS. YOU ARE ALL
AWARE NO DOUBT OF THE ONGOING
FEDERAL BUDGET BATTLES ON CAPITOL HILL
AS THE PRESIDENT AND THE CONGRESS
CONTINUE TO FIND A WAY TO BALANCE THE
BUDGET AND BRING ABOUT GREATER FISCAL
DISCIPLINE TO HOW TAX DOLLARS ARE
SPENT. DOMESTIC PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN
UNDER ATTACK FROM THE REPUBLICAN

MAJORITY IN CONGRESS AND, IN MY OPINION,
SOME CUTS HAVE BEEN IRRESPONSIBLY
SEVERE BY GOING PAST THE FAT AND INTO
THE BONE OF LEGITIMATE SPENDING
PRIORITIES. ONE OF THESE PRIORITIES IS
THE VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET AND HOW
WE INTEND AS A NATION TO FULFILL OUR
COMMITMENT TO THOSE WHO FOUGHT FOR
THEIR COUNTRY, THEIR SPOUSES, AND THEIR
DEPENDENTS.

SO FAR THE MESSAGE IS MIXED, LEAVING
CONSIDERABLE DOUBT ABOUT WHAT THE

FUTURE BUDGET OUTLOOK MAY HOLD.
WHILE VETERANS SPENDING HAS NOT BEEN
SUBJECTED TO THE EXTENSIVE BUDGET-
CUTTING ATTACKS BROUGHT TO BEAR ON
OTHER DOMESTIC PROGRAMS IN RECENT
YEARS, FUNDING LEVELS HAVE BEEN BARELY
ABLE TO KEEP PACE WITH INFLATION. AS
THE HEALTH NEEDS OF OUR AGING
VETERANS COMMUNITY CONTINUE TO GROW
AND COST OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES
CONTINUES TO SOAR, WE ARE EFFECTIVELY
LOSING GROUND WITH THE PASSAGE OF
FLAT LINE BUDGETS. I DON'T HAVE TO TELL

YOU WHAT THIS HAS MEANT WITH RESPECT
TO VETERANS SERVICES OVER THE PAST
FEW YEARS.

PRESCRIPTION COPAYMENTS HAVE
INCREASED. MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENTS
HAVE LARGELY DISAPPEARED. HOSPITAL
WINGS HAVE CLOSED. THE TIME TO RESOLVE
COMPENSATION APPEALS HAS GROWN
LONGER, AS HAVE THE WAITS JUST TO SEE A
DOCTOR. WHILE THE BASIC HEALTH
BENEFITS AND COMPENSATION PROGRAMS
FOR VETERANS REMAIN INTACT, THE

COLLECTIVE EFFECT OF THESE AND OTHER
CHANGES HAS BEEN TO CREATE A GREAT
DEAL OF FEAR AND ANXIETY OVER WHAT'S
NEXT.

WILL THE 171 VETERANS HOSPITAL SYSTEM
REMAIN INTACT? WILL HEALTH SERVICES BE
CONSOLIDATED OR CURTAILED AT CERTAIN
MEDICAL CENTERS? WILL COST-OF-LIVING
ADJUSTMENTS CONTINUE TO BE APPROVED
IN TIMELY MANNER? CAN PROGRESS BE
MADE IN REDUCING THE GROWING BACKLOG
OF BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS CASES?

THESE ARE ALL LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS AND I BELIEVE, REGRETTABLY, THAT THEY WILL REMAIN OPEN FOR SOME TIME TO COME. I DO NOT WISH TO SOUND PESSIMISTIC, FOR I TRULY BELIEVE THERE IS A SOLID BASIS OF SUPPORT WITHIN THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS TO NOT FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE THE SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF OUR VETERANS SERVICES. YET, THE TEMPTATION ON THE PART OF SOME TO REFORM VETERANS ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS AND BENEFITS PROGRAMS WILL ONLY GROW IN THE COMING YEARS AS

FEDERAL RESOURCES BECOME
INCREASINGLY SCARCE. PERSONALLY, I AM
CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE
OF FEDERAL VETERANS BUDGETS.
THEREFORE, MY WORDS SHOULD ONLY
SERVE AS A WARNING THAT NOTHING
SHOULD BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED. TO A
LARGE DEGREE, THE LEVEL OF VETERANS
FUNDING WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE
CONTINUED VIGILANCE OF ORGANIZATIONS
SUCH AS THE AMERICAN LEGION AND BY
TIRELESS ADVOCATES SUCH AS THOSE OF
YOU IN THIS ROOM.

IN MY EIGHT YEARS AS GOVERNOR AND
EIGHTEEN YEARS AS YOUR UNITED STATES
SENATOR, I HAVE SOUGHT AND LISTENED TO
THE ADVICE OF THE LEGION ON THESE AND
OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS. YOUR
COUNSEL HAS BEEN SOLID AND TRUE OVER
THE PAST QUARTER CENTURY, AND I ONLY
HOPE THAT I HAVE LIVED UP TO YOUR
EXPECTATIONS IN THE PERFORMANCE OF MY
OFFICIAL DUTIES. MORE IMPORTANTLY, I
HOPE YOU HAVE SEEN ME AS A CONFIDANT
AND A FRIEND, A SYMPATHETIC EAR AND A
STRONG FIGHTER FOR THE VETERANS

CAUSE. THERE HAVE BEEN MANY VICTORIES DURING THIS TIME, AS WELL AS A FAIR NUMBER OF DEFEATS. BUT MY RESOLVE TO PERSEVERE ON BEHALF OF VETERANS HAS NEVER WAVERED.

WHEN, AS A TWENTY-ONE YEAR OLD, I RAISED MY HAND AND ENLISTED TO FIGHT FOR MY COUNTRY, I THOUGHT I WAS SIMPLY JOINING THE ARMY. WHAT I DID NOT KNOW THEN WAS THAT I WAS ALSO JOINING A FAMILY AS WELL, A PROUD FAMILY OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE SERVED THEIR

COUNTRY IN BATTLE. LIKE OTHER FAMILIES,
WE MUST LOOK AFTER EACH OTHER AS IF WE
ARE BROTHERS AND SISTERS, SONS AND
DAUGHTERS. I AM PROUD TO BE
CONSIDERED YOUR BROTHER, YOUR
BROTHER IN ARMS.

MAY THIS BOND NEVER CHANGE AND MAY
GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

REMARKS BY SENATOR J. JAMES EXON (D-NE)

TO THE

NEBRASKA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

SALUTE TO CAREGIVERS

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

OCTOBER 18, 1996

Thank you so much for inviting me here today to help you honor outstanding caregivers without whose dedication and hard work, Nebraska's hospitals would not be able to serve their communities.

Nebraska's communities have been well served by their hospitals and I have been proud to do what I can to help them continue to survive and thrive. I am concerned, however, over the political climate in which those of us who you can count on as your friends must operate. Last year's government shutdown and gridlock were very unfortunate. However, they did serve a purpose in showing that a certain "Contract with America," which no one in this room signed, was not going to be rammed down our throats when it came to Medicare and those who are served by it.

Many of your rural hospitals would have been forced to close. This ill-advised Medicare proposal touted increased choice, but these choices in the rural areas were only illusions. With few, if any, managed care plans to choose from, many Medicare beneficiaries would have had only one choice, fee-for-service. Many of the proposed reductions would have been taken from the fee-for-service plan. You and I know that doctors would have either left rural areas or refused to see Medicare patients. Some of our best hospitals could have been left to "whither on the vine."

Even though this wrong-headed plan was killed by popular demand and wise action by some in Congress and the President, the Medicare financing problem is real and must be addressed. But it must be addressed in a way which makes sense, which protects beneficiaries and which is workable for you our compassionate caregivers.

Your task as hospital administrators and employees is not going to be easy in the coming years. With both Medicare and insurance companies looking to reduce their costs, health care spending will come under increasing scrutiny.

Your tasks to continue to serve your communities will become more difficult and I wish you all the best.

It has been my pleasure to serve as your Governor and United States Senator for the past 26 years. I am proud of the progress made in keeping our rural hospitals viable by being a founding member of the Senate Rural Health Caucus. Healthy rural hospitals mean healthier people of all ages and walks of life. We cannot become a nation of "haves" and "have nots" when it comes to health care.

As I mentioned in my final speech in the Senate, some of my proudest accomplishments include the ending of the Cold War and the signing of the nuclear test ban treaty. With these accomplishments, we have built our bridges to the future on the firm footings of national security. Hopefully a more concentrated effort can now be made on affordable health care for all Americans. We made a strong beginning down this road this past year with the passage of the Kassebaum-Kennedy health insurance reform legislation. Portability of coverage, guaranteed availability of health coverage for small employers, and

increasing the tax deduction for self-employed health insurance expenses to 80% are just some of the features of the new law which will enhance the quality of life for tens of millions of Americans.

I am very pleased that we have taken some action on health care availability and affordability and trust that we as a nation will do even more to ensure the health of everyone in our country.

Thank you again for honoring me here today as you salute these hardworking Nebraska caregivers. While those of us in elected office

respect you and try to do the right thing, it is you who do the actual work and deserve the recognition and rewards for a job well done.