

Today, I'm honored to stand on this hallowed Senate Floor and share my gratitude for and the priorities of the people of Kansas.

I want to start by thanking the people of Kansas who believed in me and sent me here to represent them. It is an honor of a lifetime to follow in the steps of heroic Kansans who preceded me in this legislative body. That includes sharing this tour of duty with my long-time friend I've admired for decades, and now senior Senator Jerry Moran, as well as legends of this chamber, my mentors Bob Dole and Pat Roberts.

Before I continue, I want to say a special word of gratitude to my family for all of their support. I would not be here today without the support of my wife of 37 years, Laina and our four children and three grandchildren... as well as my parents, brother, sister, and extended family who in so many ways have contributed to our campaigns and the work we've done in Congress. I'm grateful for their understanding, unwavering support, and sacrifice of privacy and family time. But mostly, I'm grateful for the VALUES they passed on to me.

And I'm grateful for the many teachers, coaches, pastors, and personal friends who inspired me and gave me a solid foundation of VALUES that have seen us all through our lifetimes.

These VALUES provided the foundation for me – a fifth generation farm kid – to become a first generation college student, and live my American dream as a physician in rural America.

And these VALUES have become pillars, the sturdiest of which in my life are faith, family, community, education and hard work.

- A FAITH that you live in your heart, not wear on your shirt sleeve;
- A FAMILY that loves and stands beside you no matter what;
- A COMMUNITY where everyone looks out for each other;
- An EDUCATION that is the great equalizer leveling the playing field for all.
- And finally, a belief in HARD WORK that paves the way to achieve your American dream.

As I traveled Kansas this past year, I carried these pillars with me while I heard from people all over the state as they gave me three very clear priorities:

1. To provide for their safety, health, and security;
2. To bring our jobs and economy back; and
3. To protect our VALUES and our God-given, inalienable rights.

And I'm here in this Senate to do just that. To fight for the people of Kansas, for all Americans, but more than anyone else, I'm here to fight for our children and grandchildren. Like another Kansan, the 34th President of the United States, Dwight David Eisenhower, the decisions I make will be most guided by the impact they will have upon future generations... not by tonight's news or the simultaneous tweet that goes out as I raise my thumb up or down. History will be the judge of my decisions, not social media.

The motto of the First Infantry Division of the U.S. Army, the BIG RED 1 – housed in the heart of Kansas – is “No Mission Too Difficult. No Sacrifice Too Great. Duty First!”

It is with this fighting attitude I intend to:

- Fully fund our military,
- Secure our borders,
- As the son and brother of veterans, and a veteran myself, honor our commitment to those who protected our freedoms and values,
- And, as the son of a police chief, fully support our law enforcement.

I am grateful for all law enforcement officers – including those here at the U.S. Capitol. They put their lives on the line every day and we join the entire nation in mourning those heroic officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice keeping us safe.

While we too often hear calls to defund the police and weaken our military readiness, we are still a nation of law order and we must advance President Reagan’s philosophy of “peace through strength.”

Pre-COVID, we had the strongest economy of my lifetime thanks to Republican led policies put into place over the last four years. Lower taxes and deregulation resulted in historically low unemployment rates, as well as American energy independence and affordable energy costs. With agriculture being responsible for 40% of the Kansas economy, these policies, along with strong trade agreements, provided the tools necessary to ensure our farmers, ranchers, and producers remain profitable and our rural communities prosperous.

But here's what concerns me today: like my grandma often told me at the supper table, there are three things you can count on from the current majority party:

1. They will spend a lot of your money,
2. They will raise your taxes,
3. And, they will increase regulations.

Just like my grandma warned, within the first three months of this new administration, we've seen an onslaught of harmful red tape, proposed tax increases, and an unprecedented spending spree.

Fighting government red tape and working to ensure Kansans keep more of their hard-earned money as a means to harness job growth and help our economy recover, will be what I work for each day.

Lastly, and I think most importantly, as this is what keeps me up at night, I was sent here to protect the Kansas VALUES I was raised on. These VALUES are still held by the majority of Americans and many of us are tired of being canceled, censured, and lectured to.

I acknowledge we all need to be woke sometimes – woke up for church on Sunday's, woke as a child to help milk cows on my grandparents farm – but we certainly don't need the woke mob to shake us out of bed every day.

Like all nations and people, we've made plenty of mistakes and we have room to grow but we Kansans are still proud of our American history. Rather than cancel it, we should embrace it. America has accomplished incredible things and defeated enemies of freedom. We should be proud of our history, hang onto it, and learn from it. God has given our nation enormous bounty and blessings to help feed the world, maintain peace, and protect human rights. America has been called upon to be the salt of the earth, and remain a bright burning candle, not hidden under a bushel.

I believe our country will not fall from another military giant, nor will it succumb to economic failure created from foreign lands. Our greater risk of failure comes from falling under our own weight if we continue to ignore the self-evident VALUES our forefathers taught us. Indeed, if we continue paying too much attention to silly hyperbole, social media hype, and political correctness, this nation will struggle, and not be the leader of the free world we were intended to be.

Before I leave the subject of VALUES, I want to share how important and personal the sanctity of life is to me. I had the honor as an OBGYN to deliver over 5,000 babies, and I will work as hard in this Chamber to protect the lives of the unborn and our children as I did in the delivery room all those years. I will always LEAD on this issue, and protect our VALUES.

Leadership is the quality I most remember my Dad looking for and praising in others. I've always tried to study and emulate great leaders.

And to this end, as I sometimes wander the Capitol looking for solitude and inspiration, I'm struck by one of my favorite paintings hanging in the Capitol Rotunda.

In this portrait, the artist depicts General George Washington shortly after the Revolutionary War surrendering his commission as an officer. And behind Washington, resting on an otherwise empty King's Throne, are the robes of a King....the robes he declined. The leadership lesson is that great leaders don't seize more power when they see the opportunity.

Three months into the 117th Congress, it appears the power grab General Washington declined is now the majority party's primary modus operandi. We've seen:

- A record number of executive orders,
- The first partisan COVID relief bill,
- Steps to grant D.C. statehood to tip the scales of power,
- An attempt to federalize elections and destroy election integrity with H.R.1,
- And now a commission to study expanding the Supreme Court.

Like Dorothy watching the grains of sand dropping through the hourglass, additional partisan priorities remain on standby while the timing of dropping the ultimate power grab – the elimination of the filibuster – is carefully weighed.

The filibuster is meant to force both parties to work together to come up with long-lasting policies which help all Americans. Without it, we will see tax laws and many other important policies go up and down like a roller coaster, creating uncertainty and making it impossible for long term business planning.

We are witnessing what may be the most blatantly hypocritical policy switch we've ever seen, as most all senators – and the president – have been on record previously in support of the filibuster. This flip - flop appears to be all in the name of greed and power.

So, while I come to the Senate intent on fighting against efforts to weaken our security, harm our economy, and diminish our American VALUES, I also want to discuss what I am for.

My favorite memories of growing up were spent in the great outdoors with the people I love: my friends and family. Make no mistake, I will do everything in my power to leave this world cleaner, safer, and healthier than I found it. And this can be accomplished while at the same time, maintaining affordable energy.

And whether it's environmental policy, or economic policy, we need a level playing field both at home and abroad. We must prioritize jobs for Americans, secure our supply chains, and continue to develop fair and reciprocal trade agreements. We must lower the cost of healthcare for ALL Americans. We must stop intellectual property theft, along with economic coercion, forced technology transfer, and cyber espionage. We must stop counterfeit products and illicit drugs from entering our nation.

In addition, we must stop all censorship – especially censorship of conservative thought that is under attack. And for our grandchildren’s sake, we must modernize our policies surrounding big tech, and social media before they engulf our society.

And so, this nation, still young in the scheme of world history... We have our challenges, but as long as we stay true to our American VALUES, we will get more right than we get wrong. But we have to learn to forgive our pasts and forgive each other.

Over this past Easter break, one of my sons told me something that made my heart go pitter-patter. He said, “Capitalism keeps America at the tip of the spear.”

He was spot on. American innovation, our pioneer spirit, and hard work will always lead the way and bring victory over totalitarianism and singular thought and rule.

Each and every American youth and young adult has their own story to write, and my job is to ensure everyone has their shot at happiness and their shot at their American dream.

While we cannot guarantee happiness, those of us in this Chamber can pave the way with an abundance of opportunity.

As the dreams and stories of so many Americans are interweaved, this American portrait – this tapestry of blues and grays, of pastels, and earth tones – will keep this republic in good shape. It’s our diversity that makes us great!

And as long as we pass on our American VALUES that have seen this nation through so many dark nights, we will succeed through current and future trials and conflicts.

May GOD Bless this grand republic.

###