

**Senator Susan M. Collins**  
**Senator John McCain statement**  
**Aug. 27, 2018**

Madam President, the United States Senate, indeed our entire nation, is mourning the loss of a great leader, an American patriot, our colleague and friend, Senator John McCain.

Madam President, I first met John McCain when I was a young staffer in Senator Bill Cohen's office, and John was serving as the Navy's liaison officer. As a fellow Senator for the past 21 years, I knew him as a trusted colleague, a courageous legislator, and a close friend.

John was a true American hero who devoted his life to serving his country. Courage and character were the hallmarks of his military service as well as his work in Congress. In the Senate, he was a consequential leader on the most critical issues facing our country. John McCain was one of our Congress' most respected voices for a strong national defense and for good government. His word was as much as bond in Washington as it was to his brothers in arms in Vietnam.

Madam President, I would like to share with my colleagues a story that I believe demonstrates the essential character of John McCain. In November of 2010, John was part of a congressional delegation on its way to a security conference in Nova Scotia. Bad weather caused their flight to be diverted to Bangor, Maine, where I live. I shortly received a phone call to come to the airport and I went and welcomed John and my colleagues on their unplanned visit.

As it happened, the Troop Greeters of Maine were at the airport at the same time. This legendary group of citizens has greeted more than 1.5 million service members, either leaving to go overseas or returning home, since 2003, never missing a single flight. Even in bad weather or the middle of the night and the presiding officer, I believe, who also has served her country so well, Senator Ernst, was one of those who was greeted by the troop leaders in Bangor, Maine. Rather than fly out when the weather cleared, John, the others in the delegation, agreed to stay and joined me with the long line of these patriotic troop leaders to await the arrival of the airplanes. And I remember when I told John that there was a plane that would be arriving shortly and then there was another one that would be arriving in a couple of hours, he said, "Of course we'll stay!" Well Madam President you can imagine having gone through gauntlet of Mainers greeting and welcoming the troops back home, hugging them, cheering them, giving them cell phones, thanking them for their service. Then, all of a sudden, troops realized that they had just shaken hands with John McCain. The legendary John McCain who was so popular with service members. And I saw them literally do a double take when the first group went by, shook his hand, and then turned around and said to each other, "Wasn't that John McCain who just shook our hands?" They then came back and of course posed for pictures and chatted with him and held up the rest of the line who were very eager to see John.

I will never forget how thrilled these troops were to be greeted when they were first setting foot back on American soil by a true American hero, John McCain. Someone who had served our country with such courage and character.

By the end of the day, John had spent three hours greeting two planeloads of soldiers. He loved greeting them and posing for pictures. It was such a heartwarming, unexpected event, and a very special moment. And it not only gladdened the hearts of the troops, but also of the troop greeters who were thrilled to have their hero with them. It was vintage John McCain that he stayed even after the weather had cleared and greeted each and every one of those troops.

John McCain did what he thought was right regardless of the political consequences. He had absolutely no interest in scoring partisan political points on the Senate floor. He welcomed and would listen to good ideas whether they came from the Democratic or the Republican side of the aisle. While he was always open to new evidence, good ideas, and was capable of changing his mind, he was unshakable when he was convinced of the appropriateness of a course of action. John was impatient. He wanted to get on with solving the problems facing our country. He had no use for the political games that, sadly, far too often are played in the Senate.

One often overlooked aspect of John was his love for the environment. I once visited him at his beloved ranch in Sedona, and I was surprised when he took me all over the property, pointing out birds, naming them, and clearly taking such delight in the wildlife. Until that moment, I did not know of his interest and love for nature. Later on, I accompanied John on a trip he organized to the Arctic to see the permafrost melting and to meet with native Alaskans. We also traveled to Antarctica, where we spent four days meeting with scientists who told us of the impact of global warming. He took me on so many trips and broadened my horizons. Four times we went to Afghanistan, four times to Iraq. We went to Yemen. We went to Libya and met with Colonel Gaddafi before he was overthrown and killed. John taught me so much on these trips.

The principles that guided John's life are best summed up by his own words from his beautiful autobiography, *Faith of My Fathers*:

*Glory belongs to the act of being constant to something greater than yourself, to a cause, to your principles, to the people on whom you rely, and who rely on you in return.*

John McCain was a statesman and a dear friend who was devoted to a cause greater than himself and that cause was the United States of America. It has been an honor to serve alongside him for nearly 21 years in the United States Senate. Although he will be deeply missed by all of us, he leaves behind an extraordinary legacy that will inspire Americans for generations to come. Thank you, Madam President.

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