

How to Test Negative for Stupid

And Why Washington Never Will



John Kennedy

UNITED STATES SENATOR

HOW TO TEST NEGATIVE FOR STUPID

And Why Washington Never Will

SENATOR JOHN KENNEDY



BROADSIDE BOOKS

Dedication

To Becky, Preston, Mom, Dad, Tom, George, Richard, the people of Louisiana, and all dogs everywhere. And, most of all, to my God.

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Introduction

My name is John Kennedy. That's really my name. I'm a United States senator, though I have tried to rise above it.

For as long as I can remember, one thing has been true about me: I have the right to remain silent, but not the ability.

In America, we are free to believe what we want, and to say it out loud. You are not free if you can't express yourself. You're not free if you can't say what you think.

So, I do. That makes some people mad, but I try not to worry too much about what anyone thinks of me. Except dogs. I really like dogs.

How do I sleep at night knowing that some people don't like me? With the fan on. I think I make the right people mad.

I speak my mind because I don't know any other way. It's just who I am. Back home in Louisiana, where I worked in state government and politics and taught law school for many years before I became a United States senator, people seem to appreciate my candor, whether they agree with me or not. Growing up in the small town of Zachary, I learned pretty quickly that you couldn't hide your true self for long (and that you shouldn't try anyway). Zachary only had a few thousand people in it when I grew up there. Everyone knew whose check was good and whose husband wasn't. The town was so small that we didn't have a town drunk. Several people had to take turns. The best approach, I learned, both practically and morally, was to speak the truth and do so as plainly as possible.

Before I became a United States senator, I heard repeatedly that this simply wasn't the way things were done in Washington, D.C. Just about every time I met someone who had spent time in Washington, they would

caution me that it was a place full of deceptive, ambitious, self-absorbed ex-class presidents who would unplug your life-support system to charge their cell phones. I understood that as a theoretical construct. I understood, intellectually, that Washington is supposed to be broken; that Congress moves slowly; that sometimes it takes Congress months to get nothing done; that people in this place try to impress you with high-level name drops while looking around for somebody more important to talk to; and that many of these same people are slaves to the adage of “I have principles; if you don’t like them, I have others.” But I never understood any of this viscerally because I had no firsthand experience. I never understood that as bizarre as Washington looks from the outside, you have to see it from the inside to understand its turpitude. Not everyone, thank God, is like this. It’s important that you understand that. But a lot of them are. And I certainly did not understand that a senator is not supposed to go to Washington and say all of this out loud.

I figured that part out the hard way.

In January 2017, after only a few days in our nation’s capital, I was being interviewed by Greta Van Susteren for her show *On the Record*. I remember it well. The camera crew put me in a chair in front of a white wall, then pulled down a screen behind me to make it look like I was some place impressive when I wasn’t. Some guy in his early twenties shined a light in my face, making me squint. My eyes have always been sensitive to bright light, but this was a whole new level. And before I knew it, Greta was asking me about the upcoming Supreme Court nominee that President Donald J. Trump would soon be selecting, and she quizzed me about some of the names that the permanent Washington types, including United States senators, were confidently telling Trump he should pick for the job, as if they were the repository of all wisdom. Without thinking, I fell back on my roots and spoke plainly. Looking straight down the lens, still squinting a little, I said, “I noticed that a few people around Washington seem to act as if they are one of the Founding Fathers.” After all, Trump had been elected president, not them.

The interview ended, and I didn’t think much about what I said. Looking back, I think it was actually a pretty tame way to describe my initial feelings about Washington. But soon it became clear that some of my Senate colleagues did not appreciate me talking this way about the Senate and, by extension, about them. It was nothing mean or really overt, just a few casual comments from my colleagues reminding me of the importance of tradition, custom, and decorum in the United States Senate, called by many the

world's greatest deliberative body. In other words, this is not a place where you're supposed to say the quiet part out loud.

A little bit later, the same thing happened. I was in an Appropriations subcommittee meeting listening to the testimony of an "expert" witness called by one of my Senate colleagues, much senior to me in years of service. This guy was a health care economist. Many—not all but many—economists are about as accurate as those psychic hotlines you see advertised on late-night TV. This particular witness, called by my senior Republican colleague, must have been playing Frisbee in the quad during Econ 101 because his analysis was superficial at best. So, when it was my turn to question him, I worked him over pretty good. I wasn't rude, and I never raised my voice, but I was very direct and challenging. He backed off on some of the things he said. The point is that later this senior Republican colleague pulled me aside and asked me not to do that again to one of his witnesses or any Republican witness for that matter. Once again, the message was that teamwork and decorum are important, and this is not a place to express such sentiments so publicly.

A little while after that, I was in a Senate Banking Committee hearing where one of the witnesses was a credit reporting company that had had a data breach affecting more than 145 million people. Credit reporting companies collect data and account information from consumers and provide that information in the form of a credit score to banks and other lenders so they can decide who to lend to. The customer of a credit reporting agency is the bank or business buying its information, not the consumer, so credit reporting agencies are very probusiness. Some of them are big Republican contributors. Anyway, when it was my turn to question the executive from this particular credit reporting company that had lost the data of 145 million Americans, I brought up the fact that, in spite of this, his company had received a \$7.25 million contract from the Internal Revenue Service to validate the identity of taxpayers who contacted the IRS. You don't have to be Euclid to see the problem here: The federal government, with our money, was hiring a company that had lost the data of 145 million Americans to handle the data of even more Americans. So I said to the company representative: "You realize, to many Americans right now, that looks like we're giving Lindsey Lohan the keys to the minibar." (Ms. Lohan and her father later threatened to sue me, but they never did.) Shortly after this hearing, I heard again from some more of my Senate colleagues. They were nice and all, but their not-too-subtle message to me was clear: Kennedy, what planet did you just parachute in from? Once again, they

politely suggested I was being too aggressive. Don't rock the boat, or at least don't rock it so assiduously.

It's been almost nine years since those warnings, and I haven't stopped talking. Why? Because only dead fish go with the flow. Because every advancement in art, science, philosophy, medicine, technology, cooking, and golf happened after someone challenged the rules and said, *There's a better way*. Because my people sent me to this place to solve problems, not make new friends. Because, once more, you're not free if you can't say what you think, because the American people can handle the truth, and because the American people deserve the truth and they deserve it in a way that's easy to understand. Sometimes that means calling out the obvious fact, as I did in one interview, that President Joe Biden "has just got to try harder not to suck," or observing that, according to the polling data, the American people think that "when the vice president's IQ gets to 75, she ought to sell," which I did on television and which earned me an official condemnation from the Biden White House. (I kind of wish I had that one back, because I like Kamala Harris, but that's what the polls showed.) And sometimes it means making people mad.

But all that's worth it because, as I see it, it's part of my job. You can't make good policy unless you talk about it critically. You can't change bad policy unless you talk about it plainly. The American people can't decide which is which unless they hear the truth explained to them succinctly and in a way they can understand. So that's what I do. And I believe my candor has influenced policy in the United States Congress. More specifically, I know for a fact that it has helped to kill bad policies from presidents of both parties and even to tank nominees from those presidents who would have made bad policies.

This is hardly a news flash, but most Americans are busy living their lives. To paraphrase a former president, they get up every day, go to work, obey the law, pay their taxes, and try to do the right thing by their kids. They also try to set aside a little money for retirement. They want to retire before they're ninety-four, and when they do retire, they don't want to have to live in a refrigerator box behind Outback and eat cat food out of a can. The point is that, while most Americans don't read Aristotle every day, they care about policy and they care about politics and government, but they care about their families more. There's nothing wrong with that. That's the way it should be. The point also is that most Americans have neither the time nor the patience to listen to a United States senator or some other politician honking on like a goose about the latest fire drill in Washington, trying to muddy the water to make it seem deep so voters will have no choice but to trust the politician's

judgment, even if they don't know what he's talking about. Neither do I. So, I don't.

This book is for people who might enjoy learning about a few things—some funny, some tragic—that have happened to me in the United States Senate, or that I have observed happening to others. Senators aren't like most teenagers; they are all over forty. You'll see what I mean soon enough if you keep reading. (Please keep reading.) This book is also for people—there may not be many of you—who want to know how this particular senator came to be like he is, and why he does what he does and does it how he does it. This book is about saying the quiet part out loud. This book is about the mighty weapon of candor, which most people in Washington, D.C., have only a casual relationship with. And this book is also about my hope that you too will be encouraged to risk saying what you think and making the right people mad.

One A Day in the Life of a U.S. Senator

Unlike some of my colleagues, I live a pretty boring life in our nation's capital. I don't go to too many parties. My evenings are usually quiet, and I tend to keep to myself. For my first eight years, I lived in a small, overpriced one-bedroom apartment about a block from the Hart Senate Office Building. It was rented, and it came furnished. I would describe the design aesthetic as "early Salvation Army." (I lost my lease a year or so ago and moved to another rental in the same building.)

In both apartments, the dining room table was and is my desk. The art on the walls is mine, and the largest piece is an aerial photograph of my duck-hunting lease back home in St. Bernard Parish. (In Louisiana, we call our counties parishes.) My wife, Becky, brilliant and beautiful, often told me she'd like to redecorate my first apartment for me. I'm sure she would have done a magnificent job, but I refused her every time. My neighbor Mitch McConnell and his lovely and talented wife, Elaine Chao, live in a \$3 million townhome just up the street. As the Irish say, "Fair play to them." But that's just not me. Besides, I get a lot of benefit just by living within a hundred yards of Mitch. For instance, his security detail is on the street around the clock, so you would have to be cell-deep stupid to commit a crime in our neighborhood. And when it snows, our street gets cleared first.

I spend most of my free time reading. Some of it is fiction (to relax), but most of it is for work. Every morning I work my way through *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and articles on the Associated Press website. For Louisiana news, I rely on a

press clipping service that sends me articles from back home and the Louisiana section of Google News. I also read policy memos. I also read the Associated Press, Louisiana media, and policy memos prepared by my able staff. Sometimes I read white papers prepared by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service. The CRS does research and analysis for Congress, and they are very good at it. I've been interacting with them for a long time, and I haven't met a dummy there yet.

I like to read. Always have, since I was a kid. My parents encouraged it. My schooling required it. I enjoy policy, and if you like policy, there's no better place to be than the United States Senate. If I'm interested in something—say, chronic disease management programs for Medicaid patients—I can spend time learning about it. I made a good living practicing law and teaching, but the problem with my law practice was that I had to learn what my clients wanted me to learn in order to represent them, which wasn't always what I was interested in. Serving in government is different and better. I prefer to think that most of my colleagues in the Senate approach their work the same way I do, but I know some don't. I know several senators who are more interested in the politics side of the job than the intellectual side, and they coast by reading the minimum number of two-page staff memos. That's their business. I just have a different approach. I enjoy learning and I enjoy policy, and knowledge is power. That may be a cliché, but clichés become clichés because they're true.

Unfortunately, God has blessed me with an appetite for reading and learning, but not writing. My education and vocation taught me how to write, but I find it difficult. I really admire good writing and a clever turn of phrase, and, fortunately, God also blessed me with a good memory, so I retain a lot of what I read. I also have an app set up on my iPad that allows me to make notes on what I'm reading and to write down something I like when I come across a writer whose work I enjoy.

Most mornings, once I've finished my reading, showered, and put on my suit (usually while wearing a pair of dark brown wallabees, which are as ugly as they are comfortable), I walk over to the Capitol. Sometimes if I'm running late, a member of my staff will pick me up. Either way, it's an easy commute. But whether I walk or ride, I am always stirred when I round the corner and the giant dome of the United States Capitol Building comes into view. Even now, after a few thousand morning trips, this is a sight that still has the power to move me. Constructed in 1793, the Capitol Building has survived two wars and innumerable political upheavals, fires, and renovations. In 1814, it was partially burned down by British troops, but it was later restored. Today it stands as a monument to the resilience of the

United States of America, in my judgment the greatest country in all of human history. It's a building that says only the most serious and capable citizens of this country are allowed to work here.

Which, I guess, is why I don't work there.

Senators vote there, but we spend most of our time in our offices and committee hearing rooms in adjacent buildings. My office is in the Russell Senate Office Building, the oldest of the Senate buildings and an impressive example of Beaux-Arts architecture. It's classical, which is why I chose it. Senators get to pick new offices every two years based on seniority. I've moved three times—a pain in the arse—but each time solely for more space for my staff. I sit on four committees. For eight years I sat on five, which was probably too many, but I had to give one up when we elected more Republican senators in 2024. I spend plenty of time in committee hearings, but when I've been away from my office too long, I walk through the staff offices just to check in. On Monday mornings, I inevitably dad-joke, “Okay, who got drunk and thrown in jail this weekend?” In the late afternoon, my message is usually “Go straight home, stay out of the bars.”

My office is impressive, though no credit to me. High ceilings, nice furnishings, a fireplace, and a view of the Washington Monument. I spend a lot of time there and in the adjoining conference room, meeting with constituents and staff. I also meet with lobbyists, but I'm selective—you learn quickly whom you can trust.

The crown jewel of my office reception area is a twelve-foot stuffed alligator named Alphonse. Kids visiting the Capitol love sticking their heads in his open mouth for pictures. I found him at a taxidermist in South Louisiana, abandoned by someone who never paid the final bill. So, I bought him. Alphonse had quite an adventure getting to D.C. I was in a Judiciary Committee confirmation hearing for a Supreme Court nominee when my deputy chief of staff interrupted with an “Alphonse emergency.” Capitol Police, apparently unfamiliar with alligator delivery protocol, were convinced Alphonse had a bomb in his belly and wanted to cut him open. My staff, ever resourceful, talked them down and got Alphonse inside.

When a vote is called, I leave my office or committee meeting and head across the street to the grand dome where grown-ups are supposed to work—the U.S. Capitol. I either walk or, if I'm running late, take the underground trolley. Either way, I have to dodge reporters, who are like stray dogs—once you feed them, you can't get rid of them. (For the record, I like dogs much better than reporters. Like I always say, God is great, dogs are good, and people in D.C. are crazy.) Reporters are also like hyenas. They hunt in packs. There are scores of them.

Then I step into the vaunted chamber of the United States Senate.
Where the magic happens. Or is supposed to.

Most Americans imagine the Senate as this grand theater filled with distinguished lawmakers delivering erudite speeches. In reality, it's usually empty as a timeshare salesman's heart. The only people there are the senator speaking, the presiding officer, and staff. The presiding officer is supposed to run the show, but since no senator really understands the archaic rules, they mostly take cues from the Senate parliamentarian.

I've given my share of speeches—on everything from the difference between disinflation and deflation to President Biden's attempt to give away a military base in the Indian Ocean. I listen too, when I'm there, at least when the speaker is not proposing we do the dumbest thing possible that won't work. Some senators, like Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, could talk a dog off a meat wagon. Others, like Bernie Sanders and Michael Bennet, are compelling in their own way. Bernie's almost always wrong but never in doubt, and Bennet, though soft-spoken, sometimes gets so worked up he reminds me of Coach Bobby Knight throwing a chair.

Another senator I enjoy listening to is Lindsey Graham. We don't agree on everything, especially some aspects of foreign policy. If you want to stump Lindsey, just ask him to name a country he wouldn't bomb. He's experienced, whip-smart, and can talk intelligently on just about anything. He always reminds me of the guy who, when pulled over, tells the cop, "Just so you know, officer, I've got a nine-millimeter Glock in the glove compartment, a thirty-eight in the console, and a three-eighty Beretta in my boot." The cop asks, "What are you afraid of?" The guy says, "Not a damn thing." That's Lindsey—unafraid and able to talk the hinges off a gate. That doesn't mean he's always right. Sometimes I think his motto is *Don't be part of the problem—be the whole problem*. But he'll say the quiet part out loud too, and I respect that. He's also unpredictable. Invite him to dinner, and you don't know if he'll sit down for an intelligent conversation or get drunk and vomit in the fish tank. But that's why I like him.

Then there are senators who just read monotone from staff-written scripts. I shouldn't name names, but Mitch McConnell and Chuck Schumer, despite their stature, usually aren't the most exciting. Mitch is deadpan but deep; I did see him smile once in 2017, and I'm convinced his blood pressure is a steady seventy over forty. Mitch would be the first to say he is taciturn. I

would be the second. Schumer, when he cuts loose, is like a five-year-old in a Batman costume on a sugar high, but like Mitch usually reads from a script. I get it. They have to be careful because the press hangs on their every word.

I don't know if people find my speeches interesting. My staff writes great ones, and sometimes I even use them. Mostly, I just let it rip. Now and then, I say things that raise eyebrows—like when I repeatedly used the word *penis* in a Senate speech on transgender locker rooms or criticize wasteful spending as “spending porn,” or as I once said about another senator's bill amendment: “This amendment is all Henry and no Kissinger. If you're foolish enough to vote for it, you'll never own your own home.” But so far, I haven't been thrown off the Senate floor.

A senator speaking to an empty chamber is the perfect metaphor for Washington. Why do they do it? To look good for the folks back home. Only six people still living in their parents' basement may watch the speech on C-SPAN, but the speech is recorded and a staffer clips it, edits it, and ships it off to the media back home as proof of their boss's influence. This is common practice. I've done it myself.

The truth? I can count on one hand the times a Senate speech changed a vote.

Senators also give speeches because they love to hear themselves talk. And talk. And talk. Most senators are—how shall I put it—self-satisfied. They think the country will cease to exist without them. They think they are brand names, like Lululemon. The reality? I can't think of a single one, including me, whose absence would cause civilization to collapse. But that doesn't change how they see themselves. Many think they should be president. Many act like they discovered gravity. Plenty assume Americans hang on their every word. They think they could teach Jesus a few things when they get to heaven.

It's understandable, I suppose. Like Senator Lamar Alexander (what a good man) used to say about the Senate: “It's hard to get here and it's hard to stay here.” People kiss our asses. We get called “sir” or “madam.” Strangers want autographs and selfies. We get to fly on military planes that look like mini Air Force Ones. We even get great football tickets.

Don't get me wrong. There are some fine people serving in the United States Senate. As a group, they're the most interesting people I've ever been around. But I also get that Congress as an institution is about as popular as chlamydia. Some of that represents voter frustration; some is self-inflicted. But it's undeniable that many Americans believe that the brain is an amazing organ—it starts working in the mother's womb and doesn't stop until you get elected to Congress. Ask Americans how many senators it takes to solve a

problem, and they'll say, "We don't know. It's never happened." That about sums it up. And it's true that the Senate can take months, even years, to accomplish nothing. Some weeks, all we do is fly in Monday afternoon, run around for a few days, issue press releases, eat a light snack, and fly home Thursday.

In truth, while there's a lot of backroom dealmaking, the only time we really "deliberate" as a body is when a major bill is on the floor—and even then, it's hardly a debate. Most discussion is on amendments, not the bill itself, and the majority leader has near-total control over which amendments get considered. Unlike the House, where amendments must be relevant, we can often tack on anything—an amendment about eagles to a bill about apples—if the majority leader allows it. Sometimes amendments are used to kill a bill entirely. I've seen senators change their vote because of a single added amendment. Another trick to kill a bill is to "love it to death": add so many amendments that the bill's proponents become skeptical about its effect.

Debate, when allowed, is tightly limited. "Time agreements" are common, so only a few senators from each side get to speak, often for just two or three minutes. This applies even to final passage. Deliberative, my ass. If I were king for a day, I'd change Senate rules to allow much more debate and unlimited amendments. But some of my colleagues would scream like I tried to steal Christmas. They like the system as it is. Yes, this would take longer—but most Americans work forty hours a week. I don't see why senators can't.

Senate rules are bizarre. The only drinks allowed on the Senate floor are water and milk. Many rules aren't even written down—they're "precedents," meaning we do it that way because we always have. No senator fully understands them. Our staffs know more, but even they could make up rules, and we wouldn't know the difference. The rules read like they were put together by a heroin addict with a socket wrench. For example, Senate Rule XV(3), pertaining to amendments and motions, reads as follows:

If the question in debate contains several propositions, any Senator may have the same divided, except a motion to strike out and insert, which shall not be divided; but the rejection of a motion to strike out and insert one proposition shall not prevent a motion to strike out and insert a different proposition; nor shall it prevent a motion to simply strike out; nor shall the rejection of a motion to strike out prevent a motion to strike out and insert. But pending a motion to strike out and insert, the part to be stricken out and the part to be inserted shall each be regarded for the purpose of amendment as a question, and motions to amend the part to be stricken out shall have precedence.

And it's not just the standing rules of the Senate that constrain you. The Senate legislative process is also governed by a large body of "precedents" created by past rulings of the Senate presiding officer or by votes of the Senate itself. And don't even get me started on the arcane procedure for substitute amendments, first- and second- and third-degree amendments, and the priority given to bill amendments. If you don't believe me, try reading all this stuff yourself. After two pages, you'll run away screaming. After five pages, you'll want to set them on fire. They make no sense, and they probably were never meant to. Once again, if I were king for a day, and could get the votes, I'd rewrite them. And one of the first things I'd change is the power of the majority leader and committee chairs. I think senators should have more latitude to bring a bill to the floor without getting the permission of a senator whose first pet was a dinosaur.

The Senate doesn't change because the Senate doesn't have to. I spent my first six months in the Senate reading everything I could about its rules and procedures. It was like trying to read Sanskrit. At the end, I felt like someone had run over me, backed up, and run over me again. I finally gave up and consulted with staff like everyone else.

New senators arrive ready to gallop but soon learn they have to inch along. In fairness, you come to appreciate that that's not entirely bad. The job isn't just about advancing good ideas—it's also about killing bad ones. Our Founders designed the Senate to move slowly (though not to not move at all). Unlike the House, where the majority rules absolutely, the Senate gives individual senators power to stall or stop bills. George Washington called the Senate "the cooling saucer." That's why we have the filibuster. To take up most bills, we need sixty votes. And if even one senator objects, they can hold up a bill indefinitely.

Filibusters used to require talking for hours on the floor—like when Ted Cruz spoke for twenty-one hours against Obamacare, or when Cory Booker spoke for over twenty-five hours about how much he dislikes Donald Trump. But a 1975 rule change made most filibustering happen behind the scenes. If a senator threatens to filibuster, leadership usually tries to work out a deal instead of tying up the Senate for weeks. Why not just wait them out? Because many senators—not all, but many—want to work only four days a week.

Most senators also introduce "messaging bills" that have no chance of passing but play well with voters. I've done it. I once proposed requiring able-bodied adults on welfare who have no minor children to work twenty hours a week. Welfare, I believe, was meant to be a bridge, not a parking lot.

I knew Democrats and a few Republicans wouldn't pass it, but I wanted voters to see I tried—and maybe plant a seed in my colleagues' minds.

When a senator has a bill with a real shot at passing, they have to lobby their colleagues, the media (to get publicity), and leadership. If you want the bill to go through a committee first, to garner more support, you have to get the committee chair to put it on the committee's agenda. You can choose to bypass the committee and bring the bill directly to the floor, but that takes a majority leader's blessing, a committee chair's approval, and often the committee ranking member's consent. If one of them says no, the bill dies. Even if you get through that, you still need House approval and the president's signature. Senators use leverage—like threatening to block a nominee—to gain support for their bills. But that can backfire. What goes around comes around.

Passing a bill is hard, as it should be. The Senate wields enormous power, and every bill affects millions of lives. But it's harder than necessary. Again, if I could change one thing, I'd allow senators much more leeway to bypass Senate leadership and bring a bill to the floor.

I care about passing good bills and killing bad ones. Not every senator does. Some just like the perks or the attention of the job. But most are serious. Some, though, want to be a senator without doing the work. You can fake it here, but that's not for me.

Being a senator is the hardest job I've ever had—and the best. Most nights, when I come home to my little Capitol Hill apartment, I've got two wheels down and my axle dragging. But it's a good kind of tired. I might complain, but it's like complaining on a yacht. I'll do this job until I run out of gas or my people tell me to come home. And if it's the latter, it won't be because I played peacock politics.

I don't promise to win every fight, but by God, I refuse to be beaten, as one of my old bosses used to say.

Because of its rich traditions (whether they make sense or not), because of most senators' ample self-regard, and because of the different personalities, the United States Senate can, on occasion, appear to be deeply weird. Put another way, you don't have to be crazy to serve in the Senate; they will happily train you. The Senate works best, however, when everyone isn't crazy at the same time. If you have followed our occasional behavior, you might think this would be a difficult state to achieve.

Sometimes it is. I observed to a reporter one time that you can lead a person to Congress but you can't make him think. There's an element of truth to that. Sometimes Congress is like high school with power. Sometimes walking through these noble halls can warp the judgment of even the smartest, kindest people in the world. Still, and once more, I believe the majority of my colleagues are sincere. Almost all of them, in fact. When it comes to the Senate, I don't agree with George Burns, who said, "It's all about sincerity; fake that and you've got it made." With a few exceptions, I've managed to get along with almost all ninety-nine of my colleagues, as well as their staff members. I know one or two of them who hate my guts, though they'll never say it. I don't feel that way about them.

I'll give you an example of a marvelous person who is a marvelous senator. In fact, I'll give you two: Susan Collins of Maine and Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire. If you dislike either of them, you are going straight to hell. Susan has never missed a vote. Not once in over twenty-seven years. She's the only Republican United States senator in the Northeast. That's quite an achievement considering that Maine, though often described as a purple state, is really more left-leaning. In her last election, the Democrats spent over \$100 million to beat her. They hit her with everything but a chair. They cut her up so bad on TV, radio, and social media that at the end of the election they were just working on scar tissue. Every expert in Washington who has never run a race in his natural life predicted her defeat. Even the Cook Report, which does know what it's doing, called the race a tossup. All Susan did was win by 9 points over the Democrat and two independents.

Senator Shaheen is cut from the same cloth as Senator Collins. She was a successful governor of New Hampshire, then ran for the United States Senate and lost, and then ran again and beat the guy who beat her. She's the dean of New Hampshire's congressional delegation. I've never heard either Susan or Jeanne raise her voice. Composure is their superpower. They are as polite as they are effective. They're also very, very earnest. Imagine a cross between a hall monitor and a class valedictorian. I honestly believe that Susan and Jeanne think WTF stands for Well, That's Fantastic.

On the other side of the spectrum, pick your poison. We've got some characters in the United States Senate. I've already talked a little bit about my friend Lindsey Graham. He's amiable, like Senator Collins and Senator Shaheen, but in a different way. No one would ever accuse Lindsey of being a hall monitor. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that he was suspended twenty-three times in junior high school. In February alone. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Lindsey could burp the Alphabet backward. Another is Senator Markwayne Mullin from Oklahoma. He was named after two of his uncles. I