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## In Praise of My Retiring Colleague, Sen. Voinovich

Forty-four years ago, U.S. Sen. George V. Voinovich embarked on a journey that propelled him from Collinwood to Columbus to Congress. Forty-four years ago, Ohio was a different place. We were confronted with challenges ranging from segregated neighborhoods to a shifting populace to economic strife and a host of issues that demanded steadfast leadership.

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Ohio needed a determined leader and we found it in George Victor Voinovich. This son of Eastern European immigrants brought Midwestern values to Washington. On behalf of generations of Ohioans, I would like to express my gratitude to Senator Voinovich for nearly 50 years of public service. George and I are in different parties and may not agree on all the issues, but there is no questioning his dedication, humility, and gifted leadership.

Our state has come a long way in four decades and – as Sen. Voinovich retires – we have an opportunity to honor the man who has led us this far. I am proud to call him my friend and colleague. The trajectory of his career shows a sweeping commitment to public service.

George began his career as Assistant Ohio Attorney General, after receiving his undergraduate degree from Ohio University – where The Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs is named in his honor – and earned his law degree from The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. He served as the auditor and a commissioner for Cuyahoga County.

Since then, George has served as mayor of Cleveland, a state representative, governor of Ohio, and as a U.S. Senator. He recently delivered an address on the U.S. Senate floor for the final time.

If the mark of courageous leadership is having the fortitude to make difficult decisions during tough times, then Sen. Voinovich is a courageous leader. As mayor, he made hard choices that helped to transform Cleveland from the first city to go bankrupt since the Great Depression to a world-class urban center. His forward-looking leadership helped transform a culturally rich manufacturing town into a robust hub of commerce, education, medicine, and the arts.

Then-Governor Voinovich used his considerable negotiation skills to unite public institutions and private organizations, creating new opportunities in our state. Public-private partnerships forged during his statehouse years have helped Ohio respond to an ever-evolving economic climate.

Reflecting his respect for our state's tremendous potential, George likes to say "the rust is

off the belt." He walks his talk, not only promoting – but firmly believing in – Ohio as a great place to work, live, and raise a family.

As a pivotal member of the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works, George brought his executive experience as a Mayor and Governor to enhance our nation's infrastructure. He worked to ensure repair of our roads and bridges, our water and sewer systems. I was proud to author bipartisan legislation with him that would help municipalities afford necessary renovations to their water and sewer systems.

George's advocacy also meant protecting the walleye and yellow perch in Lake Erie, promoting economic development in Appalachia, and preserving Ohio's legacy as a gateway to our nation's economic prosperity.

If the mark of wise leadership means knowing when to compromise and when doing so is not beneficial, then Sen. Voinovich has led with wisdom. While the Senator stands with his Republican colleagues on most issues, he recently crossed party lines to join me in voting for a small business jobs bill that will help Ohio small business owners access the credit they need to expand operations and hire new employees. Regardless of the issue, the willingness to stand independently is the mark of a true statesman.

With his wife Janet by his side, George has spent his life in public service recognizing that governing is more than taking a position. It's displaying leadership when it matters most.

That's why Sen. Voinovich will be missed.

While Sen. Voinovich and I have not always been on the same side when it comes to policymaking, I have always known that we are aiming for the same goal: to promote the wellbeing of the people we serve and the prosperity of the state we call home.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown  
U.S. Senator



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