

The Hatfield Values—His Legacy to Us:
Passion, Compassion, People, and Principle
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Distinguished guests, members of the Hatfield family, members of his professional family, friends, and Hatfield school colleagues, good afternoon and welcome.

We are gathered today to witness the unveiling of a number of important commemorative pieces about and by Senator Hatfield, but this is something more. This is part of a re-founding, a re-grounding if you will, of the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government. It is a rededication of the school and its faculty and staff to the legacy that Senator Hatfield has bequeathed to all of us who are privileged to be part of the Hatfield School, something we have come to call the Hatfield values.

How many times have we heard people say—or perhaps we ourselves have said in recent weeks and months: “Oh, how we need Senator Hatfield now!” We may not have him here in person, but we certainly have his legacy.

He was a person of principle and compassion backed by a passionate commitment to public service.

We have had an interesting time, particularly over the past year, thinking about the Hatfield values and how to ensure that we make them an integral part of what we do in teaching, research and service, but even more important, in who we are.

The reason that it is such a challenging task is that the Senator had so many important qualities and commitments that it is difficult to capture them all in any brief way. Words like civility, courage, bipartisanship, belief in the idea that diversity in politics as elsewhere is a strength, a commitment to innovation, a plainly stated faith that government can do great things, often in cooperation with nongovernmental organizations, both nonprofit and for-profit, and an ongoing concern to facilitate innovation and problem solving at the local level, in the community, with help from Washington and Salem.

He cared about the not-so-obvious or publicly recognized matters of governance and the institutions of governance. That is in part why he identified his pivotal vote to defeat the balanced budget amendment as his most difficult vote, but one that he had to make, even though he stood alone among the members of his party. It was also clear in his opposition to term limits.

As to bipartisanship, he loved to point out that Wayne Morse supported him in 1966, that his state chairperson in 1984 was former Democratic Congresswoman Edith Green from Portland, his 1990 state honorary chairman was his former Democratic opponent in 1966, Robert Duncan, and that Congressman Earl Blumenauer organized a list of Democrats for Hatfield with many mayors and county commissioners on that list. He urged that: “politics does not have to be a win-

lose situation, particularly when you are molding public policy.” “We can get out of this polarization.” (He said that in 2001.)

Turning back to the Hatfield School, some years ago a candidate for a faculty position came to campus for an interview. As a hard charging professional, he was convinced that we needed to hire him because, as he saw it, we really had not developed a comparative advantage in a particular specialty and indeed did not seem to think we had one clear and specific focus.

Members of the faculty smiled after looking at each other with that look that made clear that this interview was over. First, we explained, he should look at the national rankings for our local government, natural resources, and health administration programs, among others. Second, and more important, he missed the point. He clearly did not understand what the Hatfield School is and what it does.

We tried to educate him by explaining that although we were proud of our growing national reputation in a number of specific fields, we were even more interested in helping to prepare new generations of students and professionals to recognize and commit to a set of public service values, the Hatfield values.

Our students and our faculty may debate just what the public interest requires in any given situation or particular issue, but those students will leave here with a clear sense that there is such a thing as the public interest. There are many other universities where there is no such commitment to this or others of the Hatfield values.

Senator Hatfield was a man of great principle and compassion, but he was also a man of passion. “There has to be passion!” he said. “Passion,” he advised, “can sometimes help create a positive result.” He listed some of the areas for which he had a great deal of passion and in which he had seen that passion help to enact policy, as in medical research, issues of war and peace, and protection of the environment.

If we watch and listen to him—and we can given how much is available online—we see that he had the gifts of a master politician (using that term in its highest and best sense). He could engage with light humor an audience of strangers and bring them in so that they felt that he was speaking with them personally.

But when he began to go from there into a discussion of issues and problems, one could almost feel the energy change. It was as if he was downshifting an automobile and pressing down on the accelerator. His tone would change and intensify. He would use his hand gestures to punctuate his points. His energy burst forth. If we want great examples, we need look no further than his speeches in which he addressed Hanford or his statements on the death penalty.

He was also masterful at using his passion to convey most effectively what were clearly well-reasoned and well-supported arguments. He stressed that research was critical right along with passion. “The only way,” he said, “that some of those extreme positions against environmental

protection could be challenged was science. We have let our natural resources be taken over by political pressure.”

Well beyond policy, though, as he said, he had a passionate commitment to public service—to living the life of a servant leader. “We are dealing with human beings, real live people.”

His son Visko Hatfield told the story of a poignant moment during his eloquent eulogy at Senator Hatfield’s memorial service. His father was having a difficult time of it and he feared that he was nearing the end of his life.

“He wasn’t speaking very much. I asked him if there was anything he needed or anything I can do.

He straightened up his leaning body and opened his eyes wide and said, “You need to save a life.”

I said, “Whose life I should save?” He said, “The first one you can.”

There was a long pause and he was staring straight ahead, not blankly but like he was looking at something that I couldn’t see.

I asked him what he was looking at.

He said, “There are so many poor people, poor people and hungry people who are on the doorstep.”

We honor Senator Hatfield’s legacy and the public service values he advanced in word and deed throughout his long career. We have benefitted greatly since our founding as school from his legacy, his support, and his generous willingness to name our school and to be part of it as he was able. We appreciate your continued support and hope that you will remain with us as we move forward in our efforts to honor his passionate commitment to public service, in all its forms. We will try to be worthy of that trust.