

## U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

### Senate Floor Speech on the Passing of Sen. Dianne Feinstein

September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

**Sen. Cantwell:** Mr. President, I follow my colleague from California, and I believe he said it correctly, the legacy of Dianne Feinstein.

Our colleagues are in shock today even though we knew Dianne was ill, even though we knew she was 90 years old, even though we knew she was the longest-serving woman Senator. The fortitude she showed and demonstrated was constant.

Sitting here just a few months ago, in all-night vote-a-rama sessions, when the youngest of us would want to crawl into our hideaways, sipping coffee at 2:00 AM, Dianne was at her desk voting. At 90, she had the fortitude, as Senator Murray said, to vote just yesterday.

I don't know if it was the steel cemented into her at the moment of the mayor's assassination, or the tragedy and cost of serving and knowing you still had to move forward no matter how disastrous the situation was, Dianne moved forward.

I am so blessed to have served with her, but I want people to know the nation has lost a legislative giant.

Women have lost a hero, and the Senate has lost a true colleague.

Now, those of us who are out here today know when we say the word true colleague, we mean like true collegial colleague. Sometimes we say the word with a little more disdain, like our frustrating colleague, or as Senator McConnell said, our good friend when maybe in reality it's hard to get those words out.

But Dianne was the epitome of what the Senate is losing. Let's just face it.

Dianne, one of her most famous phrases was, I have to go home and read tonight. I'll bet her family or staff heard her say that. She meant it. She meant, I don't know enough about the subject to go spur off, I am going to study and analyze and find out what it actually is all about. How many times did Dianne stand up in caucus and say, I've been reading a lot about this subject, but I think we need to know a lot more? And she would communicate what she knew and as many of my colleagues know, she was always asking questions.

And, for me, as a young member coming here more than 20 years ago, I was amazed and astounded at what I might call the polite pushiness of Dianne Feinstein.

I don't know how she did it, but serving on the Judiciary Committee with her, and Dick will observe, when Dianne's time ran out and somebody tried to cut in and debate her, Dianne had this way of saying, Mr. Chairman, this is a really important point and I just need to make this point, and the chairman would let Dianne go on for another five minutes.

And I thought, how does she pull this off? I'll tell you how she pulled it off because people knew she was serious about legislating. She was serious about working across the aisle and probably in my early days here forged the greatest impression of what working across the aisle was really all about.

There were times probably when I didn't even agree with her, but she had the cachet of a Senator who could put a deal together with both sides.

I saw her great work on the California Desert Protection Act, landmark legislation in protecting California. I saw it on the 2007 energy bill where we raised CAFE standards for the first time in 25 years. Dianne had a provision called ten-in-ten, she evangelized why we needed higher fuel efficiency standards, and she thought we could improve it ten miles in ten years, and she was right, and it became the basis for what that bill was. She never let anybody off the hook in those negotiations, she made sure we got that done.

I saw her work tireless, as my colleague Senator Murkowski may not have been here yet, but she worked with Jon Kyl on water legislation until the cows came home. Because Arizona and California had real water issues and Dianne was forever adamant about trying to address this issue for the western part of the United States.

So, for me, I want to thank her family for your sacrifices, for sharing Dianne with us, letting us have her for as long as she was willing to serve, and for making it the dedication of her life.

And, yes, that personal side of her was also so sweet. You know, most of us doodle, but Dianne doodled in masterpieces, and she was always inviting people to dinner, always doing those kind little things for us, which means she made the Senate a more human place.

That's what she did, made it a more human place by giving time and attention to some of the needs of her colleagues. What sweet blessings, what sweet stories.

I want to honor Dianne by remembering her great legacy and thanking all of those who were part of her life. For women we didn't really know how to get all of this done here, how hard you push, how loud you can be, how much you can just get in here and grind away sometimes.

And Dianne showed us that, yes, we could be trailblazers and do it and that the results really, really, really, really matter for people.

So, I hope that people will remember that legacy of her and the kindness that went along with it and realize that this institution really does need to return to the ways of Dianne Feinstein. And if you're from California, you should be damned proud that your Senator is going to go in the history books as a forerunner for so many other women and for policies and behavior that we should be [exemplifying].