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Senator Richard Lugar: Setting the Example for Bipartisan Leadership & Cooperation

by **RITCH K. EICH, THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA**

The April 28 death of longtime Indiana Republican Sen. Richard Lugar and the praise heaped upon him from both sides of the political aisle after his passing reinforce what many already knew but have seen too little of in recent years: that bipartisanship cooperation brings lasting success.

At a time when political divisiveness domestically is arguably at its worst, foreign relations with many of our allies are strained, and the United States is leaving many crucial international agreements, Lugar's legacy exemplifies what today's crop of presidential candidates and members of Congress should aim for: solving the nation's problems through collaboration, working with those from the opposite party with different viewpoints, and seeking solutions to problems important to Americans by working with our allies.

Lugar also proved that true leadership doesn't have to mean being loud, cruel, brash, boycotting historic events, or making grand speeches to Congress before a vote. Lugar was known for his modesty and at times annoyed his fellow Republicans when he went against his party on various issues like bringing sanctions against the white South African government for its apartheid policies.

Former Michigan Democratic Sen. Carl Levin said of Lugar following his death, "Dick Lugar was a truly decent and courageous man whose strong and steady voice for bipartisanship benefitted the U.S. Senate, our nation and the world for over three decades. His soft language and calm demeanor and his ability to ignore bluster and bombast in the search for pragmatic answers characterized a noble career."

Purdue University President and former Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, who served also as Lugar's chief of staff in the Senate, said, "Dick Lugar was not just the finest public servant I will ever know, he was the finest person. He embodied all we can hope for in our leaders: brilliance of mind, purity of motive, stainless in character, tireless in the pursuit of duty. Incomparably knowledgeable about the world, he was first and always a patriot, utterly dedicated to the security and wellbeing of his fellow Americans."

And President Barack Obama echoed those sentiments. "In Dick, I saw someone who wasn't a Republican or Democrat first, but a problem-solver—an example of the impact a public servant can make by eschewing partisan divisiveness to instead focus on common ground."

Lugar showed that bipartisanship collaboration with our international adversaries brings success. His most significant achievement, destroying weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union through the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Act, was attained by teaming up with Georgia Democratic Sen. Sam Nunn and others. Nunn said in a statement

after Lugar's death, "This generation and future generations can learn much from his example in the political world and in life."

Lugar was the 2005 recipient of the American Foreign Service Association Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award and the 2016 recipient of the J. William Fulbright Prize for International Understanding. The Queen of England made Lugar an honorary Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, and President Obama awarded Lugar the Presidential Medal of Freedom, according to the Lugar Center.

After he was voted out of office following six terms in the Senate, Lugar continued to call out the United States government for being dysfunctional because he wanted Congress to do better and to be held accountable. Lugar founded the non-profit Lugar Center, a think tank that studies and promotes better government as well as various global issues. His Bipartisan Index tracks for the public the frequency with which a member of Congress co-sponsored a bill introduced by someone from the opposite party as well as the frequency with which a member's own bills attract co-sponsors from the opposite party, to measure bipartisanship. The Lugar Center's research and policy statements aim to better the debate through civil dialogue and bring together people of differing ideologies.

American youth and future elected officials would do well to learn about modesty and the value of hard work from Lugar, who was an Eagle Scout, first in his class at Denison College, a Rhodes Scholar, a Navy officer and a two-time big city mayor before he went to Washington, D.C. They should also remember Lugar's legacy of intelligence, honesty, civility, humility, and cooperation as the Administration continues talks with our new adversaries in the weapons race, namely China and North Korea. Let's hope that the President, Congress, and candidates for public office understand that building bipartisan cooperation domestically and fostering teamwork internationally are necessary to achieve real, lasting results.

Ritch K. Eich, former chief of public affairs for Blue Shield of California, has published four books on leadership. A retired captain in the naval reserve, he served on Congressional committees for Sens. Carl Levin of Michigan and Dan Coats of Indiana. He holds a Ph.D from the University of Michigan.