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# Helena High School Commencement

Max S. Baucus

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Remarks For The Helena High School Commencement

Senator Max Baucus

6-6-09

**Introduction:**

**Thank you, Ana [Pronounced ON-AH], for that great introduction. Ana was senior class president. Let's give Ana a big hand! Ana, I know you have a bright future ahead of you.**

**In the book of Ecclesiastes, we are reminded that there is a time for everything. A time to laugh, a time to weep. A time to mourn, and a time to celebrate.**

**Today, we do both. We celebrate the class of 2009, but there is no escaping the events of this past week.**

**No reason can justify, no logic can explain, what happened last week. But, there is a time for everything.**

**And soon, while always remembering those that we've lost, we will be able to move past this unthinkable tragedy.**

**I also want to recognize and remember another special student who is no longer with us: Beau Olson. From everything that is said, Beau was a tremendous young man with the utmost courage. And I know everyone here is proud of everything he accomplished while he was with us.**

**While there is no denying the pain that these losses caused, it reminds us how close our community is. As I look at the list of graduates, I see a lot of students who I have known for most of their lives.**

**Take Garrett Mitchell – the person you can thank – or blame depending on your point of view – for my being here.**

**I remember when Garrett was born – his dad was working on my re-election campaign and left to be with his mom to welcome their first child. Now he sits here as a young man, heading to college to make his own way in the world. Time sure flies.**

## **Congratulations:**

**Each person here deserves recognition.**

**To the parents of our graduates, I want to say job well done. Your years of dedication to your children have truly paid off. I'm sure there were some restless nights along the way, but I know it was worth it.**

**To the faculty of Helena High, I want to say thank you. Thank you for investing in your students over the last four years, and graduating this class of young adults.**

**And to the Helena High School class of 2009, congratulations! Today is your day. Over the last four years you've put in a lot of hard work, but I'm sure you also had a lot of fun... maybe too much fun.**

**Today is a day to look toward to the future. While you will always be Bengals, and graduates of the best high school in Helena, you now have a whole new world of opportunity at your fingertips.**

**I remember when I graduated. It was 1959. That year, Alaska and Hawaii would become states and the Dodgers won the World Series. I remember thinking about the future, trying to plan what I would do, where I would go.**

**And now, fifty years later, I hope to pass on a couple pieces of advice that I've learned that might help you as you begin your own journey.**

## **Serve Others:**

**Today, I want to tell you two stories.**

**The first story is about when I travelled around the world as a young man. Still to this day it was one of the most transformative experiences of my life. I'm standing here today because of that trip.**

**While it may be more entertaining to tell you about my adventures, or perhaps misadventures, like when I hitchhiked with gypsies, or stood on death's door with illness in Egypt, or was fortunate enough to meet the prime minister of India, what I want to tell you about instead is what I learned during this trip.**

**I remember stepping off a boat in the Congo, and I was hit with an epiphany. I suddenly realized that our world was getting smaller and we were all going to have to work together to get along. And I truly believe that this experience laid the foundation for me to enter public service.**

**Service is the noblest human endeavor. Whether it is service to one's country, community, school, church, or family, service is the most honorable thing a person can do. I want to impress that upon you today.**

**Service is the most noble of all endeavors.**

**You don't have to run for office to serve your community. Maybe it is volunteering, or mentoring. Maybe it is cleaning up a park, or donating food to a shelter.**

**Service can take a thousand different forms, but no matter what you do, I promise you it will make a difference.**

**That is the first lesson I want to pass on: serve others.**

**Never Give Up:**

**The second story I want to tell you about happened just a few years ago. Let me start off by saying I love running. I love lacing up my shoes on a cool fall morning, or a warm summer evening.**

**Running clears my head and rejuvenates me like nothing else.**

**And I love to run in races, like the Governor's Cup this morning. I love the way you get the butterflies in your stomach as you move up to the start line. I love feeling the nervous energy from all my competitors, as people speak in hushed tones trying to map out their game plan.**

**I'm not sure what possessed me, maybe it was a lapse of judgment, but once I signed up to run a 50-mile ultramarathon. I had my whole plan set out. I had trained for months, and come race day I was ready. My plan was set.**

**And when the starting gun sounded, I was off. The first mile is always interesting. You either start out too fast or too slow. You are looking at all the people around you, seeing who you can pace off of, who you might be able to run behind to help battle the elements.**

**I got the first mile down, and 49 to go. I was continually thinking over details: was I running too fast, was I running too slow? When would I need to grab some water, who could I run with? But after a few miles, I really settled into my pace. I was cruising. Everything was going according to plan.**

**Then on mile twelve, something happened. I was on a narrow trail, my foot hit a large, sharp rock, and suddenly my weight was lurching forward.**

**I tried to catch myself, but it was too late. I smacked face first into more sharp rocks. I felt a splitting pain on my forehead and as I reached up I felt blood gushing out. This was definitely NOT part of the plan.**

**As I sat there for a minute, I knew I had two choices. The first would be to give up. I had cut my head, still had thirty-eight miles to go and I could have easily called it quits. The second choice was to get up and to continue on. I could finish the race. I wouldn't finish the race the way I had planned, but I would finish none the less.**

**And so I got up. I put one foot in front of the other, and I am proud to say I finished the race. I might have looked like a Halloween character at the end, but I finished.**

**I'm sure most of you have plans for the future. Maybe it is college, or maybe it is travelling around the world. Maybe it's taking over the family business, or starting a family of your own.**

**But as you go forward, you will find that life is going to knock you down. I've been knocked down. Your parents have been knocked down. Everyone gets knocked down.**

**Yet, it's not getting knocked down that is important, it's how quickly you get up.**

**Like the great Winston Churchill once said “Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never- in nothing, great or small, large or petty- never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.”**

**And that is the second lesson I want to pass on:  
never give up.**

**Closing:**

**There is an old saying that life isn't fair. But I say life is neither fair nor unfair. It is what you make it. In life you can try or do nothing. And if you try, always try your best. Always do what you think is right.**

**Always be true to yourself.**

**And as you leave here today, remember: serve others and never give up. While I can't guarantee you fame or fortune, I guarantee if you serve others and never give up you will live a very full, very meaningful life.**

**Graduates, today is your day. There is a time for everything. And now is a time to celebrate.**

**Thank you.**