



“Orrin Hatch Foundation honors Mitch McConnell and Elaine Chao in Salt Lake City”

By Matt Sandgren | Tuesday, July 11, 2023

Orrin Hatch knew he still had work to do when he retired from the United States Senate in 2019. After 42 years of working across the aisle and fostering commonsense solutions to our nation’s challenges, he earned the moniker “Titan of the Senate.” Still, he felt he had a mission to pass those values on to the next generation of Americans.

Hatch liked to say, “Only in a nation like ours could someone like me, the scrappy son of a simple metal worker, grow up to become a United States senator.”

He was right.

The same can be said about the two people the Hatch Foundation will honor with the Titan of Public Service Award next month in Salt Lake City – Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell and former Secretary of Labor and Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao.

Together with civic and business leaders from across our nation, the late Sen. Hatch created the Orrin G. Hatch Foundation. Among the Foundation’s most important work is convening the great civic minds of our time and recognizing their exemplary public service. To that end, the award honors individuals who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to civic leadership. It’s a celebration of those who have spent their lives promoting our shared American values. I can think of no more appropriate recipients for this award than McConnell and Chao.

Like Hatch, McConnell and Chao personify the American dream. They rose from humble beginnings to the highest levels of government, shaping our nation in ways both great and small.

Only in a nation like ours could the 8-year-old daughter of a merchant mariner – who arrived in the United States not knowing a word of English – become the 18th U.S. Secretary of Transportation and the 24th Secretary of Labor. That person is Elaine Chao.

She would go on to hold numerous important positions across four different presidential administrations, including chair of the Maritime Commission, deputy secretary of transportation, director of the Peace Corps, and cabinet appointments such as Secretary of Transportation and

Secretary of Labor. She demonstrated integrity, leadership and steadfast service in each position under four presidents.

Only in a nation like ours could the son of an Army veteran – whose bout with polio as a young boy nearly bankrupted the family – grow up to become the longest-serving Senate Leader of either party in American history. That person is Mitch McConnell.

He would go on to transform the federal judiciary, deftly shepherding the confirmation of three justices to the U.S. Supreme Court and hundreds of other trial and court of appeals judges.

Under McConnell's leadership, the Senate enacted dozens of important legislative reforms: from replacing No Child Left Behind with the most significant K-12 education reforms in years to passing a major overhaul of America's tax code to taking action on America's growing opioid epidemic.

Unfortunately, space does not allow for an exhaustive list of McConnell and Chao's collective accomplishments.

Hatch, McConnell and Chao have all achieved tremendous success in their public service. But they always remembered where they came from and the people they were called to serve.

And their unwavering dedication and determination have deeply influenced those in their orbit. The vast network of Hatch, McConnell and Chao alumni have worked closely together over their years in public office. During my time as a Hatch staffer, I quickly discovered that McConnell, Chao and their staffs were the best of the best.

Whether it was regulatory reform, judicial appointments or any of the hundreds of issues that might come up on any given day, you knew you were working with professionals dedicated to the betterment of our country.

Here at the Hatch Foundation, we're committed to bringing together disparate voices, inspiring the next generation of leaders and working to solve our nation's most pressing problems.

In hosting McConnell and Chao, we're honored to bring together old friends, make new ones in celebrating their incomparable public service and build upon Hatch's legacy. That's how we're working to secure a strong America for the next generation.

The Titan of Public Service Award will be presented to Sen. McConnell and Secretary Chao at a special gala in Salt Lake City on Aug. 22. For ticket inquiries, please visit orrinhatchfoundation.org/titan.

Matt Sandgren is executive director of the Orrin G. Hatch Foundation. A 15-year veteran of Capitol Hill, he served as a senior counsel on the Senate Judiciary Committee and as Sen. Hatch's chief of staff.