



## “Why you’ll want to take a look at the Orrin G. Hatch Papers”

By Matt Sandgren | Monday, August 22, 2022

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When Sen. Orrin G. Hatch left office in 2019, he had passed [more bills into law](#) than any senator then living. He had participated in the confirmation hearings of 15 Supreme Court justices, as well as more than half of all federal judges who had ever served. The Center for Effective Lawmaking, a nonpartisan research organization, named Hatch the [most effective member](#) of the Senate in his final term in office.

Hatch could be a fierce partisan when times called for it. Anyone who’s watched [Justice Clarence Thomas’s](#) confirmation hearing knows there was no better person to have in your corner than Orrin Hatch. Hatch was a stalwart Republican and a committed conservative. You always knew where he stood on the issues.

But the senator also knew how to reach across the aisle. He famously developed a close friendship with Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy, a man who was his polar opposite in virtually every way. Their unlikely alliance led to landmark legislative victories in fields like health care, medical research and [religious liberty](#). You do not become one of the most prolific lawmakers of all time by spending all your time shouting from the bleachers. Effective lawmaking requires hard work, civility and a willingness to find common ground. Hatch understood this well, and mastered the art of legislative compromise.

Among the senator’s greatest achievements were legislative triumphs that required significant buy-in from Democrats and Republicans alike. These include: the [Hatch-Waxman Act](#), which laid the groundwork for today’s generic drug industry; the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which strengthened First Amendment protections for people of all faiths; the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#), which transformed the lives of millions of Americans living with disabilities; and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, which provided access to health insurance for millions of children from low-income families.

With today’s Congress stuck in a state of [perpetual gridlock](#), it’s worth asking: How did Sen. Hatch do it? How did this mild-mannered son of a metal worker become one of the most effective lawmakers of all time? How did he wrangle colleagues from both sides of the aisle to work with him in the name of bipartisanship? And how can we apply lessons from his public service to fix our broken politics today?

These questions are more relevant now than ever before. Polarization is reaching new heights as red and blue America drift further apart. Often it seems like the two sides don't even know how to talk to each other anymore. Congress, for its part, appears to have devolved into a never-ending shouting match. When so much seems broken, it becomes more important than ever to look to models of successful leadership. And fortunately for us all, there will soon be available an unparalleled resource for understanding how true legislative leadership works – the [Orrin G. Hatch Papers](#).

This fall, the Orrin G. Hatch Foundation is bringing to Utah one of the largest collections of congressional history ever compiled this side of the Mississippi. The Hatch Papers will include more than 3,000 boxes of legislative documents spanning one of the most prolific political careers in the Senate's history.

To put this news in context, the Hatch Papers will give academics, practitioners, students and the general public an in-depth look at the conversations, meetings, interviews and deals that took place behind the scenes of some of the most consequential debates to come before Congress in the last 50 years. Most importantly, they will provide researchers with countless case studies of bipartisan legislating – from Hatch's work on the [Orphan Drug Act](#), which provided heightened incentives for research into rare diseases, to the Ryan White CARE Act, which established funding to help fight HIV/AIDS, and so much more.

The Hatch Papers will provide exceptional insight into what it takes to be a successful lawmaker. They will reveal to the public, for the first time, the strategies Hatch followed to enact more bills into law than any other member of Congress during his time in office. They will draw congressional scholars from across the nation, providing unprecedented access to Senate notes, speeches, memoranda and other records.

Although the senator is no longer with us, our country still has so much to learn from his example. The Hatch Papers will bring that example to life, ensuring that the virtues of comity and compromise are passed down to the next generation.

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