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Plymouth State University – American  
Foreign Policy.

Thank You.

*Northwestern University*  
*Manchester College, Indiana*

I don't expect that many of you know the name Margaret Chase Smith. She was the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate, and if not for her, we might be quite a different country. When we were in the middle of the Joseph McCarthy era, when good people were being hauled before Congress and accused of being enemies of the state, and so many reputations ruined for no reason, and so much privacy violated and the Bill of Rights so trampled, Mrs. Smith stood up and said, "Senator McCarthy, have you no shame?"

It was one of the great speeches of our nation, and it, in a stroke, ended McCarthy's

reign of terror. She brought everyone to their senses with one speech. I think they are ready for another one.

I begin my remarks with that story as a reminder of the fact that the U.S. Congress is a very human institution, and the laws that come out of that beautiful building are often the products of emotions and dreams. I don't have to tell you that much of the output also comes from greed and fear and all our deadly sins. But it is no soulless machine—it is deliciously human.

Presidents come and go, full of energy or content to keep quiet down the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, but the Congress is always a beehive of activity—it is like the flywheel of a great steam-powered machine—or hot air, anyway, which turns to keep the engine of democracy running with or without the president's leadership.

The checks and balances of the overall

system are ungainly when working their best, and they are presently somewhat damaged.

The balance of power is usually described in terms of the legislative, executive and judicial branches checking each other. But there is another way to look at it, certainly as intended by the Founders as the three-branch balance, and that is the fact that the people themselves balance against the overreaching or underachieving of the Congress. When Congress takes a break and the members come home to their districts, they get a great earful from their constituents, who line up to meet with them.

That interaction, and the conversations by mail, email and phone, balance the attitudes of the members in a crucial way.

When I was working to get the campaign finance reform bill through Congress, I was told by some members that they were not



hearing a big demand for the bill from the people back home. Well, so I walked across the country to get those calls coming in. Then they were far more responsive. That kind of sensitivity to what the people want or don't want is a very good thing, as there is a native common sense in the people that Congress would be wise to listen to.

There is a fairly new barrier between Member of Congress and Citizen, and that is the big money needed to get reelected. That thirst for cash empowers the swarm of Capitol Hill lobbyists, and it redefines the days and evenings of the members' lives, who soon get used to talking to one eveningful of lobbyists after another. It becomes the way of life. But it leaves the people out.

That can be cured with a little campaign reform, and with more people willing to run without special interest contributions, as I

~~am doing.~~ DID PUBLIC FUNDING

We have another problem to worry about, and that is the narrowing of news coverage. The news media have always informed the citizens so that the citizens could be deeply well informed, and could be in a position to inform and advise the Senate.

Without the regular voice of the people in the Halls of Congress, the little hilltop can become a world of its own, and before you know it you've attacked the wrong country and maxed out the credit cards, which is to say the federal deficit.

Congress, the people, the press. That is a system of checks and balances, and a system of shared decision making, that has helped us through great national crises.

Here is another check and balance, one that is also out of kilter in the present era.

Our federal government has grown as a check on the ~~the~~ rise of large corporations. At the turn of the Twentieth Century, government grew to control the great trusts and monopolies, and it grew in the New Deal to counteract the human costs of industrialization.

Human beings indeed are in competition with giant machines we have wrought: not robots of metal and wire, but of charters and stock certificates and corporate policies and advertising budgets and employee rules. They have escaped our control and bought for their own use the instruments of government that once controlled them. They are taking down our main street businesses and taking out our affordable housing and putting up their big boxes and towers and having us foot all their bills and clean up all their messes. Monsters indeed.



These monster machines now stare down at us and think it completely right that they should rule our lives, buy our politicians and elections, and make us work our lives for their benefit.

They take over nation-states and use them as their hand puppets to loot national treasuries, employ young people in armies to do their bidding, and steal the wealth of middle classes and turn nations into colonies for their benefit.

The warrior princes of our ancient past could relate well to today's CEO's, who developed their sharp teeth and their exploitive salaries in the 1980s, when Mr. Reagan refused to put a lid on corporate raiding, hostile takeovers, and the junk bond financing that made takeovers possible. In that moment, corporations stopped being something of our communities, and became something of this monster story we are living out. They closed profitable operations

that were not profitable enough. They off-shored, out-sourced, de-unionized, anything they could to be less a takeover target and to survive in the new age of hyper-profitability. Many essentially raided themselves, saddling themselves with massive debt and sending off the less profitable parts of the company out into the cold.

So many companies were ravaged by this looting operation that a new class of company CEO emerged—the turn-around artist, who justified his pay on the basis of saving the day. That carnivore became the new model CEO who makes \$50,000 for every hundred dollars his employee makes. We can thank the Reagan Administration for him, and thank subsequent Administrations for letting this cancer fester and become a blight on the whole world.

We can bring down the size of the federal government, as many people want, but we



must first bring down the size and reach of corporations, <sup>so</sup> ~~as~~ there is a check and balance relationship.

So. There are checks and balances to our system that we often do not think about or work to preserve, but they are important to our lives.

*FOR THE LAST FIVE SINCE ~~THE~~ MY WORK ACROSS I HAVE BEEN TRAVELLING TO VARIOUS STATES THAT ARE ~~CURRENTLY~~ WORKING ON PUBLIC FUNDING FOR CAMPAIGNS -*

So, yes, we have great work to do in our personal lives and in our communities if we are to survive as free humans. But it is a blessing to have an opportunity for a heroic life in meaningful times, isn't it?

Thank you.

*WE HAVE TWO STATES ARIZONA & MAINE AND OTHERS ARE WORKING AT IT*