

## **Senator Padilla's Full Remarks as Delivered on the Legacy of Senator Dianne Feinstein**

Before I begin, I also want to acknowledge others that are here in chambers to be part of this tribute, part of this moment, first of many, over the coming days and weeks, no doubt.

Senator Schumer acknowledged, Speaker Pelosi, excuse me, Speaker Emeritus Pelosi, my speaker, Catherine in the gallery here. We do have a good amount of the California congressional delegation here as well paying their respects, the dean, Representative Lofgren, and so many friends from the north to the south to the east and the west of the Golden State.

Up in the galleries, also, Team Feinstein, so many of the staff members that made sure the office was always performing at peak capacity, just the way Dianne insisted.

I know that personally, and I'll tell you why in a minute. But I think I speak on behalf of all of us when I say that it is with profound sadness that we bid farewell to my dear friend, colleague, an outright champion for the state of California, Senator Dianne Feinstein.

As we've been hearing today, she was a towering figure. But let me be clear, she was a towering figure, not just in modern California history, but in the history of our state and our nation. Yes, she broke barriers throughout her career. You've heard about that from Leader Schumer. How many firsts? Her leadership though as the City of San Francisco's first female mayor, in the aftermath of the tragic assassination of Mayor George Moscone, and supervisor Harvey Milk, showcase her unique ability to lead with grace and strength in the face of adversity. And it wouldn't be her last time.

Following her election to the Senate, more than three decades ago, Dianne's commitment to bipartisan collaboration made her a deeply respected figure on both sides of the aisle. And so my heart is full to hear the words of Senator Collins and Senator Murkowski and others.

She understood the importance of working together to find common ground and to get things done for California, for the country, and most importantly, for the American people. Her ability to bridge divides, and find that consensus, especially on the thorniest of issues, was a testament to her dedication to the principles of our democracy. And of the many attributes you're hearing about her today that's the one that I've admired most, and have worked my damndest to try to emulate throughout my career, and especially here in the Senate.

Now long before being able to serve together here in the Senate, Dianne gave me one of my first jobs in politics in her Los Angeles office. At a time early in my career, when I was looking to make a difference for my community, and for our state. It's in part thanks to her groundbreaking career that a Latino son of immigrants could one day not just work for her, but work alongside her to keep up the fight for the American Dream. As we mourn Senator Feinstein's passing, we must also celebrate her incredible legacy: her contributions to our nation, from gun safety and environmental conservation, to national security and health care reform, and so much more. Just as a reminder, not just the power of her example, but the power of public service. For Californians, so much of our public lands have been preserved thanks to her singular drive and

leadership, from the redwoods of the headwaters and the San Francisco Bay, to Lake Tahoe, to the Southern California desert.

We can go on and on, but it is clearly, clearly, a tremendous impact she's had.

She leaves behind a legacy of service, of leadership, and a deep love of our country, and our democratic ideals. Senators have mentioned her grace, how she worked, how she carried herself, an example for us to follow.

Although I'd be remiss if I didn't say there was an exception to that. And that is, if you were one of our staff members that came into a meeting with her unprepared, you did not want to not have the answer to her question.

She was classy, absolutely. We will get into the debate about the dress code. And as Senator Murray said, she was absolutely generous. Now I did not receive a seersucker suit. I was not here at the time. But for the decades of a relationship that we had, every time I came to Washington, I made it a point to reach out at a minimum, we'll call, a lot of times, a quick meeting in her office, and I always came away with something. More often than not it was a book, she has quite a library, read her collection. Once upon a time it was the Senate tie. But there was always something, and I too, Senator Collins, have a watercolor [painting].

It's hanging at home in Los Angeles. My wife's favorite. So I don't have it here to display. What I do have though, is a photo that she said, from back in the day, that she sent me just a year ago, periodically going through her files, her archives, a picture from the San Francisco AIDS Walk in 1987 — but personalized, no auto pen here, personal note from Senator Feinstein.

The last story I'll share, which I do think is unique. Another example of her generosity is the day I was sworn into the Senate in 2021, under the most trying of circumstances, COVID, pre-vaccine, two weeks after January 6. 40,000 National Guardswomen and men on the perimeter of a fenced off Capitol Complex. She honored me by escorting me, down the center aisle, to the rostrum, stood behind me as I was sworn in.

Big day for me. Tough day not having Angela and my boys by my side. As soon as votes were over, session was over, she grabbed me by the hand. She said come with me.

Sorry, not sorry to say that I had interviews lined up. We marched right past reporters to her hideaway. Immediately wanted to continue the dialogue of "How can I help you? How can I help you?" Mustered up a little bit of courage and said, "Dianne, I love you, but I want to call my wife. I've just been sworn into the Senate." So I call my wife, Angela answers, we immediately start FaceTiming each other. We're by the window, so I can make sure the signal doesn't drop. And my boys are there. And Dianne says, "Give me the phone."

I've just been sworn into United States Senate, and I'm watching Senator Feinstein FaceTime with my kids. "So proud of your dad. When are you coming to Washington. I will buy you lunch."

That was Dianne Feinstein. May she rest in peace, and may her legacy continue to inspire us all.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.