



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

JACK M. MARTINS November 24, 2014

Thanksgiving Thoughts

Every year, I ask sixth-graders in our district to write a Thanksgiving essay, the theme being, “What are you most thankful for?” Truth be told, I remember well that I wasn’t overly enthusiastic about these kinds of “extra” writing assignments as a student – especially with promise of holidays and vacation just on the horizon. Yet the response to our voluntary contest grows annually, with hundreds of entries this year. Clearly, our young people have something to say.

I enjoy them immensely and I admit that I greedily read them by the handful throughout my day. They are both instructive and in many cases, inspiring. I’ll have them with me at morning coffee, or at lunch, and I’ll even share them at dinner with my family or associates. Most of us agree that children have the extraordinary ability to sort through all the background noise and zero in on the things matter most. They’ll mention what on the surface appears to be some little common moment and somehow poetically crystallize why it’s actually so powerful or significant. And that’s precisely what Thanksgiving is all about, isn’t it? It’s an opportunity to step back from things we take for granted and reflect on how truly special they are.

In that light I decided to share a little bit of one entry that knocked my socks off. This young lady wrote,

This year I am thankful for problems. It may sound weird but problems are a big part of our life. Problems make our lives easier because we always realize our mistakes from them. And we probably will never repeat them again. Problems are like weeds before our harvest of wheat. The day before a harvest comes a weed. Having a weed only means our harvest is coming quicker. So that is why this year I am thankful for problems.

I see a future leader here! And it sounds as if a pretty wise family member is helping that young person find value in everything, pointing out that even problems serve as catalysts to learning. To be sure, in Albany we regularly go back to mistakes we've made in past legislation to make new laws better. It even got me thinking about the seven feet of snow we're dealing with in Buffalo and how we're applying what we learned about emergency mobilization from our experience during Superstorm Sandy. But in the end, the essays remind me personally of what I'm most thankful for and in the spirit of the exercise I want to share that with you.

I'm thankful for family, a particularly large, loud one. I wouldn't want it any other way.

I'm thankful for a wife and kids that love me so much that they not only bear the sacrifices of public service with me, but the slings and arrows of bumpy election campaigns.

I'm thankful for health. As I travel around the district I'm blessed to be part of the wide scope of your lives, christenings to funerals. I know every moment is a gift.

I'm thankful that you, my constituents, saw fit to return me to service as your senator. I'm humbled to know it doesn't mean I'm perfect, but that you trust my intentions and my effort.

And I'm thankful for my dog, Riley. I'm positive that our walks lower my blood pressure.

Last but not least, I'm thankful that we live in a country where we allow ourselves a day to be grateful. I hope and pray that each of you enjoy it. From my home to yours, I wish you a happy and healthy Thanksgiving.