

PROFILES IN CITIZENSHIP: HOW TO KEEP THE REPUBLIC



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Jon Tester

U.S. Senator Jon Tester, D-Mont., is a farmer and former music teacher who served on various local boards and committees and in the Montana State Senate for eight years before moving on to national politics. All the while, he has essentially kept his day job: every weekend, he heads home from Washington to get his hands dirty on the farm his family has worked for more than a century. We spoke with Tester on July 27, 2010. Here are some of his thoughts for students.

On partisanship:

I can tell you that there is no doubt in my mind that folks vote in some cases 'yes' or 'no' just to be partisan. That's not what's always best for the country. That's not always best for your constituents, not always what's best for your state. . . . There is only one hope for what we see on that tube right there, and

that's the next generation. They're the ones that can fix this, and if they are willing to allow this to happen, it will never get fixed. It just won't. They can fix it.

On running for the Senate:

I was running in the primary against a guy who had already won statewide who was a millionaire—I'm not. I just thought, if we work hard, like the way I was brought up—if you work hard, and stick to it, to do what you want to do, the good Lord will open the door or he won't. And if you never try it, trust me—there were many times I wanted to get out of the race, many times. But if you never try it, you never know.

On keeping the republic:

[Benjamin] Franklin is right. This place won't work if everybody sits on their hands. And I think it's critically important and I think it's very rewarding for people to get involved. . . . It takes some work, but it's very rewarding. . . . you don't have to do it eight hours a day. You can do it one evening a month in some cases. And it is very, very important. It's very important to the health of the country, it's very important for you to know what's going on in your community, and it makes life a whole helluva lot more fun.