

Embargoed until 5pm

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**Prepared remarks of Senator-elect Bell in the Senate Democratic Caucus during the debate on the nomination of a Senate Majority Leader**

As some of you may know, during my campaign, I also pledged not to support Senator McCaffrey for any leadership positions. My constituents--particularly those in the LGBTQ community--felt very strongly that I should not vote for him.

I acknowledge that I committed to oppose him before getting to know him personally, and I really do want to thank him for reaching out to have breakfast with me. I believe in having productive discussions oriented around finding ways to work together. Political disagreements shouldn't be personal.

So why did I commit to oppose him? Why did so many constituents ask me to? Because Senator McCaffrey is quite conservative. He is not pro-choice. He has yet to publicly support repealing the tax cuts for the rich, and he even voted against marriage equality.

But here there is another concern. Our chamber went through a very contentious series of leadership battles during the 1980s and 1990s, pitting the conservative wing against a coalition of moderates and liberals. During much of the 1990s, for instance, the conservatives who are now in power formed a dissident caucus and used aggressive resistance tactics to seize the Senate Presidency in 2000. When Senator Montalbano became Senate President, he took an important step towards healing the divide by selecting Senator Paiva Weed as Majority Leader.

Senator Paiva Weed was a true moderate. Although mostly a social conservative, she fought hard for social services, political reform, and better budgetary policy. She served as Judiciary Chair when moderates were ascendant in the 1990s. She lost that gavel in the 2000 leadership challenge. She was even drawn into the same district as Senator Cicilline, and she had to beat him in the primary.

When Senator Montalbano brought in Senator Paiva Weed, it was a gesture that mattered. It brought the chamber together. It ended the discord. So when Senator Paiva Weed succeeded Montalbano, she respected the tradition by selecting Senator Ruggerio, a conservative, to be her Majority Leader. When Senator Ruggerio became Senate President, however, I expected him to return the favor. Instead, he selected one of the very few Senators even more conservative than he is, Senator McCaffrey.

Next in line was Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin. If Senator Ruggerio had selected her, I would be voting for her here today. Senator Goodwin is a moderate. She's nowhere near as left-wing as I am, particularly on reproductive justice, but her views are pretty close to the center of our chamber. She has a ton of experience, and she is widely respected by our whole caucus. The reality is that Senator McCaffrey was selected over a more qualified woman.

Selecting Senator McCaffrey blew up the crucial compromise that had held our chamber together.

It was an aggressive move. I could never support a nominee with Senator McCaffrey's issue positions, but what his nomination represents makes it far harder. It represents a refusal to compromise. It represents a rejection of the collegiality and decorum that has defined our chamber. I know that Senator McCaffrey will win today, but I would like to begin a conversation over the next two years about who would be better suited to lead our caucus.