

COURAGE CAN SAVE

US



TEN EXTRAORDINARY AMERICANS
AND THE FIGHT FOR OUR FUTURE

RYE BARCOTT

For our sacred war dead and their families.

Freedom isn't free.

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**GOVERNOR
MIKIE SHERRILL**



"I've Done Harder Things Than Take a Vote"



Who are you, Florence fucking Nightingale?" a midshipman groaned at her Naval Academy classmate, Mikie Sherrill.

The ship reeked of vomit. Hurricane-charged waves tossed the Navy Yard Patrol Craft, YP-690, without regard for its steel hull.

"Just eat some ice chips. You'll feel better," Mikie suggested, half-laughing, as she held out a handful she had grabbed from the galley for her seasick crewmates.

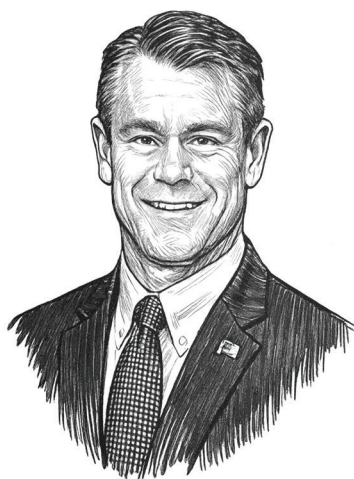
The midshipman swatted her hand away, leaned over the rack, and threw up on the deck.

It was June 1991, and Mikie was on her sophomore "Youngster" cruise at the U.S. Naval Academy. YP-690 had carried two dozen midshipmen from Annapolis to the Bahamas and back. Now, just off the Outer Banks—an area known as the Graveyard of the Atlantic—the sea was setting the terms.

The midshipmen believed their ship could take it. Rough seas were part of the job. They just needed to "get salty," as sailors say, and get through it. A shout cut through the storm's noise. Someone was calling for help.

Mikie ran to the bridge. A classmate lay sprawled on the deck. Another midshipman was already kneeling beside her, counting out chest compressions aloud.

**SENATOR
TODD YOUNG**



"Prefer the Hard"



Mud caked Todd Young's elbows. Sweat stung his eyes. Halfway through another low crawl at Marine Corps Base Quantico, cradling his rifle through the muck, he saw why some of the candidates around him were falling away—and why he was not.

"The warrior ethos really took hold with me," Todd says. "I wanted to be a warrior and be in the elements and go through hard things with a handful of other hardened people who were also looking for life challenges."

At The Basic School in Quantico, where all newly commissioned Marines trained to become officers, he'd pushed himself like a man possessed, sprinting up hills until his lungs burned, and humping fifty-pound packs for miles on end while his shoulders screamed. He was lean, fast, and lethal, a rifle platoon commander in waiting.

Except the battles never came.

Todd graduated into the peacetime lull of the late 1990s, that suspended decade of American hegemony between Desert Storm in Iraq and 9/11. The Marine Corps was full of warriors without wars. After a few years monitoring drone footage along the southern border, Todd's next orders sent him not overseas but back to where he'd grown up: the American Midwest.

A cum laude graduate of the Naval Academy, Todd was assigned to