

# Duckworth Honors the Legacy of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on the Senate Floor

September 24 2020 2:18 PM



WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) spoke on the Senate floor earlier today to honor Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s legacy. Senator Duckworth’s remarks discussed a few of the ways that Justice Ginsburg’s landmark decisions impacted her own military career and family life. Video of the Senator’s speech is available [here](#).

## Key quotes:

- “Ruth Bader Ginsburg helped make my career possible... she helped make my hope of one day serving in a combat role regardless of my gender... of one day commanding a unit despite most of my crew being men... achievable.”

- “I may never have been able to become a mom if it weren’t for Justice Ginsburg. Without her, without what she did to safeguard healthcare and reproductive freedoms, I might never have been able to get pregnant through IVF. I might never have been able to have my two little girls—never would have been able to watch Abigail place a bouquet on the steps of the Supreme Court if Ruth Bader Ginsburg hadn’t spent decades in that very same building defending my rights.”
- “Her passing isn’t just heartbreaking for me and for countless other women across this country. It’s a loss for our entire nation. For justice. And for equality. So while today I’ll continue to mourn everything we lost when she passed last Friday, tomorrow I promise that I’m gonna roll up my sleeves and honor her in the way I believe most true to how she lived her life: by fighting like hell for what’s right—and for all of our rights.”

Duckworth’s full remarks as prepared for delivery are below:

A five-foot-one-inch giant, Ruth Bader Ginsburg changed this nation—and my own life—time and again, seeing no challenge too big and finding no cause too small to fight for.

A woman with the softest voice yet most powerful words one could ever imagine, she made it her life’s work to lift up the voices of others who all too often had been silenced or ignored.

With every case she argued...

With every ruling she issued...

With every dissent she penned...

Justice Ginsburg helped push our country toward that more perfect Union our founders once wrote of in the Constitution she believed in so fiercely.

Our democracy may have been founded in the 18th century—but it wasn’t fully built when the ink dried on the Declaration of Independence.

It was shaped and strengthened... forged and formed... not just by those whose faces loom

large on Mount Rushmore, but by someone who was often the smallest, quietest person in nearly every room she ever walked into.

It is because of Ruth Bader Ginsburg's brilliance and resilience that so many of us have the rights we too often take for granted.

And it is because of her that who I am today is possible.

Long before she was a Supreme Court justice, she was a relatively unknown law school professor who altered the course of history when she argued that the equal protection promised under the 14th Amendment didn't just mean equal protection for men.

Her legal genius was captured in her first landmark victory and reflected in her choice of a male plaintiff to demonstrate that discrimination on the basis of sex harms every American—male and female alike.

Suddenly... thanks to this idealistic young lawyer who spent her own law school years having her place questioned because of her sex... it became illegal to discriminate against women because they happen to be women.

That same tenacity... that same trailblazing intellect... that same woman also helped paved the way for me to succeed in my career as a woman in the military.

In 1973, she made sure that the equal rights for women she'd helped secure extended to the women seeking to defend our nation... arguing—and winning— her first case in front of the Supreme Court... getting the justices to rule in 8-1 fashion that the military couldn't give a female servicemember fewer benefits than her male counterparts.

Her life... her position and title... changed over the next couple decades, as we all well know. But her convictions did not.

Twenty-three years after standing in front of the bench of the highest court in the land to argue that our Armed Forces couldn't discriminate against a woman in their ranks, Ruth Bader Ginsburg herself sat on that very same bench and issued a ruling that changed everything for countless women dreaming of serving their country in uniform.

She struck down the state-funded Virginia Military Institute's male-only acceptance policy... granting women the ability to learn and train alongside men at one of the top military academies in the nation.

In a ruling I plan to read out-loud to my little girls some nights instead of their usual bedtime stories, she wrote of potential female VMI students, arguing that, quote:

“Generalizations about, ‘the way women are,’ estimates of what is appropriate for most women, no longer justify denying opportunity to women whose talent and capacity place them outside the average description.”

I can’t begin to imagine the number of women generals and flag officers and servicemembers she paved the way for with those rulings.

But I do know the story of one.

My own.

As I was just a couple years into the Army when she wrote that decision, Ruth Bader Ginsburg helped make my career possible... she helped make my hope of one day serving in a combat role regardless of my gender... of one day commanding a unit despite most of my crew being men... achievable.

It was because of her that my dreams had the opportunity to become a reality.

You know, yesterday I told my five-year-old, Abigail, that we were taking a field trip instead of our usual homeschooling routine, and I took her and her younger sister, Maile, to the steps of the highest court in the land.

I didn’t expect to get emotional. I didn’t expect to tear up. But with Maile in my lap and Abigail by my side, I started to cry.

I was crying because it wasn’t just my career Ruth Bader Ginsburg helped make possible—but my family, too.

I may never have been able to become a mom if it weren’t for Justice Ginsburg.

Without her... without what she did to safeguard healthcare and reproductive freedoms... I might never have been able to get pregnant through IVF...

I might never have been able to have my two little girls... never would have been able to watch Abigail place a bouquet on the steps of the Supreme Court if Ruth Bader Ginsburg hadn’t spent decades in that very same building defending my rights.

She changed—no, she gave me the chance to achieve—my life as it is today.

But her passing isn’t just heartbreaking for me and for countless other women across this country. It’s a loss for our entire nation. For justice. And for equality.

So while today I'll continue to mourn everything we lost when she passed last Friday, tomorrow I promise that I'm gonna roll up my sleeves and honor her in the way I believe most true to how she lived her life:

By fighting like hell for what's right—and for all of our rights.

My daughters might be too young to remember going to the Supreme Court to pay our respects to Ruth Bader Ginsburg. But they will know her legacy—and already, every day, they are living proof of its power.