



## **TRANSCRIPT: Senator Kelly's Maiden Speech**

Mister President, it is an honor to rise today to deliver my maiden speech.

Nine months ago, the people of Arizona entrusted me with a great responsibility:

to represent them in the United States Senate;

to do so during a pandemic that has challenged every one of us, taken loved ones too soon, and battered our economy;

and to fill the remaining years of Senator John McCain's sixth term.

Each day since then I have gone to work for the people of Arizona, striving to fulfill that responsibility, undeterred by the challenges we have in front of us.

Because that's what Arizonans have done over the last year and a half...protecting their families from this virus, keeping themselves and their businesses afloat, looking out for their neighbors.

Arizonans have faced down this virus, and the economic fallout that came with it, with determination.

And I came here to have their backs. And to work towards a brighter future for our growing state.

Because we can't just rebuild our economy the way it was before – we have to reinvent it to create the jobs of the future – good-paying jobs that you can actually raise a family on.

It's a long to-do list, but hey I'm used to those. The checklist for flying the space shuttle stands about six feet tall.

The Senate, though, is not NASA. It doesn't move as fast. And it's not the United States Navy, either, where everyone works together towards a common goal.

But, my wife Gabby taught me a thing or two about how to listen, and how to find common ground.

Now, she loved representing Arizona in Congress. And no one works harder than she does.

Neither of us expected that it would be me serving here in the United States Senate. I might have been the astronaut, but it turned out that she's the one who would nearly lose her life serving our country.

I am so proud of her, and of her relentless positivity that she brings to her continued rehabilitation. It inspires me each and every day.

And I could not do this without her support, and the support of my daughters Claudia and Claire, my first grandchild, Sage, who was born in May. Though, maybe, I'm not sure about her support...she's only two months old.

In my first days here, I spoke with Republicans and Democrats to work on emergency COVID relief.

For so many Arizonans, the relief we got passed was a lifeline....the difference between bankruptcy and keeping the lights on, between losing their small business, and being able to keep paying their employees.

I've heard that countless of times as I've traveled around the state.

In March, on my 100th day in the Senate, I spoke with a group of Arizonans to understand how COVID-19 was impacting them and their families.

One of those conversations really stuck with me. And I want to take a second to tell you about Susana Andrade.

Prior to the pandemic, Susana worked in a school cafeteria in South Phoenix.

Her husband worked as a landscaper.

When the pandemic spiked in Arizona, her husband's work slowed down, and the school closed.

But Susana and her coworkers, they kept going to work.

The school was continuing to offer meals for pick up for students and families that needed them.

And a lot of them needed these meals.

She told me that they initially were just offering breakfast and lunch, but then they added dinner and a snack, because the demand was just so high.

Susana and her coworkers knew how hard the pandemic had hit the community, how many folks were out of work -- there were students who wouldn't eat if they weren't there to make the meals.

So she kept going to work, making and packing meals for students and their families. And then, in February, she and her entire family got sick with COVID.

She couldn't go into work for weeks. And she and her family struggled to pay their bills that month while they tried to recover.

Now Susana's story has stuck with me over the last year.

Here is a hardworking Arizona family, doing everything right, that just got knocked off their feet.

At the same time, Susana embodies the best of what we saw during this awful pandemic, neighbors and parents making tremendous sacrifices to help one another get through this.

I spoke to Susana recently. She told me that, days after we spoke in March, she and her family received their stimulus checks, and it made such a big difference in their lives.

But she is still now living paycheck to paycheck, working two jobs, trying to provide for her family and to just get ahead.

I understand that. Growing up, my mother worked both as a secretary and a waitress at the same time.

When my brother and I were in middle school, she decided to become a police officer like my dad.

But she had to pass this physical fitness test, which was designed for men. But my mother was not discouraged, she wasn't discouraged by that. Or by the fact that if she passed, she would become one of the first female police officers in our hometown.

In fact, I think she kind of liked that. That was my mom for you.

But I knew she believed that the increased, steady salary would help our family.

My mother wanted to give my brother and me every opportunity to succeed.

She showed us what we could achieve by having a goal, and a plan, and working hard at it.

And I am here because of a good public education. And because of the opportunity that my parents created for me to serve our country and pursue my dreams.

But for so many families, it's becoming harder to get ahead.

And the pandemic only made this more difficult -- businesses shuttered, savings drained, debt and bills piled up.

What every parent wants -- what my mom wanted -- is to be able to work hard and give their children a future filled with opportunity.

That's why the most important responsibility we have here is not just to rebuild our economy, but to reinvent it for the future....

And doing that starts with infrastructure -- roads, bridges, water, the power grid, high-speed internet.

And it's not just in big cities, but in rural and small towns, small town Arizona, and tribal communities.

That's the item on our checklist now.

Arizona is facing a severe drought that requires us to improve our water infrastructure and increase our resiliency.

School buses on the Navajo Nation cost three times as much to maintain because so many of the roads are unpaved.

I-10, which runs through the center of our state between Tucson and Phoenix, has not been expanded in years. A single accident can cause delays for hours. That happens almost every day.

It's clear that Arizona will benefit from upgrading and modernizing our infrastructure.

That's why, for the past few months, I've been working with a group of Republicans and Democrats to come to an agreement on a historic investment in our infrastructure.

I advocated for Arizona's priorities, and we worked together to find common ground and work out our differences.

And now, we are on the verge of passing it.

This is going to fix roads and bridges, improve tribal water and transportation infrastructure, expand affordable high-speed internet access, and make Arizona more resilient to drought and wildfires.

I've been determined to deliver these infrastructure investments that Arizona needs to continue to grow. We want to grow and want to attract new and innovative companies to our state.

Because Arizona's prosperity depends on continuing to create new, high-paying jobs, including growing our tech sector.

Now one of the biggest success stories of our growing tech sector is an industry that actually produces something physically small...microchips.

Microchips go in everything from our phones and appliances and cars, to computers, but also the most sophisticated fighter jets and missile systems.

There is currently a global shortage of microchips, and the truth is today that just 12% of them are manufactured here in the United States.

It used to be 40%.

Many foreign competitors, including China, are investing heavily to try to dominate this industry.

Now, Arizona does manufacture a lot of microchips.

It already employs about 30,000 people in good-paying jobs in this industry.

And it is poised to grow and we recently announced investment plans from Intel and the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company.

Arizona can lead the way as we restore more microchip manufacturing and development to American soil.

That's the goal of this \$52 billion plan that I spent months working on with Senators Cornyn and Warner – to create new advanced manufacturing facilities, or fabs, in places like Arizona.

I made it my mission to get this passed through the Senate.

Because it's important. It's important to our economy. And it's important to our national security – ensuring that our supply chain for something so critical does not depend on adversaries like China.

Transformational investments such as this will create thousands of high-paying jobs.

And we got it passed through the Senate, Republicans and Democrats working together.

Now, we must continue working on this checklist -- getting Arizonans the skills they need for these new jobs.

Now for some, that will mean getting a college degree in science or engineering.

Arizona is home to three world-class universities that are leaders in research and innovation.

We must continue to educate the best scientists and engineers in the world. That's the only way we are going to stay ahead.

At the same time, we know that about a third of students who graduate high school will not pursue a four year degree.

That does not mean they can't be set up for success in the 21st century economy, and we need to make sure that they are.

Advanced manufacturing facilities like the microchip fabs that I mentioned earlier, for those we need well-trained semiconductor processors. And we need electricians. We need HVAC technicians.

These are good-paying careers for those who get the skills and training that they need.

And right now, a lot of young Arizonans are getting those skills through our community college system.

At Pima Community College's downtown campus in Tucson, they have a new Automotive Technology and Innovation Center that I visited last month.

And their students are learning how to operate the software that automatically controls drills, lathes, mills, 3D printers, and other tools.

They can be trained not just in traditional automotive technology – but in electric vehicles as well.

Arizona is becoming a center for innovative electric vehicle manufacturers, so why shouldn't we be getting these students the skills they need for this technology right now.

Pima Community College's Chancellor, Chancellor Lambert, calls this much-needed approach, "moving at the speed of business."

And what he means is our education system must meet the demands of today's workforce.

And that has to be the case not just in major metro areas, but in rural Arizona as well, and in rural America.

At Yavapai College in northern Arizona, they just opened a new Skilled Trades Center in Clarkdale where they will train a new generation of construction workers, plumbers, electricians, and HVAC technicians.

And I couldn't be more impressed with Arizona's community college system.

Yavapai College is also taking advantage of partnerships with companies to set students up with opportunities that prepare them to immediately enter the workforce in industries like mining.

Moving at the speed of business...

That's how we're going to prepare hardworking young students to get these good-paying jobs.

It's also how we will outcompete and out-innovate other countries like China.

Having a talented workforce that can fill the jobs of the future and develop cutting-edge technologies that are critical not just to our economy, but to our national security as well.

Now these are issues that I know Republicans and Democrats agree on.

And even on tough issues, I believe we can also find common ground.

We've had crisis after crisis at our border, each a result of decades of failure in Washington to adequately address border security and fix our broken immigration system.

Senator Portman and I have introduced bipartisan legislation that would require the Department of Homeland Security to finally develop a plan to handle increases at the border.

To take the politics out of this, no matter which party controls Congress or the White House.

And to provide dedicated funding to carry out that plan and ensure a secure, humane process at the border.

Finding common ground on issues like this is hard. But it's important.

Like many of you, like many of my colleagues, I spent years admiring the way the late Senator John McCain represented Arizona in the United States Senate.

But my first impressions of John McCain were not of him as a Senator, but of his service in the Navy.

He was a hero of young naval aviators like me...an example of how to serve your country honorably and bravely, including in the impossible circumstance of being shot down and captured.

His legacy means so much to the state of Arizona.

And it lives on through his children and his wife Cindy – who I am so grateful to have here today in the gallery. Thank you. [applause]

His legacy is something that cannot be matched.

But it is what inspires me serving in this Senate seat.

And it's his example of bipartisanship, of independence, that continues to demand more of us.

So I'm going to continue focusing on delivering results.

On beating this virus and reinventing our economy for the future.

So that hardworking Arizonans have every opportunity to succeed.

Arizonans sent me here to have their backs. And that's what I intend to do.

Thank you, and I yield the floor.

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