
It appears that the junior senator from Massachusetts has taken over the mantle as the liberal “Lion of the Senate,” a title proudly worn by Ted Kennedy, who controlled the same seat for 50 years. Warren’s new book, the former Harvard law professor’s 9th, is called *A Fighting Chance*. It seems the book’s title itself harks back to a time she describes is now well past, when families of merely modest incomes had to work hard but also knew they had to stick to the rules, therefore giving them a fair shot at the American dream. She laments: “Here’s the hard truth: American isn’t building that kind of future any longer.”

She didn’t live here for long, leaving after high school graduation at Northwest Classen High School. She received a scholarship to George Washington University, propelling her toward her long career as consumer advocate, agency head and current U.S. Senator. Her troubled Oklahoma upbringing helped shape her focus on the unraveling of the middle class. In *Fighting Chance*, she does not pull any punches, characterizing the economic arena as certainly “rigged,” where the giant banks are in cahoots with big-money. As a result, there is a rising rate of anxiety in the middle class, in turn, a near total loss of faith in the American Dream.

Warren’s pugnaciousness can perhaps be explained by her transition from a “Goldwater Girl” to Democrat as a result of a loss of faith in the market system more than twenty years ago. Unfortunately, Warren does not dwell at any length on this transformation, depriving the reader of insight into her change of ideological allegiance.
Warren’s early conservatism helps to explain her decision to become an expert on bankruptcy policy: “I was on the lookout for cheaters and deadbeats. But, her research led her to find something she didn’t expect. Ninety percent of the time people go bankrupt for one of three reasons: 1) a medical problem; 2) a job loss; or 3) a family breakup (divorce or death). What’s more, she found that most people felt that bankruptcy was a personal failure, therefore, they didn’t take it lightly, as portrayed by the banks.

Warren is steadfast that the “system was rigged,” and argues that Reagan-era policies emphasizing deregulation facilitated increasingly risky behavior on the part of big banks and other financial institutions. Warren argues that these risky gambles resulted in the financial crisis of 2008.

Warren’s fast-paced narrative will keep the reader turning the page, as her autobiography moves from childhood to her fight to set up the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and her public battles with the credit card industry as the fledgling bureau’s interim director.

In her upset win against Senator Brown, she was helped by simple agreement between the two of them. If either candidate had a SuperPAC ad, each candidate would “dip into our own campaign contributions and give money to charity.” Therefore, the League of Conservation Voters were in check with Rove’s American Crossroads. This “People’s Pledge” worked effectively blocking outside money from both campaign via ads thereafter. Maybe, this “People’s Pledge” should be used for the 2014 campaign season!

Warren also notes that her pugnacious style likely doomed her from being named full director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. At the Bureau, as she often does, she threatened too many banks, which were amply scared of her populist rhetoric and actions in protecting the public from predatory banking practices and exorbitant credit card interest rates, which were created and legitimated by the courts and congress during the 1980s and 1990s. Her anger through the
page is palpable. She writes, “Gradually [the bankers’] strategy emerged, target families who were already in a little trouble, lend them more money, get them entangled in high fees and astronomical interest rates, then block the doors to the bankruptcy exit if they really get in over their heads.”

On her campaigning across Massachusetts she set up several coffees. At one such coffee, a person recorded her, and it became a YouTube sensation. At this coffee, she heatedly off-the-cuff exclaimed, “There is nobody in this country who got rich on their own. Nobody! You built a factory out there - good for you. But I want to be clear. You moved your goods to market on roads the rest of us paid for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for. You didn't have to worry that marauding bands would come and seize everything at your factory... Now look. You built a factory and it turned into something terrific or a great idea - God bless! Keep a hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along.”

What’s more, when Warren worked at the Consumer Protection Agency, she was charged with being called a socialist, but in reaction said that she’s not one, instead she’s a capitalist who believes that markets work best only when “there really is a level playing field where both seller and their customers understand the terms of the deal.” That’s not socialism, that’s transparency in a regulated capitalism.

Warren explains further in her book: “We can’t bury our heads in the sand and pretend that if ‘big government’ disappears, so will society’s toughest problems. That’s just magical thinking—and it’s also dangerous thinking. Our problems are getting bigger by the day, and we need to develop some hardheaded, realistic responses. Instead of trying to starve the government or drown it in a bathtub, we need to tackle our problems head-on, and that will require better government.”
Warren’s book reveals a lifetime of passion and hard work, and some luck thrown in as well. And, in the end, even if painfully slow, maybe one person can really make a difference, but we make better choices when we acknowledge of our past investments in our common good as well as thinking about future commitments, all of which are required to make personal initiative thrive.

Warren wants an America to be a place where everyone gets a shot, much like she did: “a fighting chance.”

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