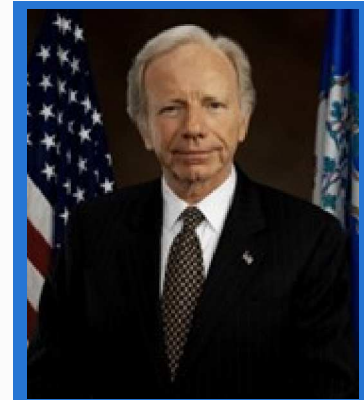


CIVICS IN REAL LIFE

Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how "We the People" interact with the government and each other. Let's help each other expand our civic literacy.

U.S. Senator Joe Lieberman

On March 27th, 2024, Senator Joseph Lieberman, who represented Connecticut in the Senate from 1989-2013, died at the age of 82. Who was Joe Lieberman, and why is he a significant figure in American history and civic life?



Senator Lieberman stands out the most for us because, in 2000, he became [the first Jewish candidate on a major political party ticket](#). That year, he was selected by Democratic presidential candidate (and sitting vice president under Bill Clinton) Al Gore to serve as his vice presidential running mate against the Republican campaign of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. As a candidate, Lieberman stood as a hardworking example of bipartisan consensus, with a generally conservative approach to politics while also supporting the generally liberal-centrist platform of the Democratic Party. Ultimately, he came within just a few votes of becoming the first-ever Jewish vice president of the United States. [The 2000 election was one of the closest ever](#), and

the Bush-Cheney ticket, though losing the popular vote, won by 5 electoral votes. It wasn't until December 12th of that year that the Gore-Lieberman ticket learned [they lost Florida by about 500 votes](#) and officially gave Bush-Cheney the victory. Senator Lieberman was that close to history.



As a senator, Lieberman was known for being bipartisan, with his tenure in the Senate being one of compromise and collaboration. He was not afraid to [challenge his own party](#) when he disagreed with it or its leaders, with the most notable example being [his criticism of President Bill Clinton's personal conduct](#) that led to his impeachment. Lieberman's bipartisan approach to politics and belief in the importance of country over party put his 2006 reelection to the U.S. Senate in jeopardy. That year, he lost the Democratic primary to challenger, [Ned Lamont](#). Despite this set back, Lieberman chose to [run as an unaffiliated candidate](#) instead. He ultimately [kept his Senate seat](#), thanks to a coalition of Democrats, Republicans, and independents who supported his bid for re-election over the candidates of the Democratic and Republican parties.

Joe Lieberman was a man of principle and believed in the importance of placing the country above party and politics. Perhaps his own words illustrate this sentiment best, "[I agree more often than not with Democrats on domestic policy. I agree more often than not with Republicans on foreign and defense policy.](#)" Clearly, he was not afraid to take a controversial position that showed his independence.

Legislatively, he played a key role in [the development of the Department of Homeland Security](#). He helped develop the [video game rating system](#) that is still used today. He led the effort to allow gay people to serve openly in the military and to adopt children. He supported efforts to [punish the leaking of secrets](#) that could affect national security. He advocated for a strong national defense and fight against terrorism, including the war in Iraq. He wanted more government surveillance to try and prevent terrorism. He opposed some parts of President Obama's Affordable Care Act, despite caucusing with the Democrats as an independent.

Senator Lieberman will be remembered for many things, but above all, [he will be remembered](#) for his service to the nation and to the people of his beloved Connecticut.

To Think and To Do: To Think To Do: The late U.S. Senator and 2008 Republican presidential candidate, John McCain, wrote of Joe Lieberman, "I completely trusted, liked, and worked well with Joe. And I still believe, whatever the effect it would have had in some quarters of the party, that a McCain-Lieberman ticket would have been received by most Americans as a genuine effort to pull the country together for a change." In your view, how do Senator McCain's words illustrate the bipartisan nature Joe Lieberman approached governance? Explain.

Learn More:

- [The 2000 Election](#), from the National Constitution Center
- [Joe Lieberman Press Conference on Violent Video Games](#), from SafeShare
- [Joe Lieberman and Homeland Security](#), from Boston University