

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PENCE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CAN SERVE IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OR ANY FIELD OF ENDEAVOR WITH JUST MINOR CHANGES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago, I was up here speaking as the proud sponsor of a resolution honoring Erik Weihenmayer, a young man who inspires not only people with disabilities but all of us struggling to overcome our own obstacles and challenges. As the first blind person to summit Mount Everest, he illustrates the immense power of the human spirit. However, while it is important to pay homage to such remarkable people, I believe it is equally important that we honor those who make such special achievements possible.

Tonight I would like to pay tribute to the gentleman from Illinois (Speaker HASTERT); the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), the minority leader; the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY); and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the ranking member of the Committee on House Administration; the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY); the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Small Business and all their dedicated staff, as well as those who manage the floor activity on a daily basis. They have all provided tremendous support to me as a freshman Member of the United States Congress.

My experience illustrates the compassionate understanding one can receive from his colleagues and employers once they are aware of his or her needs. I have been overwhelmed by just how considerate and flexible my colleagues have been in ensuring that I can work effectively in Congress.

When I dreamed of running for this office, I was not sure how accessible the congressional buildings would be, but from the moment I was elected in November of last year, the hard-working engineers, architects, design managers, and my fellow Members of Congress made it clear that they would do whatever was necessary to make my office, the committees on which I serve, and the House floor accessible. One of the products of this generous response to my needs, in fact, is the lectern and microphone that I am using right now. It took months to design and build this remarkable podium which can be easily raised and lowered and is truly a work of art.

I gratefully recognize all the time and resources that were dedicated to

making this lectern, to installing additional voting machines on the floor, and placing ramps in my committee rooms and providing accessible office space. What everyone involved in this process may not realize, however, is that beyond enabling me to better serve my constituents, they have also opened the doors for people with disabilities to serve in this Chamber in the future.

As I have said many times before, I may be the first quadriplegic elected to the United States Congress but most certainly I will not be the last. The invaluable message that has been delivered in making this Chamber accessible is that any one of the nearly 53 million people with disabilities in this country can become a Member of the United States Congress or can serve in any other field of endeavor with just minor changes.

Mr. Speaker, people with disabilities are an integral but underutilized part of our workforce. With minor accommodations they can become an even more important part of our society and be involved in strengthening America's communities, businesses, and government. That is why I am so thankful to President Bush, who has highlighted the need to make workplaces, housing, education, technology, and our society in general, more accessible to all Americans. The President's new Freedom Initiative is an important proposal which calls for funding of a broad range of programs that together can help create countless new opportunities for many Americans who continually face unnecessary obstacles because of their disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I am eager to work with President Bush to make this new Freedom Initiative a reality. To this end, I recently sent a letter co-signed by 23 of my colleagues to the House appropriators seeking their support in providing funds for the President's proposals. This is an issue on which we can all come together regardless of party background and help open doors for millions of people who are eager to conquer new challenges.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I extend my heartfelt thanks to the dozens of people who have made my tenure in Congress possible. Ensuring that some day every workplace in America will be able to respond to the special needs of employees in the same way is one of my top priorities in Congress. When that happens, we will all benefit from the remarkable talents and contributions of the millions of Americans with disabilities who are eager to pursue their dreams just as I have.

TRIBUTE TO BIRDIE KYLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, in the rush to greatness upon which many of us embark in this city, in the heat of

the TV camera lights, in the chaos of clashing interests, it is important that we pause and take stock of those who brought us here, keep us here, and help make us. So this evening I thank and I pay respect to my long-time legislative director Birdie Kyle who passed away over our recent work period.

Birdie once wrote, "I am a native West Virginian born in Fayette County at MacDunn but raised up on Cabin Creek in the coalfields. I was born in a one-room abandoned boxcar. When I was little, my older sister tormented me when she felt like it by calling me 'Old Boxcar Bill.' I do not remember which made me the madder, being reminded that I was born in a boxcar or being called Bill when I was a girl. Probably both."

That was Birdie Kyle writing for West Virginia's Goldenseal Magazine in 1980.

Well, Boxcar Bill traveled far from her humble beginnings, but she never lost sight of the hills of home or the people there.

Birdie Kyle, a true coal miner's daughter, a native West Virginian in every sense, served West Virginia and our Nation in the Congress for more than 3 decades. Birdie served with me since 1989, and I appreciate deeply her loyalty and dedication. Before that, she spent most of her career with the late Senator Jennings Randolph.

Her mainstay of work for the Senator and for me was education. For Birdie, education was not a part of one's life. It was life itself. Teachers captivated her. Students compelled her.

Books were with her always, from her earliest moments to her latest nights. If books were her backbone, words were her blood. She was the mother of wordsmiths and, boy, could she make me sound good.

Birdie's letters, more often than not, prompted replies, and I got more kudos from her letters than anything.

Her list of legislative responsibilities in my office over the years reads like a record of the republic itself: Education to health care, the Postal Service to the Middle East. As one person who called to express their sympathy said, "She knew everything and everybody."

How true. She could converse on every subject, but that was not her most unique attribute. She did not care if one was king or commoner. She was going to sway you to her belief before you left the building, and most of the time she did.

Will there ever be another Birdie Kyle? No. Can one person fill her shoes? No.

Birdie was, in addition, the poet laureate of the office. Each Christmas and on my birthday she composed wonderful verses that not only made me feel special but it was so wonderful I started believing it.

She gave me my voice on many issues, issues of life and death, on wealth and poverty, on education and ignorance, health care and child care.

Her deep compassion infected us all. In a city where a lot of people can

make a buck off an issue, Birdie poured her heart and soul into those issues and sought nothing in return.

Her family, her mother, her sisters, her children, and grandson all meant everything to Birdie. In fact, I think she would have liked to adopt me because sometimes she thought I needed a mom in town, and she was probably right.

Each time that she came in to see me in my office to offer her advice and wisdom, she would tap lightly on my door. No one else ever did that. I knew that I was either in trouble for a vote I had cast on the floor that day contrary to her suggestions, or I was in store for a witty argument on an upcoming vote in this body.

There will be many days and many nights ahead when I will miss that tapping at my door, but I will have many years of memories, many years of good counsel and many years of friendship upon which to reflect and rely.

Washington is a city of monuments hewn of stone and sewn with mortar. We can admire these great people and we should, but Washington is also the city that spreads forth the ray of hope for our Nation and our world. Birdie Kyle spent her life igniting that hope.

I was honored to know and work with Birdie. Without her, I would not have been as good a representative nor as good a person as I am. Many of us in this body can say that about our staff.

About right now, somebody up there in heaven is getting a morning briefing from Birdie, and I am sure it is not a pretty sight with all that needs to be righted in the world. We all know that heaven is in good hands with Birdie Kyle up there at the helm.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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SALVATION ARMY DISCRIMINATING AGAINST GAYS AND LESBIANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PENCE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this evening because of a shocking story that appeared on the front page of the Washington Post this morning about a secret deal between, of all people, of all organizations, the Salvation Army, to support charitable choice in exchange for the issuance of a White House regulation, OMB Circular No. A-102, that would deny assistance to States or localities that require religious charities to adhere to their non-discrimination laws as they apply to gay men and women. Now, of course,

these nondiscrimination laws have to do with the activities of these religious charities that do not relate to their religions.

A political deal should be beneath the dignity of the Salvation Army, given its long Christian heritage, not to mention the President of the United States. It is a deal to discriminate under the table.

According to the lead document, this cannot be done in the legislative process very easily, so they had to do it by regulation. Charitable choice already contains a fatal flaw, because, as put forward by the administration, it would allow a religious organization to discriminate using government money by requiring people it hires to do a government task to be of their religion. That is a direct violation of Title VI and of the Constitution of the United States.

I am a former Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. I strongly support an exemption in the law that I administered, Title VII, which allows a religious denomination an exemption to the antidiscrimination law in hiring people of their own religion with their own money. But we cannot give the Baptists and the Lutherans and the Catholics and the Jews our money and say you can discriminate when you perform services in our name. That is already a problem with the bill.

But in order to make it perfectly clear, in case that does not survive, that at least people who are gay and lesbian should not be discriminated against, this would be done by regulation.

Mr. Speaker, why the Salvation Army would engage in this deal is really perplexing. The Salvation Army already gets \$300 million in funds from the Federal Government to do their wonderful work. They get it because they abide by government regulations that say when you use government money, you cannot proselytize, you cannot engage in religion, because this is America, and this is what we have stood for, for everybody. So they already get money, just like Catholic charities and just like Lutheran charities and just like Jewish charities all get money, and they have accepted it, and I hope they will continue to get it on the basis that everybody else who does the government's work accepts it, and that is as long as we are doing the government's work, then your money is the public money, and we cannot discriminate against anybody when giving those services.

This body has already a long history of discriminating against gays and lesbians in the District of Columbia, because whenever there is anything in our law that allows equal protection for people of a different sexual orientation, then somebody hops up here and tries, and often succeeds, in overturning the law. Now we are trying to do to do what you do to the District of Columbia to hundreds of localities and States in the United States.

I hope everybody understands what it feels like to intrude in the affairs of local jurisdictions in a federalist society, a society where we say, look, different strokes for different folks. Some of us behave one way with respect to our laws, others another way. Some people have chosen to protect gay men and lesbians against discrimination, and I say God bless them. In the 21st century we should not be discriminating against any Americans based on a characteristic that has nothing to do with performance. Sexual orientation has nothing to do with performance, and the last people, the last organizations who should be engaged in such discrimination are organizations that go by the name "Christian," and the Salvation Army should be ashamed of itself that it has been caught red-handed on the front page of the Washington Post in the column where you put war and peace. Thank God that they were exposed.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. McINNIS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised by the previous speaker and her unrelenting attack against the Salvation Army. She apparently got the merits for this attack from one newspaper article. I have heard the gentlewoman previously speak from here. I think she is well-educated. She comes generally with numerous sources when she speaks. That is why I am very surprised that she takes one newspaper article and launches an attack against the Salvation Army, which I would like to say to the gentlewoman has helped millions and millions of people throughout the history of this country. I think such an attack is unfounded, and I think you should hear the other side of the story.

I would advise the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia to immediately go to a TV, turn on CNN on the half-hour, or some other broadcast, and she will find that the other side of the story has come out. In fact, I just spent some time, I was not looking for the story, I was grabbing a snack and watching the other side of the story being played out, and once the gentlewoman sees that, she will moderate the comments against the Salvation Army.

I do not disagree with her point, I want to make this clear to the gentlewoman. I do not think any kind of secret deal should be made. But I do not think the Salvation Army went out and made a secret deal to discriminate against people, contrary to the laws of the United States. And I think that in all fairness to the Salvation Army, as well as the President of the United States, that both sides of the story should be read, both sides of the story