

here for a long time, but when JERRY got elected, he called me. And no one has ever called me and taken an interest in the small town that I represent. And it wasn't for the purpose of trying to get projects, because we know that those are very difficult when you have a lot of cities. But JERRY WELLER cares about the little people in this country so much so that he contacted all of the small town mayors and all the mayors just to say that he's our new Congressman and he's there to help us."

I can't find a better tribute to an individual who does stuff like that, anybody who takes the time to travel the area and get to know the people.

I also noticed that when I was with him, people would call me "Congressman MANZULLO" but they would call him "JERRY." I said, You know what? What a title of honor to feel comfortable enough around this man, and even with the dignified title of "Congressman," they called him "JERRY." And why? Because JERRY has always been JERRY. Just your average young man working on a hog farm with a desirous heart to serve America elected to the United States House of Representatives.

And JERRY, we're going to miss you. We're going to miss your humor, your unfunny jokes. We laughed at them just to be polite.

And, RAY, we're going to miss you also because of the dignity that you always would bring to the House of Representatives. You had the heaviest mallet in the House. When you hit that mallet, people would sort of stand to attention.

HONORING RAY LAHOOD AND JERRY WELLER

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, I, too, am honored to be here tonight just for 5 minutes to talk about two of my colleagues, two of my mentors, two of my friends who helped me as a new Member of Congress. They both served seven terms, finishing their seven terms, 14 years. One's about 10 years older, one is the same age.

Both represented—well, JERRY had parts of Cook County, Chicago in his first district, but mostly south of I-80 guys, which brings in a different dynamic in Illinois politics, which is rural, small town, agriculture interests.

□ 2115

I'd like first to spend time to talk about JERRY and his fight on the Ways and Means Committee primarily—most of us know him for eliminating the marriage penalty, and that was before JERRY got married. So it was no conflict of interest. He wasn't in doing things for himself.

And since that time not only did he save—I mean the basic debate that he made was this. Marriage should not be penalized under the Tax Code, and that position he fought hard and long for, and it has maintained itself until the loss of the majority here. And that marriage penalty is threatened unfortunately by Democratic control of Congress, and hopefully, they will make that permanent, and it will be a tribute to you, JERRY, if they do that.

Not only does he have a lovely young bride, a congresswoman, Zury Rios Sosa from Guatemala, but a lovely daughter, and I can't even pronounce her first name, Marizu Catherine Weller, and JERRY has been proud to show these pictures around. We understand why JERRY now has chosen a different path in life. He's got a lovely bride, a young daughter. This is not a very great profession for families. It's very challenging. And no one casts any disappointment on JERRY WELLER choosing family over a profession here.

JERRY's been a confidante and friend. Our staffs are very close. My chief of staff worked in his first campaign. JERRY has been very helpful to me. He knows that. I'm honored to call you a friend, and I look forward to working with you for many years to go.

RAY LAHOOD. These guys are like two polar opposite-type guys. RAY's come up through the political system as a staff director for Leader Bob Michel, a State rep himself, a man of the institution. Shocking that he would decide to leave because he loves the institution so much. RAY is close friends with former Speaker Denny Hastert. He's a guy that you always know where RAY stands, and he's not embarrassed to tell you, and he's not embarrassed to tell his constituents when they agree with him and when they don't.

RAY has a unique ability to confront those in opposition with him forcefully and firmly. Some of those attributes I've tried to take on because sometimes you have to confront those who attack your values and your position. You've got to attack it front on. You don't want to be coy. You just want to tell them what it is you believe and why, and that's what RAY has always brought to the table.

RAY and I have had our own fights, but our friendship and loyalty has lasted through the time of our service. He's also finishing his seventh term, that means 14 years as a Member of the House, many years with Leader Michel, probably 30-plus years in Federal service that he's done for this great country.

A man from Peoria, born, raised there, lives there, went to school there,

again a southern Illinoisan who tries to balance the interests of rural America and agriculture interests with some of the big, monumental issues of our time. He proudly represented Caterpillar, which the home office is in Peoria, and made sure, as JERRY WELLER did, the importance of trade to both our agricultural community and manufacturing sector, especially Caterpillar.

These are good friends, mentors to me, mentors when I was doing stuff right and mentors when I was probably going off the track and I needed some direction to stay focused on the responsibilities as a Member of Congress. JERRY was always there to help me do that. RAY definitely was, also. I appreciate that.

We're going to miss them, but they have chosen to pursue other pursuits. We want to honor and recognize that, and I want to thank them publicly for their service.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE JERRY WELLER AND THE HONORABLE RAY LAHOOD

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

Mr. ROSKAM. Madam Speaker, it is a real honor for me to be here with my colleagues from Illinois to honor two men who have really served admirably and have brought great pride to the Land of Lincoln.

The first is Congressman JERRY WELLER who I got to know in the Illinois House of Representatives, and I served for one term with Congressman WELLER. When he was in the State House of Representatives, he had a reputation of somebody who knew how to come back.

And he got involved in a tough election, and I won't drag you all through the weeds of that tough election, but he got dealt a tough blow in that many people thought he fairly won that election, but for a whole host of political reasons, he wasn't seated in that election. Do you know what? Rather than going home and say, oh, woe is me, JERRY WELLER came back and he went out and he campaigned, and he earned the confidence of the voters of that district. He earned the confidence of his neighbors in Morris, Illinois, and he came back, and he was there to greet me when I first went to the House of Representatives in 1992.

Then JERRY WELLER was a part of the historic class of 1994 that came in, and as has been previously mentioned by Mr. MANZULLO and Mr. SHIMKUS, he was the person who focused in on repealing that marriage penalty, and I remember him talking about that to me. I remember him focusing on that. I remember reading about JERRY WELLER pursuing that and pursuing that and pursuing that, and as we all know, it is a very difficult thing to pass a major piece of landmark legislation like that. There's a lot of exit

ramps around here for good ideas. There's a lot of trap doors for good ideas. But JERRY WELLER was tenacious and he was able to put together the coalitions. He was focused and he got that done, and today, millions of Americans have fundamentally benefited because of his tenacity and the political savvy with which he moved that through the House and ultimately through the Congress.

He had other successes as well, and that was the transformation of the Joliet arsenal in Illinois, and that was property that had not it been for his leadership in his district, it could have essentially gone by the wayside. But because he was tenacious and he was focused, it's been turned into a good thing.

So JERRY WELLER, we are going to miss you, and it is with regret that we're here tonight. But it is with a great deal of hope and optimism that we'll see you and your tenacity and the glint in your eye.

The other person that we're here to honor is also another member of that class, and that is Congressman RAY LAHOOD. Congressman LAHOOD has been described by Mr. SHIMKUS as a man of the House, and I kind of feel like he has the demeanor of sort of Dad coming home. When he would be in the Chair and the House would be raucous and a little bit spunky, he would gavel that down, and he was entrusted with the gavel during some of the most historic times.

And he is a man of history because he serves in the same seat that Abraham Lincoln served in. He's from the same hometown as another Illinois great, that is, Everett Dirksen. He served also at the side of Bob Michel, and these are great Illinoisans.

I'm pleased that now the Easter Seals of Peoria, Illinois, has chosen to honor Congressman LAHOOD and his bride by setting up the Ray and Kathy LaHood House for Children with Special Needs.

I think it's indicative of the type of person that he is, the type of integrity, the directness with which he interacts with his colleagues, and I know that that's great encouragement not only to me but I know it's great encouragement and a great example for all Americans.

So for these two men who have chosen to sacrifice so greatly and serve our State so well, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that it is with a great deal of pride that I say it's been an honor to serve with Congressman WELLER. It's been an honor to serve with Congressman LAHOOD, and I look forward to our paths crossing many, many times in the future.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to honor the incredible service of my very good friend RAY LAHOOD. I have had the privilege of serving alongside him as a Member of the Conference and as an Appropriator.

I first met RAY when he was a young staffer for Bob Michel. He performed invaluable serv-

ice in helping Bob be a great leader. RAY's son Darin was looking for work and it was a pleasure to bring him into the extended Lewis family as a part of my personal office. With my encouragement, Darin went on to law school as an attorney in Nevada. I know I share RAY's pride as Darin has returned home to Illinois to run for Peoria County State's Attorney.

RAY is a consensus-builder and a common-sense legislator and has distinguished himself as a champion of this great institution. Throughout his time here he has fought vigorously to ensure the Capitol stays the "people's house" and that it remains a beacon for motivated and service-minded young people.

I know his constituents appreciate his selfless service. His efforts are a testament to the highest level of commitment an individual can demonstrate on behalf of others. I join my colleagues in wishing RAY, Kathy, and his family well.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the 5-minute Special Order of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is vacated.

There was no objection.

TRIBUTES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, at this time I do want to yield such time as he may consume to the man who has been talked about a great deal. If I didn't know better and didn't know him so well, I would say they've been exaggerating, but there has been no exaggeration, a great man, a great Representative. It's been an honor to serve with him.

I yield to JERRY WELLER of Illinois.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I want to thank my good friend from Texas for sharing his time in giving me the opportunity to say thank you, not only thank you to my constituents but thank you to my colleagues, particularly those from the Illinois delegation who are here tonight, my friend DON MANZULLO and JOHN SHIMKUS and PETER ROSKAM for taking time to say a few nice things about RAY LAHOOD and myself, and for that I appreciate that so much. But also I want to say thank you for the partnership I've had with you as a member of the Illinois delegation over the 14 years that I've had the privilege of serving in this House.

You know, RAY LAHOOD's a good friend to all of us, and of course, I want to take a moment and just salute RAY LAHOOD who, as my colleagues in the delegation and all the Members of the House, both Republican and Democrat know, is a man who's a man of this institution, someone who's worked tirelessly to bring civility to the House, a man who led efforts to convene bipartisan retreats. Four House bipartisan

retreats were cochaired by RAY LAHOOD in his effort to bring civility and bipartisanship to the House. And I think if you can think of just one thing about RAY LAHOOD, it is his commitment and desire that the institution of this Congress should work together to solve the challenges that we have before us.

You know, I look back over the 14 years that I've had the privilege of serving in the House as a member of the House Ways and Means Committee and the opportunity I had to serve on the Foreign Affairs Committee and serve, of course, as a deputy whip. I think of those opportunities to get to know my colleagues and have an opportunity to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and I can't say a few words tonight without saying thank you to all the men and women that I've had the privilege of serving with, for the courtesies, for the opportunity to work together, and frankly, we had some good times as well in that process. I want to say thank you to everyone, and I also want to thank my colleagues for serving in this Congress.

You know, there's a lot of work that goes sight unseen. You don't often get thanked enough for the work that's done behind the scenes, but I want to thank my colleagues for their work and for their commitment to public service.

I also want to thank my colleagues for the support that you have given me in the projects and the legislation that I've had the opportunity to work on.

My friends mentioned the marriage tax penalty, which was an issue of fairness, and that issue came to me in my first campaign. I remember a young woman who came up, she was working in the office in my campaign, and she said, you know, JERRY, if you do get elected to Congress, there's an issue I want you to look into and I hope you will fix it. It's a penalty. If you're married, you're going to pay higher taxes.

She said, you know, my boyfriend and I, we want to get married. We both have pretty good jobs, and my friends said you better do your taxes jointly just to experiment and find out what your obligation would be. And they did that. They discovered they paid about \$1,400 more in higher taxes just if they got married.

□ 2130

And because it was clear to me that it was unfair and, frankly, wrong that you should pay higher taxes just because you're married, that doesn't seem right, it's wrong, that our Tax Code was punishing marriage; where if two people worked, and because when you marry you file jointly, your incomes were combined. And the way our complicated Tax Code was structured, 42 million married working couples across America were paying higher taxes, on average about \$1,400.

And I want to thank President Bush for signing into law my legislation eliminating the marriage tax penalty,