

## HONORING TAYLOR BURTCH

## HON. FREDERICA S. WILSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor the service of Taylor Burtch, my fellow who has worked to improve our Nation's education system. Taylor has proven to be a talented and intelligent policy analyst, always ready to take on any task and apply her knowledge.

Taylor assisted my education policy team, where she worked on legislation, partook in stakeholder meetings, and considered various ways to improve education and teacher assistance. She is a detailed and focused professional with the ability to excel in her projects.

Originally from Dundee, Michigan, Taylor completed her bachelor's degree in Women's Studies at the University of Toledo and her master's degree in Gender and Sexualities Research at the University of Florida. Currently, Taylor is a doctoral candidate at the University of Florida. She will receive her PhD in Higher Education Administration and Policy after successfully defending her dissertation, which focuses on the exploration of college trajectories among young persons with adverse childhood experiences, in the Summer of 2023. Taylor will use her passion for education equity to continue her policy research and advocate for improve conditions for marginalized communities.

The first fellow to serve in the University of Florida's Legislative Education Fellows program, Taylor has made my office proud to receive the university's inaugural fellow.

On behalf of Florida's 24th Congressional District, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Taylor Burtch for her inevitable success.

## TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE RYAN COONERTY ON HIS RETIREMENT

## HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the work of Santa Cruz County's Third District Supervisor, Ryan Coonerty, who is retiring after serving two terms as a Member of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors.

Ryan Coonerty has a long and distinguished history of public service. He served twice as the Mayor of the City of Santa Cruz, and was first elected to the Board of Supervisors in 2014. He hosts a podcast, An Honorable Profession, and co-founded NextSpace Co-working and Innovation, serves as a lecturer on law and government at U.C. Santa Cruz, and co-wrote The Rise of the Naked Economy.

As a Santa Cruz County Supervisor, Ryan worked to create affordable housing, expanded public safety programs, voter access and family health. He is a respected leader on environmental issues and opposed offshore oil and gas drilling. He is a steadfast supporter of women's rights and LGBTQIA+ equality, and an advocate for local immigrant families.

Supervisor Coonerty has been a leader on the Board of Supervisors in bringing forward proposals to address post CZU Fire issues, such as the creation of the Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience, initiating a debris clearance process, and more recently, addressing permitting and rebuilding challenges. While the fire was burning, he put out an email newsletter almost daily to keep residents informed.

Ryan and I have worked together on North Coast issues, especially balancing tourism with control over traffic, noise, and trash. He helped set up the North Coast Multi-Agency Working Group, which I'm an ex-officio member of.

Ryan has received many honors, among them his selection as a Rodel Fellow in Public Leadership by the Aspen Institute as one of "the nation's most promising young elected officials". He was honored as a Community Hero by the Red Cross of Santa Cruz County, and Advocate of the Year by the United Way of the County.

Ryan Coonerty is a graduate of the University of Oregon's Clark Honors College, the London School of Economics, and earned his law degree from the University of Virginia. He and his wife Emily reside in Santa Cruz with their children Daisy and Kellan.

Madam Speaker, I ask the entire House of Representatives to join me in thanking Ryan Coonerty for his exemplary service and wishing him every blessing in the next chapter of his life. Because of his superb leadership we are a better community and a stronger country.

## HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF BOBBY SILVERSTEIN

## HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Mrs. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life and legacy of Bobby Silverstein, a devoted public servant who made monumental progress advancing disability rights. Over the span of a career serving both chambers of Congress, Bobby worked behind the scenes to deliver countless wins for the disability community. Notably, he played a pivotal role in the development and enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act during his time serving as staff director and chief counsel for Senator Harkin's Disability Subcommittee.

Every person deserves to live and age with dignity, and this was a principal Bobby committed himself to every day. Bobby will be remembered for his compassion, track record of success, and passion for giving a voice to those who feel forgotten, and these sentiments are shared by his colleague and friend, Peter Thomas, who spoke at Bobby's memorial service. In honor of Bobby, I include in the Record Peter's speech.

## REMARKS OF PETER W. THOMAS AT BOBBY SILVERSTEIN'S MEMORIAL SERVICE

Like the bright sun on this crisp fall afternoon, Bobby Silverstein shines his light on us today.

Good afternoon. I'm Peter Thomas, Managing Partner of Powers law firm in Washington, DC.

If the measure of a person's life is the number who mourn his or her passing, then Bobby Silverstein knocked life out of the park.

There are no words to express the depth of loss we all feel. I usually take Bobby's lead and try to speak diplomatically, rather than bluntly, but you can't sugarcoat this. Bobby's untimely passing is a dagger. It's a gut punch that will be felt for a long time to come.

But we would not have learned from Bobby if we did not focus on the positive. The impact his life had on so many. The love he spread throughout his life and the fact that we are all better off for knowing him.

As we approach Thanksgiving, let us recognize those who can be thankful for Bobby Silverstein and all he did to improve the lives of people with disabilities:

1. If you have a child with an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD), think about thanking Bobby.

2. If someone you know needed special education and an individualized education plan (IEP), think about thanking Bobby.

3. If you can access public services and transportation despite your disability, think about thanking Bobby.

4. If you are employed as a person with a disability, Bobby probably deserves your thanks.

5. If you benefitted from research on rehabilitation, disability, and independent living, thank Bobby Silverstein.

6. If you are relying on this interpreter or using closed captioning on this livestream, Bobby played a role and is worthy of thanks.

7. I could go on, but the magnitude of the positive impact Bobby had on our lives is truly astounding.

Bobby was my partner at Powers' health care and disability practice for the past 15 years. What an honor and privilege it is to have shared his space on this earth; to have shared a front-row seat in his work on behalf of the people he devoted his professional life to; individuals with disabilities.

I first met Bobby in 1989 while I was in law school trying to pass legislation to establish a prosthetics research program to help people with limb loss, like myself. Bobby was working for Senator Tom Harkin's Disability Policy Subcommittee as staff director and chief counsel. I was no one, and I was very nervous.

Bobby was gracious but serious and direct. He told me the Claude Pepper Act for Amputees, as the bill was known, had little chance of passing because it was "not integrated into the disability policy framework." That probably sounds familiar to some of you but I scratched my head. He said he could not be supportive of legislation to help amputees alone at the exclusion of others with disabilities in similar circumstances.

Long story short, in the end, and with much help from Bobby, the bill enacted into law the following year created the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR) at NIH. The center's mission is medical rehabilitation research writ large, but the law includes specific mention of prosthetics research and development. The center has been a major funder of prosthetics research for over 30 years which, of course, accomplished the original goal of the Claude Pepper bill but did it in a way that was, in fact, integrated into the disability policy framework.

I learned a great deal from that experience that I have put to use throughout my career, and in life. I know many others who have had the same experience when they came into Bobby's orbit.

In fact, one of Bobby's most blessed gifts was to those who sought his guidance. Bobby was an exceptional mentor to those with and

without disabilities. I am so grateful that the health care associates and young professionals in my firm got the opportunity to hear from Bobby just one week before he passed away.

Bobby presented virtually to the Powers health care group on the “Art of Negotiation” and imparted years of wisdom on the younger members of the Powers Team. Bobby was his old self, methodically presenting his well-prepared remarks, highlighting his points with examples of bill negotiations from his Senate days, and laying out his process which relied heavily on preparation.

I took a look at some of Bobby’s binders over the past few days and could not believe what I saw. Well-organized, tabbed, color-coded, and dog-eared for sure, but each page is full of comments in the margins, underlined words, double underlines, circled words, pencil, pen highlighter, sticky notes, stars, exclamation points! Double explanation points!!

He sucked the pulp off those pages. It was an exercise in aggressive reading!

His dedication, passion, and clarity of focus left me awe-struck. Those were not the work papers of a casual lawyer. Bobby was no 9-to-5er. He was most fulfilled after a full weekend of work, producing a 12-page, single-spaced memo and seeking review and substantive comment; before 12:00 Noon on Monday.

Bobby was the consummate professional who lived and breathed disability policy. As he said many times, Bobby considered his work to be his therapy, even in his final hours.

His list of accomplishments is remarkable: The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Georgetown University Law Center, cutting his teeth at a public interest law firm, House committee staff, Senate Disability Policy Chief Counsel and Staff Director, Director of the Center for the Study and Advancement of Disability Policy, and mediator for the U.S. Appellate Court in Washington, DC—all before settling into the last 15 years of his career at Powers law.

His awards are too numerous to mention. While he accepted them graciously, his beloved wife Lynne tells me that he housed them in his closet. And that’s really all you need to know about Bobby Silverstein.

Bobby never sought the limelight. He never craved credit. They say “Success has many parents and failure is an orphan.” There are many who can legitimately claim playing a key role in enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, some of whom will speak after me, but Bobby went out of his way to stay behind-the-scenes: To do the heavy lifting; the principled negotiation; always with a goal of getting to “yes.” And his track record demonstrates his effectiveness: Twenty federal laws impacting people with disabilities, all bipartisan and all based on consensus. It is an incredible legacy to leave behind.

In the past few days, I have heard from literally hundreds of Bobby’s colleagues and friends expressing their sentiments:

1. A genuine, kind, and humble man
2. An endless fountain of good humor and optimism
3. One of a kind; he has no equal
4. Such a force and a relentless advocate
5. Uncompromising defender of what is right and true
6. Thorough and analytical yet thoughtful and compassionate
7. A selfless mentor to anyone in need of guidance
8. A visionary, yet practical
9. Tough but warm, and always the voice of reason Case in point: When Bobby told a room full of leaders that their theory was

“preposterous”—We were all thinking it, but he was the only one brave enough to say it!

10. A giant in the disability community

For me personally, I will miss Bobby pain-fully in our internal policy debates, our ad-vo-cacy on behalf of people with disabilities, and on our weekly Legislative Practice calls. But mostly, I will just miss my friend.

Bobby was the most positive person I have ever known and I will always be grateful for the time we spent together. For that, let me say thank you, Bobby. Thank you so very much.

COMMEMORATING THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN

HON. HALEY M. STEVENS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Ms. STEVENS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the City of Birmingham, Michigan, for its role in the American abolitionist movement and to recognize the bravery and sacrifice of those who risked their lives seeking freedom from the atrocity of slavery in the United States. As important work continues to appropriately recognize and educate around this terrible period of American history, it is a great honor to highlight the story of Birmingham, Michigan, and two individuals who dedicated themselves to helping others achieve their freedom.

The Birmingham Museum of Birmingham, Michigan, documented the remarkable role the city and its residents played in the anti-slavery movement through its research into Birmingham’s Black heritage. The city was proud to submit its application to list Birmingham’s Greenwood Cemetery on the National Park Service’s Underground Railroad Network to Freedom list. Birmingham’s application to the network was officially accepted in March of 2022 and was further recognized by the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission. The stories of two men, Elijah S. Fish and George B. Taylor, were compiled as accounts of Birmingham’s connection to the Underground Railroad, and I would like to share more about their harrowing stories today.

Elijah S. Fish was among the first settlers to purchase land in what is now Birmingham, Michigan, in 1820. Mr. Fish’s land acquisition occurred just two years after Birmingham’s founding as one of the oldest settlements in Michigan. Described as a “principled and hardworking man,” Mr. Fish became an influential figure in Birmingham’s early history, founding its first Presbyterian Church and becoming its first deacon. As territorial Michigan grew, Birmingham became an important stop along the route from Detroit to Pontiac. Its convenient location expanded Birmingham’s potential to influence regional economy and politics, and Mr. Fish seized upon this opportunity to become a key figure in the abolition movement of early Michigan.

Mr. Fish served as a dedicated organizer of anti-slavery efforts through the associations he formed with other abolitionists, such as lawyer and state legislator George Wisner of Pontiac and Quaker activist Nathan Power of Farmington. Even before Michigan was granted statehood, Mr. Fish and 50 other abolitionists founded the Oakland County Free Discussion

and Anti-Slavery Society. His work with the organization continued throughout the early 1840’s, as he continued to fight to end the enslavement of black Americans from his home in Birmingham, Michigan.

By 1840, Michigan had developed a strong network of anti-slavery organizers and thousands of freedom seekers were aided through Michigan’s Underground Railroad network. As bounty hunters became more aggressive in their efforts to recapture freedom-seekers in the region, and upon the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, anti-slavery advocates redirected freedom-seekers through the state and toward Canada as a safer destination for those escaping enslavement. Individuals such as Henry Bibb, an influential abolitionist lecturer, relocated across the Detroit River to Windsor, Ontario, around 1850, to assist in resettling escapees who arrived via the Underground Railroad and began publication of The Voice of the Fugitive. Helping people who were enslaved establish new lives in Canada required a system of abolitionists on both sides of the border. Organizations such as Michigan’s Friends of Humanity had active anti-slavery advocates from Oakland County such as Elijah Fish and Nathan Power, and Wayne County’s Reverend Marcus Swift who were instrumental in fueling the continued efforts to combat slavery in America and safely usher Black Americans to freedom in Canada.

A convention of anti-slavery advocates was held in May of 1851 in Detroit with Elijah Fish presiding as President. The convention resulted in the formation of the Refugee Home Society to raise funds necessary to make land purchases in Canada for freedom-seekers. Mr. Fish remained committed to the cause following the convention by funding and providing supplies to freedom-seekers navigating the Underground Railroad and by organizing influential abolitionist speakers to the region to raise awareness and speak on the anti-slavery movement. While Mr. Fish was unable to celebrate the successful prohibition of slavery due to his death in February of 1861, his contribution to the movement in Michigan helped propel the nation toward abolition, a feat that was accomplished just four years after his death. His admirable dedication to abolition makes him a noteworthy historical figure of Birmingham and deserving of this posthumous recognition.

Mr. George B. Taylor’s story illustrates the cruel conditions that were withheld by those who were enslaved, and the sacrifices made to gain their freedom. Mr. Taylor, like many other people born into slavery, did not know his family history and did not have birth records, but his estimates place his birth year around 1822 to 1824. Despite years of inhumane treatment during his enslavement by the Greathouse family of Hancock County, Kentucky, it was not until 1855, after experiencing a public whipping, that he became determined to escape to the north. Throughout his treacherous and long journey northward, he encountered unimaginable risk that was, sadly, not unique to him. He narrowly evaded capture by armed bounty hunters who were aided by bloodhounds and navigated hundreds of miles of difficult terrain using only the stars in the night sky. His journey can be described as nothing short of incredible.

The month-long trip from Hancock, Kentucky, to Michigan was over 300 miles, and even upon arrival in the north, significant danger remained as raids of known abolitionists’