

MIKE BILIRAKIS was my immediate neighbor as he represents the Ninth Congressional District of Florida just to my north. There is no member more beloved by his constituents than MIKE BILIRAKIS as they respect him as a man of character and integrity.

MIKE was not a member who scheduled press conferences or spoke often on the House floor. He did his work behind the scenes and was tenacious when seeing matters through to their conclusion. You only need to look at his efforts to provide concurrent receipt payments for our Nation's veterans who retired from military service with a disability. After more than a decade, his legislation was signed into law to solve this terrible inequity for so many veterans. Likewise, he fought tirelessly for veterans with spinal cord injuries to expand the spinal cord treatment unit at the Haley VA Hospital.

This is how he worked on the many other issues that were of special interest to him including health care, Medicare, seniors issues, or medical research. He took his work as Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health seriously and spent considerable time on the many legislative matters that fell within their jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, MIKE BILIRAKIS is a patriot and statesman and we will miss the quiet grace with which he and his wife Evelyn served the people of Florida. For me, I will especially miss him as a friend and confidant. They are a special couple who I wish all the best in their retirement years. And I know it is with great pride that they will watch as their son Gus is sworn-in next month to establish a new legacy of service in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I also rise to pay tribute to CLAY SHAW, the Chairman of our Florida delegation. He has done outstanding work over the past few years in keeping the 25 members of our delegation communicating and focusing on the needs of our large and growing state.

CLAY also has a distinguished record of legislative success in this House. He chaired three Subcommittees of the Ways and Means Committee, leaving behind an indelible stamp of success in many divergent areas. It was under his chairmanship that we passed and enacted sweeping welfare reform. He was a voice of reason as chairman of the Social Security Subcommittee as the Congress and our Nation has wrestled with the best approach to sure up the financial integrity of the Social Security Trust Funds. And in his latest assignment, he has advanced the issues of global trade and competitiveness as chairman of the Trade Subcommittee.

He has also been an unquestioned champion for our environment as he has been a leader in the restoration of the Everglades, the renourishment of Florida's beautiful beaches, and in fighting to prevent drilling for oil off Florida's coastline.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to his legislative successes, CLAY is also a personal inspiration as he and Emilie have worked together to represent our Nation, our state, and the 22nd district of Florida with great energy and integrity. Even two battles with lung cancer never slowed CLAY's drive to serve in this House as he never missed a step.

Our colleagues from Florida, those who served with him on the Ways and Means Committee, and all those who have come to

know him over the past 26 years will miss CLAY and his easygoing yet thoughtful manner.

Mr. Speaker, KATHERINE HARRIS is one of our delegation's most junior members but quickly established herself as one of the hardest working members of this House. She has devoted her career to public service, having been elected to serve Florida as a State Senator, Secretary of State, and member of the House for the past four years representing the people of the 13th Congressional District.

Among her many legislative accomplishments in that short period of time were bills to create more affordable housing opportunities, to provide funding for a veterans cemetery in Sarasota, to restore equity in disability payments for veterans, and to spur free trade. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank KATHERINE for her service here and to wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to JIM DAVIS, my colleague from the 11th District of Florida whom I share the City of St. Petersburg with and who has proudly represented the people of the Tampa Bay area for 10 years.

From his first days in office, JIM has always kept his focus on fiscal responsibility through his work on the Budget Committee. He also established himself as a leader on education issues, particularly in the recruitment in response to severe shortages in Florida and throughout the Nation.

As much as I will remember JIM for his legislative work, I will always remember the care with which he balanced his work here with his passion to spend time with his wife Peggy and their sons Peter and William. JIM found a way to manage the hectic schedule of the House with the need to be with his young sons as they have grown during his five terms here.

Mr. Speaker, the Florida Congressional Delegation has always worked well together in the best interests of the people of Florida. We may have had differences of opinion on national legislation, but we put those differences aside to work on Florida issues. With the departure of CLAY SHAW, MIKE BILIRAKIS, KATHERINE HARRIS, and JIM DAVIS, we lose four Members who have devoted themselves to this House and to our State. We will miss their service and their friendship but we will continue to carry on their commitment to serve with honor and distinction. In closing, I join with all my colleagues who will follow me this evening in wishing each of these Members the very best as they leave the people's House.

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

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

IN APPRECIATION OF DEPARTING FLORIDA MEMBERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my apprecia-

tion for departing members of the Florida Congressional Delegation.

I am especially saddened that I will not see CLAY SHAW walking these halls or voting on this esteemed Floor next year. He is a class act, a true public servant who always demonstrated grace and decency. He has been a great mentor to me, and I can only hope that I can serve in Congress with the same honor CLAY SHAW did for 26 years. I know he will now have more time for his wonderful wife and his lovely family, but I also know that I will miss him dearly.

MIKE BILIRAKIS has earned his retirement from public service and I wish him well. Proverbs states that "A wise son maketh a glad father," and MIKE BILIRAKIS should be a very glad dad. I had the great pleasure of serving with his son Gus in the Florida State Legislature, and I look forward to working with him again in the 110th Congress.

No one can doubt that KATHERINE HARRIS loves Florida. Her family roots run deep in the Sunshine State, and no one is more proud of our great State than her. I am honored to have served with her both in the Florida Statehouse and in this distinguished Chamber. I wish her all the best.

FAREWELL TO FELLOW FLORIDA MEMBERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I join my esteemed colleagues this evening in paying tribute to the Members of the Florida Congressional Delegation who will be departing this body at the end of this week—Representatives CLAY SHAW, MIKE BILIRAKIS, JIM DAVIS, and KATHERINE HARRIS.

It has been an honor and a privilege to work with such fine Americans throughout my tenure in Congress.

Therefore, it is with great sadness that I begin by paying homage to one of our greatest leaders in Congress, CLAY SHAW.

During his 25 years as a Member of Congress, CLAY has demonstrated outstanding service, dedication, hard work, devotion, and love for the American people and our wonderful State of Florida.

As dean of the Florida delegation, CLAY has been a confidant and trusted advisor to many of us.

From offshore drilling, to insurance regulation, to hurricane relief, CLAY has led the Delegation to ensure that we work together on the issues important to Floridians.

Our delegation will never be the same without CLAY at the helm.

We can only hope that our next leader will be of the same caliber and possess equal skills and resourcefulness.

It has been a true pleasure to serve with CLAY, and I know that the legacy of his contributions to this distinguished body will serve as an example for Members both present and future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my dear friend and colleague MICHAEL BILIRAKIS for his 24 years of service to our Nation.

During his time in Congress, MIKE has been a terrific spokesperson for his constituents, and they should be proud that he has served them with honor and distinction.

I have been fortunate to work with MIKE on many different topics affecting our communities locally and abroad.

Together we formed the Congressional Hellenic Caucus, a forum to promote the domestic interests of the Greek-American and Hellenic communities, and we have tackled issues of importance to the Hellenic community such as the just reunification of Cyprus and the appropriate name for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

I am privileged to call MIKE my friend, and I look forward to our continued friendship for many years to come.

I also look forward to working with his son Gus in continuing all the good work MIKE has done for Florida.

I would also like to recognize the Representative from Tampa, Florida, JIM DAVIS.

Upon arriving to Congress in 1996, JIM was elected as President of the incoming freshman class by his Democrat colleagues, an early indication of his keen leadership abilities.

While we have differed on issues, we have been able to come together and work for the good of Florida and our constituents.

JIM has served this body for over a decade, and his colleagues from both sides of the aisle will miss him.

Lastly, KATHERINE HARRIS has been integral part of the Florida delegation and her presence will be sorely missed.

In her time here, KATHERINE has made a tremendous impression on all those she came in contact with.

Not only will her constituents miss KATHERINE, but she will be missed by her colleagues for the central role she had on all her committees, especially the International Relations Committee, where I was fortunate to have her as an ally on Middle East issues.

I also had the opportunity to travel to Iraq with KATHERINE, and meet with Iraqi officials, women Iraqi leaders, and our brave troops.

Her incredible optimism and keen understanding will be deeply missed by our close-knit Florida family.

In closing, I would like to offer my warmest wishes to CLAY, MIKE, JIM, and KATHERINE for their dedicated service to our country.

Whatever your next vocation may be, I am certain that you will all continue to serve the citizens of Florida and our great Nation with dignity and I look forward to working with you all again.

TRIBUTE TO VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE NEW YORK CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

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

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a number of New Yorkers who have served so well in this Congress, some of whom are retiring, some of whom were defeated in the last election, all of whom have served our State ably. I regret, unfortunately, that some members of our very own delegation worked for the defeat of some of these, and unfortunately that does affect the comity and collegiality of our delegation, but we have to resolve that in the coming days.

But I would like to talk about my travel partner, SHERRY BOEHLERT, a man whom I have had the pleasure of getting to know over the last 18 years in my service here. He is a great guy. He is loved in his home. He is loved in Washington by all, as you have heard tonight, people on both sides of the aisle. He is a great baseball fan, a Yankee fan. People love the Yankees because they are the Yankees. They are New York. They are our brand name.

He has served as a congressional staffer for 20 years. He served for former Congressman Alexander Pirnie. So he started at the bottom and worked his way to the very top.

He is possibly the biggest baseball fan in the Congress. He is known as a centrist, a moderate.

He served on the Science Committee since 1983 and became its chairman in 2001. In that capacity, he has been the leading Republican environmentalist in the House, a remarkable title and one that certainly is fitting.

He is recognized as a champion of Federal investment in science and technology. He authored amendments to the Clean Air Act that have changed the way we breathe in this country. He authored the conservation title in 1996 on the farm bill, which changes the way we drink our water. So many things, so many contributions to our community.

Perhaps the greatest contribution that someone in the Boehlert family made was his wife, Marianne, for the time that she spent away from him while he did his job here. We are deeply grateful to Marianne for that. I know SHERRY looks forward to his move to MIKE CASTLE's district and working in the Woodrow Wilson International Center, and he will serve us well there and his country.

I would also like to pay tribute to my colleague and friend, SUE KELLY. SUE was elected in 1994 and is finishing her sixth term in the Congress. She represents the West Point District of New York. Prior to coming to Congress, she had a professional career that ranged from teacher, to small business owner, patient advocate, rape counselor, PTA president and biomedical researcher. What a resume.

She was appointed chairman of the House Financial Services Oversight Investigations Subcommittee, was a co-author of Sarbanes-Oxley, and made her subcommittee a leading force in Congress to improve the Federal Government's ability to track and disrupt terrorist financing. She also served on the bipartisan Congressional Anti-Terrorist Financing Task Force.

SUE has also been a great advocate for the Hudson River and worked hard to enact the Hudson River Habitat Restoration Act. She is also a chief sponsor of the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act, enacted in 1998.

She is a good friend, we will miss her, but I know she will continue to serve her country and her community.

My good friend and colleague, JOHN SWEENEY, also a member of the Appropriations Committee, represents New York's 20th Congressional District in Clifton Park, New York. JOHN served as executive director and chief counsel for the New York State Republican Party. JOHN served 2 more years as the New York State commissioner of labor under Governor Pataki.

He is a fellow appropriator and serves as vice chairman of the Transportation-Treasury Subcommittee and HUD Appropriations Subcommittee for Homeland Security and Foreign Operations. He is a dedicated, hardworking public official. His dedication to New York is unchallenged.

He worked very hard to restore the Albany International Airport and the Capital Region, which is a booming airport today. He helped ensure that I-87 was designated a high-priority corridor to receive Federal highway resources, and he led the charge to ban dangerous steroid drugs in professional sports and throughout our society.

Significantly, JOHN played an important role in the \$21 billion appropriation for New York City after September 11.

Lastly, my colleague and longest serving Member to retire is MAJOR OWENS. MAJOR OWENS has served New York in so many ways, representing New York's 11th District in Brooklyn. Before coming here, he served as public library community coordinator, community action executive, New York city commissioner, Columbia University professor, and New York State senator.

What a remarkable public servant he has been. During his tenure in Congress, Congressman OWENS gained notoriety for his role as chairman of the Subcommittee on Select Education and Civil Rights in the 1980s, for his role in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, a strong supporter for the minimum wage, strong support of Davis-Bacon legislation and a strong supporter of workers rights to organize into labor unions.

All of these men and women have given their all for the State of New York. We owe them much. They have asked little other than to serve. They have been given that award by the people of New York. Now they are going on to something else. We wish them all the best, Godspeed, and thank you deeply from the bottom of our hearts.

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REPUBLICAN STUDY COMMITTEE TRIBUTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCHENRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, before he leaves the floor I would echo the sentiment of my gratitude for the friendship, the public service and the example of integrity of the gentleman from