

America to the Republic of Liberia, en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO MIRA BALL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for six decades, my dear friend Mira Ball has been helping Kentucky families realize one of the cornerstones of the American dream: owning their own home. Earlier this year, Mira was honored for a lifetime of achievement in our Commonwealth with Leadership Kentucky's Flame of Excellence Award. Today, I would like to congratulate Mira for this latest recognition of her contributions to our home State.

With her late husband, Don, Mira built Ball Homes into a respected business helping improve the lives of Kentuckians for generations. Don led the sales, and Mira kept the books. Together, they made a premier team helping make home ownership a reality for families across the region. The organization was made better still as their children, Ray, Mike, and Lisa, took their own leadership roles. Today, the company builds over 1,000 high-quality homes each year.

Mira's contributions to Kentucky extend far beyond her entrepreneurial achievement. She is a trailblazing leader and philanthropist with special emphases on the health and education of our next generation. Saying she would only get involved in organizations where she could really make a difference, this former schoolteacher has helped steer the future of some of Kentucky's prominent institutions. In fact, Mira was the first woman to chair the boards of trustees for the University of Kentucky, Midway College, and the Lexington Chamber of Commerce.

In 2018, Mira made the single largest scholarship gift in UK's history of \$10 million to help Kentucky students access higher education and the opportunity for a better future. The scholarships focus on students from Nelson and Henderson Counties, Mira and Don's native homes, respectively. The gift is only one snapshot of years of philanthropy that will benefit the school and all who rely on it.

Across our Commonwealth, families and communities can see the results of Mira's work. Families living in homes built by the Ball have adapted this year, turning kitchen tables into of-

fices and classrooms. Students supported by Mira's philanthropy were given an extra leg up. Anyone who turns on Kentucky Educational Television, KET, or receives help from the United Way has benefited from her vision and immense generosity.

So, it is my privilege to join the chorus praising Mira's leadership in Kentucky. She has not only paved a remarkable path, but she is also helping new leaders find their own. On behalf of my Senate colleagues, I would like to congratulate Mira Ball for this award and wish her years of continued success in Kentucky.

The Kentucky Builders Journal recently published a profile on Mira Ball's career. I ask unanimous consent the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Kentucky Builders Journal, Summer 2020]

MIRA BALL HONORED FOR HER LIFE'S WORK

Earlier this year, the statewide leadership development program Leadership Kentucky awarded its annual Flame of Excellence Award to Lexington businesswoman Mira Ball. The award is given to an outstanding Kentuckian who "bravely goes before and lights the way for others." Ball has certainly led a life that fits that description. As a member of the home building community, she is a role model to future generations in areas of leadership, business management and community involvement and service.

While the Ball name is well known in the Lexington area, Ball and her late husband, Don, have both had impact across the state. The couple incorporated Ball Homes in 1959 and immediately focused on the first-time home buyer market with their first model home in the Cardinal Valley neighborhood off Versailles Road. Their goal was to build homes in a price range that Lexington city police and firefighters could afford. At the time, police and firefighters were required to live within city limits.

More than 60 years later, the company remains family owned and still prides itself on making home ownership a reality for those who never thought it possible.

"If you've got a heart for people, you want them to be able to have an affordable home that they can live in and enjoy," said Mira Ball. "You see what's happening with zoning and the availability of land, and you get very concerned about the fact that the people who are the ordinary workers can't afford to live there."

Ball Homes has built more homes all over Lexington as well as in the Louisville and Knoxville markets. Don was passionate about affordable housing throughout his career, and the Balls' daughter Lisa Ball Sharp shares her father's interest and has served on Lexington's Affordable Housing Task Force.

Ball is still involved in the business although the Balls' three children, Ray, Mike and Lisa, have been leading the company since the 1980s. Ray took over acquisition and development, Mike oversees construction management, and Lisa is in charge of property management and sale. Ball said that even as her husband let go of the day-to-day decision-making long ago, she stayed active in the business long after because "nobody wanted to do what I did." What Ball did was make sure the bottom line always added up.

ACCOUNTING FOR SUCCESS

Ball first took an interest in accounting and business while attending the University

of Kentucky, where she met her future husband and worked in the Placement Service office. Although she graduated with a teaching certificate and taught junior high school students for one year, Ball left teaching to stay home when her children were born. As the family and the building business grew, she became the bookkeeper and behind-the-scenes partner while her husband became the business's public face.

"Don was a good salesperson," said Ball. "He had the ideas. And I was the one who kept things straight."

She said that while it's important to be ready for new opportunities and challenges, good timing had a lot to do with their success. Ball Homes has also benefited from new ideas as her children began to lead. They expanded into new markets, developed new neighborhoods and formed a property management business within the company.

"There's a lot of interaction between Ray, Mike and Lisa. But they work well together," said Ball. "The building business is something that you can be very proud of; you're furnishing homes for people."

When asked how she had managed to raise children who wanted to follow into the family business and shared their parents' commitment to the community, Ball mentioned the example set by her and Don's parents.

"Our parents were really good examples for my children. Hard work was expected and something you should enjoy and helping other people was important. Some of that empathy came naturally to Don," said Ball. "I think you have to be sincere and live your life like you should and be a good example, but I also thank the Lord every day for my parents and what they gave me. It wasn't wealth but they had good values and that's what was more important."

"I'm sure too that having us both work in the business and talking about things in front of [our children] made them familiar with what went on in the building business, both the ups and downs. There have been times when we thought we'd never sell another house with interest rates at 18% and 19%. They were aware of that growing up and understood it. Don always understood the impact of high interest rates on affordability, and Ray really gets that too."

FOCUSED ON EDUCATION

Her husband is remembered for his efforts to aid the homeless and addicted across the state through his roles as state representative and service on the Kentucky Housing Corporation. Ball's own civic contributions have focused on health and education. She has served with a wide variety of organizations including the PTA, the American Cancer Society, the United Way, Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, the St. Joseph Hospital Foundation, the Kentucky Historical Society, the Governor's Mansion Preservation Foundation, and the Kentucky Horse Park. In 1991, she became the first woman to serve as chairman of the Lexington Chamber of Commerce. She was also the first woman elected to the Kentucky Utilities board of directors, the first woman chairman of the Midway College board of trustees, and the first woman to serve as chair of the University of Kentucky board of trustees. She was appointed to the State Economic Development Task Force and the Governor's Commission on Tax Policy. She continues to serve on the Endowment Board of Kentucky Educational Television.

"I think I came along at a time when a lot of organizations thought it's time for a woman. I wasn't going to get involved with any organization if I wasn't going to actually work on it," said Ball. "There are so many things in this world that you feel like you can't make a difference. But education