

Those of us who had been her friend through the years, and who, just days ago, had worked with her and experienced her enthusiasm and energy have great difficulty in contemplating her absence.

Betty Marra and I graduated from the same high school—Suitland—two years apart. We were contemporaries. Therefore, more than most, I know she has died too young. We did not know one another in high school, but soon thereafter we became friends as members of the Young Democrats of Prince George's County.

She loved politics and it was a very large part of her life. And in almost every campaign during the past 30 years, Betty was there: involved; leading; following; helping; encouraging; and making a difference.

She had come, like so many of us in Prince George's County, from someplace else. But this was home and this was where she made a difference. She worked for, taught, learned from, and greatly helped so many of us who have been given the privilege and honor of elected public service. From the great chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Peter Rodino; to representative Leon Galvin of Pennsylvania; to my friend, Representative Bill Hughes of New Jersey. And, of course, she participated as a member of the staff of the historic Impeachment Inquiry Committee in 1974.

Her longest continuous employment was, appropriately, with her dad—the patriarch of the wonderful Procopio family, which, like Betty, has made such a positive contribution to the life and wellbeing of our community.

Betty always reflected warmth and graciousness of her mother Rose; and evidenced by the love of her brothers: the late Alfonso, Jr., Ray, and Joe, and her sisters, Josephine and Linda. And, I can remember well, Julio as early as the 1960's, and the contribution he has made, as well. Thank you Julio, for what you have meant to so many of us.

Elizabeth Julia Marra was a special person, who reflected what Hubert Humphrey referred to in 1968 as the joy of politics. In talking to her sons, Al and Michael, they commented on that joy she shared. The excitement she derived from and brought to her involvement in the political process at the county, State, and national levels. From precinct official to President were persons she respected for their effort and their commitment.

Betty Marra was contagious. And so many of us caught her spark and carry it with us today. We will remember her and her vitality, her optimism, her drive, her warmth, her faith, her love of life and of all of us.

History chronicles the contributions of a few and we call those individuals famous. Betty was not famous. But, Betty Marra did what all of us should do; she gave freely of her time and talent to make her community and country better. She did what President Kennedy urged each of us to do and she did not "ask what her country could do for her, but what she could do for her country."

And, as she did, she joined the ranks of thousands who have played a part in preserving and protecting the great Nation we love as the "land of the free and the home of the brave." And so, for what she did for each of us; and what she did for me, I say, "Thank you Betty, we miss you."

DATABASE FOR TRACKING VETS' ILLNESSES RELATED TO VIETNAM SERVICE

HON. SAM GEJDENSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 2, 1995

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation which will establish a database within the Department of Veterans' Affairs to track patterns of illness experienced by our Nation's veterans.

In the 1950's, submariners in southeastern Connecticut were treated with radium exposure to the base of the brain. It's only recently that the Federal Government is beginning to recognize that veterans may have significant health problems as a result.

In the 1960's, we sent our troops into Vietnam. It wasn't until years later that troops suffering debilitating diseases as a result of exposure to Agent Orange received help.

In 1990, we sent our troops into the Middle East. It wasn't until the end of the 103d Congress that the mystery illnesses plaguing Gulf War vets were recognized as service-connected disabilities.

The Federal Government is beginning to respond quicker, but our veterans deserve better.

Our troops have just returned from Somalia, and will soon return from Haiti. We do not know if they are sick as a result of their service, but we shouldn't wait for years before we try to find out.

My bill would pro-actively look for health problems in service personnel and veterans beginning with those troops who returned from Somalia and continuing with all combat troops in the future.

It will establish a database in the VA to track disability claims, health screenings and individual phone calls looking for patterns of illness. The database will also include the spouses and dependents of veterans who may be ill due to the veteran's exposure. Finally, the database will be completely confidential and information will only be included with the individual's consent.

When we ask our troops to put their lives on the line in defense of our country, they do not say "we are too busy right now, maybe in a few years." They respond immediately. When they get sick as a result of their service, the U.S. Government has an obligation to respond immediately—not in a few years.

I hope other Members will consider co-sponsoring this important legislation.

RETIREMENT OF JOAN RECK

HON. JOHN P. MURTHA

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 2, 1995

Mr. MURTHA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to note the retirement of John Reck, the chairman of the United Steelworkers Association's Pennsylvania legislative committee.

John has spent 43 years with the USWA in Pennsylvania, serving in virtually every elec-

tive and appointive office in the organization. He has served as a member of various boards and commissions in the Commonwealth, and has been instrumental in negotiating labor agreements for the USWA in Pennsylvania.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate John and wish him well in his retirement. The USWA loses an important figure with his retirement, but John Reck has made the USWA in Pennsylvania a stronger and more effective organization through his work. His legacy will continue to influence the USWA in Pennsylvania, and his efforts on behalf of steelworkers will be long remembered.

UNFUNDED MANDATE REFORM ACT OF 1995

SPEECH OF

HON. GARY A. FRANKS

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 19, 1994

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5) to curb the practice of imposing unfunded Federal mandates on States and local governments, to ensure that the Federal Government pays the costs incurred by those governments in complying with certain requirements under Federal statutes and regulations, and to provide information on the cost of Federal mandates on the private sector, and for other purposes.

Mr. FRANKS of Connecticut. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 5, the unfunded mandates reform act. H.R. 5 responds to the cries of State and local governments saddled with the financial responsibilities associated with unfunded mandates. We have a situation wherein the Government—meaning Congress as well as executive branch agencies—impose duties upon States and localities, while at the same time refusing to finance the cost of the regulations. Cities across the country continuously report on how their ability to govern and meet budgetary priorities is undermined by our increased tendency to dictate priorities to State and local governments. We must recognize that in a time when funds are limited, the entities most qualified to allocate those funds are the affected local communities.

Opponents of H.R. 5 view the legislation as a mechanism by which current environmental and public health laws will be gutted. However, I see this bill as an attempt to refocus our direction, recognizing that we cannot continue to usurp the authority of States and localities. H.R. 5 forces us to seriously consider the financial ramifications of the legislation we propose each year.

H.R. 5 accomplishes the following: If it is determined that a bill contains an unfunded mandate a point of order could be raised on the House floor which can be waived with a majority vote. This accomplishes the following—for one, we are forced to go on record should we decide to impose an unfunded mandate on States and localities. Second, we are greater informed about the effect that our actions would have. I think that is reason enough for passage of this legislation and I would urge my colleagues to support this bill.