

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 5 minutes each.

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

VERNAL G. RIFFE, JR.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise to note the passing, today, of an Ohio legend. Early this morning, an Ohio legend died. Here is how Lee Leonard, the dean of the Ohio statehouse press corps, began his report in this morning's Columbus dispatch:

Vernal G. Riffe, Jr., who rose from a Scioto County insurance salesman to become one of the most powerful figures in Ohio's political history, died today at 1:30 a.m. He was 72."

Vern Riffe served a record-breaking 20 years as Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives, from 1975 to 1995. From the first day that he was elected Speaker, he was "The Speaker" and will always be, Mr. President, "The Speaker." He came to the Ohio House in 1959, spent 16 years learning the skills that would make him the most effective as well as the longest-serving speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives.

He studied the approaches of legislative veterans. He learned a lot. He learned that, in a legislative body, you get a lot further by helping your colleagues move their own legislation forward than you do by grandstanding. As a result, Vern Riffe quickly became the person both Republican and Democratic Governors turned to to make things happen. Vern Riffe was a pragmatic, results-oriented Speaker. He was a partisan, but his greatest victories came from his willingness to work with Republican Ohio Governors to get things done for the people of Ohio.

When Vern Riffe retired from the Speakership, he said this:

If I was 20 years younger, I might be in the mood for forming my own party, called the Moderate Democrats or the Middle of the Road Democrats.

That was Vern Riffe.

These are the lessons of Vern Riffe: Hard work, learn the details, build consensus, and put the interests of Ohio ahead of the interests of your political party.

Vern Riffe grew up in politics. His family was highly political, and from an early age he loved the nuts and bolts of making government work. He used to say, "I love being Speaker."

Political scientist Samuel C. Patterson of the Ohio State University summed up Riffe's style:

Riffe loved working with his members, doing favors for them, helping them get elected, and assisting them in fulfilling their own ambitions and their own objectives as legislators. As a political leader, he was supportive, and his success depended on his reliability and trust. Riffe's friendliness and his southern Ohio, small town, 'down home' de-

meanor, endeared him to his supporters and disarmed most of his opponents. He was not stridently partisan, a quality underscored by the fact that the two prominent Republicans, former long-time Governor James A. Rhodes and former house Republican leader Corwin Nixon, are among his closest personal friends.

That is the Vern Riffe that I remember. He used to spend time at the Galleria across the street from the Statehouse, meeting with members of the house and senate in a very informal way, reaching agreement on literally countless issues. When he retired from the house a couple of years ago, this is what one State representative said:

Vern Riffe is the Woody Hayes of Ohio politics. Without his strong leadership, not just the Ohio House, but all of State government will be fundamentally different.

I think that is right. Vern Riffe was a legend, a man who cared about using the power he had to help the people of Ohio.

In conclusion, Vern Riffe never lost sight of the values he learned from his closest political adviser, and, as he told me, his closest friend. That was his dad, Vernal G. Riffe, Sr., who was a former railroader who served as mayor of the town of New Boston. Vern Riffe's dad used to tell him: "Son, if you're going to be a leader, you've got to lead." Mr. President, Vern Riffe always led.

Another Ohio legend, John Mahaney, president of the Ohio Council of Retail Merchants, put it best. He said about Vern Riffe: "It's like you get in the Hall of Fame by batting .300, 15 out of 20 years. It's longevity and consistency. And (Vern Riffe) passes both tests."

Mr. President, we will miss him a great deal. In March of this year, he and his wife Thelma began their 50th year of marriage. On behalf of the people of Ohio, I express my condolences to Thelma and to their children—Cathy Skiver, Verna Kay Riffe, Mary Beth Hewitt, and Vernal G. Riffe III, and to their seven grandchildren.

Mr. President, he was a good man.

I yield the floor and thank my colleagues.

COMPTROLLER GENERAL,
GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, before leaving for the August recess, I want to address the Senate briefly on the matter of the vacancy in the Office of the Comptroller General. The General Accounting Office is a vital organization to the Congress, and the person selected to head the GAO must have the confidence of both the majority and minority. When a vacancy occurs, a commission is established by statute to consider and recommend candidates to the White House. The members of this commission are the President pro tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, the majority and minority leaders in the House and Senate, and the chairman and ranking member of the

Senate Governmental Affairs Committee and the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee.

Members should be advised that this group has been organized on a bipartisan, bicameral basis, and we are moving forward. Based on the precedent of alternating between Houses, I will serve as chairman of the commission, with the Speaker of the House serving as vice chair. The Governmental Affairs Committee has jurisdiction over the General Accounting Office, and I have asked Senator THOMPSON and his staff to manage the administrative tasks of the commission. There are a number of candidates to start, but Senator DASCHLE joins me today in putting all Members on notice that we are open to recommendations. If you know of someone interested in being considered for the position, please advise me, the minority leader, Senator THOMPSON, or Senator GLENN at the Governmental Affairs Committee, as soon as possible to ensure that the commission has an opportunity to consider all qualified candidates.

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
THE BLIND OF KENTUCKY

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity to recognize an organization who has represented the visually impaired for 50 years. Members of the National Federation of the Blind of Kentucky will convene on September 5 and 6 to celebrate their work and commitment to improving the lives of visually impaired citizens in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The organization's first president, Harold L. Reagan, lived his life not as a blind person, but as an American citizen with a dream. Not only was Reagan blind, but he also lost his arm. In the 1930's this was not easy to overcome. However, this did not stop Reagan. He created an enterprise selling candy, soft drinks and cigarettes over a counter at the Jefferson County Courthouse in Louisville, KY. Reagan was the first visually impaired person to manage this type of business in Kentucky and inspired many others to follow in his footsteps.

Reagan faced adversity with courage and strength. Along with fellow supporters, Reagan helped shape a small organization that became known as the Kentucky Federation of the Blind. This group challenged society to set aside their biases, and opened doors for the visually impaired. Their efforts led to the establishment of a separate agency for the blind in Kentucky which improved services to the blind through additional resources and the elimination of bureaucratic hurdles.

In 1947 Kentucky became the 27th State affiliated with the National Federation of the Blind. In 1979 Betty Niceley filled the shoes of her mentor as President of the Kentucky chapter.

Visually impaired Kentuckians, family, friends and citizens now reap the