REMENBERING CONGRESSMAN JIM JONTZ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about a friend of mine who passed away on Saturday. His name was Jim Jontz. For 6 years, from 1987 to 1993, Jim represented Indiana's fifth congressional district in the House of Representatives. That is where I first met him and worked with him.

In 1991, the Almanac of American Politics described him as: "One of the most incredibly hardworking and gifted natural politicians who has routinely done the impossible."

Two years ago Jim was diagnosed with colon cancer that had already spread to his liver. We hoped at the time he would find a way to "do the impossible" again and defeat this illness. He fought that cancer for 2 valiant years, but he died on Saturday afternoon in his home in Portland, OR.

Jim Jontz defied ordinary stereotypes. A progressive Democrat, he was elected three times by one of the most conservative areas in the country to represent them in Congress. People used to wonder all the time how that was possible. I have some ideas. For one thing he had a flair for trademarks. He was famous for riding his sister's rusty blue Schwinn with mismatched tires in parades.

Jim also practiced a very personal style of politics. Something he learned from his parents, who he describes as grassroots organizers. He ran what he called “shoe leather” campaigns. His goal in every campaign was to knock on as many doors and speak to as many people as possible. He owned four pairs of shoes that he rotated in and out of at a local repair shop every week. That is how much shoe leather he put into his job. His campaign signs were always shaped like shoes.

Most importantly, Jim Jontz was a bridge builder. There is a school of politics that says the way you win campaigns is to divide people up into groups and pit them against one another. Jim was a master of a different and better kind of politics. He wanted to build bridges and understanding between groups that too often saw themselves as enemies: organized labor and environmentalists, and family farmers and environmentalists. He was always trying to find some common ground. He cared deeply about preserving the land and family farms and he believed the best way to preserve family farms was to help farmers be better stewards of the land. That seemed like a strange idea to some people 25 years ago. Today, it surely makes sense.

Because of his bridge-building abilities, Jim was tapped to mediate disputes between farmers and environmentalists during negotiations for the 1990 farm bill. One result was a wetlands protection program that won strong support from environmentalists, environmentalists, and sportmen. That program has saved many family farms, preserved the natural beauty of our land, and protected our clean water. It is part of the great legacy Jim Jontz leaves.

In addition to his important work on the House Agriculture Committee, Jim served on the Education and Labor Committee, the Committee of Aging, and on the Veterans' Affairs Committee. On Veterans' Affairs, he worked with another brave man—my closest friend when I came to Congress—Lane Evans. They worked to help veterans living with one of the most common but least understood injuries of war: post-traumatic stress disorder. Those efforts are part of Jim's legacy that we are relying on today. As many of our soldiers come back from Iraq and Afghanistan trying to conquer the demons in their minds from that experience.

As everyone who knew Jim also knew, he was deeply committed to preserving the ancient forests in the Pacific Northwest. That commitment earned him the support of celebrities and common folk as well who shared his love for America's natural treasures. It also won him the enmity of powerful logging interests and their supporters in Congress.

During the debate of the 1990 farm bill, Jim offered an amendment that would have prevented logging of ancient forests and national parks. A powerful House member of the other party retaliated by drafting legislation that would have allowed the Federal Government to create a 1-million acre national forest reserve. It was in the middle of Jim's congressional district.

In the end, Jim's efforts to save old-growth forests probably ended his career in Congress. The timber industry targeted him for defeat when he ran for his fourth House term in 1992 and he lost, but he didn't stop. In 1994, he ran for the Senate, losing in his last campaign. In 1995, he moved to Portland, OR, where he continued to work to save ancient forests and preserve the Endangered Species Act.

In 1998, Jim was elected president of Americans for Democratic Action, a position he held for 4 years before becoming ADA president emeritus. His most recent project for the ADA was leading its “Working Families Win” campaign which focused on raising the minimum wage, providing working families with affordable health care, and other issues of basic economic justice.

Jim Jontz grew up in Indianapolis and graduated phi beta kappa from Indiana University in 1973 after less than 3 years with a degree in geology. He fell into politics almost by mistake. In 1974, he opposed a dam building project that he thought threatened his little community. He challenged the chief sponsor of the project, who happened to be the majority leader of the Indiana House, and Jim won. At age 22 he became a member of the Indiana House. He also served in the Indiana Senate before being elected to Congress in 1996 at age 35.

Jim won that first race against the House majority leader by two votes. He believed he picked up those last two votes when he insisted on campaigning at 10 p.m. the night before the election at a laundromat that was still open. Mr. President, I say a few words about a friend of mine who passed away on Saturday. His name was Jim Jontz. For 6 years, from 1987 to 1993, Jim represented Indiana's fifth congressional district in the House of Representatives. That is where I first met him and worked with him.

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Jim won that first race against the House majority leader by two votes. He believed he picked up those last two votes when he insisted on campaigning at 10 p.m. the night before the election at a laundromat that was still open. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.
The achievements of our forces in Iraq are serious—and here is what impressed me the most from our trip: So is their commitment that the Iraqis must assume responsibility for the security and governance of their own country. In nearly every briefing, at every meeting, the message came loud and clear that our military is highly focused on accomplishing a handover of security responsibilities so as to bring our troops home. As a young soldier in mess hall told me, the Iraqis “won’t stand up until we start to stand back.”

I do believe the Iraqis need more motivation to stand up. For instance, there is key legislation the Iraqi Parliament must pass that our military commanders believe is necessary if this surge is to succeed. They told me we cannot succeed in this military surge unless it is accompanied by a political surge, an economic surge, and a diplomatic surge. Critical measures to facilitate provincial elections, regional revenue-sharing for the Iraqi oil industry, reversing de-Beatification in favor of reunification, and restricting sectarian militias are all legislative initiatives that have stalled. Iraq must move this legislation forward and step up its own security presence. That will require real commitment and urgency, Mr. President. And it would be putting it mildly to say I was not reassured by the signals I received from our meetings with Iraqi officials. There is a serious disconnect between the urgency of our general’s about this legislation, and the absence of urgency or energy on the part of Iraqi officials. One soldier I met put it in simple, homespun terms. He said: “If your parents are willing to pay for the movies and you don’t have to spend your own money, or if you can get your big sister to do your homework for you, who wants that to stop?”

It makes this Congress is taking action to make that clear. I was proud to vote with a majority of the Senate to pass binding bipartisan legislation to require the safe redeployment of our brave troops beginning in June. The quorum call be rescinded. The clerk will call the roll.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes in morning business.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 123

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, in January this body took a significant step toward reforming the way we spend American taxpayer dollars. While debating the ethics reform bill, Senators voted 98 to 0 in favor of my amendment requiring transparency for 100 percent of Member-requested earmarks. This was an early sign that Congress was going to change the way we do business here in Washington.

But since then, I am afraid my optimism has been tempered by a healthy dose of political reality. The ethics bill containing new Senate rules has been stalled, and its future enactment is anything but certain. In the meantime, the Senate has continued business as usual, as earmarking continues unchecked from transparency rules. The appropriators are soliciting earmarks. The WRDA bill is full of undisclosed earmarks, and none of the committees are complying with the anticorruption transparency requirements.

I believe the time has come to vote legislatively to end these practices. It is time to restore integrity to a process that has become a political circus. I am therefore going to offer this bill again on the floor, the Democratic leadership of the Appropriations Committee just issued a press release.