

ramps around here for good ideas. There's a lot of trap doors for good ideas. But JERRY WELLER was tenacious and he was able to put together the coalitions. He was focused and he got that done, and today, millions of Americans have fundamentally benefited because of his tenacity and the political savvy with which he moved that through the House and ultimately through the Congress.

He had other successes as well, and that was the transformation of the Joliet arsenal in Illinois, and that was property that had not it been for his leadership in his district, it could have essentially gone by the wayside. But because he was tenacious and he was focused, it's been turned into a good thing.

So JERRY WELLER, we are going to miss you, and it is with regret that we're here tonight. But it is with a great deal of hope and optimism that we'll see you and your tenacity and the glint in your eye.

The other person that we're here to honor is also another member of that class, and that is Congressman RAY LAHOOD. Congressman LAHOOD has been described by Mr. SHIMKUS as a man of the House, and I kind of feel like he has the demeanor of sort of Dad coming home. When he would be in the Chair and the House would be raucous and a little bit spunky, he would gavel that down, and he was entrusted with the gavel during some of the most historic times.

And he is a man of history because he serves in the same seat that Abraham Lincoln served in. He's from the same hometown as another Illinois great, that is, Everett Dirksen. He served also at the side of Bob Michel, and these are great Illinoisans.

I'm pleased that now the Easter Seals of Peoria, Illinois, has chosen to honor Congressman LAHOOD and his bride by setting up the Ray and Kathy LaHood House for Children with Special Needs.

I think it's indicative of the type of person that he is, the type of integrity, the directness with which he interacts with his colleagues, and I know that that's great encouragement not only to me but I know it's great encouragement and a great example for all Americans.

So for these two men who have chosen to sacrifice so greatly and serve our State so well, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that it is with a great deal of pride that I say it's been an honor to serve with Congressman WELLER. It's been an honor to serve with Congressman LAHOOD, and I look forward to our paths crossing many, many times in the future.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to honor the incredible service of my very good friend RAY LAHOOD. I have had the privilege of serving alongside him as a Member of the Conference and as an Appropriator.

I first met RAY when he was a young staffer for Bob Michel. He performed invaluable serv-

ice in helping Bob be a great leader. RAY's son Darin was looking for work and it was a pleasure to bring him into the extended Lewis family as a part of my personal office. With my encouragement, Darin went on to law school as an attorney in Nevada. I know I share RAY's pride as Darin has returned home to Illinois to run for Peoria County State's Attorney.

RAY is a consensus-builder and a common-sense legislator and has distinguished himself as a champion of this great institution. Throughout his time here he has fought vigorously to ensure the Capitol stays the "people's house" and that it remains a beacon for motivated and service-minded young people.

I know his constituents appreciate his selfless service. His efforts are a testament to the highest level of commitment an individual can demonstrate on behalf of others. I join my colleagues in wishing RAY, Kathy, and his family well.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the 5-minute Special Order of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is vacated.

There was no objection.

TRIBUTES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, at this time I do want to yield such time as he may consume to the man who has been talked about a great deal. If I didn't know better and didn't know him so well, I would say they've been exaggerating, but there has been no exaggeration, a great man, a great Representative. It's been an honor to serve with him.

I yield to JERRY WELLER of Illinois.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I want to thank my good friend from Texas for sharing his time in giving me the opportunity to say thank you, not only thank you to my constituents but thank you to my colleagues, particularly those from the Illinois delegation who are here tonight, my friend DON MANZULLO and JOHN SHIMKUS and PETER ROSKAM for taking time to say a few nice things about RAY LAHOOD and myself, and for that I appreciate that so much. But also I want to say thank you for the partnership I've had with you as a member of the Illinois delegation over the 14 years that I've had the privilege of serving in this House.

You know, RAY LAHOOD's a good friend to all of us, and of course, I want to take a moment and just salute RAY LAHOOD who, as my colleagues in the delegation and all the Members of the House, both Republican and Democrat know, is a man who's a man of this institution, someone who's worked tirelessly to bring civility to the House, a man who led efforts to convene bipartisan retreats. Four House bipartisan

retreats were cochaired by RAY LAHOOD in his effort to bring civility and bipartisanship to the House. And I think if you can think of just one thing about RAY LAHOOD, it is his commitment and desire that the institution of this Congress should work together to solve the challenges that we have before us.

You know, I look back over the 14 years that I've had the privilege of serving in the House as a member of the House Ways and Means Committee and the opportunity I had to serve on the Foreign Affairs Committee and serve, of course, as a deputy whip. I think of those opportunities to get to know my colleagues and have an opportunity to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and I can't say a few words tonight without saying thank you to all the men and women that I've had the privilege of serving with, for the courtesies, for the opportunity to work together, and frankly, we had some good times as well in that process. I want to say thank you to everyone, and I also want to thank my colleagues for serving in this Congress.

You know, there's a lot of work that goes sight unseen. You don't often get thanked enough for the work that's done behind the scenes, but I want to thank my colleagues for their work and for their commitment to public service.

I also want to thank my colleagues for the support that you have given me in the projects and the legislation that I've had the opportunity to work on.

My friends mentioned the marriage tax penalty, which was an issue of fairness, and that issue came to me in my first campaign. I remember a young woman who came up, she was working in the office in my campaign, and she said, you know, JERRY, if you do get elected to Congress, there's an issue I want you to look into and I hope you will fix it. It's a penalty. If you're married, you're going to pay higher taxes.

She said, you know, my boyfriend and I, we want to get married. We both have pretty good jobs, and my friends said you better do your taxes jointly just to experiment and find out what your obligation would be. And they did that. They discovered they paid about \$1,400 more in higher taxes just if they got married.

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And because it was clear to me that it was unfair and, frankly, wrong that you should pay higher taxes just because you're married, that doesn't seem right, it's wrong, that our Tax Code was punishing marriage; where if two people worked, and because when you marry you file jointly, your incomes were combined. And the way our complicated Tax Code was structured, 42 million married working couples across America were paying higher taxes, on average about \$1,400.

And I want to thank President Bush for signing into law my legislation eliminating the marriage tax penalty,