

HONORING RICHARD WINKEL

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 1998

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the work and dedication of Richard "Dick" Winkel who retired after 29 years of service from the elected position of Kankakee County Auditor on December 31, 1997. Dick Winkel has continuously served the most terms, eight in all, of any county auditor in the history of the state of Illinois.

When Dick Winkel first took office in 1968, computers were just beginning to be utilized. In 1968, the computer at the auditor's office was the size of a large refrigerator and had to be housed in the basement of the County Building. The old system required a \$23,000 climate control system to keep it running. Today, thanks to Dick Winkel, the new system includes built-in safeguards to prevent the county from ever experiencing a computer melt-down that would wipe out months of accounting work.

Dick and his wife Betty are the proud parents of four children and the proud grandparents of 17 children. Dick has always followed his father's ideals about the important things in life; family, God, and the political climate in which you live. According to Dick, "You have to be an active participant with all three. If you don't participate in politics, you deserve what you get."

Dick Winkel's commitment and impact on his community is not only deserving of congressional recognition, but should serve as a model for others to follow.

At a time when our nation's leaders are asking the people of this country to make serving their community a core value of citizenship, honoring Dick Winkel is both timely and appropriate.

I urge this body to identify and recognize others in their congressional districts whose actions have so greatly benefited and enlightened America's communities.

TRIBUTE TO THE NCAA 1997
WATER POLO CHAMPIONS
PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 1998

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 1997 National Collegiate Athletic Association water polo champions from Pepperdine University, in Malibu, California.

The NCAA water polo finals don't draw the crowds or television viewers some higher-profile college sports do. But athleticism, commitment and sacrifice aren't measured in the stands, they are measured in the competition. Water polo players are among the most dedicated and physically fit of all athletes.

Michael Jordan once said, "Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships." I would like to acknowledge all of the athletes on Pepperdine's 1997 water polo team. Individually, they have dedicated their time and energy to their sport, making

many sacrifices along the way. They also realize the importance of working as a team toward a common goal, a lesson that will serve them well throughout their lives.

To be recognized as the premiere water polo team in our country is no small feat. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the many strengths of these exceptional athletes, and wish them the best of luck on their future endeavors, in and out of the water. Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, please join me in honoring the 1997 National Collegiate Athletic Association water polo champions from Pepperdine University.

THE MEDIA

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 1998

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, January 14, 1998 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

REFLECTIONS ON THE MEDIA

In recent decades, we've seen a dramatic drop in the number of Americans who trust their government to do the right thing most of the time. Many factors contribute to this, but one often mentioned is the way in which many journalists approach their craft today. There is increasing concern that journalists too often report just the failures of government and not the successes, just the scandals and not the substance of governing. I am impressed with the number of constituents who ask whether they can really believe what they see and read in the media.

The press, of course, plays an essential role in the relationship between citizens and elected officials. We rely on the press to inform citizens about government actions, to help public officials gauge public opinion, and to act as a watchdog. By deciding whether and how extensively events or issues are covered, the press influences the policy agenda. I worry sometimes that in this age of instantaneous communication, journalists are less likely to reflect carefully on the quality and impact of their coverage.

I've always felt that journalists should ideally remain on the sideline as observers and analysts. But today many of our journalists, especially those based in Washington, want to be policy players rather than reporters of events. They want to give advice to the public and to prominent politicians, to score political points rather than illuminate events. Too often they reject the traditional values of the journalist—detachment, skepticism, caution—that have always been vital to the practice of good journalism.

These journalists, like anyone who seeks to influence opinion in this country, engage in intense competition to get on television. Unfortunately, some political talk shows are not much more than shouting matches. They do not analyze, explain, or clarify the issues facing the country. One panelist was quoted as saying, "The less you know about something, the better off you are." That may be true for entertaining TV but it is not true for journalism. What makes good television and what makes thoughtful analysis are two different things.

Journalists know that there's big money associated with appearances on television, if not for the appearance fee (which is usually quite modest), then for the opportunity those appearances provide to garner lucrative speaking engagements before groups of

all kinds. My view is that their considerable talents may be dissipated by this quest for money and that the country is the poorer for it.

It's easy to exaggerate the importance of these kinds of journalists. Even the most popular talk shows do not get more than 2 or 3 percent of TV households. Only a few people follow them closely. But the desire of some journalists to influence policy can have a troubling effect: the tendency to cozy up to government officials or to tilt a story. I think sometimes journalists pull punches rather than offend powerful public officials. On the other hand, some reporters go to the other extreme, viewing government officials and their actions not with healthy skepticism, but with suspicion or cynicism. The best reporters view them as neither inherently dishonest nor inherently virtuous.

Also worrisome is that in covering policy debates journalists too often focus on the horse race—who is winning—rather than on how we should deal in this country with some very tough problems. Every public official gets distressed by the electronic media reducing issues to sound bites of a few seconds. All that does is encourage shrillness, generalities and mutual attack rather than informed and meaningful debate. In addition, the journalist understands that the reporting of scandal will get him on the front page much more quickly than the reporting of substance. If journalism does not begin to pay more attention to disinterested analysis, it will continue to lose credibility with Americans. Certainly the ideal is the independent non-partisan, non-ideological journalist, a journalist who does everything he can to filter out of his reporting his personal political views.

There are a lot of things I don't worry much about in journalism. Some complain that the press has a liberal bias; others see a conservative bias. Fortunately, we have multiple sources of information and the competition among these sources contributes to a self-correcting process. If a story is reported badly by one source, other sources quickly set the record straight. For the citizen willing to search for it, substantive information about public policy is widely and cheaply available from a large variety of sources.

Despite its flaws, I favor a powerful press because it can balance the power of government. I may complain about the press on occasion, but I would not like the country without it. The job of the press is formidable. We should not resent but applaud the efforts reporters make to investigate and to keep the record straight. Jefferson said, "No government ought to be without censors. And where the press is free none ever will. The only security of all is a free press. The agitation it produces must be submitted to. It is necessary to keep the waters pure." As Jefferson pointed out, it is difficult to draw a clear line of separation between the abuse and the wholesome use of the press. But because the free press does have a high mission in a democratic society it has to be all the more responsible to carry it out.

The press has an obligation to ferret out scandal. It has the obligation to cover contests for public affairs. It should also report complex and serious policy issues objectively, explaining the complexity of the issues involved and the positions of various parties. Biased analysis may have its place on the editorial pages but the news columns should report the facts.

What should government do about these criticisms? Nothing. Justice Brennan said that press freedom should be, "uninhibited, robust, and wide open." He was right on the mark. Government officials should not try to