

Bella S. Abzug, one of the most admired women of America, honors the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Spirit of Houston and the National Women's Conference by her presence and her acceptance of the role of Honorary Chair.

Information on the 20th Anniversary Celebration, including Conference and hotel registration forms, can be obtained at the NWC Web site.

CONTRACT WITH WOMEN OF THE USA
(By Bella Abzug)

The downsizing of women off the national political agenda is being challenged in a new and exciting campaign. The "Contract with Women of the USA" is gathering momentum across the country.

Even though we are a majority of the U.S. population, women are being attacked, trivialized and ignored in much of the current political debates. Modest gains that we have won in years of struggle are in jeopardy. The time has come to put women's needs and concerns up front, in actions as well as words.

Initiated by the Women's Environment and Development Organization, of which I am a co-founder, and the Center for Women Policy Studies, the Contract campaign is endorsed by growing numbers of women's organizations, women members of Congress, state legislators and others. Our target is a thousand endorsements by this fall. Even more important, the Contract provides a flexible organizing and advocacy vehicle for addressing state and local issues of importance to women.

Women state legislators are taking the lead in supporting the Contract and working with women and other public sector groups to develop their own state contracts. Kicking off the campaign on International Women's Day on March 7th were women legislators in Arizona, California, Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota and New York.

Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America" has run into stalemate and massive rejection by the American people. Our "Contract with Women of the USA" reflects the realities of American women's lives in all our family, economic, political, social, racial, age, religious and educational diversity. It offers an alternative and unifying vision in which women and men work together on an equal basis for our mutual benefit.

The 12 principles and action commitments in our Contract are based on the Platform for Action, approved by consensus last September at the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women by the United States and 188 other governments, as well as by 30,000 nongovernmental women, including 7,000 from our country.

The dozen commitments outlined in the "Contract with Women of the USA" call for economic, social and political equality for women; access to affordable health care and reproductive rights; an end to discrimination and violence against women; continuation of social safety nets for poor women and children; inclusion of women in peace-making; educational opportunities for women; and mechanisms to monitor and further women's gains.

Women legislators in the six kickoff states have signed on to the Contract. Similar actions are being planned in other states. We welcome the support of women legislators and activists throughout the country and urge them to join us in this important effort.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NO-FEE POST OFFICE BOXES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, after nearly 20 years of effort, I have a victory to announce: Since I came to the Congress in 1979, my constituents in small Nebraska communities and Americans like them throughout our Nation have sought relief from the injustice of having to pay Post Office box rental fees because the U.S. Postal Service did not provide delivery to their homes. They came to the post office to pick up their mail because they had no home delivery, and they paid box rent for the privilege of doing so.

Incredibly and unfairly, they paid box rent while saving the U.S. Postal Service the cost of providing home delivery, which is provided free to urban residents and those living in the countryside. Can you believe it?

Well, finally, Mr. Speaker, that has changed. This afternoon I was notified by the U.S. Postal Service that effective April 5, 1998, throughout the United States, eligibility for no-fee post office boxes finally will be extended to those citizens living in small towns without home delivery whose residences or businesses are within the immediate vicinity of the post office and who, therefore, are ineligible for delivery service.

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See the Federal Register, March 27, 1998, page 14820, for the details.

In the parlance I have learned as a lonely Member fighting this inequity over the years for small town America, effective April 5, there is no more quarter mile rule. Those Americans will now have free box rent for a normalized box. The costs are gone at last.

I congratulate the U.S. Postal Service for making the right decision.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HOEKSTRA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TRIBUTE TO THE FAMILY OF RON BROWN, AND IN RECOGNITION OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NUSSLE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. This evening, Mr. Speaker, I will not take

all of my time, but I wanted to pay tribute to the Ron Brown family, Alma, Tracey, and Michael. This evening Tracey Brown, the daughter of our former Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown, had the book signing for her personal tribute to her father. I believe that there is no greater tribute than that a child can give to a parent.

Certainly as we reflect on what this government means and the idea of public service, we certainly recognize that former Secretary Ron Brown was that kind of public servant: a giant, gentle, strong, persevering.

As I looked around the room where the book signing occurred, I saw so many diverse faces, people from all walks of life; people who had no personal stake in their presence this evening, other than to pay particular tribute to a man who was unselfish in his giving, in his love of his country.

It was interesting to see my colleague, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT), who indicated that he had attended college with Ron Brown and is noted in the book.

It is not often we have time to thank family members and to again say how sorry we are that we lost such a patriot, such a contributor to the process of government. But to Tracey Brown and her family, I would like to thank them so very much for persevering, staying steady, and continuing to love our country.

We are very privileged to have Mrs. Brown, who continues to stand as an example of a family that has given so much.

To Tracey, my hat is off to her for the singular purpose of this last year of writing about her father.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, if I might, I will add my recognition and special feeling about the 30th anniversary or commemoration of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. It is important in this time, when we spend so much time using and reusing the words and the beliefs of Dr. King.

Sometimes they are used in ways that I think are not befitting both his image, his message, and his leadership, for too often on the floor of this House I have heard so many cite Dr. King's message about a color-blind society, or being judged by your character, not the color of your skin, to raise legislation to eliminate opportunity for minorities and women.

Often when we are debating the question of totally eliminating affirmative action for women and minorities in this country, after acknowledging just recently that discrimination is still a very harsh part of American society, I will hear those rising to the floor, commentators and others, citing the words of Dr. Martin Luther King.

I would like to think of Dr. King as a gentle spirit, one who knew the importance of nonviolence as opposed to violence, but he was a serious, straightforward gentleman. He always spoke his mind. You never had to think about what he was saying.