

In addition to their creative hobbies, Otello and Carolyn have always been active in the Wallingford political arena. Their outstanding work with the Democratic Town Committee has benefitted many local elected officials, including myself. Their tireless efforts have gone a long way in bringing a strong voice to local residents and their interests.

Enjoying their retirement years together, Otello and Carolyn have found what may be the key to a successful marriage—teamwork. Whether with their hobbies or in the community, it is a rare moment not to see these two working together. It is with great pride that I rise today to join family and friends in congratulating my dear friends Otello and Carolyn Massoni as they celebrate their 50th Anniversary. My very best wishes to them for many more years of health and happiness.

TRIBUTE TO STATE SENATOR  
REGIS GROFF

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2001

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a man considered, after twenty years of service to be the "Conscience of the Colorado Senate." As a State Senator Regis Groff was a man who never backed down from a fight and always stood up for what he believed in. Although he often stood alone, he never hesitated to do what he believed was right.

As an African-American political leader from West, Regis was often pitted against the forces of discrimination, a battle in which he was consistently outnumbered. He pushed for Colorado to divest itself from business relationships with the apartheid regime of South Africa, and was a strong voice for enhancing voter registration. When it wasn't popular, he was also a voice for rational gun control. He was responsible for carrying Senate legislation in Colorado designating the birthday of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. as a state holiday.

Regis Groff's convictions earned him respect from both sides of the aisle. One former colleague remarked, "there would be a hush when Regis went to the microphone." The former Colorado Senate President, a member of the opposing party, said, "Regis was the most fun and challenging person to debate at the microphone of anyone I served with in the legislature."

I would ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to a great and dedicated public servant. I am including an article from a recent edition of the Denver Post that recognizes the significant contributions of Regis Groff to the people of Colorado.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ... REGIS GROFF?:  
FORMER "CONSCIENCE OF COLORADO"  
SPEAKS FROM SIDELINES

(By James B. Meadow)

The former "Conscience of the Colorado Senate," the man who spent 20 years fighting—and mostly losing—the good fight is staring out the window of the clubhouse of the Park Hill Golf Course sympathetically watching grown men flail at a little white ball.

"Most retirees assume their golf game will be much, much better, but it doesn't happen

that way," says Regis Groff. He flashes his trademark megawatt smile as he adds, "At least it didn't happen to me. But then I only play one-third as much golf as I want to."

Not that he's complaining, because these days life is better than just OK for Groff. For one, he looks a decade younger than his 66 years, almost too youthful to be the grandfather of four. For another, he takes a winter hiatus in Las Vegas every year.

He also indulges his passion for baseball by taking advantage of his Colorado Rockies season tickets. True, they're not his beloved Chicago Cubs, but few know better than Groff that life is riddled with compromise.

For two decades, he was the impassioned, eloquent spokesman for liberal causes in the Colorado Senate, a man whose flights of oratory were legendary.

"There would be a hush when Regis went to the microphone," says former Sen. Mike Feeley, calling the Democrat "the finest public speaker ever to grace the floor of the state Senate."

Even those at the opposite end of the political spectrum were Groff fans.

"Regis was the most fun and challenging person to debate at the microphone of anyone I served with in the legislature," says Tom Norton, former Senate president. "I don't know that he ever passed a whole bunch of bills. But he always made sure the point of view he represented was adequately considered."

Norton isn't exaggerating in his remarks about Groff not passing a whole bunch of bills.

"Oh, it was thorough frustration to have zero influence, no power," says Groff of his 20 years in the minority party; years of futilely fighting to ban capital punishment, have the state divest itself from business relationships with the apartheid regime of South Africa, enhance voter registration and establish gun control.

"But you have to raise issues that aren't popular," says Groff. "You try to raise issues that touch the conscience of each human being."

Although Groff dismisses Sen. Jana Mendez's claim that he was the conscience of the Senate as "overspeak," he doesn't deny that he was loath to back down from an issue.

That's why in April 1993, only months after Coloradans passed Amendment 2—largely seen as a slap at homosexual rights—Groff tried to get the Senate to put it back on the ballot to let voters "revisit" the measure.

That same session, he was blunt about his feelings for Douglas Bruce, author of Amendment 1, which limited the state's ability to raise taxes and spend money.

On the Senate floor, Groff said that Bruce, a California transplant, "slithered into Colorado and hoodwinked the state."

Standing alone was second nature to Groff: He was the Senate's only black. And political ostracism was nothing new for a guy who knew all about racial discrimination.

When he first arrived in Denver in 1963, to begin what would be a lengthy career as an educator, he and his wife were repeatedly denied rental homes in Park Hill because, as landlords told him, "We don't rent to coloreds."

Growing up the son of a potter in Monmouth, Ill., a small rural community, Groff wasn't allowed in the YMCA pool.

Racial intolerance was still an emphatic given when he was attending Western Illinois University. Along with a group of other black students, Groff led a successful push to force a local barbershop to serve black students.

His proudest moment as a legislator came in 1984, when he persuaded the Senate to pass a bill making Martin Luther King's birthday a state holiday.

He recalls that debate over the bill almost caused a fist fight with another senator. "I told him, 'I should kick your ass!,' and he said, 'C'mon!' but others stepped between us," laughs Groff.

Groff left the Senate in 1994 to head the state's Youth Offender System, a multi-million-dollar rehabilitation facility for violent juveniles. He quit in 1998 and then headed the Metro Denver Black Church Initiative.

These days, he says, "I have no gainful employment," content to be a grandfather, serve on boards, travel, golf, watch baseball, adjust to life as a divorced male after 33 years of marriage and basically do what he pleases.

Would he ever again consider elective office?

"No, no, no!" he says, recoiling in mock horror. "If 20 years of politics doesn't fill you appetite, then that appetite is so insatiable as to be dangerous."

Still, he does confess to more than a trace of envy now that Democrats control the Senate.

"You bet I'm jealous. I'd like to know how it feels to be in the majority," he says.

But then you'd expect a frank answer. After all, anything less from the Senate's former conscience would be, well, unconscionable.

HONORING THE LATE GLADYS  
"SKEETER" WERNER WALKER

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2001

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to remember the accomplished and unforgettable life of Gladys "Skeeter" Werner Walker. She was truly a kind person and an outstanding athlete. As family and friends mourn her passing, I would like to pay tribute to this longtime resident of Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Skeeter was born in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, with the rest of her family, and was the oldest of three siblings who grew up to ski in the Olympics. She and her two brothers, Buddy and Loris, trained locally on Howelsen Hill and traveled later to ski in the Alps. The Werner family's prominence in the skiing world flourished to such an extent that the name of the ski mountain in Steamboat Springs was changed from Storm Mountain to Mount Werner in their honor.

Skeeter began skiing at age one and entering competitions by the age of five. Perhaps one of her greatest achievements was being selected as the youngest member of the U.S. Alpine World Championship Team in 1954, at the age of 21. At the downhill event in Sweden, Skeeter placed 10th. Her triumph was awarded when she graced the cover of Sports Illustrated and became recognized as one of America's great Olympians. When Skeeter again returned to the Olympics in 1956 in Italy, she again garnered a 10th place finish in the downhill race.

Skiing was not Skeeter's only career. After retiring from skiing in 1958, she relocated to New York where she was a model and a fashion designer. The Yampa Valley drew Skeeter back in 1962, and along with her brother Buddy and his wife Vanda, they opened two ski shops in Steamboat and Skeeter initiated

the first ski school at Storm Mountain. Every step of the way opened a new opportunity for Skeeter and her family that allowed them to have a dramatic impact on the Yampa Valley that will last forever. She fell in love with and, in 1969, married Doak Walker, the 1948 Heisman Trophy winner. Together, Doak and Skeeter helped to shape Steamboat and the skiing community. Doak passed away in 1998 following a skiing injury several months earlier.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, Skeeter was a person who lived an accomplished life. Although friends and family are profoundly saddened by her passing on Friday, July 20, each can take solace in the wonderful life that she led. At the age of 67, Skeeter was an outstanding member of the community and a heroic role model for others. I know I speak for everyone who knew Skeeter well when I say she will be greatly missed.

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PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. JERRY MORAN**

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 25, 2001*

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge an error I made earlier today in voting for the previous question motion on the Treasury, Postal Appropriations bill. As is customary on such procedural motions I voted "aye." Had I been aware of the implications of the vote, I would have voted "no."

I have been and continue to be an opponent of Congressional pay raises. Fiscal discipline must start with our elected officials. My constituents don't get a cost of living increase every year and neither should we. Had I known the previous question vote would be construed as having anything to do with a congressional COLA, I would have opposed it.

Not only do I oppose the pay raise itself, but I strongly oppose the manner in which this issue is handled. We ought to have a clear "yes" or "no" vote on the pay raise and let the chips fall where they may. When given the opportunity to vote on the pay raise directly, I have always voted "no." If others feel differently, let them cast their vote in the light of day and explain it to their constituents. To disguise an issue as important as a congressional pay raise inside a procedural motion is less than honest. Such gimmicks further erode this institution's credibility and member integrity.

It is my responsibility to know all the implications of the motions and bills that I vote on. My constituents deserve my attention on each and every vote. One the issue of a congressional pay raise, the American people deserve better from all of us.

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VETERANS HAVING HEALTH-CARE

**HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 25, 2001*

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation to ensure that all veterans, regardless of where they live, have equitable access to the best health care at VA

medical centers across America, and especially in the Northeast.

Along with Congresswoman KELLY and Congressmen GRUCCI, HINCHEY and GILMAN, we are introducing two bills to improve the way the VA allocates funding for veterans medical care across the nation.

In 1997, Congress passed legislation that authorized the VA to develop a new formula for allocating veterans medical care dollars across the country. At the time, veterans were moving from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West, and the VA's formula then did not address how to allocate funding with this shift.

Unfortunately, the new formula developed by the VA still failed to address the changing demographics of the veterans population. The so-called Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation formula (VERA) did begin to provide additional medical care dollars to areas with growing veterans populations, but unfortunately, the VA did so by slashing funding to states with veterans populations that remained stable, like my own state of New Jersey and others in the Northeast.

I know firsthand about the law of unintended consequences. VERA has had the terrible effect of restricting access of veterans to medical care in my part of the country because my district in New Jersey is part of Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 3. This VISN has borne the brunt of VERA's funding shift. According to the VA's own figures, funding for VISN 3 has been reduced by 6 percent, or \$64 million, at a time when other VISNs saw their allocations increase by as much as 47 percent or even 53 percent!

I continue to ask the VA how this practice is equitable and why medical care in the Northeast should be reduced.

New Jersey has the second oldest veterans population in the nation, behind Florida. Our state has the fourth highest number of complex care patients treated at VA's hospitals. Yet New Jersey's older, sicker veterans are routinely left waiting months for visits to primary care physicians and specialists or denied care at New Jersey's two VA nursing homes.

Something is fundamentally wrong with the VERA allocation formula if it continues to decrease funding for areas where veterans have the greatest medical needs. All veterans, regardless of where they live, have earned and deserve access to the same quality of medical care—care that is too often denied under the current formula based.

That is why I rise today with nearly 30 of my colleagues to introduce these two bills.

The first bill, the Veterans Equal Treatment Act, would repeal the VERA formula and direct the VA to devise a truly equitable allocation formula based on need.

The second bill, the Equitable Care for All Veterans Act, would require the VA to take steps to account for regional differentials—the differences in the costs of providing care in some areas of the country due to the high cost of living, long travel distances, and like—in determining the national means test threshold. This threshold currently stands at \$24,000 for veterans across the country, regardless of where they live.

We know that the costs of such basic necessities as housing and utilities differ across the country. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the ten least affordable States include New Jersey, New York,

Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont and Rhode Island. These States are parts of VISNs 1, 2 and 3—all three VISNs fare the worst under the present VERA allocation formula.

Mr. Speaker, VERA should be adjusted to reflect factors such as the high cost of housing in the means test. It is the least we can do to ensure that all veterans who need and deserve care are provided with access to VA medical centers.

I strongly encourage the Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee to hold hearings on these issues, and to move forward with changes to the VERA allocation formula as outlined in these two bills.

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PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO**

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 25, 2001*

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, earlier today on the vote to consider the previous question on this bill I intended to vote "no" but inadvertently voted "aye".

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PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 25, 2001*

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, during rollcall vote No. 255 on H.J. Res. 50, I mistakenly recorded my vote as "no" when I should have voted "aye".

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TRIBUTE TO THE ORIGINAL 29  
NAVAJO CODE TALKERS

**HON. MARK UDALL**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 25, 2001*

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the original 29 Navajo Code Talkers, who courageously served this country during WWII. The original 29 Navajo code talkers developed a Navajo language-based code to transmit information while in the Pacific theatre. Their efforts were invaluable to this nation and helped bring the war in the Pacific to a close, impacting all Americans. Today these men or their surviving family members are receiving Congressional gold medals of honor as a symbol of our Nation's appreciation for their valor.

In early 1942 the Marines started to recruit Navajo men to serve as code talkers in the Pacific. The Marines were searching for a code, which the Japanese would be unable to break. Since the Navajo language is incredibly complex and consists of complicated syntax and tonal qualities, plus different dialects it was an ideal code. The original 29 Navajo Code Talkers developed a code dictionary, which had to be memorized. This code consisted of English translations of Navajo phrases. The Japanese were never able to break the complicated code. The Navajo Code