

Myra has excelled in each of her professional positions and given of herself freely to every student, the most rewarding experience of her career was her work with children with severe emotional disabilities.

Myra's dedication to education was also evident in her own life. And like all good teachers, she practiced what she preached. Ms. Kelly's academic credentials are truly impressive. She received both a Bachelors and a Masters degree from Lehman College, her Professional Diploma from the City College of New York, and a School District Administrator's credential from the College of New Rochelle. Except for her dissertation she has also completed all of her work for a Doctorate in the Learning, Language, and Literacy program at Fordham University.

I hope that new teachers and school psychologists are inspired by Myra's dedication to her chosen career. The New York Department of Education will sorely miss her.

I would like to join the New York Department of Education, her family and friends in thanking Myra for her years of service and wishing her congratulations on the occasion of her retirement.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF
BATON ROUGE ADVOCATE RE-
PORTER JOAN MCKINNEY

HON. CHRISTOPHER JOHN

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 12, 2003

Mr. JOHN. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have been a member of this body for the past seven years. In that time our world and our Congress have gone through times of grief, destruction, joy and prosperity. Through it all, there has been a constant voice at my side asking me the tough questions and reporting news of my actions in Congress to the news consumers in Louisiana.

As of today, that voice will move on to ask others the tough questions and aid Capitol Hill's press gallery reporters in relaying the latest news to their vast readerships. After 24 years as the Baton Rouge Advocate's Washington reporter, Joan McKinney is putting her skills to use in a new arena as Deputy Director of the U.S. Senate's Daily Press Gallery.

My colleagues and I in the Louisiana delegation will miss her energy, her attentiveness, and most of all her objectivity. Joan's depth of historical and institutional knowledge of both House proceedings and the Louisiana Congressional Delegation is unrivaled. Having begun her career as press secretary to U.S. Senator FRITZ HOLLINGS of South Carolina, Joan understands the challenge of being both question asker and information giver.

Her colleagues at The Advocate describe Joan as "an excellent reporter who worked very hard to understand the complex issues she covered through the years. She understood the federal system and was able to anticipate developments on important stories. And, she was very good at understanding and communicating how federal issues might play out in Louisiana and how they might affect people here."

We will all miss Joan's coverage of our lively delegation, her ear for a unique angle and her inquisitive spirit. She's not going far—per-

haps only a few desks from her current one in the Senate Press Gallery—but she leaves a gaping hole for her predecessor to fill.

Joan, I wish you all the best in your new job. You'll be missed. Congratulations!

THE CHILDREN OF WORKING AND
WELFARE FAMILIES ARE ON
THE FRONT LINES

HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 12, 2003

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, on a suspension vote we reauthorized the current Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) legislation leaving in place a very hard hearted and contemptuous piece of the so-called safety net. Farm subsidies may go as high as 200,000 dollars per recipient with few qualifying provisions attached; however, welfare recipients with a family of four receive between 4,000 and 6,000 dollars per year. On the day before the reauthorization there was yet another nasty Republican slur at the poor and at families on welfare: "These people want a welfare check, not a child care tax credit." This demonization of the poor has escalated among Republicans despite the fact that it has clearly been established that on the front lines in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Baltic states and elsewhere more than ninety per cent of our troops are from poor and working class families. Because most of them were draftees it is probable that more than two-thirds of the heroes whose names are carved on the Viet Nam Memorial Wall came from families eligible for welfare and other social services. Washington decision-makers should try to imagine the emotions of welfare mothers who search for the names of their sons at the Viet Nam Memorial Wall. To prime the imagination of those who will soon be deciding how many more American sons and daughters are going to be sent to Iraq I offer the following RAP meditation:

WELFARE MOTHER AT THE VIETNAM WALL

O so long I saved
For the Greyhound bus fare
To travel to this great wall
Just to sit and stare.
From across the park
They all look the same
But take it slow
I find each separate name.
Girls names you can play with—
Towana Shoshana Sojourner;
But all my boys I gave
Names from the holy bible—
Joshua, Joseph and Paul
Now they decorate this great American Wall.
Officers respected my boys
And found them strong,
They used to get rough
But they did no wrong.
Angry snakes inside me
Keep coiling,
Maybe I shouldn't be bitter
But nobody asked
When they drafted my litter.
O God!
Stop my streaming blood
From boiling,
All my days
Are filled with toiling;
Never owned a dress of silk
But my breasts
Filled up rich with milk.

Nobody ever said thanks
When my babies
Climbed into their tanks;
Never had accounts in banks
Only crumbs for welfare ranks,
Butt of jokes and office pranks,
Pride they always made me smother—
Despised begging welfare mother.
Welfare clerks take up
So many hours of my time
Shuffling me round from line to line.
Clerk questions and forms
Nearly choked me to death.
Governors and Mayors held me down
Till I almost ran out of breath.
Worked in many stores
Scrubbed a whole lot of floors,
Once was tempted to hang out
With a ring of cheap whores;
At home always heavy chores,
Too tired to keep a job,
Then my welfare clerk attacked
With poison arrow eyes;
In front of her something in me dies,
Acts like its her money
Used to ask if I had a honey,
Charges me with lies,
Envy what was once
Between my thighs.
Be nice if I still had a man,
I miss hugging and stuff
But men are like babies
And six kids was enough.
They all had the same daddy
But my husband died too soon,
Strangled by escaping gas
With no mask
In the factory back room.
All my kids
I found some way to feed—
They grown now
And your molasses pity
Don't none of them need.
I let my daughters-in-law
Keep all the war insurance money;
They take good care of their kids
As far as I can see;
Don't want my grandsons
Still standing
In the soup kitchen line with me.
Its me alone now—
My social security
Covers most of the rent
But then its all spent;
For food each month
I survive on
Whatever crumbs God has sent.
My struggle goes on
With Medicaid Madams
Demanding my birth certificate
Again and again
They keep on trying to break me in.
Let them shove their questions and forms—
Don't push on me no more
I done come through too many storms.
Why go back to the welfare folks?
Maybe I'll just die
Right here and my boys
Will bear my body home.
Soldiers hear your mama call!
Break from the ranks
And leave the wall!
From each of your flags
A little bit of cloth
To quilt me a coffin cover;
Maybe somebody will blow a horn
To let the world know I'm your mother.
No, God forgive me!
I am a mighty American mother!
It wouldn't be right
To die here and spoil this place,
I got a duty to uphold our dignity,
We are a proud and loyal race.
My bus return ticket is here,
I'll face that Medicaid Madam
And swallow my fear;
My heroes would be ashamed
If I ever shed another tear.