

has already made his mark as a fair-minded and seasoned leader. He has driven the successful passage of several pieces of legislation, addressing Vermont's sexual abuse response system and legalizing same-sex marriage, among other important issues. Marcelle and I recently had dinner with Shap and his wife Dr. Melissa Volansky. We are both impressed with his commitment to Vermont.

I am looking forward to watching Shap Smith continue to lead the Vermont Legislature and build a record of fiscal and social responsibility. I wish him luck as he undertakes this challenging job during these difficult times.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of an April 20, 2009, Rutland Herald article about Mr. Smith be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Rutland Herald, Apr. 20, 2009]

SMITH LEADS WITH GRINNING STYLE

(By Susan Allen)

MONTPELIER.—Each speaker of the Vermont House has his or her own leadership style.

Ralph Wright growled.

Michael Obuchowski boomed.

Walt Freed ruled.

Gaye Symington analyzed.

And Shap Smith . . . well, he grins.

"I'm a friendly guy," said House Speaker Smith, new to the post this session, when asked last week about his style. Smith, himself a Democrat, reaches across the political aisle to work with Republicans, Progressives and Democrats alike.

But don't think he's a pushover.

"People know I take the issues pretty seriously," added Smith, a University of Vermont and Indiana University School of Law graduate who handles intellectual property, insurance coverage and civil litigation with the firm Dinse/Knapp/McAndrew during the off-session. "I can go toe-to-toe in debating issues."

Looking at the speaker, opponents might be tempted to underestimate his political skills. With a wiry frame from running, cross-country skiing and other athletic activities, and his wire-rimmed glasses, Smith looks about 25. He is, in fact, 43.

And anyone who thought he might be too young to lead need look no further than the recent House vote to override the governor's veto of the same-sex marriage bill. Smith needed 100 members to support the override, and going into the vote, the outcome was far from certain.

As he announced the final tally to the House floor—to the surprise of many, the needed 100 voted with the speaker and same-sex marriage would become law in Vermont—Smith stepped away from the podium briefly and appeared emotional.

"I have friends and colleagues to whom and for whom this bill meant a great deal," he said during a conversation last week in his window-lined Statehouse office. "I am very pleased we were able to do it. It was a great achievement."

Shap is actually Shapleigh Jr., a name that came from his grandmother, who was adopted into the Shapleigh family from the town of Shapleigh, Maine. His grandmother grew up in West Lebanon, N.H., where "there were all these Shapleighs," he added.

"I went to high school in Morrisville. I always wanted a different name," Smith said.

"Dave or Tim would have been just fine. Shapleigh is not a usual Vermont name."

Smith had an eye on public service since serving in student government in school. He followed politics closely in the 1990s while living in New York City and working for a law firm there, and started becoming more serious about a run after moving to Morrisville in 1999.

In 2002, with 2-month-old son Eli at home but an open legislative seat calling, he took the plunge, becoming what he described as the "Stealth" candidate knocking on doors, re-acquainting himself with friends from childhood and their families, and quietly winning the seat under the radar.

As all legislative leaders discover, juggling the pressing Statehouse agenda and a home life is challenging (he has two young children, and wife Melissa is a general practitioner).

"I go home almost every night," he said, adding that he tries to arrive in time to read to his children or at least put them to bed. "I'm the one that gets them up in the morning, which is a real reality check."

Things are less clear at the Statehouse, where Smith is focusing on his legislative agenda:

(1) Repairing and maintaining Vermont's transportation system—the roads and bridges;

(2) Expanding and improving telecommunications (computer broadband) in rural areas;

(3) Strengthening Vermont's public education system; and

(4) Trying to close the gap in educational performance between students on the lower economic scale and their wealthier peers—a disparity consistently documented in national and state school test scores.

Hanging over those priorities is the staggering challenge of trying to balance the state budget in dire economic times, with the state hemorrhaging red ink. It is, he said, a task that "keeps me up at night."

"How do you balance being fiscally responsible with meeting the needs of the state?" he asked rhetorically. And while not completely unexpected, the economic challenge has been "worse than some of us thought it would be."

Returning to the place he was raised, meeting and re-meeting neighbors, old friends and classmates, and watching his children grow up in the same area he did seems to drive Smith's political vision.

"I want to make sure we put in place policies that allow the next generation to have the opportunities that I did," he said.

REMEMBERING AL MYERS

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I am both proud and saddened today to salute Mr. Al Myers, a beloved teacher at Williston Central School in Vermont who recently passed away after being injured while working on the set of a school play. Mr. Myers was best known as a popular educator who was remembered by former school principal Lynn Murray as being "brilliant with children." As a U.S. Senator, I remember Mr. Myers bringing students to Washington, DC every year. He truly wanted them to understand the importance of living in the world's greatest democracy.

In memory of Mr. Myers, I ask unanimous consent that the following memorial article, by Matt Ryan of the Burlington Free Press, be printed into the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Apr. 27, 2009]

MYERS' DEATH MOURNED

(By Matt Ryan)

WILLISTON.—Parents, students and teachers at Williston Central School are mourning the death of a popular educator who fell from a ladder and suffered a severe head injury while working on the set of the school's production of "The Wizard of Oz."

Al Myers was found in the auditorium Friday morning and transported to Fletcher Allen Hospital where he underwent surgery. He died Saturday morning, according to the school.

Julie Longchamp, the producer of the school play, worked with Myers for 20 years.

"He was an extraordinary man with a lot of passion," Longchamp said. "Everyone has come together and we're going to be putting Al's show on."

Longchamp prepared for the play near Myers' desk, in their office at the school Sunday evening. In the auditorium, parents and students quietly worked on the play's set and costumes, the Emerald City and Glinda's pink dress. Tickets for the show, which is scheduled for this weekend, sold out April 1.

"The play the Wizard of Oz will go on as scheduled under the direction of Julie Longchamp," principal Walter Nardelli wrote in an e-mail to parents. "Al and his family would have wanted it that way."

Counselors will be available today for students, and staff will attempt to keep the day as normal as possible, Nardelli said. He encouraged children to go to school. Students were on break last week.

The school was coordinating with Champlain Valley Union High School to support former students who worked with Myers, Nardelli said.

Myers had directed many theater productions over the years. Former students and parents of students posted thoughts about the teacher on several Facebook pages dedicated to his memory. They wrote about working with Myers on plays like, "Annie Get Your Gun," "Fiddler on the Roof" and "Macbeth," and catching his infectious love for music and theater.

"Mr. Myers was a wonderful teacher who took me under his wing as he did to so many others," David Stephens of Burlington wrote. "I remember the sing-a-longs that he had in class where he would pull out his guitar and would have 100 percent participation because it was so much fun. I can still remember a bunch of the songs we would sing, 'Feeling Groovy,' 'Blowin' in the Wind.'"

Former Williston Central School principal Lynn Murray remembered Myers being "brilliant with children."

"In my entire career, I have never met anyone with so much heart, so much talent and so giving a nature," Murray wrote.

According to one Facebook page, a celebration of his life will be held at noon, May 16 at the Williston Central School. As of 9 p.m. Sunday, more than 450 people joined the "In Memory of Al Myers" Facebook page.

"He's going to be a very, very missed man," Longchamp said.

AMERICAN CITY QUALITY MONTH

Ms. SNOWE. Madam President, I rise today to recognize that the month of April is designated as American City Quality Month. Through the continued efforts of the American City Planning