

Mrs. Edith Armstead Gray. Mrs. Gray passed away December 1 at the age of 99. Mrs. Gray was a lady of style, grace, and compassion. But, most of all, Mrs. Gray earned the highest honor that could be bestowed upon any of us: "Servant."

Mrs. Gray was born in Galveston, Texas, in 1910 to Henry and Millie Armstead. She enrolled at Tuskegee Institute, now University, as a student majoring in home economics. She accepted her first and only teaching job in Conecuh County, Alabama, and returned to summer school to earn her B.S. degree from Tuskegee in 1940.

During her extraordinary teaching career, she became a great role model for thousands of young men and women who entered her classroom. But, her commitment and dedication to humankind did not limit itself to the classroom.

Shirley Chisholm once said that "Service is the rent that we pay for the space that we occupy here on this earth." Mrs. Gray paid her rent and she paid it well. She gave dedicated service to many community organizations to include: the Conecuh County branch of the NAACP; the Evergreen Housing Authority board of directors; the Neoteric Club, now associated with Neoteric Clubs of Alabama; the Mt. Zion A.M.E. Zion Church; the County Retired Teachers Association; and a life member of the advisory board at Reid Technical College. Because of her dedicated service to Reid Technical College, the library and technology center now proudly bears her name.

Mrs. Gray was a trailblazer. She was a founding member of the Conecuh branch of the NAACP and the Neoteric Club. She worked tirelessly to make sure that citizens in her community exercised their power of the ballot.

Mrs. Gray married Philander A. Gray in 1936. From that union came three accomplished children: Phyllis Hallmon, my chief of staff, Frederick Gray, and Jerome Gray. Upon the death of her husband in 1953, as a single parent, she reared her three children and passed on to each of them a love for people and public service. All of them have had distinguished careers and are making their mark on the world because of their mother's strong influence. Frederick has served for many years as a United Methodist pastor. His charge has been to bring souls to Jesus Christ for His service. Jerome has served as the State Field Director for the Alabama Democratic Conference. Like his dear mother, he has devoted his life and work to the expansion of political and civic opportunities for African-Americans. He has been involved in many capacities at the local and state levels in the fight for civil rights and equal opportunities. He currently serves as a Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture for the State of Alabama. Phyllis has also had a distinguished career, serving as a public school teacher, government lawyer, legislative director to a United States Senator, and chief of staff to two Members of the United States House of Representatives. In the same vein as her mother, she has distinguished herself as a woman of hard work and compassion. The legacy of Mrs. Gray will live on through each of them and their progeny.

Her legacy of good will is something that we all should seek to replicate. Our country and our world are better because Edith Armstead Gray passed this way. She will be sorely missed. I know that after 99 years of dedi-

cated earthly service, she has now claimed her crown of righteousness.

I extend my deepest sympathies to the Gray family and thank them for sharing this special woman with the world for so many years.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR PAULA  
HAWKINS

HON. JOHN L. MICA

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 8, 2009*

Mr. MICA. Madam Speaker, it is with sadness that I report to the House of Representatives the passing of former United States Senator Paula Hawkins. Florida's former State Public Service Commissioner and U.S. Senator died Friday, December 4 in Orlando, Florida. With Paula Hawkins' passing, we have lost a remarkable public servant and trailblazer for women and all Americans in the state and national political landscape.

A resident of Winter Park, Florida, who began her public career in nearby Maitland, Florida, was born Paula Fickes in Salt Lake City, Utah, on January 24, 1927. She received her education from the public school systems in Salt Lake City and Richmond, Utah, as well as, Atlanta, Georgia, attending Utah State University from 1944–1947.

In 1972, she became the first woman in Florida elected statewide with her winning a seat on the Public Service Commission. With her election and work to reform Florida's State Utility Commission, she gained the name as the battling "Maitland Housewife." In 1980, she became the first woman elected to the United States Senate without being preceded in office by a husband or family member.

In the United States Senate, she authored the Missing Children's Act in 1982. During her 6-year term, she championed children's and women's issues and created a public dialogue on the subject of missing, exploited and abused children. "Senator Paula Hawkins was tireless, tenacious and an incredible champion for America's children," said Ernie Allen, President of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. "We will cherish her memory and miss her very much."

Senator Hawkins was also responsible for the passage of Radio Marti legislation and a number of measures assisting women in the workforce. She Chaired the Investigation and Oversight Subcommittee of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. In addition, the Senator served as Chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Children, Family, Youth and Drugs and was responsible for establishing the U.S. Senate Child Care Center.

Mrs. Hawkins was instrumental in building the Republican Party, both at the state and national level. She began her GOP work at the local level, served as National Republican Committeewoman from Florida and co-chaired the 1984 Republican Convention Platform Committee. Senator Hawkins was also state co-chair in Florida for several successful Republican Presidential campaigns.

Senator Hawkins received numerous awards and was honored by selection to Florida's Outstanding Women's Hall of Fame.

Prior to election to the U.S. Senate she served as a vice president of Air Florida 1979–1980; director, Rural Telephone Bank

board 1972–1978; member President's Commission on White House fellowships 1975; served on Federal Energy Administration Consumer Affairs/Special Impact Advisory Committee 1974–1976; and served for 7 years as a representative for the United States on the Organization of American States Inter-American Drug Abuse Commission.

Senator Hawkins is survived by her husband Gene Hawkins of Winter Park, Florida and three children, Genean McKinnon of Winter Park and Montreal, Kevin Hawkins of Denver, Colorado and Kelly McCoy of Orlando, Florida, as well as, 11 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

SPEECH ON AFGHANISTAN

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 8, 2009*

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, on Friday December 4, 2009, I had an opportunity to address the American Security Project Conference regarding the situation in Afghanistan. This speech followed a hearing of the House Armed Services Committee, which I chair, the day before. My address is as follows:

[Speech given at the American Security Project Conference, Dec. 4, 2009]

BEYOND THE SURGE: ASSESSING THE  
PRESIDENT'S AFGHANISTAN STRATEGY

(By Ike Skelton)

First, let me take a moment to thank Admiral Gunn for that introduction. You're too kind. I'd like to extend that thanks to Senator Hart and the American Security Project as a whole. You're doing great work, and I appreciate your efforts. I'd also like to say happy birthday to Evelyn Farkas, here at ASP. I would also like to thank our brave men and women in uniform. We have asked much of them in the past decade, and they have not failed to deliver.

Two months ago, I wrote a letter to the President saying, essentially, that he should listen to his commanders in the field. Being a member of Congress, I took six pages to say that, but that was the basic message. I made that same point in private conversations with the President. And so it pleased me the other night when the President agreed to provide General McChrystal with additional forces needed to make this new strategy work.

But before assessing the overall strategy, I think we should take a moment to remind ourselves why we're in Afghanistan and the threat we face there.

Al Qaeda presents a serious threat to our nation. Osama bin Laden and his minions have attacked us or attempted to attack us many times over the years. The most remarkable attack involved the murder of 3000 civilians—men, women, and children—but it was hardly the only attack. And I do not believe that anyone has a good reason to believe that they have given up their attempts to attack us.

Following our invasion of Afghanistan in response to this attack, al Qaeda largely fled to the border regions of Pakistan. Their Taliban allies, meanwhile, continue to escalate their attacks in an attempt to overthrow the Afghan government and drive out the international coalition.

Others have differing opinions on this, but I do not believe that we can ultimately destroy al Qaeda if we cannot prevent them from recreating a safe haven in Afghanistan.

I also do not believe that we can be successful in rooting them out of Pakistan if we fail in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan and Pakistan have some inherent advantages for al Qaeda that other places may not. Having been in the region for over 20 years, they have married into local tribes and made contacts with other extremist organizations. These connections have allowed the senior leaders to hide successfully for many years.

Afghanistan is also of strategic value to al Qaeda. In losing Afghanistan, they lost not only the support of a government and the use of an entire country as a safe haven, but suffered a tremendous blow to their image. Reestablishing a safe haven in Afghanistan could rehabilitate this image among those who resent or oppose the United States, leading to increases in recruiting and funding.

Nor can we consider Afghanistan and Pakistan in isolation—the security situation in Afghanistan can have a negative impact on the stability of Pakistan. It is foolish to think that if the Taliban and al Qaeda were able to reestablish themselves in all or part of Afghanistan, they would not lend support to those militants seeking to overthrow or destabilize the Pakistani state. Al Qaeda has already assisted the Pakistani Taliban in carrying out attacks on the Pakistani government, and I would expect this aid to increase if al Qaeda regained a base in Afghanistan. There was an attack at a mosque earlier today that killed dozens. With a secure base for al Qaeda, I would expect many more such attacks. And the only thing worse than al Qaeda loose in Afghanistan again is a destabilized, nuclear-armed Pakistan.

On Tuesday night, the President proposed what I think is a good way ahead as we address this threat. From the extensive media reporting on the process, we all know how thorough a review was conducted by the White House, lasting months and including somewhere around 10 cabinet secretary level meetings and extensive consultation with every expert they could find.

President Obama's strategy rightly focuses on seizing the initiative from the enemy, building Afghan capacity, and ultimately allowing the Afghan government and security forces to take the lead in fighting this war.

The President has appropriately called for additional troops from our allies—this is not just America's war, and we must not allow it to become that. Perhaps more importantly, the President has put the burden of reform squarely on the Afghan government, laying out clear expectations of performance and promising support for those ministries and local leaders that perform.

The President has also rightly acknowledged the importance of Pakistan. Pakistan remains a challenge, playing a key and often contradictory role in the region. Pakistan, by assisting in the pursuit of al Qaeda and Afghan Taliban leaders, could help bring the war in Afghanistan to an end. Conversely, if Pakistan were to return to old habits of supporting the Afghan Taliban, the war may be almost impossible to win. More concerning, the continued ascendancy of militant movements in the region could destabilize Pakistan, a country with nuclear weapons. This could be disastrous for all of us.

I think this is a good strategy. Perhaps most importantly, it is a strategy that I believe has a good chance of success. In the past, I have often said that we lacked a strategy for the first 7 years of the war in Afghanistan. Some of my colleagues have suggested that this assertion may not be entirely fair. But, the result of whatever the

prior Administration thought it was doing, ultimately resembled conducting combat operations without any thought of what we were trying to accomplish. So having a strategy, much less a good one, is a great start.

President Obama also, I am pleased to say, took my advice. He listened to his military leaders, including Generals McChrystal and Petraeus, Admiral Mullen, and Secretary Gates. Ultimately, the President endorsed adding 30,000 troops to carry out his strategy. This is on top of the 21,000 he dispatched to Afghanistan earlier this year. In January 2009, there were about 33,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. In about 7 months, there will be three times that. That is, I believe, a clear sign of the President's resolve and willingness to do what it takes to be successful in Afghanistan.

Yesterday, the House Armed Services Committee, which I have to honor to chair, hosted Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, and Deputy Secretary of State Lew. Next Tuesday, we will hear from General McChrystal and Ambassador Eikenberry. Members, properly, have a lot of questions about the strategy, and we want to make sure that the details have been thought through. I'll list a few of the areas we have explored or will next week.

Many members are concerned about the July 2011 date to begin redeployment. So far, most have focused on that date as being set, rather than completely conditions based, but to me it looks like this is a case where there isn't much to complain about. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen were pretty clear that not only were they comfortable with the date, but that they thought it served the useful purpose of motivating the Afghans.

To me, what happens after that date is at least as important as the date itself. Secretary Gates testified that the process of transition that begins on that date would itself be slow and conditions-based, so that while the start of the process was fixed in time, the end could be adjusted as required. And I think that flexibility and realistic approach to a difficult process is exactly right.

One other concern, and one that in my mind might be more realistic, is the unintended consequences of setting out such a message. The message of a gradual, conditions-based transition may not be understood the same way by all audiences. The Pakistanis may well believe that it signals that the United States is once again leaving the region, and that might undermine our hopes of gaining their cooperation. Various ethnic groups in Afghanistan, fearing a civil war after we begin to depart, could start stockpiling weaponry or hedge their bets in other unhelpful ways. I think we have to keep our eyes open for this possibility and be creative in reassuring the Afghans and the Pakistanis that we are not abandoning them.

Corruption in the Afghan government, and the legitimacy or illegitimacy of that government, is also frequently a subject of questioning. It's a concern I share, and one that President Karzai's recent election reinforced. On the positive side, there are ministers and ministries in Afghanistan that have functioned well—Minister Wardak at the Defense Ministry and Minister Atmar at the Interior Ministry are honest effective ministers. The Health Ministry, Education Ministry, and the National Solidarity Program, run by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, all seem to be functioning well.

But there are also legitimate concerns. High level corruption among ministers and governors; shakedowns by police, judges, and other authorities; and perceptions that warlords are untouchable by the law feed the belief among the Afghan people that their gov-

ernment does not serve them. And President Karzai has not always been helpful—his family is perceived to be part of the problem, and his unwillingness to remove the immunity from some ministers so the Afghan Attorney General can indict them is not helpful.

There are ways we can help push for reform—for example, not working with those leaders who prove to be corrupt so that their ability to deliver for their followers or to make money is hampered—but we have to take this seriously. President Karzai, in his inauguration speech also promised to crack down on corruption and to hold a loya jirga of national reconciliation. I would like to hear from General McChrystal and Ambassador Eikenberry how we can hold him to these promises and push to have the jirga also help develop a compact of what the Afghan people have a right to expect from their government.

Members will also likely ask about the promised assessment of efforts in December 2010. I think that is a good time to begin such an assessment—six months after all the promised troops arrive in country—but members will likely have many questions about it. What will we assess? What is an acceptable level of progress? What are the options if progress is insufficient? These are all obvious questions. The one thing I would say is that I think it will behoove all of us to offer the Administration some breathing space before we make judgments about the success of the plan. Asking questions is fair, drawing conclusions about the success or failure of the strategy before it is really implemented probably isn't.

So, in the first few days after the announcement of the new strategy, those are some of my thoughts. I think the President is to be commended for the strategy and the resolve he is showing. I believe he is fully aware of the threat posed by al Qaeda and the potential posed by a sanctuary for terror in Afghanistan and a possibly destabilized Pakistan. These are serious threats we are facing, and the President is clearly prepared to take realistic, effective and fully resourced steps to address them.

So I conclude as I started, by thanking all of you for what you do, and by asking you to think of the brave men and women in uniform, and the civilians who will assist them, who will have to do the hard, dangerous work to make this strategy a success. We owe them a great deal, and we should never forget it.

Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO BART NELSON,  
FOUNDER AND CEO OF NELSON  
IRRIGATION CORP

**HON. CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS**

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 8, 2009*

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize Nelson Irrigation and its extraordinary founder, Bart Nelson. Recently recognized by the Seattle Business magazine as one of Washington's top innovators and entrepreneurs, Nelson has been one of the United States' leading pioneers in the field of agricultural irrigation.

Headquartered in Walla Walla, WA, Nelson Irrigation, Nelson, plans, designs, develops, manufactures, and sells proprietary products for the irrigation equipment market. His products are sold to customers throughout the United States and the world. What makes this