EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS
HONORING THE WORK OF MIKE WOODS
HON. BART GORDON
OF TENNESSEE
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, November 17, 1999

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mike Woods and his more than 25 years of work as city clerk for the town of Smyrna, Tennessee. Mike’s tenure will soon come to an end. He has decided to retire on November 30.

As clerk, Mike has seen Smyrna grow from a small community with an annual budget of $500,000 dollars and 27 employees to being one of Tennessee’s fastest growing cities with a population of more than 20,000, a current budget of more than $25 million dollars and over 300 employees.

Mike worked hard, along with former Mayor Sam Ridley, to make Smyrna the home of Nissan Motor Manufacturing U.S.A., which has almost 6,000 workers. His vision and invaluable experience have served Smyrna well, and the city has been recognized with numerous state and national awards. Mike truly exemplifies the best of public service and will be sorely missed in city government.

I have known Mike since he first began his tenure in Smyrna and consider him a close friend. He has given me lots of good advice over the years, and I thank him for that. I congratulate Mike for his admirable and distinguished career and wish him the best of luck in future endeavors.

November 18, 1999

RECOGNIZING AND HONORING WALTER PAYTON AND EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES OF THE HOUSE TO HIS FAMILY ON HIS DEATH

SPEECH OF
HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, November 16, 1999

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to strongly support this measure that recognizes a true sports hero and legend, Walter Payton.

Payton died of bile duct cancer at age 45. He is survived by his wife, Connie; his daughter, Brittany; and his son, Jarrett. But it is not his death that lingers in our minds. It is his way of life that fills our memories during a time of heartache.

As a member of the Chicago Bears, Walter Payton stretched athleticism past the bounds of our imaginations. He bulled and wove throughout the football field with a creativity that allowed brute force and artistic expression to merge into one perfect moment. Payton, the National Football League’s leader in yards rushing (16,726) and carries (3,838), was known for his durability. He missed just one game in his 13-year career with the Bears. And during that time, he earned a Super Bowl ring. Payton retired after the 1987 season, and the Bears retired his No. 34. In the first year he was eligible for the Pro Football Hall of Fame, he was an unanimous selection.

But we cannot limit his worth to mere statistics and on-the-field achievement. Walter Payton represented sheer perseverance. Some would call Walter Payton the Cal Ripken of football. I would suggest that Cal Ripken is the Walter Payton of baseball. Indeed, Payton is the very embodiment of the term “iron will.” His commitment to excellence and immense endurance makes his death seem all the more unbelievable. But Walter Payton did not lose his battle with liver disease. He simply ran out of time.

During an emotional, invitation-only memorial service that drew about 1,200 people, friends and family remembered Payton’s practical jokes, his passion for those around him, his battle with liver disease. He simply ran out of time.

The public also had its chance to say goodbye during a ceremony at Soldier Field. Thousands of Bears fans filed into the stadium, many carrying signs in tribute and others dressed in Payton’s familiar No. 34 jersey.

Yet, sports aficionados are not the only members of society who claim Payton as their hero. Any American, regardless of race or gender, can identify with Walter Payton. The consummate statesman, Payton carried himself on and off the field with dignity and class. He achieved, yet, he always remained committed to his team—individuality was not his style. It is because of his gentle and caring demeanor that he truly earned his nickname, “Sweetness.” He was as sweet a person in real life as he was to watch on the football field.