

And, perhaps, we can all try to become a little bit more like her.

RECOGNIZING THE FORMATION OF
THE CONGRESSIONAL RURAL
CAUCUS

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the official rebirth of the Congressional Rural Caucus. I am so pleased to have the opportunity to recognize the efforts of Representatives EVA CLAYTON of North Carolina, JO ANN EMERSON of Missouri, JERRY MORAN of Kansas, and EARL POMEROY of North Dakota to re-establish this important Caucus, and to thank the dozens of organizations and associations which have helped during the planning process and will continue to work with the Congressional Rural Caucus in the days ahead.

I am very excited to be a member of this new caucus. A number of years ago, I served a term as Chairman of the previously organized Congressional Rural Caucus. That group was extraordinarily valuable as an outlet for Members representing rural districts to discuss issues and work together to communicate the particular needs and concerns of rural America to the Congress as a whole. After several years of inactivity, I am glad that like-minded Members will once again have a bi-partisan organization that focuses on bringing the priorities of rural America to the forefront in the Congress.

In addition to recognizing the new membership of the Congressional Rural Caucus, I would like to say just a few words about one of the groups that has recently assisted with the organization of the Caucus and has for decades worked to improve life in rural America—the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

One of our nation's greatest achievements during the last century was the electrification of rural America. Before the third decade of the 20th Century, only about 10 percent of America's rural population enjoyed the benefits of electricity. The rest chopped wood, pumped water by hand or carried it from a stream, washed and rinsed the laundry in tubs in the yard. Life without electricity was especially hard on women. They aged early and died young because of the hardships of rural living.

Rural electrification provides us with a wonderful example of American ingenuity and federal cooperation. The people of rural America who needed electric service came together as cooperatives to organize and run their own electric utilities, and the government provided loans that most bankers, then or today, could not have provided prudently.

Electricity—and the Rural Electrification Administration and the vision of Congress—made a huge difference. Today, more than 99 percent of rural Americans can watch television in the comfort of an all-electric home, can enjoy the efficiencies of all manner of appliances—from toasters to air-conditioners, from grain dryers to milking machines and refrigeration.

Because now most rural Americans have electric service, some would say the job is done. I would say the job is just begun. Rural America today faces a different set of challenges. Electric cooperatives have deep roots in their communities, and they have a stake in improving the quality of life, the economics, the health and education of their communities. Electric cooperatives have traditionally provided services well beyond basic electricity, from something as simple as lighting the little league field to something as complex as providing distance learning in rural schools, Internet access, water and sewer, satellite television, economic and community development. They could do more; they would do more. We need to consider how rural Americans across the country could benefit by harnessing the talent of rural electric cooperatives in new ways in this new century.

I look forward in the coming months and years, as a member of the Congressional Rural Caucus, to addressing our new rural challenges. Again, I would like to thank the co-chairs of the Caucus and all of the organizations that have worked to bring the Congressional Rural Caucus back to life. Together I think we can be a positive force to bring true and consistent prosperity and a high quality of life to rural Americans.

NRA RHETORIC

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, Shame, shame, shame. The NRA's leadership has once again shamed our nation, the American people, and its own members. Wayne LaPierre, the NRA's Executive Vice President, on national television, suggested that the President of the United States promotes violence for his political gain. LaPierre said, "I've come to believe that he needs a certain level of violence in this country. He's willing to accept a certain level of killing to further his political agenda and his vice president too."

To all the parents who lost a son or daughter to gun violence, LaPierre is telling them to blame the President and not the guns. I would not be surprised to hear the NRA's leadership blaming school grief counselors of inciting more school shootings so they can have more business.

How can the NRA leadership ignore the fact that thirteen children die each day from gun violence? How can they ignore the fact that a majority of Americans want Congress to pass sensible gun safety measures? How can they lay blame on a President who supports background checks at gun shows, a ban on the import of large-capacity ammunition clips, and the sale of child safety locks with every handgun?

It's time for the NRA leadership to wake up and smell the gunpowder in our communities and classrooms, and step out of the way of meaningful gun safety legislation. I submit the following New York Times editorial entitled "Desperate Rhetoric from the NRA," for the RECORD.

[From the New York Times, Mar. 14, 2000]

DESPERATE RHETORIC FROM THE N.R.A.

Americans have become used to hearing nutty talk from leaders of the National Rifle Association. But Sunday's outrageous assertion by the group's executive vice president, Wayne LaPierre, that President Clinton is "willing to accept a certain level of killing to further his political agenda" deserves special condemnation.

Mr. LaPierre made his sick suggestion that the president relishes having gun tragedies to exploit in an interview on ABC's "This Week." He was there to push the N.R.A.'s demonstrably false line that the nation already has enough gun laws on the books if only the administration would enforce them. Thanks largely to the N.R.A.'s lobbying, those laws do not adequately address issues of supply, distribution, design or child access.

In a new advertising campaign the N.R.A.'s president, Charlton Heston, accuses Mr. Clinton of engaging in lying and scare tactics to win support for gun control measures bottled up in Congress. But for dishonesty, it is hard to beat the N.R.A.'s own whopper in trying to portray the group as a friend of the reasonable gun safety measures it has been fighting to defeat or water down.

The sparring came just days after Mr. Clinton's meeting with key Congressional leaders at the White House failed to produce progress in freeing a modest gun control package from the House-Senate conference committee where it has been stalled for months. The sticking point remains the strong gun-show provision that cleared the Senate last May over the N.R.A.'s vehement opposition. This provision would extend to gun-show sales the same background check requirement that now applies to guns purchased from licensed dealers.

Two Democratic senators, Charles Schumer of New York and Richard Durbin of Illinois, are planning to step up the pressure by attaching gun control amendments to other legislation coming to the floor. This will force recorded votes on matters with broad public support, like mandatory trigger locks and background checks of buyers at gun shows, flea markets and Internet sales.

Only two weeks ago a 6-year-old killed a classmate with a handgun, one of many reasons gun regulation promises to be an issue in the long political campaign ahead. The chief obstacle to saner gun control remains the obstructionism of the N.R.A., whose extremist views and rhetoric should offend Americans fed up with all the gunfire.

CONGRESSIONAL RURAL CAUCUS

HON. ALLEN BOYD

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, today more than one hundred of my colleagues and I celebrate the formation of the Congressional Rural Caucus. Our bipartisan group will serve as a unified voice on behalf of rural Americans. One in every four Americans, or 62 million people, reside in rural areas and an additional 15 million Americans live in small cities and towns. Unfortunately, too often the logistical difficulties rural residents face prevent their concerns on issues like education, healthcare and agriculture from being heard. Our caucus hopes to share with our colleagues in Congress the