

within the Archdiocese. He brings 40 years of ministerial experience to this House.

Daniel Coughlin is a Catholic. That does not make him more nor less qualified for the job. But I am proud of his historic appointment. I hope his appointment will help us to heal and that it will bring a sense of pride to the millions of Catholic men and women around this country who have had legitimate feelings of past discrimination which some in this House have sought to manipulate.

I urge all of my colleagues to get to know Father Coughlin. He is a good man who will provide this House with spiritual guidance and counseling support necessary to bring us together again. Let me say to every leader of this House and to every Member of this House: let us embrace our new Chaplain, put this episode behind us, and move forward to do the people's business.

RESIGNATION AS CHAPLAIN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD) laid before the House the following resignation.

OFFICE OF THE CHAPLAIN,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 23, 2000.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: During the last 21 years it has been my privilege and honor to serve as Chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives. I came to the House with a view that the practice of politics can be a noble vocation and should be considered a high calling and I leave with that view strengthened and with my admiration enhanced for the people who serve in government.

I write now to inform you that effective Thursday, March 23, 2000, I resign my office as Chaplain of the House of Representatives.

It has been a singular opportunity to be elected to the position of Chaplain and now to be named Chaplain Emeritus, as I have sought to serve all the Members of the House and to honor their political and religious traditions. The friendships that have begun here have nourished my life and my work and I leave with appreciation for our years together and with a salute for the opportunities of the future.

With every good wish, I remain.

Sincerely,

JAMES D. FORD,
Chaplain.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, and with regret, the resignation is accepted.

Mr. KLECZKA. Reserving the right to object, Mr. Speaker, I have an inquiry of the Chair. Is the Chair prepared to allot some time for this side of the aisle to be heard on this issue?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain requests, and it depends on what the request is.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for up to 15 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Dakota?

There was no objection.

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the Chaplain's resignation is accepted, with regret.

There was no objection.

CONCERNING THE CHAPLAIN SELECTION PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) for 15 minutes.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for allowing us to express our thoughts on this important matter. I would begin my thoughts by joining the Speaker's expression of regret about the resignation of Dr. Ford, who has served this institution so well and been a dear friend and an important chaplain to each of us. I thought that at some point, I might, as cochair of the chaplain selection process, have the opportunity to address the body as to the version, our version in the minority, of the events that have transpired throughout this chaplain selection process. I did not anticipate it coming today, in the middle of the budget vote; and I did not anticipate following the Speaker of the House, a person for whom I have considerable regard relative to his obviously heartfelt remarks just delivered. My remarks are not prepared. I ask you to bear with me.

I want to convey a deep sense of sorrow and regret that a process that began so honorably by the Speaker has ended in this fashion. Clearly, Speaker HASTERT wanted to capture the bipartisan efforts of other Speakers as the chaplain was selected but improve upon it. So when Speaker O'Neill asked the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations and the ranking member of the Committee on Appropriations to go and agree on a chaplain that he might then appoint, that was bipartisan. It could have been improved upon and Speaker HASTERT set upon a process that did improve upon it. It had even broader involvement, eight minority, eight majority. We were even given a cochair opportunity. We were very, very pleased and heartened by this gesture by the Speaker, because we believe that the chaplain is the chaplain of the House, not the Speaker's chaplain, not the majority chaplain, but the chaplain for all of us.

We advanced with the work, and it was considerable. Thirty-eight resumes to pore through. We culled it down in a process that had more comity and agreement across the party aisle to 17 interviews. Going through the hours of interviews, we developed friendships across party aisles, members of the

committee. I so enjoyed working with my cochair, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY), and each of the members, majority and minority alike.

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We then got it down to six semifinalists working toward the list of three. And while the Speaker is absolutely correct, his letter to us says send up to three names, the discussion throughout was to send three names. And we did not seriously consider sending less than three names.

As the final balloting occurred, even though this had been a process utterly without partisanship, there were, and it is not surprising, party distinctions in the relative support behind the candidates.

The candidate that finished fourth had only Democrat support. The candidate that finished third, Dr. Wright, had Republican support, with 1½ Democrat votes and a token showing across the party aisle. Two candidates, Dr. Dvorak and Father O'Brien, had significant bipartisan support, with Father O'Brien having the first showing in terms of vote totals.

We did not rank these candidates. We decided not to rank them. Ranking involves making a judgment, who is the best one, who is the second best one. We thought all three were qualified individuals, but what was important was the bipartisan consensus behind them.

Again, this is the chaplain of the House. It was a bipartisan process; and, therefore, the degree of consensus behind the final three is very important to us in the selection process, because this determines really the candidates that were able to capture support across the party aisle.

In this respect, in my presentation to the Speaker, the Minority Leader, as they began their work of the final committee of three, I indicated that Father O'Brien had had the most support; that Dr. Dvorak had the second level of support; that Dr. Wright had the third level of support.

I believed that the discussions that followed also captured this sense of consensus behind O'Brien, consensus behind Dvorak, not consensus behind Wright. So there were two meetings, as the Speaker just indicated, largely because they did not come to closure the first time. And the second time, in a divided vote, we in the minority know how divided votes go, you lose them. And the selection was made, Dr. Wright; not a consensus selection.

Here is where I really hope you can understand where our hard feelings on this matter arise. We are asked to participate. We willingly participated. We cared a great deal about the chaplaincy, and we felt as though our view was ignored when the final decision was made. Majority only, once again. We felt that. We believed that.

You may disagree with that interpretation, but that is what we believed.