

America's Leaders

A Civil Senator

by Jeffrey R. Lewis

(NAPSA)—A U.S. senator who put voters' interests before the politics of the day and a moderate Republican who valued and cared about rebuilding this nation's human and physical infrastructure, John Heinz also understood that bipartisanship, civility and integrity were the roots of legislative success and political longevity.



Jeffrey R. Lewis

In a speech to the American Association of University Women, Sen. Heinz's comments reflected the mind-set of a passionate, caring and thinking Republican legislator who clearly understood the pulse of the American people, and his words still echo the issues Congress cannot overcome:

"We are losing our tolerance of diversity, our understanding of different circumstances and points of view, and goodwill toward those who reflect those differences," he said. "If I am right, it should be a grave concern to you and all Americans. I think the reason for this failure of spirit is a lack of confidence; a lack of confidence in our leaders, our institutions and even ourselves. We Americans have always been renowned for our ability to meet and conquer tough problems...."

What John Heinz discussed then is unfortunately still true today. He was elected in an era when civility was woven into the fabric of the legislative process. Name-calling, if it did occur, was left to the back rooms, not a public

forum and certainly not the floor of the U.S. Congress. No one, Republican or Democrat, would have tolerated the callous disregard for the presidency of the United States.

During Sen. Heinz's era, respect for the legislative process was paramount. These legislative colleagues certainly disagreed on many issues but it was always about the substance.

In a speech to the graduates of Wilkes College, Sen. Heinz shared his definition of leadership:

"Real leadership, whether it is political, economic or moral, involves persuading people to do something now that will bear fruit in the future. But too many people live only in the short term. Instead of clearly seeing what is demanded of us in this changing world...of learning from the past, instead of charting a new course for tomorrow, too many Americans are allowing themselves to be manipulated into quarreling with the past and denying the realities of the future...Americans risk losing the future and missing the great opportunities that lie before us as a nation."

John Heinz unabashedly supported policies that his party may not have agreed with because they were in the best interests of his constituents and often the American people as a whole.

Sen. John Heinz understood that bipartisanship was not a one-way street. His death left a significant void, and a dearth of passion and certainly pragmatism.

• *Jeffrey Lewis was the Republican staff director for Senator Heinz and can be reached at jeffrey13@chimrx.com.*