

Submitter: Rick Metsger  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SCR10  
Testimony in Support of SCR10  
By Rick Metsger  
Oregon State Senator 1999-2011

Chairman Jama, members of the committee. My name is Rick Metsger and I served with Peter Courtney in the Senate from 1999-2011, the later part of my service as his senate president pro-tempore

"I am a legislator. That's what I do-That's who I am." That is how Peter Courtney once responded to a reporter who asked whether he had ever thought of running for Governor.

Peter and I came into the Senate together, along with Lee Beyer on January 11th, 1999. We entered a Senate as members of the minority party. Four years later in 2003 the chamber tied and Peter was elected president of the senate beginning his historic 20-year run.

Serving in the minority party those first four years made an indelible imprint on Peter. It help guide him the rest of his career. He understood first-hand that a good idea didn't stop being a good idea just because another seat in the chamber changed party affiliation. He walked in those shoes - it sculpted him as a legislator and a leader.

One-word guided Peter Courtney- Respect: Respect for the Institution. Respect for the Process: Respect and for one another.

Peter loved the Senate. He would often break out extemporaneously from the podium educating us on some historical footnotes of the senate, the capitol or the state.

Oregon's DNA is his DNA.

Peter was a unique composite of Daniel Webster, Ken Burns and Wiley Coyote.

No one could engage a microphone like Peter Courtney. He didn't speak from the floor often, but when he did, staffers would often file in the side aisle behind the bar to watch the performance. One always filled with Passion and Power. Appeals anchored in dignity, respect or compassion.

His love for the history of the senate guided him as President. He saw himself as the steward of its customs and traditions.

Yet, back in his office, he would often take on a playful persona, reaching deep into his ACME bag of tricks to try and pull a joke on a fellow colleague or member of his staff, only to find it misfire much to the delight and laughter of the assembled

witnesses.

If you served with Peter, you cannot stand in the empty chamber of the senate, close your eyes and not hear the voice of Peter Courtney. His spirit permeates the cherry and walnut walls around you. The sunlight darting through the windows as if a spotlight searching for its orator.

A little over a year ago, his health waning Peter came to visit me at my office. He was deeply introspective. He leaned in and asked “ Do you think I would have been a good Congressman? Peter had run for congress back in 1984 barely losing in the democratic primary.

I responded. Peter you would have been a great Congressman but you would not have been fulfilled. Being one of 435 others, you would never have made the impact, the indelible impact on this state the way you did as President of the Oregon Senate. Your work is etched in the ages.

I am a legislator-that’s what I do. That’s who I am. And we are all blessed because Peter Courtney shared that journey with all of us.