



MISJUDGED, UNDERESTIMATED and sometimes ignored, Jennifer Dunn broke the gender barrier repeatedly as a single mother of two boys. Once labeled a “Glamour Girl” in Congress, Dunn rose through the ranks to become one of the most powerful women on Capitol Hill, a protégé of the speaker of the House and a friend of presidents. Dunn fought vigorously for families and women throughout her career. She was instrumental in the passage of the AMBER Alert system for missing children. She championed Megan’s Law that established community notification of sex predators. Internationally, Dunn helped secure a women’s center in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

“Jennifer was a trailblazer for women who cleared the way for others with a career of firsts.”

—LUKE ESSER, former GOP state chairman

“I didn’t run for Congress thinking I was going to be focused as much on women and recruiting women. But now that I’m there, I see that there is a real need. I look back and I think, ‘Jennifer! That’s what she was all about.’”

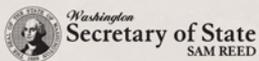
—CATHY McMORRIS-RODGERS, U.S. Rep. (R)

“People think everyone [in D.C.] has a D or an R after their name. She was somebody who really had a W after her name, thinking about what was best for the state of Washington.”

—JIM McDERMOTT, U.S. Rep. (D)

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A Woman First

The Impact of Jennifer Dunn

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BY TROVA HEFFERNAN

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Washington
Secretary of State
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For young women considering
the path of public service

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The congressional candidate in 1992, the Year of the Woman.
Washington State Archives

INTRODUCTION

You could hastily make assumptions about Jennifer Blackburn Dunn. Born in the Emerald City at the brink of World War II, Dunn wore pink dresses and braided her blond hair. Eventually, she attracted a bevy of male suitors. “It was very funny, because at one time I was dating four Larrys, four Jerrys and two Johns. And I didn’t know who I was talking to. I would make a date with someone and I wouldn’t know who it was. I didn’t know who was going to show up. I was embarrassed to ask for his last name.”

But the same Jennifer Dunn could effortlessly shoot a .22 rifle and once yanked 11 flopping trout from Issaquah Creek in 20 minutes, out-fishing her brother and 100 other boys. Dunn graduated from Stanford in 1963, when men outnumbered women two to one. She worked at IBM, when most women stayed at home. She married and divorced, becoming the very single mother she would one day represent in Congress. In 1999, Dunn became the third Republican woman in history to respond to the State of the Union Address. “I know what it’s like to have that knot in your stomach,” the single mother said. Dunn refused to take a back seat to men in Washington, D.C. or at home. Her first spouse, Dennis, once kidded the Republican National Committee (RNC) about the divorced couple’s ongoing work. “For those of you on the RNC implying theories of conspiratorial politics, I want you to know that I don’t have any more control over this woman than I did when I was married to her.”

Dunn and her predecessors in Congress fought men for equal footing. A Reagan Republican, a Newt Gingrich protégé, a Bush million-dollar fundraiser, Dunn’s star rose, spawning admiration and snide remarks. Dunn wore plenty of labels while trying to close a stubborn gender gap between

the Republican Party and women—The House It Girl, Face of the Party, The Golden Girl. *New York Magazine* dubbed her “GOP’s new glamour girl.” In a cartoon, Dunn bore a striking resemblance to actress Michelle Pfeiffer in *The Fabulous Baker Boys*. Dunn sat perched on an elephant as a matronly woman, presumably a less desirable colleague, followed behind with a broom. “She’s a very attractive woman, but she’s also a smart woman,” said Slade Gorton, former Washington senator. “The first gets men to look and the second gets men to listen.” The attention to her appearance was incessant. “Her high cheekbones and upright posture explain why the 58-year-old Dunn was once described as ‘Margaret Thatcher with better clothes,’” portrayed author Michael Graetz.

“It wasn’t unfair if it had been written in a respectful manner, but it wasn’t,” her brother, John Blackburn, said. “It was done in a very derogatory method to denigrate her abilities and brains. Kind of a ‘dumb blonde’ attitude and used by women more than men. Liberal women loved to put Jen down because she was everything they weren’t and it unnerved them. I don’t feel women’s lib did much to flatter women at the time.”

“Women always deal with the glass ceiling,” said Lisa LaBrache, a long-time Dunn aide. “You can be at this level, but you’re never going to be the CEO.”

“Jen mentioned the ‘Good Ole Boys’ network many times,” Blackburn acknowledged. “She was always butting heads with people who would disrespect her opinions and her mental abilities in favor of their buddies. That’s why she had to work so hard to prove herself. I doubt [Newt] Gingrich has ever mentioned her efforts to many people about his Contract with America, but he did stand behind her and was her mentor in Congress.”

More than 130 years after the first women’s rights convention, Dunn blazed trails and built an uncommon resume. She made history as the first woman to chair the state Republican Party. She secured a seat in Congress during 1992’s Year of the Woman. Dunn was the fifth woman to sit on the prestigious Ways & Means Committee, third woman in history to serve

as vice chair of the House Republican Conference and first woman to run for House majority leader. Three times Dunn engaged in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, a summit dedicated to women's rights. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, Dunn co-chaired the Iraqi Women's Caucus and helped inspire a new beginning for Iraqi women. None of it came easily. "Jen had to prove herself at every step of her life," Blackburn said. "She felt she had to prove herself to Mother growing up. She had to prove herself to her teachers and professors at college. She proved herself to IBM. She proved she could raise money for the Republican Party to the heads of Boeing and several Seattle banks. She proved that she was electable both for the state of Washington Republican Party and to the U.S. House of Representatives. She proved she was more than a pretty face."



Orphaned, Jennifer's grandmother Kate Maloney and her three sisters traveled from Ontario to Alberta. *John Blackburn Collection*

1 ■ Early Influences

People all around were dying of tuberculosis when the orphan girl climbed into a wagon in Thornbury, Ontario, circa 1890. She had brown wavy hair and couldn't have been more than 6 or 7 years old. Kate Maloney was the eldest of four and seemingly alone in the world. The infection took both of her parents within six months. Her father passed in the winter of 1889. Her mother followed that summer. Now they rested in peace, buried together at a cemetery in town. And Kate was leaving—with younger sisters May, Jane and Emcy.

The girls traveled over rocky terrain, through thick pockets of trees and across rolling prairies. Their wagon finally reached St. Albert, in the middle of Alberta province. Father Albert Lacombe founded the town three decades earlier to minister to Cree Indians and Metis, progeny of Euro-Canadian fur traders and Native women. Townsfolk considered Lacombe a legend. He fostered peace between warring Indian tribes and whites, preventing “the slaughter of every white man on the prairies,” during a rebellion of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Kate and her sisters settled in the city and lived with an aunt and uncle. But the arrangement didn't last.

Eventually, the girls moved into a convent with the Grey Nuns. Their Youville Home was the only known Catholic orphanage in St. Albert, and a place for new beginnings. The sisters there healed the sick, educated the youth and cared for the bereft, people like Kate and her sisters. Furniture was especially scarce in the early days of the orphanage—a table, two chairs and scattered trunks for sitting. When a delivery of fruit arrived in 1881, a tenant exclaimed with exuberance, “We have not seen or smelled anything



The orphanage in St. Albert and home to the Maloney children.
Provincial Archives of Alberta

like this in ten years. Could these be APPLES?”

The orphans knew poverty to be sure, but they were also beneficiaries of a rich education. Grey Nuns were touted as the first educators in St. Albert. They decidedly impressed an inspector who toured the school in 1890. “This is just like in France. They learn everything here,” he exalted.

Kate grew up affable, independent and in-charge. Her short hair never fell much below the ear. She had “English teeth and a big smile.” She traded with Indians and mastered five or six Native dialects—in addition to English and French.

No one knows for sure when Kate left the orphanage, but she married Benjamin Franklin Blackburn, a slim Illinoisan with a six-foot frame, a mustache and a penchant for pipes. Eventually, the Blackburns traded Alberta for the states. Kate poured her energy into her boys, canoeing with them, hiking in the woods and fishing. A no-nonsense disciplinarian, Kate was steamed when authorities picked up her teenage son (Jennifer Dunn’s father) for skinny-dipping at Madrona Beach in Seattle. Chagrined, she stomped into the police station where Jack was waiting and promptly

assured authorities she'd take over at home "and wallop the daylights out of him—which she did." Kate was unquestionably feisty for a woman of her day. She smoked cigarettes and even bet on bridge.

Eventually, time took its toll. Kate suffered from arthritis and found it difficult to straighten up. Swollen joints and pain left her hunched over. That's how Jennifer and John remembered her. Then, Kate slipped from a



The ebullient Kate Maloney, with husband Benjamin Franklin Blackburn.
John Blackburn Collection

folding chair in Hawaii. The fall paralyzed her from the waist down, yet never dampened her spirits. Kate still played her hand at bridge. She still set an example for a girl who'd become a six-term member of Congress. All her life, Jennifer delighted in Kate's colorful stories and zeal. "Jen always looked up to Kate with admiration," recalled Blackburn. "I could always see similarities in their personalities... [Jennifer] got her independence and love of life from Kate."

WHEN AMERICA'S economy collapsed in the Great Depression, Jennifer's mother, Helen Gorton, ran short on money. The stock market plunge and its lingering impact curtailed her dreams of attending the University of California at Berkeley. She earned her teaching degree at Bellingham Normal School instead, and found work instructing Flathead Indians near Kalispell, Montana. The school's funding soon dried up, however, and along with it, Helen's employment.

Most people would characterize Helen as a risk taker, and that attitude helped her rebound in hard times. She waited out the great longshoremen's strike of 1934 in Seattle, hopped aboard the SS *Yukon* and set sail through the Inside Passage. Helen, all alone, turned up in bear country. Wrangell, Alaska was quite a town. During the last half of the 19th century, the fishing and logging community boomed with saloons, warehouses and legions of fortune seekers in three separate gold rushes. "The only job a single woman could get in those days was in distant places," Jennifer explained. One winter, over amateur broadcasting station W77ABT, Helen recounted the tale of a vagabond polar bear that drifted to shore on an ice floe and roamed through town.

With her dainty features, Helen charmed plenty of admirers in the backcountry "until Dad showed up," said her son, John Blackburn. "He used to laugh about the time when they were first dating. They were heading to Seattle on a steamship. Mom received a delivery of roses at her cabin with no card attached. She thanked Dad right away, only to find out several months later that they had been sent by another suitor."



Jennifer's mother, Helen Gorton, in the rough-and-tumble Wrangell, Alaska.
John Blackburn Collection

Helen settled down with the equally adventuresome Jack Blackburn in 1936.

As a mother, she set only the highest standards for the home and the children. “Jennifer and Mother got along when she was little,” Blackburn remembered. “They used to go downtown to Frederick & Nelson for the fashion show every couple of months. Jen used to model little girls clothes at their luncheon.”



Jennifer turned 2. Dunn Family

It’s no surprise *The Times* once branded Dunn’s wardrobe “all designer chic” or that her brightly colored St. John jackets stood out on the Capitol steps teeming with dark suits. Dunn’s mother was a masterful seamstress. “I was voted best-dressed... when I hardly spent anything on clothes,” Jennifer recalled. The kids once starred in a Mother Goose parade, John as Tom Thumb with a plum pie and Jennifer as a Scandinavian girl—with wooden shoes, puffy sleeves and rosy cheeks. The dressmaker’s realistic portrayal was rewarded when Jennifer’s picture appeared in the local paper.

Helen’s talents in the kitchen were equally noteworthy. The aroma of baked bread wafted through the house. Candied apples and duck with orange sauce became family favorites. Helen ran the house, shouldering the maintenance and rearing the kids. “On Saturdays, the whole family would work outdoors—raking leaves, weeding, mowing the lawn,” Blackburn said. “[Mother] never complained if she hurt herself or was ill—she wouldn’t ever mention it because she didn’t want Dad bothered.”

Mother constantly strove for the best in her kids, Blackburn said, and

occasionally set unrealistic expectations. “Jen took the brunt of it. Mom had her enter a beauty contest and was unhappy when she came in second, although she did win a contest for homecoming at Stanford. She was under a lot of pressure to get good grades in school. When Jennifer got a B+ on a course in high school, Mom really got on her.... When I was in grade school, Mom used to tell me I could be the president some day, but that was used more to keep me interested in my school grades. She pushed Jen’s buttons in different ways—always challenging her to be the top of her class and complimenting her on her high IQ, just like Dad.” A snafu over 16th birthday plans created further tension and “after that Jen went through the motions with Mom.”

Helen remained a constant presence in her daughter’s life. She was a moral person, Dunn said. “You always told the truth. You always obeyed your parents.... She had very high standards for us kids and it was really important to her for us to get a good education. It was an era where you respected your teachers and parents. My brother and I really think of them as the role models in our lives.”

JENNIFER’S FATHER, Jack Blackburn, walked with a sturdy frame and a size 12 shoe. At 6’2", with a booming voice, the Canadian stood out in a crowd. Jack, an outdoorsman, taught his only daughter how to fire a .22. He boasted tales of shooting a half-dozen grouse with swift precision, as the birds perched in a tree. “[He took] the one on the lowest branch, working his way to the top so that they wouldn’t flutter and scare the rest off,” Blackburn remembered.

Jack was also sophisticated, a gregarious storyteller and a gifted salesman. Once when he was coming of age, Jack hustled to the docks with a toothbrush and a big agenda. His lifelong buddy, Oliver Gowdy, had landed a job on The Dollar Line in the Merchant Marines. “[Dad], being the salesman that he was, talked his way into hiring him and letting him go with them,” Blackburn remembered. Two days later Jack finally wired his mother and delivered the news. He was bound for Alaska, and then off to Japan and



China. “They couldn’t stop him, of course, so they wished him well!”

Adventures kept coming for Jack. On October 29, 1932, Jack prepared to set sail for Asia on board the *President Cleveland*. Nine days later he would turn 21. “He was allowed to vote, by absentee ballot, in the General Election prior to his 21st birthday,” Blackburn said. “There was a write-up in the Seattle Newspapers that he became the youngest person to vote in the country.

“Dad’s voyage took him across the Equator and he told us of the shenanigans that took place at the crossing to all the new sailors. He learned quite a bit on that voyage about tying all sorts of knots and the names of the different constellations and stars. Jen used to spend many evenings outside with Dad naming the different patterns. She was always very inquisitive, and loved Dad’s stories.”

On solid ground, his cruising days behind him, Blackburn crunched numbers for Wrangell Packing Company near the town sawmill. The outdoors suited him. Jack was a skilled fisherman and a great hunter. He even earned the nickname the Wrangell Kid.

When Jack and Helen discovered they were expecting their first child, the wilds of Wrangell lost their rugged appeal. They declared the rough-and-tumble community no place for children. Jennifer bounded into the world from Seattle, in the summer of ’41. U.S. Armed Forces ratcheted up; the country braced for war. John



Helen Gorton settled down with the adventuresome Jack Blackburn in 1936. *John Blackburn Collection.*

arrived a few years later. “Jen and I were both close to Dad,” Blackburn said. “Jen used to enjoy her conversations with Dad....She loved those times when he would devote his attention to her. I think that may have affected the relationship between Jen and me, to some degree, when I was born and took some of that attention away. She would go to Dad with any questions she had at school after her early years.

“We did talk politics at the dinner table—mostly Jen and I would listen. Dad was very firm in his conservative philosophy.”

A month before his 85th birthday Jack Blackburn died. “I was quite surprised how much Dad’s death affected Jen,” Blackburn said. “He died while she was holding his hand at his bedside, after she told him it was all right for him to go. She used to ask me how his death affected me to see if we had similar feelings. It must have completely devastated her.

“Several years later, Mom passed away and Jen made all the arrangements for that also....We took them down to Madrona Beach and Jen took Dad’s ashes and I took Mom’s and we scattered them in the lake.”

AS FAR AS SIBLING relationships go, “She put up with me,” Blackburn mused. Jennifer, he described, was always full steam ahead. “[She] knocked me all over the room. She just jumped right in and started swinging.”

Blackburn’s earliest memory of his sister was a disastrous trip to Alki Beach in West Seattle. Jennifer must have been about 6. On a fall evening, as the sun faded in the sky, the Blackburns gathered alone on the beach. You could see expansive views of Elliott Bay and the old Seattle Skyline, yet to include the Space Needle. Mother and Dad spread the blankets across the beach and unpacked the picnic basket. Jennifer and John raced toward the water, bundled in warm clothing. A yellow and orange jellyfish the size of a pincushion floated in front of them. It washed up on the sand and dangled its long tentacles. “Jen reached down and picked it up and almost immediately began screaming and crying and threw it back into the water.” Jennifer cried the entire trip home. Lye soap eventually dulled the sting and ended the tears, but the memory lived on for both small children. The



“She knocked me all over the room.” —John Blackburn on his relationship with Jennifer. *Dunn Family*



“Looking back, we were always competing.” —John Blackburn on childhood. *John Blackburn Collection*

Blackburns never returned to Alki Beach.

During summertime swimming lessons, the Blackburn children climbed down steep stairs in Mountlake Terrace to Madrona Beach. Twenty-five children clung to cement steps, ferociously kicking their legs. Each year at summer's end, the swimmers competed. "Jen started swimming a year earlier than I did, and swam in the intermediate class and won a second place silver medal. She was very unhappy with me because I won the dogpaddle race and got a gold medal. We raced the next year and she came in third in the crawl and received a bronze medal. Looking back, we were always competing in one thing or another—from spelling bees and reading contests, to selling more Campfire candies."

One year, Jennifer, John and 100 other boys baited their hooks, hoping to catch a wealth of trout and win the big trophy at the opening day fishing derby along Issaquah Creek. Blackburn discovered a lucky spot and called over to Jennifer. In 20 minutes flat, Dunn jerked 11 trout from the creek, walking away with her head held high and the grand prize.

JENNIFER'S FIRST SPOUSE, Dennis Dunn, was uncommonly bright—graduating cum laude from Harvard in 1962—and passionately conservative. His politics set the stage for Dunn's rise; his uncompromising views, he said, helped unravel their marriage.

Jennifer Blackburn met Dennis Dunn at the 1962 World's Fair in Seattle. She fell in love with the intellect in his conservatism and the purpose in his life. They soon married at the First Congregational Church in Bellevue and bought a home in Newport Shores, minutes from Jennifer's parents.

"Dennis was a stud," remembered Slade Gorton, the longtime Washington senator. "This was a very handsome couple."

The staunch Republican chaired the King County Republican Party from 1970 until 1976 and used his position to push a conservative agenda. In 1973, he urged support of a federal amendment to legalize gold ownership. He told *The Seattle Times*: "Now that gold has been completely demonetized and its official link with the dollar severed once and for all, the time has certainly

come to restore to the American people this most basic economic freedom.”

“Dennis Dunn was much more conservative than his wife was,” Gorton clarified. “I imagine politics was the main item of conversation in that house. Dennis was really far right and [for] the gold standard. But Jennifer didn’t reflect that kind of hardline ideology.”

Dennis and Jennifer entered Washington politics with a force in 1976 as Washington’s Republican National Committeeman and statewide coordinator for Reagan’s presidential bid, respectively. Reagan narrowly lost the primary, but remained on the stump for Ford. Dunn also stayed engaged in presidential politics, switching camps to the Ford headquarters on Queen Anne Hill in Seattle.

Despite their shared passion for politics, the Dunns divided over degrees of conservatism and their marriage fell apart. “I didn’t believe that under any circumstances a woman had the right to choose death for her unborn child,” Dennis said, “and she and I differed on that. As a matter of fact, my mother and I differed on that.” The amicable split was finalized in 1979. “She and Dennis just got to a point where they both had opposite needs,” explained Lisa LaBrache, a longtime friend and colleague. “They loved the kids and just were totally involved as parents, which really held them together.”

As Dunn charted her course in Washington politics, Dennis stayed close, consistently turning out for campaign events and raising money. “He was out there left and right with all of his friends raising money, made sure the family was there. He was there at the first kick-off event. Came to *every* one of them,” LaBrache said.

DUNN’S OWN life experiences helped her easily commiserate with working mothers juggling babies and a briefcase, and with fulltime homemakers searching for more. “She had my brother Bryant Dunn, and a couple years after that had me,” Reagan recalled. “She took five or six years where she was a stay-at-home mom.” The boys grew up in a two-story home on a cul de sac at Newport Shores. The Bellevue community sits on the eastern shore of Lake Washington. Reagan remembered most their house by Coal

Creek and summertime picnics. “Someone got McDonalds soft-serve ice cream and [it was] dripping all over our hands. Mom was running around trying to wipe our little hands and faces off... I have lots of memories like that. For whatever reason, I remember the hot summers outside.”

Motherhood indeed came naturally, but Dunn became restless. After all, she’d spent five years on the payroll at IBM as a systems analyst in a completely different world. “She’d had a taste of corporate life at IBM with the paychecks. She had a lot of energy and action from Stanford. She was ahead of her time in that regard. We’re still talking about an era where there was a substantial number—a minority of women in the working world,” Reagan said. “A woman like that who grows up and goes to Stanford isn’t just going to go home and have children,” said Gorton. “She was fortunate. She was just young enough so that was a real possibility. Had she been a generation older, most of those avenues probably would not have been available to her.”

After her marriage ran its course Dunn re-entered the workforce in 1978, under the flamboyant Harley Hoppe, then-King County Assessor. A



The Dunn family at Christmas, 1971. “What most impressed me about Jennifer was her love of her two sons.”—William Ruckelshaus, former head of the Environmental Protection Agency. *Dunn Family*



The young Jennifer Dunn spent the early years of her marriage at home with Bryant and Reagan. *Dunn Family*

longtime interest in tax policy was born. Her ex-husband moved north to Vancouver. “The dad takes another residence. The children stay in the current residence,” Reagan recalled. “There is sort of visitation every other weekend kind of thing. But my dad, after a few years, moved up to Canada where he got a job. That made it a little more distant and I think put on a little more pressure.”

Like any working mother, Dunn had limited time for homemaking. “She was a terrible cook,” Reagan admitted. “It’s really true, just terrible. But that’s because she didn’t practice much. I remember lunches were



the same...She used to take a piece of Wonder Bread and one of those processed cheese slices, slap it in there between the bread, and that was it. No mustard, no mayo, no nothing—not even a piece of lettuce. It was not so good. [But] she was working... You're talking about a woman who has to support two young single-aged boys who are growing up, and also trying to make money."

But Dunn made it work—thanks in large part to her nanny Hilda, a hard-nosed disciplinarian with German roots. "It's an enormous success story for single mothers," Reagan said. "It shows that it can be done. It was, I think, very, very hard for her, as it is for all single parents... But she just gave a lot of herself. When she wasn't working and succeeding, she was home working hard on the kids. I think we got a fair shake."

"My mouth was hanging open through the whole dinner." —Former U.S. Senator Slade Gorton on his unforgettable introduction to Jennifer Dunn. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

NUMEROUS POLITICAL figures influenced Dunn's thinking. She admired the smarts of Newt Gingrich, the allure of Barry Goldwater and the civility of Ronald Reagan. The California governor's measured approach to politics set the tone of her own career. "[H]e was the one who *really* focused me on politics and that I didn't have to be mean-spirited and cynical," Dunn said. "He was a wonderful role model."

"She saw in Ronald Reagan someone who could combine a very strong set of conservative positions, with an extremely sunny and optimistic personality and attitude toward life," Gorton said.

"She saw him... a simple straightforward man who believed very much in the American dream," added Keith Thomson, Dunn's second husband. "He believed very much in family. He believed very much in the rule of law, the rights of the individual and basic American values."

"Jen was 100 percent a Reagan Republican," her brother, John Blackburn, said. "He reminded her of Dad to a great degree, and his ideas were pretty conservative. The only time Reagan let her down was when he had his daughter appointed as the co-national Republican chairman. Jen had earned



Ronald Reagan made a sterling impression on Dunn, setting the tone of her career.
The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Library



“He was the one who *really* focused me on politics and that I didn’t have to be mean-spirited and cynical.” Dunn on the former president. *Dunn Family*

the job and was skipped over. Other than that, she was greatly influenced by Reagan.”

Nearly 10 years ahead of the Reagan Revolution, Dunn named her second-born child after the California governor. Reagan “means Rex and

has a beautiful ring to it,” Dunn said. The governor received Reagan’s birth notice and returned the gesture with a letter his namesake would read years later. “I met your parents...and I know they are making every effort on behalf of our country and you should be very proud of both of them.”

“It was the convention of ’72 when they *really* started talking about him as president,” Reagan Dunn said. “The name predated that wave. You’ll see a lot of people today named Reagan. Most of them are 4 to 6 years old. There are a few that are in their 20s and a few less that are in their 30s. But I’m pretty much the oldest one that’s named after President Ronald Reagan. What are you going to do? I’m named after him. You’re not given any choices. Now, as fate will have it, he turned out to be a pretty darn good president, so I’m glad. He wasn’t, you know, Nixon. If my name were Nixon Dunn, it would be different. Maybe there is a little luck.”

The youngest Dunn sent the California governor into hysterics once at a Republican fundraiser. “We have a picture of the governor bent over at the waist absolutely guffawing with laughter as he is shaking hands with little Reagan, who’s 3 or 4,” Dennis recalled. “Reagan just asked the Governor if he brought him a black balloon. Balloons were Reagan’s toy-of-choice. He thought since black was so rare, it’d be the rarest and most valuable balloon in the world.”

Even political heroes suffer occasional gaffes. On Halloween in 1986, during a two-day re-election campaign tour for U.S. Senator Slade Gorton, the president revved up a crowd of 5,000 inside the Spokane Coliseum. He graciously accepted a sweatshirt, one side featuring the WSU Cougars, the other their cross-state rivals, the UW Huskies. The sweatshirt undoubtedly got a laugh, but not the president’s blunder. He introduced Washington’s A-Team—Sen. Dan Evans and Reps. Sid Morison and Rod Chandler “... and of course the State Chairman of the GOP...Dunn Jennifer.”

JENNIFER'S CLOSE RELATIONSHIP with Slade Gorton began in the 1960s, at a \$100-a-plate fundraiser for the state party. "She was one of the most beautiful women I had ever met. My mouth was hanging open through the whole dinner!"

As it turned out, Dunn was smart and influential too. In 1980, when a sharp division between conservatives and Evans progressives split the GOP, she rallied Republicans behind Gorton, then a candidate for the U.S. Senate. "[W]e didn't have to do a damn thing," Paul Newman, a Gorton campaign consultant, said. "It was done masterfully for us by Jennifer Dunn, the [next] state Republican Party chairman. In the beginning I thought that nobody who looked that good could be that sharp, but she was. She was everything a state chairman should be. And the party came together seamlessly. I became a Jennifer Dunn fan. It was no surprise to me that she later made her mark in Congress."

Dunn and Gorton shared more than political interests. According to



A close friend and political ally, the Dunn/Gorton relationship was renowned. *United States Senate*

the genealogy work of Ritajeon Butterworth, a distant cousin of Slade's, the Senator and the late congresswoman were actually tenth cousins, once removed. Their notable common ancestor, Samuel Gorton, was the freewheeling patriarch of the Gorton family. And his life played out noisily in a myriad of religious disputes. Gorton's unorthodox thinking and blunt talk got him exiled from Massachusetts, thrown in jail and publicly flogged. Many accounts describe him as a noble character, calling

Gorton a kind of religious freedom fighter, a champion of Native Americans, as well as “a good husband, a good farmer, and a faithful friend.” Samuel Gorton believed all citizens could preach—even women. “He was a real rebel and a hell raiser,” mused the former senator.

Jennifer and Slade shared similar bone structure, a feature that inspired David Horsey, the Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist at his easel. “When he drew Slade, he would just think of my mom and then take away the hair,” Reagan said. “When he drew my mom, he would draw Slade and then add a bunch of hair.” “I was always very flattered when that came up,” admitted Gorton. “By the time I was running for the Senate, the second time around in 1988, when she was state chair, it was sort of a big deal. We mentioned it every time we saw one another. If we were on the same stage...someone would say, ‘You look alike!’”

“It was a great working relationship,” Reagan said. “Slade was a very good senator....He was a *very* bright person. And Mom was similar. She had those same skill sets. She was intelligent. She wasn’t a bomb thrower. She was one of the last pragmatic Republicans we’ve had in the state.... They worked a lot together. To this day, I think the Dunn-Gorton legacy and employees that worked for them have a much closer relationship than any of the other federal members. It was the last strong duo I think we’ve had in awhile.”

Gorton even once suggested Dunn as a “running mate for Bob Dole,” the Republicans’ nominee for president in 1996. “It’s a nice compliment, but that’s all it is,” Dunn said breezily. “I’m really glad Dole is going to be looking all over the country....It would be fun to be on a list like that (but) I really love what I’m doing.”

Gorton felt the loss when she died. “Jennifer was a major part of my life as she was a major part of the public life and political life of the state of Washington.”



Dunn made history in 1980 as the Republicans' first woman state chairman. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

2 ■ Record Breaker

Dunn's life and times laid the foundation for a wave of firsts. She conquered the "good 'ole boys club," narrowed the gender gap and brought women to a leadership table almost always occupied by men. No traditional feminist, Dunn opposed the Equal Rights Amendment, resisting attempts to legislate an end to gender discrimination. "I've never used my being a woman to get anyplace in my life," she quipped to the Associated Press. "I've always set high standards for myself, as an individual. The basic Republican philosophy is that you look at a person's capabilities."

In 1980, Dunn was often cast the underdog in the historic race for state party chairman. Her well-regarded opponent, Duane Berentson, was coming off a narrow primary loss to John Spellman, the King County Executive and Republican nominee for governor. While Berentson enjoyed wide bi-partisan respect as a former co-speaker of the state House, "Dunn was then a stay-at-home mom best known as ex-wife of party stalwart Dennis Dunn," wrote Nina Shapiro.

"Are you, I asked House Speaker Duane Berentson, really interested in becoming the next Republican state chairman?" pondered the incomparable Adele Ferguson, a syndicated columnist. "His answer was a guarded 'yes.' Guarded, because the last thing he wants to do is get in a spitting match with Jennifer Dunn. Mrs. Dunn is the former wife of national committeeman Dennis Dunn and so ardent a Reagan fan she even named her son after him. Reagan Dunn, that is."

The conservative agenda of Dunn's former spouse at the top of the King County Republican Party bothered one of her associates. "[Dennis Dunn's record] may be her only problem." *The Times* reported his hardline views "perpetuated deep splits within the party."

On the other hand, Dunn advocated a bigger tent. "I've never met a Republican I didn't respect," she said. "I think cooperation is especially important right now."

As the story goes from Dunn's family, Berentson placed a memorable call to Jennifer to pressure her out of the race: "Hey, you know, let's meet at Denny's on Mercer Island. I want to talk to you about this thing."

"This is what happens when you want to meet somebody," Reagan said. "You want to big-time them and say, 'Look, I'm the guy. I'm going to make it.'"

But it was Berentson caught off guard. "It is my understanding," said Keith Thomson, Dunn's late husband, "that after a conversation about which of them would withdraw, Jennifer pulled a piece of paper out of her pocket with overwhelming support of the State Central Committee. The absolute principle the rest of her life was that she always knew what the vote count was."

"She got in a car and drove the entire state," remembered Doug Ellis, an executive director of the party under Dunn. "[She] met in the kitchens with people that were going to vote on who the next party chair was going to be."

Berentson asserted in a 2010 interview that he never seriously considered the chairmanship. When he backed out of the race in 1980, he joked: "I don't care to go through a campaign for the job. I don't need the job that badly."

In the end, Dunn ran unopposed, won unanimously and shattered a glass ceiling—at least in Washington state. Gertrude Lee, a Democrat from Colorado, became the first woman to chair any state party nearly seven decades earlier, in 1913. The first Republican woman to clinch the title was Elly Peterson of Michigan, in 1965.

"We've inherited a strong state party operation.... We've established

a record of winning elections,” Dunn declared to the Republican State Central Committee. The new chairman also inherited a \$1 million budget, 20,000 contributors and a staff of 15. Grant Peterson, from Spokane County, won the vice chairmanship. Straightaway, Dunn insisted on the “chairman” title and began flexing her muscle to repair the sometimes fractured relationship between the state party and its county organizations.

Timing was on her side. Only the year before, Democrats controlled the Legislature and all but one congressional seat. But as Dunn seized the chairmanship, her party seized new territory. The Reagan-Bush ticket carried the state and won office in a landslide victory. Republicans won an additional seat in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House. They took control of the State House and the State Senate for the first time in nearly 30 years. They dominated five of nine statewide offices including governor, secretary of state, attorney general, commissioner of public lands and insurance commissioner.

Despite the Republican sweep, barriers for women remained. Washington did not elect its first woman U.S. senator or attorney general until 1992.

THE RECORD-SETTING Dunn was in good company in 1980 party politics. The media branded it a “double first” for Washington when, five days after Dunn’s win, Karen Marchioro became the first woman to lead state Democrats. “Both have received accolades for their work in rebuilding state parties, financially and politically,” noted *Pacific Magazine*. Reporters called Dunn a “dyed-in-the-wool conservative closely aligned with the Reagan wing of the party”... “Dunn is a tall, gracious woman who, at 42, still



Karen Marchioro and Jennifer Dunn hit their stride in state politics together, but on opposite sides of the aisle.

John Hughes Collection

turns male heads in a crowded room. She is a conservative, but has found ways to accommodate the moderate-to-liberal wins [wings] of the party, softening old antagonisms that date back two decades.” By contrast, *The Times* observed, Marchioro was “aligned with the liberal wing of her party. She’s short, somewhat stout and shows little concern for style. Her round cheeks glow when she gets angry and when something tickles her you can hear her fractured soprano laugh down the tiled corridor of the building.”

Marchioro’s life may have paralleled Dunn’s, but she was no supporter. “You could certainly say that I’m not a fan,” Marchioro once conceded. “She was always slippery about abortion....She was always sweet as pie on the surface....It was all for show. She was a very, very attractive woman, and obviously from the right background, and always dressed to the nines.”



Dunn always put in the time to do the homework, aides said.



Said Reagan of his mother's life: "It's an enormous success story for single mothers. I mean, it shows that it can be done." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

The very idea that Dunn entertained a chairmanship baffled Gorton. "I'm talking about a job that I think is one of the worst jobs in the world. Almost immediately getting an office like that, you have to reach out and appeal to others. People say you are no longer a purist and they go after you. People were all over Jennifer all the time, and almost always from the right. She was too compromising. She was too much for the big tent. But Jennifer, because of her personality largely and her dedication, kept the party together."

"I loved it. I loved every minute of it," Dunn said. "I loved the challenge of it. I loved the chance to be able to work on behalf of something I believed in—loved the freedom to be with children—loved commuting to Washington, D.C." Dunn's passion for the job paid off in performance, assessed Gorton, who ranked her among the most efficacious party chairs of all time. "The only person comparable to her as state chairman was

Gummie Johnson (C. Montgomery Johnson), in the early Dan Evans years. I think what the two of them shared was passion. They believed in what they were doing.”

“She was bright and she was conservative,” Ellis said. “She was concerned about state government and national government. She was a *strong, strong* Reagan supporter. She was part of the Reagan movement, which was a little more flexible on social issues, but more conservative on fiscal matters. She had this ‘in-betweeness’ about her.”

Moderate views didn’t always sit well, however. In the 1980 elections, opponents of legalized abortion gained ground. The new president promised to honor the Republican platform and “make abortion illegal.” Asked about her own stance on the issue, Dunn treaded a thin line. “I understand where the moralists are coming from, and I appreciate their point of view. But when I get down to what my feeling is on it, I can’t get past my basic belief that each individual should be under as little regulation as possible, and should therefore have the right to make that decision herself.”

Moderation wasn’t Dunn’s only impediment. “They thought that she couldn’t raise the money,” Ellis said, recalling an earful he got from elected officials in the spring of ’81. “They were trying to toss her out as she just got elected chair. I had to fly back and meet with those elected officials and tell them, ‘Back off. This is going to work.’ And that’s when they were telling me that they didn’t think that she could raise the money. And I said, ‘Give her a chance.’”

The party fundraising base shifted from major donors to grassroots. “The older contributors stayed on. She brought in brand new ones because of her appeal,” Ellis explained. “We then took the party from a major donor based fundraising operation and created a huge grassroots direct mail operation and telephone bank operation. We shifted. We still had a large major donor component...We were collecting [as much as] seven hundred thousand dollars on direct mail.”

“She’s not shy, and she doesn’t mind asking people for money,” said John Meyers, Dunn’s executive director at the state party and a campaign

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Washington State Archives

manager during her congressional career. “She did the heavy lifting herself.”

“She was the last state party chair who could walk into any corporate CEO’s office, make a request for a contribution and walk out with a big check,” recalled Steve Excell, a longtime Republican activist. Excell also said Dunn encouraged Republican candidates to share their donor lists, bringing in more money for all.

“We had a joke,” Lisa LaBrache, a Dunn aide, related. “We had a \$1.5 million to \$2 million budget per year. The joke was, you had to go get your major donors, and if you wanted to have lunch with Jennifer it was going to cost you \$5,000.”

Dunn improved candidate recruitment, Ellis said, and rightfully ran a party without litmus tests. “Those weren’t the driving factors in the Republican Party, at least *her* Republican Party. It got harder and harder as the Christian conservative right became more vocal. It turned out, as they started shifting toward more social and moral issues, it became harder

and harder to get people elected. You can talk and scream and stand on a soapbox and yell, but you're never going to be able to change the direction of the economy or the direction of the state or nation without getting elected. She knew, particularly in Washington State, you needed to break away from any litmus test. You also needed to find candidates that fit the individual districts that they were running from."

Dunn kept the hectic pace of a state chairman and still found time for motherhood. "We were survivors," Reagan said. "We were all just trying to make it work. It's just like a family business. Your parents own a grocery store on the street corner and at 12 you're going to be bagging groceries. When you're 14, you're going to be helping with the cashier. When you're 16, you'll be driving the truck. It's just part of the family business. It's just your reality. You get used to it. You realize we're all going to help out here. That's kind of the way it was with us."

The state chairman was tested when U.S. Senator Henry M. Jackson died suddenly of an aortic aneurysm in September of '83. Dan Evans was appointed to the seat and quickly faced an election to finish Jackson's term. Reagan Republicans "to put it delicately, were not happy." "Jennifer knew that her job as party leader was to keep that seat in Republican hands, and she used her credibility as a Reagan supporter to unify the party behind Evans," said John Carlson, Dunn's party spokesman. "Jennifer had to travel the state saying 'Ronald Reagan needs another Republican senator' to those on the right, and to moderates 'Washington state needs Dan Evans,'" Carlson said. In the end, Evans defeated Mike Lowry. Dunn and Evans forged a lasting friendship.

By 1984, Dunn's steady leadership united the party and outsiders noticed. "While the Democrats slug it out among themselves, Dunn presides over a state party that she has skillfully knitted together for the first time in twenty years. Spellman, never the apple of the conservatives' collective eye, might well have faced a primary challenge without the new spirit of Dunn-aided unity in the party." Possibilities for Dunn in national politics surfaced. "Reagan (President Ronald Reagan) has called on her

several times to put out brush fires among Republican women unhappy over his refusal to back the Equal Rights Amendment. She has been largely successful in quieting some of the unhappy voices among Republican women in Washington State,” noted *The Times*.



Jennifer Dunn voted as a congressional hopeful in 1992. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

Carlson praised Dunn for insisting much of his drafted party platform remained on the cutting-room floor one year. He crafted several dozen pages of language that reflected the party’s major positions. Carlson was thrilled when he’d reduced his platform to 10 pages. Dunn wasn’t satisfied with six. The final draft of the Republican platform that year filled four pages—to which Dunn declared, “Perfect!” “Shorter than most restaurant menus,” Carlson quipped.

“Looking out for the greater good,” was one of Dunn’s strengths as chairman, assessed Ellis. “Making sure that our elected officials didn’t have to...embrace a document or a platform that was just so far on the fringe they would have to run away from it. She was always pragmatic. She was always reasonable.”

If Dunn had any shortcomings, Ellis said, it was her ready willingness to change her opinion. “When people talked to her about certain philosophies and activities, she sometimes would bend that way, more than standing up on her own. But she was flexible. I guess it’s a good trait in some ways. She was flexible enough to not be rigid. But then sometimes you would look and say, ‘Stand on your own two feet. This person isn’t the end all.’

“She was [also] a little vain. I guess everybody is. I remember she would always walk out and say, ‘How do I look?’ ‘You look fine. Get out of here.’ But she was some kind of woman. There’s no question about it.”

THE 1988 ELECTION season found Dunn confronting hostility from the right. Her political hero toiled in the sunset of his presidency and his successor, George H.W. Bush, had the Republican nomination all but locked. According to GOP strategists, the electorate was “in an uncertain, contradictory mood.” The choice for voters, the Republican platform argued, was simple: “change and progress with the Republicans or change and chaos with the Democrats.”

It had been weeks since Pat Robertson, television evangelist and pillar of the Religious Right, dropped his presidential bid. Nevertheless, a scuffle erupted between Robertson and Bush supporters on the floor of the Republican convention in Snohomish County. When the fracas ended, police were called in, one person was injured and state chairman Dunn was mortified. “I’ve heard about 40 different accounts. It’s embarrassing. This kind of thing does not help the party.” Far outnumbered by the Robertson camp, Bush supporters rejected the county chairman’s offer to give them 20 percent of the 110 delegates. Instead they used cumulative voting, a practice that allowed them to cast multiple votes for their candidates. Republicans like Bill Knight cried foul: “If cumulative voting is legal, then three people can outvote 80 people.”

The county convention chair, Dick Thomas, “refused to rule” against the voting practice and Robertson supporters rebelled. “When the chairman refuses to listen to you anymore and refuses to accept any motions on the floor, the convention is in anarchy,” Bruce Hawkins barked at Thomas. By most accounts, Robertson supporters took control of the podium and selected their own slate of delegates.

After the county convention was over, Thomas, a staunch Bush supporter, demanded Dunn and the state party “discipline conservatives” he labeled “power hungry” and “potentially violent.”

Dunn hoped time would cool tempers and pledged a “totally fair process” at the state convention in Tacoma where she would accentuate her top priority—party unity. A credentials committee met and determined that if questions arose at the state convention, it would only admit

Robertson supporters, not Bush delegates. “This is an example of what happens when they allow religious zealots to put their stamp on the party,” accused Vern Witte. The Robertson team, in the end, “won lopsided control of the Washington delegation.” Only a handful of Washington delegates who went on to the Republican National Convention supported Bush, although he had the nomination wrapped up. “I tried to run a fair state convention,” Dunn said, “and it was a fair procedure.”

THE MEDIA proclaimed the 1988 Republican National Convention an event “made for television—in the age of carefully orchestrated politics.” Washington’s GOP boss arrived at the Louisiana Superdome in stagnant heat, unbearable humidity and a soaked silk suit. “The last place you want to be in the middle of August is in New Orleans,” quipped LaBrache.

Robertson followers had energized the Christian conservative right like never before. A mix of hardline conservatives and moderates gathered in a city where 80 percent of the residents are Democrats, giving new “meaning to the political term ‘strange bedfellows,’” observed *The New York Times*.

The future looked bright for Dunn nationally. She’d bumped up the ranks, heading all state Republican chairs in the country. “She was a strong fiscal conservative or a Reagan conservative,” Ellis said, “[but] she came across as not being radical. She came across as being soft, as being reasonable.... That gave her this sort of stature.” Dunn accompanied Vice President Bush to his private box at the convention with his family, and with Barry Goldwater, the senator from Arizona. Moreover, Dunn was the only Washingtonian selected to speak at the convention.

But the chairman faced stiff opposition in her home state. “We had a delegation that was fairly unruly at that time. They weren’t real friendly to Jennifer,” LaBrache explained.

In fact, Jim Summers, Republican national committeeman, hoped to strengthen the party’s conservative muscle and oust Dunn from leadership. He accused her of improving the state party at the expense of county party organizations and the grassroots. “I think it’s time to pass the torch,”

Summers asserted. “The county parties are in absolute disastrous states. The grassroots has been absolutely destroyed.”

“Present state chairman Jennifer Dunn is a little too independent for him,” wrote Adele Ferguson, the columnist. “She didn’t help matters when she sent national committee members a copy of a cartoon depicting Summers to the right of Attila the Hun.” Dunn called Summer’s actions a “power grab.”

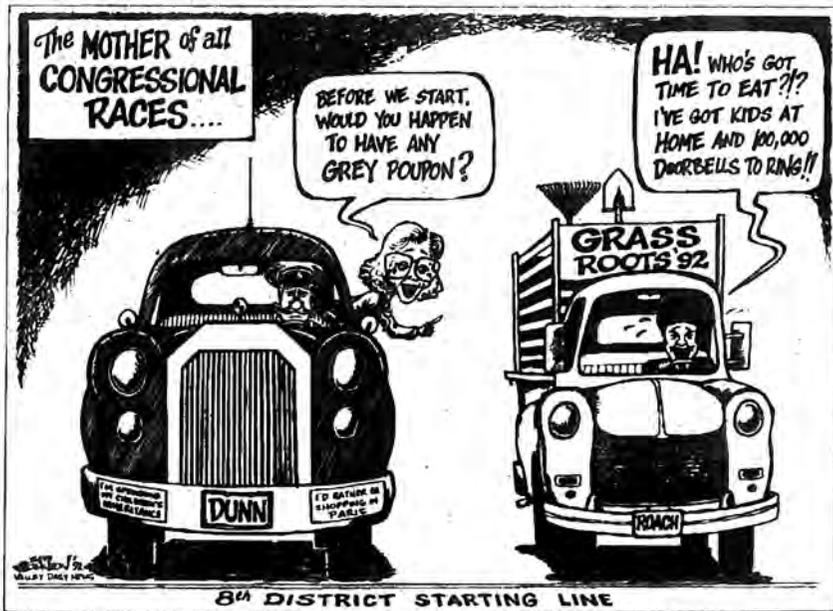
“You always think, well, the party is always united. Eh, not so much,” chuckled LaBrache. “There are always these little factions, and you need to be aware of them.”

Dunn brushed off the controversy and prepared to address the crowd. Washington delegates waved green and white umbrellas as she took the stage and took swipes at Michael Dukakis, the governor of Massachusetts and Democratic nominee for president. “As a Republican, but more importantly as a working mother, I know what kind of a country I want my two sons to grow up in. I want them to grow up in a country where government is more than a growth industry, the way it is today in Massachusetts. I want leaders who are willing to cut the fat out of budgets, not someone like Michael Dukakis who raised taxes again last month in Massachusetts. I want my children to grow up in a country whose leaders declare an all-out war on drugs and the people who push them... For both me and my children, I want our country led by people who are tough on crime.”

“Immediately the press descended upon her. You’re seeing all the local press guys,” LaBrache remembered. “You’ve got KIRO News. You’ve got KING 5... You’ve got all these other party chairmen and nobody is paying attention. They’re all circled around Jennifer.”

The convention produced expected results. Pat Robertson formally asked followers to cast their votes for the vice president; Bush accepted the nomination. “Now you must see me for what I am: the Republican candidate for President of the United States,” the nominee said.

By convention’s end, Dunn had networked with Colin Powell and survived a whirlwind of media interviews. “She looked at me and she said,



Valley-Daily News

“Well, do you want to work for me? I’d love to have you work for me.” LaBrache was floored. She dove head first into politics with Dunn and never looked back. “It wasn’t until later years that I realized that Jennifer just handed the *world* on a silver platter to me.”

MORE THAN TEN years on with Dunn as GOP chair, the Republicans were debt-free and sitting on roughly \$60,000. “She had pretty much reached the pinnacle of what she could do with the state party,” LaBrache said. “She had been there 11 years. It was in the top five state parties nationally. She had already done work at the UN. She’d done a lot of international work with women.”

“She was moving up to possibly being vice chair of the National Republican Party,” said Doug Ellis, executive director of the state party. “She was close.”

The political landscape shifted. Rod Chandler, the U.S. representative for the 8th District, gave up his seat in hopes of elevating his status to the Senate. “She looked at the party as it was getting ready to leave one president,”

LaBrache recalled, “[and] she said, ‘It’s time for me. I need to move from the state to the national stage. I have an opportunity with an open seat.’”

Republicans had talked about Dunn’s entrée into public service since Jackson’s aneurysm eight years before, but the timing was all wrong. Circumstances had changed by 1991. Dunn’s boys were off to college. Concerns about juggling a big job as a single mother dissipated. “This is what I’m thinking about,” Dunn told her sons. “If I do this, there is going to be a change. There is going to be a change in what our family does. How it’s viewed.”

“They were very keen to make sure that their mother followed through on the dream,” LaBrache said. “She had lots of conversations with people she trusted.”

“I scratched my head,” Ellis confessed. “I had known her real well. We were *absolutely very, very, very close* for seven or eight years....I was thinking, ‘Do you really want to do this?’ She knew the problems, and the sacrifices, and the hard work, and the agony—putting yourself out on a limb to say, ‘Take me or don’t take me.’ Things beyond your control could sometimes tip an election one way or another. We’d talked about it saying, ‘We really don’t want to do that.’ And somehow, she said, ‘yeah.’”

Friends and colleagues set up an exploratory committee. “She called on [John Meyers] and myself and said, ‘I’d like you to go over the campaign with me. [Meyers,] you’ll run the campaign. Lisa, you’ll be his second. You’ll raise all the money,’” LaBrache said.

“We talked a lot about it before she made the decision,” said Reagan Dunn. “You give up *a lot* to run for public office. Your family is subject to public scrutiny all the time. You are spending countless hours on the plane back and forth. You’re always working. And you’ve got to raise a couple million dollars every cycle, if not for your own campaign, for leadership races of various kinds. Every time you’re out to dinner you’re being addressed, talked to, bottles of champagne sent over. It sounds great, but it gets old fast. Public service is hard. It’s the price you pay for living in a free society.”



Dunn Family

“I figured she’d win no matter what,” said Ellis. “If she committed to doing it she was going to win. There was no question. She had tenacity and the ability to bring smart people together, to be able to make things happen.”

“It was very important to her to not try and run as the state party chair,” Reagan said. “She wanted to *step down*....She didn’t run the state party because she wanted to be elected. She ran the state party because she wanted to run the state party. Being in Congress was an afterthought.”

Dunn jumped ship and devoted all of her time to the campaign. “She was very good at making sure that the coffers were full,” LaBrache said. “Jennifer was always good at preparing, looking six miles, ten miles down the road. Get as much information as you can. Then you go home and you pull out the yellow sheet of paper. You have your pros and cons. You don’t do it in a vacuum.”

DUNN RAN FOR Congress in the Year of the Woman, when waves of female candidates, a record-setting 117, vied for seats in the House and Senate. Twenty-one were women of color.

She made her formal announcement in March 1992, as she called out abusers in a check-kiting scandal. The controversy dubbed “Rubbergate” sent voters into an uproar. “I don’t have a lot of trust in politicians and this just reinforces my view,” complained Tom Watson, a Seattleite, over coffee.

An investigation revealed that a long list of U.S. representatives regularly overdrew their House bank accounts. Dunn announced her candidacy, vowing to give Congress a good name. “For some Members of Congress, this has become their own personal gravy train,” Dunn told the crowd at her kickoff event. “They buy a ticket with a bounced check. They eat in the dining room without paying the tab. When the train enters the tunnel, where it’s dark and no one’s looking, they give themselves a pay raise.”

Democrats lashed out at the investigator, Malcolm Wilkey, for insisting that U.S. representatives turn over their bank records. “It’s a Kafkaesque nightmare that every one of our checks is going to be in the hands of the other party in the middle of an election,” griped Rep. Dan Glickman, a Democrat from Kansas. Through the course of the investigation, Wilkey sent letters to members clearing most of any wrongdoing. Wilkey’s inquiry was not “the greatest trampling of the Constitution in the history of the House of Representatives, but it probably ranks in the top 10,” critics grumbled. The check-kiting scandal investigation resulted in several criminal cases, jail time and steep fines. The House Bank closed.

Billed as bedrock Republican, the affluent 8th District had yet to send a Democrat to Congress. Once a wooded patch of land, the 8th had transformed into well-to-do communities and big business on the eastside of metro Seattle. The district encompassed rural areas and ski slopes too, spanning from Lake Washington to Mount Rainier and sweeping up parts of Pierce County.

The Dunn camp settled in downtown Bellevue, on 148th street. The sprawling bank building was so enormous “you could run a bowling

ball through the large campaign office.” Dunn was not only competing in Republican country, she benefitted from an exploratory committee, longtime ties to Republicans and relationships with local businesses. The rookie congressional candidate launched her campaign as a widely viewed frontrunner with a \$40,000 war chest.

“Giving Congress a good name” plastered the district. “We were everywhere,” LaBrache recalled. “We even ended up with Jennifer Dunn yard signs in Spokane. It was crazy. We even put one just outside of the boundaries of Mt. Rainier. We *covered* the place. But that was the M.O. The M.O. was ‘I am everywhere. You will always have access to me. And I’m not taking anything for granted.’”

The Dunn camp strategized over how to play her divorce. “You look at that two ways,” Reagan said. “You’re a single mom or you’re a divorced woman. What is that? Well, that’s just rhetoric. That’s just semantics. Of course, you’re a single mom. She’s this *super woman*. She can do this—bring home the bacon, take care of the kids.”

Dunn kept a hectic pace—door belling, making the obligatory finance calls and packing her kickoff breakfast at the Double Tree in Bellevue. “She had a marvelous flair,” Gorton said. “Part of her trademark, her signature, was standing out in the crowd. She was just a magnificent dresser... She was smart as all hell, a Stanford graduate and extremely bright. But she didn’t talk over people. She didn’t leave people feeling that she thinks she is a lot smarter than they are.”

“The way Jennifer walked into a room, everybody acknowledged that she was somebody that they needed to pay attention to,” said LaBrache. “She had a lot of natural gifts,” Reagan said. “Once she was educated, she took the time to take her education seriously. She was a better writer than just about anybody I’ve ever met. She was a very articulate speaker. But, she was also very attractive. Back then, a beautiful blond woman who was attractive and had gone to Stanford and had these credentials... that helped a lot.”

“Even people that she didn’t like, or that didn’t like her, she would talk

to and interact with,” Ellis said. “She had sort of an odd way of looking at things because most people would sit back and say, ‘You did something bad to me, therefore I’m going to be mad at you forever.’ Well, she never had that kind of thinking. When she was disappointed in people, or people disappointed her, she would confront it and then move on. It was interesting because she never held anything in terms of grudges. I always did, but she never did.”

The field of candidates for the 8th District included Republicans Pam Roach, a state senator, Roy Ferguson, a state representative and Michael Campbell, a former mayor of Bellevue. Democrat George O. Tamblyn and Independent Bob Adams also vied for the spot. All would appear on the same blanket primary ballot, but only the top vote getter of each major political party and the Independent would face voters in November.

“The primary was ours to lose,” LaBrache said. “It was very hard fought. But Jennifer, again, maintained. There are folks today that could take a lot of lessons from her. She always took the high road. It was issue driven. There was no need to get personal in anything.”

But people made assumptions about Dunn, recalled LaBrache: “She lives in Bellevue; she must be wealthy. Even though she’s a single mom, it doesn’t matter. She runs around with all these highfalutin people. She has no legislative experience. Well, running a state party, yes, you do have legislative experience, putting agendas together, what the Republicans were going to have as part of their platform. We had tons of interviews and she was out in the public. We would make sure that when there was any sort of an event going on that we had a lot of volunteers with us.”

Two of the most talked about candidates, Jennifer Dunn and Pam Roach, were two who differed dramatically on style, approach and personality. Dunn wore the label of a blond beauty, a smooth candidate who loved the symphony and dressed in designer clothing. Roach was portrayed as a gun-toting conservative—blunt, outspoken and fiercely proud of her blue-collar roots. The media made much to do out of the polar opposites, describing glares and swipes between the candidates as they

made the rounds at newspaper editorial boards. “Sen. Pam Roach has made no secret of the fact that she doesn’t like Jennifer Dunn. And the feeling is mutual,” reported the *Post-Intelligencer*. “For weeks, the two top GOP contenders in the 8th District Congressional race have been doing everything in their power to undercut or ridicule each other.” Roach accused Dunn of handing the Republican Party to the right wing, while Dunn, according to the *Post-Intelligencer*, charged Roach with being “in the pocket or organized labor.”

“Several weeks ago, Dunn’s campaign took a piece of Roach’s campaign stationery and fastened to it a one-paragraph notice of the union endorsement under the heading ‘Dunn for Congress.’” The last sentence read, “Now we know for sure who Pam is talking about when she says, ‘She’s one of us!’”

Roach countered: “Oh yeah, take a look at all those \$1,000 contributions she’s getting. They’re not the common people, I’ll tell you that.”

In a famous editorial cartoon published by the *Valley Daily News*, Dunn sits comfortably in a limousine with a bumper sticker, “I’d rather be shopping at Nordstrom.” Poking her head out the window, she poses to Roach, “Before we start [the campaign], would you happen to have any Grey Poupon?”

“I was in college,” Reagan remembered. “I was a little more grown up and sort of got the sense of what was going on. I think we just realized that this was the job she had, and it happened to be high profile. We all played along. We played the game.... Mom had a few debates when she was running for Congress, and she had multiple things she had to attend, so she sent my brother. And he still was a kid. You can’t get mad at the kid. You can’t give bad answers.”

Dunn was a good match for the district, he concluded. She was pro-choice, but fiscally conservative. “She was thoughtful in her positions. She had some conservative views, but on a litmus test issue she had some moderate streaks in her too. She was very careful about her rhetoric. She wasn’t one of these politicians that throws bombs, that finds ways to offend,

or is a lightning rod.”

“She was moderate,” said Gorton, “a moderate stance on abortion, for example. Even though she had come in from the right, from Ronald Reagan, at that point, she was not ideological enough. She was not a pure conservative from the point of the very conservative.”

“I am much more conservative thinking than Jen,” John Blackburn said. “She always tried to have her constituents in mind ahead of her own desires.”

Dunn and 107 other female congressional candidates won spots on November ballots, far exceeding the 70 who secured House nominations in 1990. “It wasn’t just something to win; it was do it and be the best,” said LaBrache. “There was a lot of the Year of the Woman and all that sort of thing going on. Jennifer [was] constantly in the press saying, ‘Listen, there are no women’s issues, *all* issues are women’s issues.’”

In the state of Washington, Dunn outspent Roach and came out three percentage points ahead. “We had a *huge* bash,” LaBrache said. “It was clear that she was the woman to be reckoned with. And all the candidates who had run against her were very gracious and said, ‘Hey, you ran the best race, congratulations. We’re circling the wagon. We’re here.’ And we took it from there and just went all out and made the case for electing her. It was Jennifer, Patty Murray...it was the Year of the Woman.”

Dunn, who had published a campaign brochure with a photo of George H. W. Bush before the primary, chose in the general election campaign to feature his wife, Barbara. She “represents my view on abortion, that the woman should make the decision,” Dunn said.

Election night arrived November 3. Hundreds jammed into campaign headquarters flanked by television cameras, microphones and eventually the candidate, who’d spent part of the night talking “what ifs” with her sons. “We have done everything right,” an upbeat Dunn told the campaign. “We have done *everything* we could possibly do. I wouldn’t have gone back and changed a thing. What happens—happens. If we go on to Congress, we do. If not, we go on to our next life.” The message set a positive tone for the evening. “She said, ‘There wasn’t anything that wasn’t perfect,’” recalled

LaBrache. “We all looked at each other and said, ‘Thank God.’ It gave us a sense of comfort... There was never any second-guessing.”

Dunn won the race handily over George O. Tumblyn and Bob Adams. Bryant and Reagan presented her with big bouquets. “Oh, I was thrilled,” Dennis Dunn said. “She had gained her interest in politics through me, through osmosis.”

Dunn was far from alone. The Year of the Woman brought women into American politics in unprecedented numbers. They gained 19 seats in the House, from 28 to 47, and tripled their numbers in the Senate, but still held only six positions. Patty Murray defeated Dunn’s predecessor, Rod Chandler for a seat in the Senate. Murray had accused the 10-year veteran of boosting his pay as families struggled. Chandler had retorted by quoting an old Roger Miller song. “Well, dang me, dang me, they ought to take a rope and hang me. Hang me from the highest tree. Woman, would you weep for me?”

“That’s just the kind of attitude that got into me this race, Rod,” Murray had countered. Once told she could never rescue a vulnerable education program, Murray got angry and grabbed her sneakers, emerging on the campaign trail as the “mom in tennis shoes.”

As Murray laced her shoes for Washington, D.C., Dunn too packed her bags. The Year of the Woman resulted in no immediate structural changes at the nation’s Capitol, however. Seven decades after women won the right to vote, “the U.S. Senate chamber still has no women’s bathroom,” noted *Time*. “Even the Democratic cloakroom in the House has no ladies’ room, leaving female Representatives with a hike to the Congressional Women’s Reading Room, where there are all of three toilets.” The magazine warned fanfare over the so-called Year of the Woman was overblown and misjudged. “[In] 1992, the Year of the Woman, 3% of the Senate and 6% of the House of Representatives is female, proportions that lag embarrassingly behind most European nations.”

After considerable legwork on committee assignments, the Dunn camp sought prudent advice from veterans like Rod Chandler. Dunn was “in the

game the minute she stepped off the plane,” LaBrache said. She chose an apartment in Pentagon City across from Nordstrom. “Come on, it doesn’t get any better than this!”

Dunn and crew encountered a “pile of furniture” in their new Washington, D.C. office and in the hallways. Desks stacked on top of one another. Computer parts scattered across the room. “Jennifer would say, ‘I need a couch. Go get a couch.’ We would all be scurrying around all the office buildings, and we’d see one, and we’d lug the sucker back. And pretty soon she just started putting her touch on it.”

“When she first came to Congress, we had a long conversation about being a member vs. being a player,” recalled Phil Bond, Dunn’s former chief of staff, to *The Times*. “With her skills and with the district she represents she could hold that seat for quite a while comfortably, or she could hold that seat and really try to become a national player that affected change, and that is what she was interested in doing.”

The freshman “pushed an agenda of campaign-finance and reform.” She urged all House committees to tighten budgets by 25 percent. She sat on the Transportation and Science committees. Unlike most in the GOP, Dunn championed the Violence Against Women Act that dedicated \$1.6 billion to investigate and prosecute gender-related crimes. However, she refused to join the Women’s Caucus. “I found out they had taken a position on abortion, so I’m not going to join that group... [W]e shouldn’t get into endorsing political points of view on some of these problems where our approaches are diverse. That keeps out people who are friends of mine like Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Helen Bentley and Barbara Vucanovich.”

“A talk with her in an ornate anteroom in the capitol is constantly interrupted by her quick trips next door for votes on the House floor and by aides rushing in with updates of her constantly revised daily schedule,” said the *P-I*’s David Horsey.

Dunn regularly caught the red eye home and studied on the couch, a mounting stack of papers at her side. “She *really* did her homework,” Reagan remembered. “That makes a big difference because most elected

officials just kind of rely on staff and don't get into the details or the weaves or policy issues.”

She was managing the pace of her new career, but longstanding issues remained. Dunn once revealed a disturbing encounter during those first days in Congress. She and her chief of staff, Phil Bond, boarded an elevator to see a prominent committee member. “Dunn was looking down at her notes, she recalls, and someone got into the elevator. Then, without warning, he kissed her on the lips.” The man in question, wrote Hanna Rosin in *The New Republic*, turned out to be the very ranking committee member Dunn was en route to see.

THE 1994 REPUBLICAN REVOLUTION positioned the GOP for an historic takeover and Dunn for party leadership. She became a protégé of Newt Gingrich, dubbed “Man of the Year” in 1995 by *Time* magazine for ousting Democrats from control of the House for the first time in decades. “I still think he’s the brightest person I’ve ever met,” Dunn said. “He holds my fascination. He thinks outside the box. He takes you right over the edge of the rules and the way things are now to the way things could be.” But Americans’ views of the speaker of the House were unquestionably split. “They love him, loathe him or can’t figure out who he is,” observed the magazine.



“I still think he’s the brightest person I ever met.”
—Jennifer Dunn on Newt Gingrich. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

“They were soul mates in many ways,” LaBrache recalled of the Gingrich-Dunn relationship. “Newt was a great thinker. It was just at the time he had great ideas....The Democrats had been in charge for 40 years. There were already abuses. You had the Rostenkowski stuff going on....Newt, being the professor that he was, he already had the turn-of-phrase. When he would get up and speak, he knew exactly what he wanted to say and how to say it to get people interested....[And] they brought [Dunn] right in and said, ‘OK, this needs to be your home. You’re in the inner circle. We need to start plotting and planning.’” (*Editor’s Note: Illinois Democrat Dan Rostenkowski, who rose to political fame as chairman of Ways & Means, pleaded guilty in 1996 to two charges of mail fraud.*)

Gingrich consulted with Dunn and a handful of women. “Mom and Newt got along famously,” Reagan said. “She was in leadership with Newt when he was speaker of the House. She really respected him for his intellect. We all recognized that he has limitations as someone who can be a lightning rod. But his positions on policy are what you would call sort of purist conservative, not in that social way, I mean, with wisdom. She enjoyed it. That was really her era.”

Gingrich helped Dunn secure a seat on the Ways and Means Committee and she became only the fifth woman ever to land the coveted



Committee on Ways and Means. U.S. House of Representatives

of Iowa in the race for vice chairman of the Republican Conference. The 129-to-85 victory made her the fifth ranking person in GOP leadership, one of the highest-ranking women in Congress and the third woman in American politics ever to win the seat. Dunn called the victory a win for the party, saying it “shows a real validation of the fact Republicans want women to be not just in the ranks but in the highest levels of leadership.”

The new vice chairman, however, quickly discouraged talk of her as a Gingrich successor. She called the Georgian “the man that rocks the House....He’s the one with vision, and his vision has never waned.”

Dunn faithfully stood behind Speaker Gingrich who eventually stepped down and resigned from Congress after two government shutdowns over a budgetary impasse and ethics charges. Republicans had tried to oust Gingrich as his public image tarnished. “The majority of our Congress is appalled to read a week ago that there has been a potential coup, or an attempted coup, against the Speaker,” Dunn told *The National Journal*. “Certainly from my point of view, when someone says they’re willing to work with the opposition party—say 20 members of our party—that is an appalling thing to have been considered. I’m very concerned about that. That out of all these things is what bothers me the very most.”

Dunn’s top job as vice chairman was to close the gender gap. “The gender gap does exist,” Dunn asserted. “The sooner we recognize that, the better off we are, because when you target a problem, then you can find the solution. I am very realistic about things like this. And so I would say, ‘let’s find out what’s going on among women in the United States. What are their expectations from government?’ Women, we are told...tend to believe that government’s role is to take care of people who really need it and who can’t take care of themselves. That is what we try to do with welfare...The problem is we’re just not talking about it.”

“Cleary, our message hasn’t been articulated as well to women in America as it could be,” admitted John Boehner, the conference chairman from Ohio. “Often we do explain our policies in a manner that doesn’t connect with women,” Dunn said. “It’s our responsibility to explain to people

what our philosophy is in this country and what we've done that affects them. And so it's a business of persuasion. Talking to women is critical if we want to continue winning elections."

Dunn led a research project to identify what women expect from their federal leaders. She retooled the wording of Republican policies to better connect with women voters. "I think we can tell the story of what our party is trying to do, a softer edge to the conservative message," Dunn said.

Just the year before, Dunn and several female colleagues attacked Congressmen Jim Moran and Paul Kanjorski for making disparaging comments about women. At a hearing on Travelgate, Moran noted the presence of Virginia Thomas, a GOP staffer and the wife of Clarence Thomas, the Supreme Court justice.

"Every time I look up, I look straight at Mrs. Clarence Thomas in that bright blue dress and I ask myself, 'What Is Mrs. Clarence Thomas doing here?'"

"American women have struggled for decades to be seen as professional equals, and your remarks put these women back in the category of chattel," Dunn and female colleagues retorted in a letter.

"You always had to watch to make sure that they [men] didn't forget you," LaBrache said. "You know guys—they have a tendency sometimes, 'Oh yeah, we'll get together and talk about this.' The idea of having a woman in the room, even when it was Jennifer, sometimes, it just didn't occur to them."

Republicans recognized that the Dunn's messages resonated with women. "She was an articulate speaker," Gorton said. "They could put her out front in something and have her speak to it—an attractive spokesperson who was going to do the job right because she knew something about it." And they did.

Dunn founded The Permanent Majority Project to generate women's interest in the party and raised nearly \$400,000 for the undertaking via her Political Action Committee in 1998. The same year, Dunn led a three-day conference, the Republican Leaders Forum, also targeting women. "We

need to go back to basics. This has been our worst political problem for the last 15 years, but nobody ever does anything about it. People have an image of a trademark Republican, a stern, harsh male who is trying to cut something or eliminate the safety net, and they don't realize that our small government policies are compassionate to families."

The conference drew roughly 700 women from 41 states and featured Elizabeth Dole, president of the American Red Cross, and Christine Todd Whitman, the governor of New Jersey. Scholars disputed Dunn's claims, arguing that many women seem to prefer that government play a larger role in education, as an example, and in environmental protection. "The old saying that women are only a divorce away from welfare—or at least a dramatic decline in income—still resonates in America," said Susan Carroll, a senior researcher at the Center for the American Woman and



Like her mentor Jennifer Dunn, Cathy McMorris-Rodgers was elected vice chairman of the Republican Conference.

Late in 2012, McMorris-Rodgers was named conference chairman and the highest-ranking woman in Congress.

U.S. House of Representatives

Politics. "It's not going to be sufficient for Jennifer Dunn to get Republicans to change their language. The gender gap has been with us a long time, and that's because it is rooted in issue positions the two parties have staked out over long periods of time."

Cathy McMorris-Rodgers, a U.S. representative from Washington's 5th Congressional District, held Dunn's seat as vice chairman of the Republican Conference in 2012. Late in the year, McMorris-Rodgers was elected conference chairman, making her the highest-ranking Republican woman in the Congress. She said the impact of the late congresswoman is undeniable. "Wow. What a foundation that she laid. Today it is common for us

to refer back to the work that Jennifer Dunn did. We certainly recognize that we're standing on her shoulders. [And] there's still more to be done.

"It is so important to have that woman's voice around the leadership table. I find myself today saying many of the things that I heard Jennifer say when I heard her from afar. I do think conservative women bring an important voice to the debate and the Republican Party....It is important that we have broad representation of the people and the citizens. Part of that is making sure that we have women that are part of our leadership, part of our party and are out front on these issues. The message and the messengers are very important."

IN 1998, DUNN made a gutsy run for House majority leader, a rank that would have placed her squarely behind the speaker in hierarchy and made her the highest-ranking woman in congressional history. "Think of Margaret Thatcher without the accent and a better wardrobe and a bit more subtlety," cracked John Carlson, a radio commentator in Seattle.

Rick White, a U.S. representative, called Dunn "persuasive and captivating" and someone who "functions particularly well in a male environment...I think they find her attractive." "She's kind of one of these people who works a lot behind the scenes," said Karen Thurman, a Democrat from Florida who served on Ways and Means with Dunn. "She's not one who's on the floor making a lot of noise."

"Some of her colleagues will tell you that Jennifer Dunn stands more in the shadows, that she's a peacemaker and a generalist," reported *The Washington Post*, "that she's a touch fuzzy on some issues, like abortion." "She rapidly dispenses with her 'libertarian' position [on abortion], which has been the focus of much scrutiny since she stepped into the spotlight. Abortion, she says, should be legal but not federally funded. She opposes 'partial-birth' abortions." Facing two conservatives decidedly against abortion rights, Dunn's Libertarian perspective—to keep government out of such a personal and difficult decision—troubled many in the Congress and on both sides of the abortion debate. Dunn scored an 80 out of 100

from the National Right to Life Committee, and a 17 from the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League. “That was higher than the zero it gave to all the other candidates for the other leadership posts. Her 17 stemmed largely from her support for family planning,” *The New York Times* pointed out. “In her entire career, according to the league, she has cast 76 votes on abortion-related matters, 52 of which were against the group’s position.”

By American Conservative Union ratings, Dunn averaged a score of 96 in 1998. Her opponents for the leadership post, Dick Armey of Texas and former NFL football player Steve Largent of Oklahoma, averaged 100 and 92, respectively. Dunn’s rating fell over a vote to eliminate the \$475 million allocated for debt payments to the United Nations. The ACU supported the amendment, believing that the “U.S. bore a disproportionate share of U.N. expenses”; Dunn did not.

Dunn lost the secret-ballot election after the second round of balloting to incumbent Armey, the former economics professor, with “no regrets.” “When she ran for a top House position, she was beaten out by a person who had less ability but was a ‘good ole boy’ from Texas,” her brother, John Blackburn, said. “I know that she feels she’s had to fight for just about everything she got,” he told *The Post*. “I know that she doesn’t feel that she’s heard a lot of the time, and that bothers her. She just feels that it’s difficult to command attention sometimes, particularly in Congress.”

“I’m not really disappointed. I was cracking that glass ceiling; no woman has ever run for a leadership position like this. I felt it was worth it just for that.” Behind closed doors, Republicans had reportedly concluded that losing Gingrich as speaker was “enough of a shake-up.”

DUNN AND LARGENT stepped back into the spotlight two months later as the faces of the Republican Party. Few moments can match the pressure and visibility of the State of the Union Address and the opposing party’s official response.

In 1999, 43,500,000 viewers tuned in to hear from Bill Clinton, as the

president waded through impeachment troubles following a scandalous affair with a White House intern. A White House senior aide anticipated “substance shock for the country.” News of the scandal had dominated Capitol Hill and every media outlet for so long. (Dunn voted to impeach the president, but a month after the address he was acquitted by the Senate.)

“Tonight I stand before you to report that America has created the longest peacetime economic expansion in our history—with nearly 18 million new jobs, wages rising at more than twice the rate of inflation, the highest homeownership in history, the smallest welfare rolls in 30 years—and the



Millions tuned in for the 1999 State of the Union Address. Dunn, with Steve Largent, spoke for Republicans. “I know how that knot in your stomach feels,” the single mother told working parents. “I’ve been there.” *National Archives and Records Administration*

lowest peace-time unemployment since 1957” the president said.

Dunn and Largent spoke for Republicans. Dunn, who became only the third Republican woman to deliver the response, told the American public, “No matter what the outcome of the President’s situation, life in America will go on. Our lives will continue to be filled with practical matters, not constitutional ones....I’ve been a single mother since my boys were little—6 and 8. My life in those days was taken up trying to make ends meet, trying to get to two soccer games at the same time on two different fields, worrying about dropping the boys off early at school in order for me to get to work on time. I know how that knot in your stomach feels. I’ve been there.”

Dunn impressed many, but not all. Noted *The New York Times*: “In their State of the Union response, Mr. Largent, of Washington, and Representative Jennifer Dunn of California [sic] infuriated many moralists who are indignant about Mr. Clinton’s conduct; the lawmakers played down the scandal and underscored the bedrock Republican issues. ‘Our country is not in crisis,’ Ms. Dunn said. ‘There are no tanks in the street.’”

3 ■ Milestones

As a sophomore in Congress, Dunn played in the big leagues. She held a seat on Ways and Means and resolved to take on an explosive topic—welfare reform. Hoping to entice Reagan Democrats to return to their roots, Clinton had campaigned his way to the White House promising, among other things, to “end welfare as we know it.”

“I had been a working mother myself, but I had not been a welfare mother. And I wanted to understand everything I could about it. I really wanted to see it first-hand.”

That’s how Jennifer Dunn met Pamela Dunn. They were no relation, but it soon developed that they had a surprising amount in common. “Walk a Mile in Your Sister’s Shoes” paired legislators with women on welfare for one month. The idea was to replace partisan bickering with more humane legislating. Jennifer and Pamela talked on the phone and agreed to various activities each week. “I didn’t have any qualms about meeting a welfare mother,” Jennifer said. “I’ve met a lot of welfare mothers. But I’d never really sat down and studied it from an issues point of view, where I’m focusing on it and asking questions that are going to be important that I’m going to have to put a lot of thought into, as we put it into legislative language. I mean, this is a big deal.” For her part, Pamela had some preconceived notions: “Well, I’m afraid I can’t be as gracious as Jennifer. My image was a little harsher. I really was expecting...someone who would be just very cold-hearted and not be listening to me and basically have their own agenda and just be doing this, I guess, because it might look good.”

Despite all that, the women became fast friends. “I liked hearing about

Pamela's daughter, Bree, 'cause I have kids too. And it's interesting that we have a lot in common. I never went the welfare route, but still, when you have been a single mother on your own, there is just very tough stuff you go through."

They parted company philosophically over the length of time recipients could receive welfare. Jennifer saw grave dangers in a system that "supported a woman into a state of perpetual dependency." She believed that path undermined "self-confidence, assertiveness or salesmanship, which are so critical to finding work." Pamela retorted, "It's wonderful to say, 'OK, we're giving you two years time and in that amount of time you should be able to find a job. But we know jobs that pay a wage that will support a family are becoming more and more scarce. Everyone says, 'Go get a job.' But nobody's doing anything to say, 'Here's jobs that you can live on and support your family on.'"

Jennifer asserted, "[W]e want to create incentives for them to be able to get out and get jobs, the way Pamela's done, and eventually get off that system, because I think Pamela would tell you...she doesn't want to be on welfare. She's a very bright woman and she's in the working market now. But she also needs some help."

The congresswoman's newfound relationship with Pamela caused her to soften her stance on the Earned Income Tax Credit. "When Pamela started explaining to me that the \$30 or so she gets every month from this helps pay her transportation costs, I started honing in on that. We literally put that program back in the budget. And that program is going to increase and not be done away with."

A couple of years passed. As legislation headed for Clinton's desk, pressure mounted for him to sign a welfare reform package he'd vetoed twice before. Speaker Gingrich said Clinton had a moral obligation to sign the new bill, while Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a welfare expert, sternly warned the president that he'd live with a "blot on his eternal soul" if he failed to block its passage. But Clinton kept his campaign promise. Having also pledged to "empower people with education, training

and childcare they need,” he signed the bill in August 1996. “We all have to start again,” Clinton said. “This becomes everybody’s responsibility. . . . The two parties cannot attack each other over it. Politicians cannot attack poor people over it. There are no encrusted habits, systems and failures that can be laid at the foot of someone else. This is not the end of welfare reform, this is the beginning, and we have to all assume responsibility.”

Many Democrats in Congress were furious. The legislation cut welfare spending by \$55 billion, ended a guarantee of aid for the needy and awarded increased authority to the states to monitor welfare rolls—all to the benefit of children, Dunn said. “In our approach, in childcare, we provide over \$4 billion more than the current system of welfare provide. . . . [M]others who are on AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) need to have the peace of mind to be able to move back into the workforce. . . . We have been very careful to sculpt a system that allows states to find those deadbeat parents. . . . [I]n this nation now, \$34 billion is owed in court-ordered child support to custodial parents. What happens when that money is not paid? The children and the mother go on welfare so the taxpayers become, in effect, the parents of those children. . . . We’re going to be able to find those deadbeat parents that leave the state to avoid paying their own flesh and blood.” Dunn declared, “That is where the responsibility should be, on the parents of the child, not on the state or the federal government, or the people I represent that have to pay taxes.”

The congresswoman later hailed the welfare reforms as a huge success. “Since 1996, national welfare caseloads have fallen more than 50 percent. The employment of single mothers, who are at the highest risk of living in poverty, has risen to an all-time high of more than 70 percent. In addition, two million children have left poverty.”

She had learned a lot from her friendship with another Dunn.

PERHAPS DRIVEN by her role as a mother, Dunn largely focused on legislation that protected families and women. “She viewed issues from the human perspective,” explained Keith Thomson, Dunn’s second husband. “First, she was a woman. Second, she was a mother.” And sometimes work was personal.

Diane Ballasiotes, a former aide of Dunn’s, disappeared on a September night in 1988 and crossed paths with an assailant twice convicted of assault. Gene Raymond Kane Jr. served out his prison sentence. Then a psychologist sent him to the Reynolds Work Release Center to transition back into society. The night he killed Ballasiotes, Kane told his employer he was sick and the center that he was due for work. “A person who was in the community but had been in a group home...had been a sexual predator...kidnapped her and raped her and murdered her with a knife,” Dunn recalled, “and it was a really tough time.” Kane fled east. Authorities captured him in the Yakima Valley and locked him up. Within a week’s time, a worker for the Seattle Parks Department discovered the body of Ballasiotes, partially hidden under a piece of sheet metal. “No one can bring our daughter back,” wrote Ida Ballasiotes, the victim’s mother and future state representative, to then Governor Booth Gardner. “The light has gone from our hearts. But, be assured, we will work and mobilize forces to get change and reform.”

“A lot of things happened as a result. I started thinking, ‘How can this happen?’ I looked at our laws as a state party chairman,” Dunn said. “I wanted to take a look at what was happening in the state legislature. There were no laws about notifying a community, if a sexual predator moves into a community. In 1990, we got that law passed.”

Washington State unanimously passed the Community Protection Act into law in 1990, making the state a “national model for addressing sexual violence and sexual predators.” The legislation toughened sentences for sex offenses and established requirements for sex offender registration and community notification.

“I don’t think we’ll ever really truly recover from this,” said the victim’s aunt. “You have to deal with Diane’s birthdays. You have to deal with the holidays. But you must go on.”

A TWICE-CONVICTED pedophile murdered Megan Kanka on Dunn's birthday in 1994. He promised to show her a puppy, raped her, and then strangled her with a leather belt 30 yards from her front door. An autopsy later revealed Megan had suffered blows to the head. She was 7, like one of his other victims. She had brown hair and freckles, and lived on a quiet street in the New Jersey suburbs. The attack unleashed national furor and spurred legislation Dunn would consider a capstone of her career.

Megan's parents discovered their daughter's pink bicycle on the front lawn one evening in July, and a massive search ensued. In a house-to-house canvass of the neighborhood, authorities found Jesse Timmendequas nervous and perspiring. He lived across the street with two other convicted sex offenders. Timmendequas's disturbing statement to authorities caused one detective to "choke back tears" in court. "I was afraid she would tell her mother I had my hand on her butt and tried to kiss her," the accused said in a statement.

Megan's partially clad body turned up in a nearby park within 24 hours of her reported disappearance. The investigation revealed the assailant, Timmendequas, was himself a victim, of parental incest, and that he assaulted children twice before, a 5 year old in 1979 and a 7 year old in 1981. He'd served his time and gone free. Megan's parents were heartbroken and angry. "We knew nothing about him," Maureen Kanda said. "If we had been aware of his record, my daughter would be alive."

Dunn lobbied for community notification of registered sex offenders in Congress, noting the risk of predators to strike again. (Federal law at the time required sex offenders to register with states, but states could decide whether to



Megan Kanka, the inspiration behind community notification by sex predators.

publicly disclose that information.) Phil Bond, Dunn's, chief of staff, said she negotiated with Joe Biden, by then a seasoned veteran in Congress. "Joe Biden came waltzing into the room and went on and on about what a bad provision it was, but Jennifer stuck to her guns."

When congressional conferees tried to hash out differences in the crime bill and revised the language, Dunn was infuriated.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the rule and with a deep sense of outrage. This crime bill is not well reasoned. By now, all Members know of the ill-considered provisions that could never stand alone on this floor were they to be subjected to a vote.

My outrage, however, is reserved for another issue: What do we do when sexual predators are released back into our neighborhoods? Let me recount the history. The Senate adopted a provision encouraging community notification when sexual predators are released from prison. The House, despite the objections of the Committee on Rules, finally made its will known when this body voted 407 to 13 to instruct House conferees to accept that Senate language. Then what happened? A handful of conferees snubbed their noses at the will of the U.S. Congress—both the House and Senate—and weakened the Senate language on sexual predators beyond recognition. They stacked the deck against community notification, they diminished the length of time that predators are tracked, and they did this in the face of yet another bloody tragedy.

Seven-year-old Megan Kanka of New Jersey is dead, Mr. Speaker. Sexual predators were released into her community and they lured that precious little girl to a grisly death. Conferees who worked to protect the rights of sexual predators should understand this: The next little girl killed by a released predator will haunt them.

Mr. Speaker, it is outrageous that a few conferees have supplanted their will for the will of the House. It is outrageous that this bill effectively denies notification to the next Megan Kanka or the next Polly Klaas, or to your mother or sister or daughter. And it is outrageous that we would place the rights of criminals over the rights of victims. I will not be a party to it. I will vote to reject this rule. I will vote to tell the conferees to reflect the will of the House and the Senate.

Bond never forgot it. “The conference debate stretched on and on, until U.S. Rep. Dick Gephardt came in and said, ‘We can’t pass this in the House without the Dunn provision.’ This was just an incredibly gutsy thing for a minority freshman to do.”

Clinton signed Megan’s Law in 1996, as the girl’s mother, Maureen Kanka, stood near. The new law indeed required authorities to notify neighbors of the presence of sex offenders. “The crime bill laid the foundation for this national registry by requiring states to track sexual offenders within their borders,” the president said. “Megan’s Law makes sure parents get this information so they can take steps to watch out for their children.”

The court sentenced Megan’s assailant to death by lethal injection in 1997. In 2012, he was still fighting his fate by appeal.

IN 1996, NINE-YEAR-OLD Amber Hagerman pedaled her bicycle near her grandmother’s home in Arlington, Texas. Within eight minutes, a stranger emerged, plucked Hagerman from her bike, and pushed the screaming girl into a black pickup truck. “Please don’t hurt my baby,” Amber’s mother pleaded. “She’s just an innocent child. Please, please bring her home safe. Please.”

A dog walker discovered Amber’s body in a creek days later. The killer had slit Amber’s neck and removed all clothing with the exception of a single sock. Amber’s family, shell-shocked by tragedy, mourned her loss; lawmakers debated over tools that may have kept her alive. The murder of Amber Hagerman became the genesis of the AMBER Alert system. The communications network quickly alerts authorities and the public of a kidnapping.

To Dunn, the original AMBER was valuable, but not good enough. She was



“Wouldn’t it be wonderful to never again name a piece of legislation after a child who has died?” —Dunn urging swift passage of AMBER Alert legislation after the abduction and murder of Amber Hagerman (above).

determined to expand AMBER Alert to every community in America—with good reason. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, most kidnappers know their victims. While stranger abductions occur far less frequently, “nine out of 10 victims are female, half are sexually assaulted, and three out of four are killed within three hours.” In a stranger abduction, in particular, every second counts.

“It is my hope that one day, there will not be a need for legislation named after little children who have died,” Dunn said.

It was in this vein that Dunn met Ed and Lois Smart, whose daughter Elizabeth was kidnapped in 2002 by the family handyman. Brian David Mitchell dragged the 14-year-old from her bedroom at knifepoint. He proclaimed her his wife after taking her to a canyon in the mountains and performing a bizarre ceremony. Mitchell raped the teenager as many as four times a day for nine months. Sometimes he chained her to a tree. He and then-wife Wanda Barzee allegedly shuffled Smart from various outdoor settings and camps. At one point, Mitchell was arrested for robbing a church in San Diego and held for six days. Still, Elizabeth remained with Barzee, unaware and using the alias Augustine Marshall. She wore white loose clothing and a veil that covered her face.

“Anything I showed resistance or hesitation to, he would turn to me and say, ‘The Lord has commanded you to do this. You have to experience the lowest form of humanity to experience the highest,’” Smart said. In the excruciating weeks that followed, the Smarts described an intense pain dulled only by strong faith and a global outpouring of support. Tens of thousands of letters arrived from people all over the world, many of whom were children. Even their niece, a child when Elizabeth disappeared, offered profound words. “They stole her body, but not her soul,” she told them. Volunteers lined up by the thousands to help search for leads.

THE SMARTS LOBBIED CONGRESS in what evolved into a political firestorm. They urged members to fast track a bill that would expand the AMBER Alert System. “In 1999, 58,200 children were abducted in this

country. Half of these children were snatched in public areas such as parks or playgrounds,” the congresswoman said.

Dunn and Martin Frost, a Democratic congressman from Texas, co-authored legislation to plug holes in the AMBER Alert safety system. “The Dunn-Frost bill, or the ‘National Amber Alert Network Act,’ provides matching federal grant dollars for communities that choose to create an AMBER Alert program. Federal matching funds, for example, would be available to King County where an AMBER Alert plan is currently in preliminary planning stages,” said Dunn.

Ed Smart accused politicians of using AMBER Alert as a political football. They’d bundled the proposed network with other child protection legislation that hadn’t garnered as much support. Smart was certain it would delay passage and risk lives. “To us, it was that children’s lives were truly being impacted because of the inability for Congress, I mean the whole process, to take the AMBERAlert through,” Smart said.

Dunn suggested a meeting between the Smarts and James Sensenbrenner, a stout white-haired congressman who chaired the Judiciary Committee. Sensenbrenner believed in AMBER Alert, but said the emergency network did nothing to *prevent* kidnappings. “He wanted to see all of these other bills go through, and he knew that the AMBER Alert would pass, and so it was kind of one of these chokeholds,” Smart said.

Dunn called Sensenbrenner as Ed and Lois Smart waited in the room.

“You can tell those Smarts that I don’t appreciate what they’ve done to me. I almost lost my campaign because of them!” Sensenbrenner railed over speakerphone.

“Here we are with Congresswoman Dunn, and Lois and I are in complete disbelief. We didn’t do anything,” Smart maintained.

“He never asked to meet with me,” Sensenbrenner retorted later. “I never had a request to meet with him *at all*.”

Despite the hostility, both Sensenbrenner and Smart credit Dunn with advancing the legislation, regardless of politics. “I don’t care how we get Amber passed, I just want it passed,” the congresswoman said. “First, she

was respected,” Sensenbrenner said. “And second, she was viewed as a go-to person who could get things done.” Noted *The Times*, “When the abducted 15-year-old Elizabeth Smart was found alive last March, her father, Ed, publicly criticized the Wisconsin lawmaker. Dunn quickly called Ed Smart and told him not to say anything politically embarrassing. Though Dunn cared passionately about passing AMBER Alert, dinging a fellow Republican was not the way to do it, she said later.”

As the Smarts, Dunn and Frost prepared to unveil the \$25 million legislation to expand the network, the state of Washington issued its first AMBER Alert. An 8-year-old girl in Benton County had vanished. “It is a sad irony that Washington State had an occasion today to launch its first AMBER Alert,” Dunn said. “I pray that young Sofia Juarez is quickly returned to her family in Kennewick.” As of 2012, Juarez remained missing.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth Smart was plotting her escape. She told her alleged abductors that God was calling them back to Utah. Once they returned, someone recognized Mitchell as a suspect in the kidnapping and tipped off police. The informant spotted Mitchell, the target of a nine-month intense manhunt, on a suburban street with Smart and then-wife Barzee, not far from Elizabeth’s home in Salt Lake City.

In March, police asked Ed Smart to come to the station; the calls had become routine. But this time Smart broke down. His missing daughter was alive.

“I am elated to hear the wonderful news that Elizabeth has been reunited with her family. I will always respect Ed and Lois for their strength and faith throughout this 9-month ordeal,” Dunn said.

A short time later, Ed Smart waded through a sea of reporters to waiting microphones. “You know,” he told the crowd, “there are a lot of parents out there that would like to have their child returned. When we have something such as the AMBER Alert, it is a first line of defense for parents. And to think that our politicians are holding this up. They are not being our representatives.”

“He got on national television and basically blamed me for his daughter’s

kidnapping, and the kidnapping of every kid who met that fate in the country,” Sensenbrenner accused.

The next day, Dunn made her own case for expanding the system. “AMBER Alert is very important,” she said. “What happened is a little girl came home. And we have proof that a system that energizes people, that gets information out, that shows faces of potential kidnappers, that perhaps portrays license plate numbers or descriptions of cars, certainly of the victim can work in the final game. We have saved 47 children through AMBER Alert.

“There is no more important thing we can do in Congress, if it’s not help parents retrieve their lost children. AMBER Alert will do that. Ed Smart, take heart. We’re thinking of you. We’re sending you our love. We’re sending you our feelings of thankfulness that Elizabeth has come home. We wish that she is well. We’re so glad she is home in your arms.”

Weeks later, Dunn, the Smarts, and Attorney General John Ashcroft looked on as Bush signed AMBER Alert legislation into law as part of the PROTECT Act of 2003. “Parents with young children have waited a long time for this day,” Dunn said. “A rewarding aspect of public service is to be a part of legislation that will truly make a difference in people’s lives. The AMBER Alert bill does just that. It is credited with helping to reunite 64 children with their parents. Now, every community throughout the nation will have access to this invaluable tool...Ed [Smart] took the traumatic experience of his daughter’s abduction and turned it into a fight to help other parents of missing and abducted children.”

Two years after Dunn’s 2007 death, the case of Elizabeth Smart made its way through the courts. The accused, haggard and shackled, shuffled to the defendant’s chair of a U.S. District courtroom in Salt Lake City. Attorneys debated whether he was fit to stand trial. Mitchell interrupted proceedings by singing church hymns until the judge ordered him out. It wasn’t the first time that Mitchell, a street preacher, disrupted court by bursting into song. A couple of weeks before Christmas in 2010, a federal jury convicted Mitchell of kidnapping Smart and crossing state lines with a minor for sex.

He was handed two life sentences without parole.

Elizabeth Smart, in 2012, married and took a job with ABC News as a contributor in missing person cases.



The president and the Smarts the day AMBER Alert was signed into law,
April 30, 2003. *Eric Draper, White House*

4 ■ “The Death Tax”

Far from a haze of tedious statistics, the spirited push to repeal federal inheritance taxes demanded dogged determination from Dunn, and may be the hallmark of her career. “The Death Tax,” as Dunn called it, was to blame for an unsettling fact: 70 percent of family-owned businesses failed to pass down to the next generation.

Proponents, therefore, characterized the repeal as a lifeline for over-taxed, grieving families who were forced to sell off their businesses in order to pay Uncle Sam. Opponents branded the repeal as a financial tax break for the filthy rich, as legislation that would compromise charitable giving and as a new law that would unjustifiably promote American dynasties. The long-running battle cut beneath American tax laws to American values, fairness and justice.

“How is it that the estate tax, which has been on the books continuously since 1916 and is paid by only the wealthiest two percent of Americans, was repealed in 2001 with broad bipartisan support?” pondered authors Michael Graetz and Ian Shapiro. After all, they pointed out, the repeal did not pass in “the dead of night like a Congressional pay raise.”

On February 25, 1999, Dunn proposed an end to the country’s long-standing estate tax that first breathed life during the naval war with France in 1797. “[I]n 1916 the federal government put its hand in the pocket of Americans to fund World War I and never took it out,” the congresswoman asserted. Her proposed phase-out slashed the tax an additional 5 percent over the course of a decade because “only with our government are you

given a ‘certificate at birth, a license at marriage, and a bill at death.’...It is incomprehensible for this tax to live on. The death tax deserves to die.”

Authors Graetz and Shapiro characterized Dunn as a sharply dressed negotiator who is “indeed, striking, utterly poised, and ready for any question” but in sharp contrast to the “soccer mom the Republican Party selected to respond to President Clinton’s State of the Union Address in January 1999—just after the start of his impeachment trial.” In *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, the writers reference a cartoon on her wall. Dunn “stands in a lifeboat aiming her harpoon at a huge whale named “Death Tax,” which is swallowing up a little fish labeled ‘small business.’”

Despite the issue’s potential to bore or perplex, Dunn’s message penetrated. The tax promoted a “me-first” attitude, Dunn accused, allowing the government to walk away with more than half of an inheritance at someone’s death.

The long-running battle kept on for years and engaged one local media company. *The Times* publisher, Frank Blethen, hired an aide whose top assignment was to repeal the national estate tax. Dunn joined the publisher in carefully portraying the issue publicly. Dunn was initially reluctant to use the term ‘death tax,’ because the label didn’t sit well with women. “It worked really well with those we needed to influence,” Dunn admitted.

“She got it passed in the House *eight* times,” said Lisa LaBrache, a Dunn aide. “It was the Senate that kept falling down on the job.” Dunn-sponsored legislation survived Congress and worked its way to the president. But the “death tax” was part of a larger tax relief bill that Clinton vetoed in the fall of ’99.

Dunn kept at it. One of the most impassioned days in Congress took place in the spring of 2000. Republicans rallied on Capitol steps relishing the House vote to repeal. “Three weeks ago, 279 Members of Congress including 65 Democrats voted to abolish the unfair death tax,” Dunn said. “The fact that one in three Democrats joined all of the Republicans on this vote shows that this isn’t a partisan issue anymore. This is a fairness issue. They all believe that death should not be a taxable event. Parents work hard

during their lives, many just in order for the children who follow them. As a result, death tax is their enemy.”

Dunn shot down claims that the estate tax only impacted “2-percent of the country who happen to be rich.” The compliance tax, she argued, is how families protect themselves from the estate tax and paid by many. The money goes to lawyers, accountants and insurance agents to protect them from death taxes that can range as high as 55 percent of the assets accumulated during the lifetime of the owner. “The compliance tax will never show up in IRS data,” said Dunn. “But I can tell you, it places a huge burden on the folks who have to spend these dollars... Just look up and down Main Street in any town. Family-owned businesses are threatened by the unfair death tax whether it’s the community newspaper, the local auto dealer, or the local hardware store. We in the House have done our job now. It’s now up to the Senate.”

Never mind Clinton’s veto threat. That summer, the Senate voted 59-39 in favor of repeal. A Montana farmer planned to drive the bill to the White House in a tractor to show its impact on growers. Rumors of a Clinton veto, however, persisted. “The more people learn about the dangerous exploding nature of this tax plan, the less they like it,” said Jake Siewert, a White House spokesman. “We think you could do more targeted estate tax relief that takes care of the small businesses and family farms.”

Clinton vetoed the repeal in late August. “I vetoed it not because I don’t think there should be any estate tax changes. I do think there should be some changes.... This is \$750-billion for 54,000 families, and a bill the country could simply not afford.”

Clinton’s veto pen sent the estate tax back to the House in September 2000 where it became the subject of political crossfire. Rep. Wally Herger, from California, took the floor. “Mr. Speaker, Americans are being taxed at the highest rate since World War II. The worst example of this is the death tax.”

With great passion, Illinois congressman Don Manzullo recalled a trip to a local auction. He watched the gavel fall on a centennial farm and

slash its value in half. Rep. Manzullo accused the president of misjudging American farmers. “They’re not rich!” he bellowed in a quavering voice as his arms shook. “They put the food on the table of America. Mr. President, look at them in the eyes! The ones who get up real early and work 20 hours a day crying out for help! America’s farmers are being called rich and insignificant. This is the bill to help them out Mr. President and you vetoed it! And you looked at them right in the eye and you said, ‘You don’t count!’ Well, they do count!! The Crosses, the Buttes, the Wilmarts...the little people across the world that put the food on the table. They’re America’s farmers.” But Manzullo did not get the last word. “The plan that you have offered will take ten years to phase in to help those farmers that you just talked about,” retorted Richard Bonior, the Democrat minority whip.

“The plan that WE have been talking about and WE have been arguing for will cover up to \$4 million in exemptions for business and for farmers like you’ve just described. And it would take effect IMMEDIATELY.” When historians analyze the effort to repeal the estate tax, Bonior continued, they will say: “Never have so many spent so much time to give so much money to so very few.” His constituents worried about better schools, a stronger social security system and reducing the national debt. “There aren’t a heck of a lot of people telling us to put these priorities on the back burner so we can repeal the estate tax for the Bill Gateses of the world.”

The debate shifted yet again. Earl Pomeroy, a Democrat from North Dakota, boasted to the chamber that he represented more production acres of agriculture than any other member of the House: “My, my, my...I’ve not heard so much concern about our family farmers in four terms in this Congress than I’m hearing in the course of this debate. This isn’t about family farms, but the richest people in America.”

Washington congressman Jack Metcalf said the death tax repeal was about “doing what’s right” for the nation. “We must override this very unwise veto.”

Republicans asserted the Democrats’ “immediate solution” only helped three percent of the people who urgently need tax relief. “In the land of

the free and the home of the brave it is astonishing that we let people be taxed after they die," concluded Bill Archer, a U.S. representative from Texas. "That's certainly not the American dream; it's a nightmare."

For all the emotion and passion on the floor, the effort to override Clinton's veto with a two-thirds majority vote failed and found Jennifer Dunn quiet.

THE YEAR 2001 brought a new president and a renewed effort to repeal. Despite his campaign promises otherwise, "signs of a retreat" by the Bush Administration emerged in February. "If Al Gore had been elected, we could have gotten exactly the same outcome," Dunn grumbled. The Bush Administration had hired Democrat John Dilulio to manage certain initiatives and he reportedly lobbied against the repeal—earning a label as "a skunk at the picnic." Other notables with deep pockets like Bill Gates Sr. and Warren Buffet came out against the repeal. "In Mr. Buffett's colorful analogy," reported *The New York Times*, "repealing the estate tax for the benefit of heirs of the rich would be like choosing the nation's Olympic team from among the children of past Olympic champions."

Dunn and Representative John Tanner, a Tennessee Democrat, proposed the Death Tax Elimination Act of 2001—a tax phase-out over ten years. "The funeral home is no place for Uncle Sam to be collecting taxes from grieving families," Dunn said.

The House voted 274-154 in favor of repeal on April 4, 2001. "This is the official start of the funeral procession of the death tax," the congresswoman said. "I'm confident the White House will work with Congress on behalf of small business owners and family farmers to eliminate the onerous death tax.... The people who oppose repeal like to claim it will only benefit the rich. We know that this is untrue. This is a tax that punishes good behavior and rewards a die-broke ethic. It is tax on virtue. It is a tax on those that worked hard, saved well, and in most cases already paid taxes on their wealth one, perhaps twice."

The estate tax was absorbed into a massive tax relief bill. On May 16, in

a roll call vote in the House, the Economic Growth and Tax Reconciliation Act of 2001 passed 230 to 197. (Five who were present opted not to vote.) It passed the U.S. Senate the following week and was signed by Bush in June. “Across the board tax relief does not happen often in Washington, D.C. In fact, since World War II, it has happened only twice: President Kennedy’s tax cut in the ‘60s and President Reagan’s tax cuts in the 1980s. And now it’s happening for the third time, and it’s about time,” the president said.

“Tax relief makes the code...fair for small businesses and farmers and individuals by eliminating the death tax. (Applause.) Over the long haul, tax relief will encourage work and innovation. It will allow American workers to save more on their pension plan or individual retirement accounts. Tax relief expands individual freedom. The money we return, or don’t take in the first place, can be saved for a child’s education, spent on family needs, invested in a home or in a business or a mutual fund or used to reduce personal debt.”

But the clock was ticking. The legislation was scheduled to sunset in 2010. One month after victory, Dunn announced a move for permanent repeal. “If Congress doesn’t act now, the death tax will be reincarnated and once again haunt American families. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to finish the job we started.”

With provisions of the estate tax set to expire, the issue remained debated in Congress in 2012.

5 ■ W.

When a Texas governor chased his dreams to the White House, Dunn elevated her own standing in presidential politics, becoming one of 10 members of his exploratory committee, the first woman to raise \$100,000 for his campaign (later raising more than \$1 million) and co-chair of both the Republican National Convention and Victory 2000, the Republican campaign to send a second Bush to the White House. It was Dunn who held up three fingers at rallies, rousing the crowd: “W stands for women!” Dunn liked the governor with the sky-high approval ratings. She especially liked his relationships with women. “He’s a person with a great mother, great wife, who listens and respects women,” the congresswoman said. “A lot of folks talk about George W. being a very personal, amiable person,” said Brian Edwards, a communications executive in Bethesda, Maryland. “On the stump, he really connects in a one-on-one way. I think that appeals a lot to women voters. They feel they know the person.”

In 2000, Republicans were out for blood, mobilizing for a swift takeover after eight years with Clinton. The party positioned Dunn at center stage in Philadelphia. Her name floated through the grapevine attached to various cabinet posts in the event of a Republican takeover. Her picture splashed across the front page. “Representative Jennifer Dunn of Washington, a member of the Republican House leadership and a deputy convention co-chair, was positively buoyant,” published *The New York Times*. “She said George W. Bush was strong on issues that deal with women, citing his plans for Social Security reform as an example. ‘Husbands tend to die seven or eight years earlier than their wives, so Social Security reform is

beneficial for women,' she said. She was also a big fan of Dick Cheney. 'He is married to a powerful woman, and he knows he needs to listen to a powerful woman,' she said. "She understands politics and she understands issues, and it's rare that you get someone who understands both," said Karl Rove, a Bush adviser, of Dunn's appeal within the party.

Dunn interviewed with Lifetime Television, a media company and women's cable channel judging the impact of the national conventions on its target audience. Bush's nine-point lead paled in comparison to Al Gore's 18-point jump after the Democratic National Convention. Dunn downplayed the difference. "As we moved to the conventions, Governor Bush's support was ninety-four percent of his base. As Gore moved to the convention, Gore's support was seventy percent of his base. Therefore, there was greater room for increase in his support from his base. And I think that's a generic comment. It's not just women....I think it was the first opportunity for busy women to focus in on Al Gore, and it paid off for him."

Dunn's connection to the future president was cemented over dinner in Austin during the holidays in 1998. "Well, I got to really liking George W. Bush as a governor and I sold Mom on the idea of trying to get involved early in his race," Reagan said. "She flew down to Austin." "I very much liked the way he listened to his wife," Dunn said. "His wife thought a run for the presidency would be fun. I knew I could raise money for him." "He held her hand and they would look at each other and talk," Reagan said. "She thought the marriage was very good and that mattered to her. She signed up to be one of the ten members of his steering committee, his exploratory committee."

Bush acknowledged that single mothers could provide happy homes, telling Dunn, "There can be as much love in a family with a single mother as a family with two parents." "He would say things in ways that I thought them," said Dunn. "It was really quite remarkable. I just felt so committed to him by the time the evening was over."

"The presidential race came around," Reagan recalled. "She was on the

exploratory committee with guys like James Baker. One thing people talk about—she was an incredible fundraiser. And in politics, that mattered. She raised *millions* for President Bush, millions, many millions. That gave her a favored status.”

But no cabinet post came to fruition in light of Dunn’s powerful seat on Ways and Means and the balance of power in Congress. “The president was reluctant to pull her out of a district that they thought they might have a hard time keeping. Instead of getting the cabinet post, she would always sit next to the president when she went to the White House. She was asked to hold the seat, essentially.”

IN THE 2000 election, Dunn trounced Heidi Behrens-Benedict with 62 percent of the vote and reclaimed her seat. She’d enjoyed a wide margin of victory in the last several elections, taking in a whopping 76 percent of the vote in 1994, 65 percent in 1996 and 60 percent in 1998.

The race for president, however, was another matter entirely. The long and controversial election night snowballed into one of the most disputed contests in modern history. Butterfly ballots and hanging chads entered the American vocabulary as widespread disbelief flooded the airwaves. News blunders over which presidential candidate carried Florida were glaring. Networks miscalculated the race—twice. “We have egg on our face,” Sam Donaldson, a news anchor, admitted with a grimace. “No question about it.”

The close vote triggered a machine recount and mobilized an army of lawyers. Katherine Harris, the secretary of state in Florida and co-chair of the Bush campaign there, came under fire for a myriad of decisions.

Dunn appeared on PBS in an interview with host Jim Lehrer. “If, for instance, the Florida Supreme Court does rule for the Gore position and says, ‘Let’s count 10,000 votes; let’s count 14,000 votes,’ or whatever, are the Republicans willing to go with that?”

“We’re in this one for the long run...[A]s we move through this process and we go from one recount to the next recount with Governor Bush winning every single one of these that it would be very much the high road and



Dunn campaigned with then Governor George W. Bush at Boeing Field. The Governor, with John McCain and Laura Bush, fielded questions on Northwest Salmon. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

I think a note of grace out of this for Al Gore to say to his lawyers, ‘Enough. This is over.’”

The case climbed to the U.S. Supreme Court where a landmark decision halted the statewide recount and handed Bush the presidency. Dunn’s candidate, the popular Texas governor, became the country’s 43rd president.

NOT FAR into the president’s first term, Dunn waded into a thorny issue that “crossed political parties and philosophical views on abortion.” She gathered the signatures of 37 Republican members of Congress and sent Bush a letter in favor of embryonic stem-cell research. To Dunn, benefits of further study far outweighed the cons. The letter urged Bush to continue federal funding. “We believe that funding embryonic stem cell research will help scientists find new treatments for chronic disease and will, ultimately, save lives,” the letter stated. But stem cell research divided the Administration. “Some officials argue the research can lead to new treatments, while others say federal support for experiments with stem cells, which are extracted from human embryos, will alienate conservatives and abortion opponents,” reported *The New York Times*.

The Seattle Times supported further research. “The Catholic Church and many pro-life conservatives, noting that work on the embryos destroys them, compares stem-cell research to abortion.

“Not even close. Abortion and the science of embryonic stem cells are entirely different. Anti-abortion conservatives, including Republican Sens. Orrin Hatch of Utah and Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, note that the most pro-life position is the one supporting efforts to save existing lives. By some estimates, 100 million people suffer from conditions that could be helped through stem-cell developments.”

Bush, in August, made the decision to dedicate federal dollars for stem cell research in specific cases. “Eight years ago, scientists believed fetal tissue research offered great hope for cures and treatments, yet the progress to date has not lived up to its initial expectations. Embryonic stem cell research offers both great promise and great peril, so I have decided we must proceed with great care.

“As a result of private research, more than 60 genetically diverse stem cell lines already exist. They were created from embryos that have already been destroyed, and they have the ability to regenerate themselves indefinitely, creating ongoing opportunities for research.

“I have concluded that we should allow federal funds to be used for research on these existing stem cell lines, where the life-and-death decision has already been made.

“Leading scientists tell me research on these 60 lines has great promise that could lead to breakthrough therapies and cures.”

IN 2003, THE Bush White House groomed Dunn to send the “Mom in tennis shoes” running back to the Evergreen State. Patty Murray had suffered a well-publicized gaffe in a school classroom when she described the popularity of Osama Bin Laden to Arabs. Murray said Bin Laden was “out in these countries for decades, building schools, building roads, building infrastructure, building day care facilities, building health care facilities, and the people are extremely grateful. We haven’t done that.” A win seemed

plausible. A Republican poll showed Dunn within four points of Murray. “We’ve been blessed in the state of Washington because we’ve had two potentially outstanding candidates in Congresswoman Dunn and Congressman Nethercutt,” said Dan Allen, communications director for the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Despite the president’s urging, a shot at the upper house had no appeal to Dunn. The congresswoman preferred the House, because it runs on merit,

and her seat on the Ways & Means Committee. It would take too long to make a real difference in the Senate, Dunn said. George Nethercutt, who defeated Tom Foley in 1994, took on Murray and lost big. He claimed just 43 percent of the vote.



Seattle Post-Intelligencer

6 ■ The Ring

With orders to kill or capture, Operation Red Dawn led U.S. forces across volatile land of the Middle East, rich in oil and scarred by violence. Following intelligence tips, they trailed the enemy in total darkness to a rural farmhouse in the village of ad-Dawr. In a swift raid, troops discovered Hussein—one of history’s most ruthless dictators—in a makeshift cellar roughly eight feet underground. It was twelve days before Christmas in 2003. Authorities had finally ousted the dictator—in a scraggly beard and dirty clothing. His modest living quarters, a far cry from the extravagant palaces to which he’d long been accustomed, consisted of a disorderly single room with a couple of beds and two pairs of shoes. “Our military tour guide tried hard—with little success—not to gloat,” recalled cameraman Chris Hondros, who traveled to the hideout the day after the capture. The U.S. finally had in its clutches one of the world’s most sought-after enemies—a man the State Department linked to kidnapping, torture and gruesome murders. In its 2003 special report, details are horrific. Najat Mohammad Haydar, a Baghdad obstetrician, “was beheaded after criticizing the corruption within health services.” All told, the State Department reported 200 such crimes carried out in public. In 1990, Hussein introduced Article 111 into the Iraqi Penal Code, added the State Department. “This law exempts men who kill their female relatives in defense of their family’s honor from prosecution and punishment,” it reported.

Hussein’s undoing took place near his hometown of Tikrit where he was born the son of peasants on April 28, 1937. America dragged the disheveled, harried ruler into captivity “like a rat,” CNN reported, and away

from more than 30 years of power. “My name is Saddam Hussein. I am the President of Iraq and I want to negotiate,” reported media outlets of the embattled dictator’s first words upon capture.

The historic event could be felt around the globe. From the nation’s capital, a seasoned congresswoman at the top of her game called the moment a turning point for millions. “Mothers see a future for their children with open access to unbiased education and modern medical treatment,” Dunn declared. “These same mothers are witnessing the emergence of a new economy, one where they can seek employment and earn important wages to help support their families. The coalition forces and the people of Iraq still face a long and potentially difficult road in rebuilding a nation that was devastated for decades under the oppressive rule of Saddam.”

Months passed. Deep setbacks followed waves of marked progress. In search of freedom, fifteen Iraqi women set out on an historic journey to the United States. For the first time, they would celebrate International Women’s



“We got him!” The sound bite heard around the world when a fallen dictator emerged from his spider hole. Dunn prepared for a “New Iraq” and a visible role helping women. *U.S. Army*

Day. For the first time, their voices would be heard at the 48th Commission on the Status of Women. “It was the first women delegation that came after Iraq had been liberated from Saddam’s Regime,” said Zainab Al Suwajj, the delegation leader. “It was very important for all women to go outside Iraq, especially for the gathering of the status of women.”

Authorities held the barbarous dictator, but threats from terrorist groups inside Iraq remained. Plenty of young men had died back home—in three wars under Saddam’s regime—and women had never known freedom. “They cannot speak of their mind,” Al Suwajj said. “They cannot live freely. They cannot practice their religion the way they wish.... And the list goes on and on and on.” “Iraq is a nation rich in culture, with a long history of intellectual and scientific achievement, especially among its women,” the State Department reported. But the Iraqi Government “uses rape and sexual assault of women to achieve the following goals: to extract information and forced confessions from detained family members; to intimidate Iraqi oppositionists by sending videotapes showing the rape of female family members; and to blackmail Iraqi men into future cooperation with the regime.” For a decade or more, many Iraqi families lived without basic needs. No healthcare. No electricity or running water. No education. “Women in America live a comfortable life,” Al Suwajj said. “They have their challenges every day, but there is no way it’s close to the challenges the women face in Iraq, such as lack of security, lack of basic services, jobs... Many of them, they cannot even feed their families.

“They (Iraqi delegates) risked their lives coming to America,” recalled Charlotte (Charlie) Ponticelli, a senior-level employee with the U.S. Department of State. “They had been suppressed, oppressed, repressed and their stories made your skin crawl... Going through this notebook yesterday brought back so much. And not just tragedy, I want to say, but hope, and courage, and determination, and the linking up with the women of the United States of America, and Jennifer Dunn’s leadership. It’s why the contribution that Jennifer Dunn made is of incalculable importance.”



“They risked their lives coming to America,” a State Department senior staff person said of the Iraqi delegation to America in 2004. *Staff Sgt. Jason Robertson, U.S. Air Force*

On the ground in Iraq only months before, Dunn had observed firsthand the mark of the dictator. “For too long the Iraqi people, especially women, lived in fear and under constant scrutiny during the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein. It is critical for Members of Congress to stay involved by offering our expertise on the democratic process as Iraqi women define their role in the new, democratic Iraqi society.” She had also observed progress from U.S. involvement—in the renovation of schools, training for teachers, an increase in healthcare spending and free press. “We don’t want to go to the moon,” one Iraqi woman told her. “We want a job. We want to help.”

Dunn returned to the U.S. and established the Iraqi Women’s Caucus with Tom Osborne, best known as a superstar coach who delivered three championships for the Nebraska Cornhuskers. The caucus was designed to help women land jobs and pursue an education.

On March 10, the caucus prepared to meet the delegation. The women arrived—a mix of Sunnis, Shias and Kurds. The country’s interim constitution had just been signed and the women were determined to live among

the free in a New Iraq. They wanted jobs, training and political power—even for women living in the country’s most remote places.

Harrowing stories came from all delegates, including Al-Suwaij, co-founder of the American Islamic Congress, who engaged in the 1991 Intifadah uprising against Hussein that temporarily sent her into hiding. Born into a religious Iraqi family in Basra, Al-Suwaij survived the Iran-Iraq War, the invasion of Kuwait and the Persian Gulf War.

It was a university professor from Mosul—a wife and a mother of two—who left an indelible mark on Dunn. Dr. Shifa’a Hadi Hussein (Dr. Shifa) met the congresswoman on her first excursion out of Mosul, an ancient city torn apart by violence near the ruins of Nineveh in northern Iraq. People of different religions once “lived and married side-by-side” in Mosul. But those days ended as the city deteriorated in unrest. Dr. Shifa lived in danger. While she never dreamed of a chance to travel to the U.S., she held deep concerns about the future of Iraqi women. “I would like you just to feel the sense of sadness and sorrow that the Iraqi people are practicing now because of the security situations. I would like you to feel the sorrow of those people in Iraq who cannot, for example, just wake up to see that they are living or not. It’s—to live there by chance, because... international terrorism is a problem. And to awake to see that you are still alive it’s a kind of chance that you are getting Iraq.

“Iraq women have been the victims of the three wars...and prisoners in their country for 35 years. I think it’s the time to start living from this moment, starting getting outside Iraq...starting with meeting in the world outside.”

The encounter between Dunn and Dr. Shifa took place in front of cameras at a Washington, D.C. press conference. As photographers documented the historic meeting, Dunn placed her hand on Dr. Shifa’s shoulder, a red corsage pinned to her suit. They were discussing medical needs, the cancer rate and the need to train women, email between the State Department staff would later explain. Dr. Shifa expressed her fear that the U.S. involvement in the country would be short-lived, despite Dunn’s

assurances otherwise. Then, she took a ring off her finger and handed it to Dunn.

“I have a grant that is helping me train women to be security officers. And we’re all very, very worried that the grant is going to run out, and that after the Iraqi elections you’re going to forget us and leave,” Dr. Shifa warned.

“We’re not going to do that. We’re not there to occupy you. We’re there to train you and do what we can to help you run your own country. But we will always be involved in things that we believe are important. And training women to have jobs is important. But I don’t want to take your ring.”

“You must take it...My husband gave it to me.”

“Is this your wedding ring?”

“So then, I had the tears coming down my face,” Dunn later recalled. “I was really going to make sure that that grant continued.”

That week inspired the delegates, especially Dr. Shifa. “Being in the U.N. has taught me a lot that I have the chance and everyone in Iraq has a chance to start again. We have known democracy for so long time, but it was impossible for us to practice this democracy on the ground...I would like just to ask the whole world to give a hand to Iraq to just to stand on its feet.”

The borrowed filigree ring from Dr. Shifa weighed heavily on Dunn long after the press conference. For six months, Dunn aides and the State Department corresponded with Americans on the ground in Iraq to ensure Dr. Shifa’s requests had been met. “I recently learned that several U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) grants have enabled a new Center for Iraqi Women to open its doors in Mosul,” Dunn announced. “It is now offering counseling on women’s health issues, business advice, employment and political training, and social and family services.” USAID confirmed it invested \$10,000 to launch the Mosul Women’s Center and another \$23,000 to continue operations there after its name changed to the Iraqi Women’s Center. “Jennifer proudly wore that ring and gave it back,” recalled Thomson, Dunn’s widower.



An unforgettable encounter between Dunn, co-chair of the Iraqi Women's Caucus, and Dr. Shifa Hadi Hussein on her first excursion outside the violent city of Mosul. *Alex Wong/Getty Images*

The historic meetings in the U.S. produced tangible results abroad. According to Al Suwajj, eight Iraqi delegates ran for office, and three or four took senior government positions. Dr. Shifa won a seat on the Mosul City Council.

Years later, Al-Suwajj learned of an attempt on Dr. Shifa's life. "The situation in Mosul was very bad," she explained. "It has improved, but not much. I know that Dr. Shifa—they tried to assassinate her." Dr. Shifa survived the assassination attempt, but soon lost her husband.

The crusade toward a new and more stable Iraq marched on and found the Washington congresswoman optimistic. "The people of Iraq are finally free and have control over their destiny," she said. "After decades of repression and government sponsored torture and abuse, Iraqi women now have access to educational and professional opportunities. And they are fully embracing the new small business owners' opportunities by taking jobs as government officials, educators, police and security guards, and engineers. The new constitution also includes a provision calling for a target



A typical women's center in Iraq. Thomas Hartwell, USAID

of 25 percent representation for women in the forthcoming transitional national assembly.”

For Iraqi women, Saddam's capture brought opportunity and hope, said Al Suwajj, who now lives in the U.S. But the women's center in Mosul came down in lingering violence and security threats. “There is nothing... They closed it,” Al Suwajj said in 2012.

Dunn always remembered her encounter with Dr. Shifa and her commitment to helping women. “It was just something she felt strongly about,” her younger brother, John Blackburn, concluded. “I'm sure her convictions became stronger as she went on to her conferences in Europe and Africa.”

THE HANDMADE SIGN haphazardly stuck between two tin shacks: *Siloam Fellowship Academy for Orphan and Needy Children. Education is the Key to Peace and Victory.* Dunn stood on the southwest side of Nairobi, in an African shantytown filled with corrugated tin roofs, mud walls, and a plethora of sorrowful stories. Kibera held dubious honors as the largest

slum in Africa and the second largest in the world.

“You can just see miles and miles and miles of tin shacks. And this is where people live,” recalled Mary Bush, chair of a commission that traveled to Africa in 2007 with Dunn. A journalist for the BBC described Kibera as: “Six-hundred acres of mud and filth, with a brown stream dribbling through the middle. You won’t find it on your tourist map—or any other map. It’s a squatters camp—an illegal, forgotten city—and at least one third of Nairobi lives here.”

One million people squeezed into a community the size of Central Park in New York City. Malaria and AIDS took over. In a section of the slum in 1998, only 10 working pit latrines served 40,000 people. Yet, hope abounded. Driven by a calling to “restore the broken-hearted” Siloam Fellowship Academy opened its doors in 1992 to African orphans, widows and the needy. Proper care and education changed lives. By 2009, the future held promise. Two of the academy’s 650 students had finished college and 87 more were close behind. The academy offered ten different classrooms, two water tanks, and electricity.

To evaluate U.S. aid and propose improvements to Congress, Dunn held a seat on the commission, Helping to Enhance the Lives of People around the Globe (HELP), in March 2007. Dunn and a team of delegates traveled to Kenya, entered Wanyonyi’s academy, and saw firsthand what it meant to attend school in a kind of poverty most Americans will never see.

“It was inside one of these tin shacks with mud floors with very little light and it was extremely hot,” recalled Bush. “But when we got off the plane, we were greeted with song, festivities and people in their native dress. You know, no matter how difficult things are, people do try to put their best foot forward.”

The bright-colored dresses, scarves, headpieces and shiny gold jewelry stood in great contrast to the surrounding dirt, mud floors and drab buildings. At one school, children gathered around Dunn to catch glimpses into her digital camera. “They were drawn to her,” commission members said. At another, students wrote and sang a special song for their American

visitors. “The head mistress of the school and the girls had put together a program,” Bush said. “The girls sang a song that they had written themselves. The gist of that song, the main line, was ‘I just want a chance. Just give me a chance.’ It was so moving Jennifer and I both were sitting there in tears.”

When the program ended, the head mistress approached Bush. “We are just so grateful to the United States for giving us this money so that we could start this girls’ school because otherwise they simply would not be educated,” she told her.

Dunn’s husband, Keith Thomson, recalled a HELP Commission story from the Republic of Ghana in West Africa. There, Dunn met a woman who thanked her profusely for U.S. aid. “The U.S. had been so helpful giving money here, but the budget is going to be cut. Please could you help us?” The woman pleaded. When she walked away, Dunn broke down and always remembered their encounter.

“I watched her connect with the people,” said Bush. “You know this is a very senior, very prominent former Congresswoman who’s out there and she’s hugging—like it’s her family. She just fell in love with the children. She just had a way about her. You can feel when something is genuine and when it’s just there for the camera and the press. And with her I’ll tell you, it was genuine.”

Bush credited Dunn with uniting political parties, strong personalities and highly accomplished people. “She brought, I think, a hand of grace and a hand of wisdom. She was one of the most valuable members. She was a person who used both sides of her brain very well, the emotional and the intellectual. I just thought Jennifer was a wonderful person.”

The experiences left the HELP Commission united in a belief that money alone would not ease the suffering in poverty-stricken communities. “The world has changed and U.S. assistance programs have not kept pace,” the commission reported to the president and Congress. Among its recommendations, members encouraged a wholesale rewrite of the Foreign Assistance Act, a greater emphasis on job creation in the developing world



Dunn on a humanitarian mission to one of the poorest slums in the world. *Thomas Briggs and Wesley Wilson*

and business models that engage non-governmental partners.

“Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn, who wanted America to be known not just for its strength but for its compassion, was an invaluable member,” Bush said. “I think Jennifer would say no matter how hard the times are that the United States is going through we have a moral obligation to humanity to help people around the world who have very, very difficult lives.”

“She was driven with her goals and desire to accomplish something of value in this world,” Dennis Dunn said.



“I watched her connect with the people. You know, this is a very senior, very prominent former Congresswoman who is out there and she’s hugging like it’s her family.”

—Mary Bush on Dunn’s role abroad. *Thomas Briggs and Wesley Wilson*

7 ■ Blind Date

“She was the woman I’d been looking for my whole life,” said Keith Thomson, Dunn’s second husband. The late congresswoman’s family likened Thomson to British film star Sean Connery. A news reporter called him a towering Brit. Thomas was distinguished, with a sturdy frame.

For all of their globetrotting, political engagements and esteemed friends, Thomson met Dunn on a blind date. Their romance began at one of her Washington, D.C. haunts, on the corner of 6th and Pennsylvania. “And as they say, the rest was history.” Instant chemistry, shared interests and mutual respect forged a powerful bond.

Pat Hale, a friend and former Washington State senator had arranged the meeting. “I have this guy I think you need to meet,” Hale had told her. Dunn had never seen or heard of him.

Thomson was overseeing nuclear waste cleanup, and 5,000 employees, as president and CEO of Fluor Hanford. The Fortune 500 company shouldered cleanup of the nuclear waste site where plutonium was produced to end the second world war. Thomson had immigrated to the United States in 1964. His career had already taken him to virtually every region of the world. While still in England, Thomson had served on flying duties in England and Yemen as an officer in the Royal Air Force.

He had much in common with the well-travelled congresswoman. But Thomson said until they met in person, he’d never even see her in a photograph.

“I’ll call and make a reservation,” Dunn told Thomson on the phone. “When you’re a congressman they know you and they’ll give you a good table.”

“No, I will. That’s a man’s job.”

“I didn’t say anything. That was strange too, that I was willing. Must have been that accent,” Dunn mused later.

The Capital Grille in Washington, D.C. is well known for elite guests and stunning views of the Capitol. It was a lovely Washington evening as Thomson waited at the table for the congresswoman. “I saw this little convertible come up and



“For me, it felt like we had known each other forever.”
—Keith Thomson. *Keith Thomson*

do a U-turn right in front of the policeman. This gorgeous looking lady got out and walked toward the restaurant.”

Dunn walked in and introduced herself to Keith. “I’m fairly tall and she said, ‘Wow!’ And I said, ‘Wow too!’ We went to the table and three hours later we were still talking.”

“The relationship was just absolutely teenager wonderful,” Thomson said. “It was just super. It might sound trite. But it was that first time we sat down and just started talking. For me, it felt like we had known each other forever. There were no awkward moments; it flowed.”

“He called Jennifer,” LaBrache recalled, “and said, ‘I had a wonderful time, it was great. I’d love to have an opportunity to see you again. I think it’s brilliant what you’re doing. And I’ve always been interested in politics. And I hope we can have a chance to meet again sometime.’”

“Jennifer was going home for August recess and there were a number of events that were going on that she had been invited to. So she told the scheduler, ‘Why don’t you call Keith Thomson and see if he’d like to come to one of these with me?’ And so the scheduler calls Keith and says, ‘The

Congresswoman would like to know if you'd like to attend.' And Keith said, 'No, I don't want to attend one of them.' And she said, 'Excuse me?' And he said, 'I'd like to attend *all* of them.'"

"She loved the fact that my family sort of took her in," Thomson said. "She had been a single mother with Reagan and Bryant growing up and suddenly she was just so absorbed into my family and she just loved them a lot. There was absolute concentration, it seemed, on me and she made me feel I was the most important person to her. It wasn't the politics or all the people she knew. She made me feel good and I felt the same way about her."

Dunn was indeed smitten. "We were all so happy when she found happiness at the end of her life with Keith," Slade Gorton said. "Keith was a great guy. They were just starting that life together when she so tragically left us. It's obvious, though she never talked about it, how personally lonely she was for a very, very significant number of years. And then, relatively



The Dunn-Thomson legacy. *Keith Thomson*

suddenly, that all ended. She was so very, very happy for that last two or three years.”

“I have a boat that I kept down in the Virgin Islands, so we went down and spent some time on my boat,” Thomson recalled. “I asked her to marry me as we pulled in to St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. I made a reservation at a restaurant called Black Beard’s Castle. We were having dinner there. I did the traditional thing. I went down on one knee and asked her if she would marry me. She hesitated about half a second.”

The two married on Mercer Island, shortly before Thanksgiving in 2003. The bride wore a periwinkle gown and carried peach flowers.

“I came back to Washington, D.C. The Bush Administration asked me to join the Department of Homeland Security,” Thomson said. “I had some particular qualifications that seemed to be able to help there. For three years, I was the assistant commissioner for U.S. Customs and Border Protection.” Dunn still held a powerful position in Congress and represented Washington as a senior delegate. But the influential politician decided her time in Congress was running out.

IN A MOVE that stunned the political establishment, Dunn called it quits. “You and I have a rendezvous with destiny...” Dunn began in a letter to friends. At a reception for her key longtime supporters, Dunn was uncharacteristically quiet. Her husband read the letter that highlighted the Sunshine Laws she helped enact “which brought Congressional deal making out from behind closed doors and helped restore some measure of trust in the People’s House.” When Dunn exited public service, the country had once again elected a Republican president and the GOP controlled both chambers.

“She always said that she thought that she believed that a member of Congress starts to fade after 10 years,” Reagan said. “There are experiments and studies out there that say the effectiveness of a member of Congress starts to fade after 10 years. Twelve years seems like a good time to hang it up. As it turned out, she met somebody right around year 10 or 11 of her

time, right around her fifth term. She got that ring on her finger and she said, 'I'm tired of all the B.S. This is crazy. I've done what I can. I've got a lifetime of service.'"

According to *The Washington Post*, the last vote Jennifer Dunn cast in Congress was in favor of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act. "Loyalty marked her tenure," published *The Seattle Times*. "Her influence extends farther than Washington State," said Congressman Doc Hastings, her friend of 30 years. "She was steadfast on the death tax and carried that from Day One."

"Jennifer Dunn is a good friend and an outstanding public servant," President Bush said. "She has championed sound policies that encourage economic growth and create jobs. She has led the way in providing tax relief for the American people; promoting the advancement of small and women-owned businesses; helping America's children, including by sponsoring the Amber Alert bill; and protecting the environment."

"I think she had a good perspective on it," Reagan said. "I think she knew she wasn't going to do it forever. I think she knew very clearly that what she did was for the best interest of the community. She really felt a responsibility to serve the public well, and then when she was done with that she'd do something else. So, you know, I remember her in moments of weakness, and moments of doubt, and moments of hardship, especially in some of the tougher campaigns. But overall, I think she had the right perspective on it."

"Rather than campaign for myself," said Dunn in her closing letter, "as chair of President Bush's re-election committee, I will devote my time and energy to ensuring his re-election and making sure that he has a Republican governor, U.S. senator, and a representative from our 8th District who will support his efforts to strengthen America."

"It has been a deep honor and a remarkably rewarding experience to serve as your voice in the House of Representatives... Together, we had our rendezvous with destiny."

At a roast with former Washington Governor Gary Locke, her protégé

John Carlson stole the spotlight with a story from election night that transpired moments after Dunn heard the news that Bush emerged the victor. At a Republican victory party at the Bellevue Hyatt, Dunn grabbed the remote control to flip it to Channel 48, Fox News. “But at the Bellevue Hyatt,” bellowed Carlson, “Channel 48 gives you the porn channel. Of course, the guests were somewhat surprised!”

In March 2005 Dunn began work as a senior adviser of government affairs for DLA Piper, at the time, the second largest firm in the world. The firm payroll reads like a who’s who of Washington, D. C., including former House majority leaders Dick Gephardt and Dick Armey, and U.S. Senator George Mitchell, the Democrat who became Senate majority leader in 1989. The partisanship is gone, said Dunn.



With George H.W. Bush and Barbara Bush at Kennebunkport, a summer home of the Bush family. *Keith Thomson*

8 ■ The Happiest Summer

The month before she died, Dunn turned 66. It was the happiest summer of her life. Thomson, Dunn and their children traveled to the Tulchan Lodge, a 1906 estate in the Scottish Highlands that overlooked the Spey Valley. “This was the summer of 2007 and we had gone over for Angus’ (Thomson’s son) graduation from Oxford,” Thomson said. “The next day was Jennifer’s birthday. I gave her a lunch for her birthday with all of my English relatives at this lovely restaurant in Oxford. She could see her two boys and their wives being part of my extended family and she seemed very comforted by that.”

In Scotland, they visited the small stone house of Thomson’s grandfather. “We went fishing up there for a week—all of us in kilts,” Thomson said. “It was a dirty dozen up there. It was just absolutely exquisite. It’s right there on the River Spey, and it’s just great fishing there. Bryant (Dunn’s son), who is a world-class fisherman, loved it. Jennifer said it was the happiest summer of her life.”

Dunn was engaged and planning the future in her final months. The very morning of her death, she had a conference call scheduled with the HELP Commission. On Labor Day, however, plans never materialized and the happiest summer came to an abrupt and devastating end.

It had been a beautiful holiday weekend. Keith and Jennifer took in the annual International Antiques Show in Baltimore, savoring soft-shelled crab on a sunny day at a favorite crab shack on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. On Labor Day morning, the smell of fresh coffee wafted through the air at their Alexandra, Virginia condo that overlooked the Potomac River.

Thomson was out cooking breakfast when he heard Dunn exclaim, “Oh, what a gorgeous morning!”

She emerged wrapped in a peach robe and steadied herself on the door jam. Dunn stretched one arm out toward Keith.

“She was standing there tall and elegant, no evidence of pain, no crying out. She looked at me, looking dreamily beautiful, and then sank to her knees and rolled over onto her side... She didn’t say a word. Nothing. By the time I got to her she was not breathing. There was no pulse. I did CPR. I called 9-1-1 and got her up breathing again.

“I got her to the hospital at the ICU. They were helping her breathe. She appeared to be sleeping.” The doctor told Thomson, “She doesn’t know yet that this has happened.”

Thomson spent 24 hours in the Intensive Care Unit at his wife’s side, holding her hand.

Meantime, LaBrache returned from a vacation in Washington State and discovered a recent email from Dunn. The former congresswoman may have retired, but she remained a force in presidential politics as co-chair of “Women for Mitt.” In her email, Dunn invited LaBrache to dinner, where they would strategize Mitt Romney’s campaign for president.

“We need to get together,” Dunn wrote. “We’ve got to get going on this Romney stuff and I want to go through boxes. Let’s plan on getting together Wednesday, and having dinner. We can start working on the campaign.”

LaBrache left Dunn a voicemail. Then, she heard from Thomson and headed for the hospital.

By September 4, the family knew Dunn would never recover. They donated her organs, as the congresswoman had wished. Dunn died of a blood clot in the lung, a pulmonary embolism that blocks blood flow to the lungs and “results in five times as many deaths as breast cancer.”

“We were all able to say goodbye and do all those plotting and planning things that you do when you have no idea what you’re doing,” LaBrache said.

On September 5, the Dunn-Thomson family formally announced her death:

“Jennifer Dunn led an amazing if all too short life. In the words of President Bush used on her retirement from Congress, ‘She is a superb legislator and a strong leader who has stood for the best of Washington State’s values and who has improved the lives of its people.’

“Her political career was a series of firsts: first woman to chair the Washington State Republican Party (1981), first freshman woman to win a place in the House Republican leadership team (1992) and went on to be elected as the highest ranking Republican women in leadership as the Vice Chairman of the Conference... what Jennifer Dunn was most proud of was her family. She delighted in talking of the successes of her sons, Bryant Dunn, Reagan Dunn and Angus Thomson....She passed peacefully surrounded by family.”

News of her passing stunned and saddened across Washington and beyond. Doug Ellis recalled the moment he heard the news. “Oh my god, I was here at the commission. I got a call from her longtime secretary, Lois Smith. It was real sad. It was interesting because all of her trips back and forth flying, you know, there was always a concern about clotting—blood clots. I think that’s what did her in... The real sad thing about it is that she was *finally* settling down, and *finally* having some quiet time in her life.

“As you’re younger, you push and you strive. You do things. You’re always active and moving. Then, as you get older, there should be quiet time. There should be a time to say, ‘Let’s play with my grandchildren. Let’s do things with my husband. Let’s take it a little slower than we have in the past.’ She didn’t have that much time to do that.”

The family issued a press release as Thomson crawled into bed. Five minutes later, the phone rang.

“Dunn-Thomson residence, may I help you?” LaBrache asked.

“Yes. I need to talk to Keith,” the caller said.

“Okay, sir, may I tell him who is calling?”

“This is 41. President Bush, Number 41.”

“Yes, sir, Mr. President. One moment, please.”

“I’m thinking, ‘Here’s the President of the United States!’”

LaBrache knocked on the door. “Keith! It’s President Bush. It’s 41.”

Keith picked up the phone.

“I have to tell you, Keith,” the president said. “You and Jennifer really embarrassed Barbara and me.”

Thomson was speechless. Finally, he said, “Mr. President, I’m very sorry. When was that?”

“Do you remember when you and Jennifer came and stayed with us? We had other people staying in the house. You two—all you would do was walk around holding hands, looking at each other.” Thomson couldn’t believe it.

One hour later, the phone rang again.

“Dunn-Thomson residence,” LaBrache answered.

“Uh, yeah, I’m looking to speak to Keith Thomson.”

“Yes, sir, may I tell him who is calling?”

“It’s 43.”

“Yes, sir, Mr. President.”

“He was in Australia,” LaBrache explained. “This is the power of this woman. After that, it was Condoleezza Rice. Margaret Thatcher sent a note.”

The longtime columnist, Adele Ferguson, summed her passing up this way: “It might even have surprised Jennifer Dunn if she’d heard what I did the other day when a restaurant patron seated near me commented to her companion, ‘Jennifer Dunn died and some opera singer.’ Some opera singer was Luciano Pavarotti, such a superb singer they’ve already started arguing over who succeeds him in estimation as the finest living tenor in the world.”

Ironically, the same week, Karen Marchioro, first woman chair of the Washington State Democratic Party, also passed away.

9 ■ “My mother lives on.”

The portrait, flanked between grand bouquets of cascading peach flowers, greeted mourners as they stepped inside St. James Cathedral in Seattle. A who’s who of Washington politics, on both sides of the aisle, came to pay final respects, observing the detailed painting of Jennifer Dunn, wearing a slight smile and a dignified royal blue suit.

“Jennifer was filled with life by a God who was very good in giving her to us,” the minister said. “A Christian that she was, Jennifer did look at things with the eyes of faith. There is an appointed time for everything from the Heavens, but we never fully understand. We know that there is a time to be born, and a time to die. But our knowledge stops there. The timing is always God’s, never ours.”

Doc Hastings, the congressman, called Dunn a first-rate communicator and a mentor who drew Republicans at every political event because the television cameras always found her, the striking woman in yellow. They were renegades when they first met 32 years ago, Hastings said, adding, “Let us rejoice in a life lived fully and confidently. She was a remarkable woman. Washington State and the nation have lost a giant of a leader.”

“What most impressed me about Jennifer,” offered William Ruckelshaus, “was her love of her two sons, Reagan and Bryant, and of course their wives and two grandchildren, and her pride in their accomplishments. And more recently, the obvious lift to her happiness and satisfaction in her life from her marriage to Keith.

“Jennifer was a consummate public servant who was not afraid to listen hard to someone with whom she disagreed.” Ruckelshaus recounted his many

trips to Washington, D.C. with Dunn. He, director of the Environmental Protection Agency, would plead with Frank Wolf, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, to cut federal dollars loose and rescue salmon. “In fact, I don’t think Frank knew a salmon from a carp,” Ruckelshaus razzed as the audience roared. Ruckelshaus described their encounter:

Wolf’s eyes would glaze over. At the end of their discussions, Wolf would look at Jennifer and ask, “Is this important to you, Jennifer?”

“Very!” Dunn responded each time.

“Then we must fund it,” Wolf said.

“And that’s how the salmon along the Northwest Coast of North America got help from the federal government,” Ruckelshaus said. “There can be no doubt why Jennifer rose higher in the Congress than any woman before her. It was because of the respect and esteem of her colleagues, like Frank Wolf.”

“She was above all things a wonderful lady who was full of love,” Bryant Dunn said. “Her love was pure, it was perfect, and it was permanent...My mother lives on.”

Reagan called her his best friend and mentor. “She spent her whole life giving to other people...Mom worked really hard to make everything look easy...She understood that one of the characteristics of a great leader was to develop those young people who would lead us in the future.

“Mom would not have wanted any of you to leave sad. She would have wanted you to, as she would say, get over it. She would have wanted to move on, to leave the world a better place than we found it. Mom, you will not be forgotten. I will think of you during every peach sunset. I will pass on the values you taught me to my family. I will never forget you. And Mom, as we honor you here today, I want you to know, that through all of the Ages, no son could have ever been more proud.”

Pallbearers included Norm Dicks, a long-serving powerful Democrat, John Carlson, the radio commentator, Kemper Freeman, the developer, and Gorton, the senator. “She, perhaps more than any other single individual in my generation, in any generation after me, opened up the

Republican Party and the conservative attitude to be more welcoming to a larger group and a broader range of people,” the senator once said.

Outside the cathedral, Thomson somberly accepted an American flag that flew over the U.S. Capitol on the day Dunn died.

REAGAN AND Paige Dunn hadn’t been married long when Jennifer passed away. A handful of belated wedding gifts arrived one day on the doorstep. Among the presents was an ice cream set—bowls, parfait cups and an ice cream maker—a gift from Jennifer. “I could hardly believe it,” Paige said. “That gift was I’m pretty sure the best gift we received, partly because of the timing but also because it has given us a new family tradition: when we need to celebrate or come together as a family, Jenny’s ice cream party comes to the rescue. I know that, when Reagan and I die, the treasured item to fight over will be the ice cream set, not fancy china.”

Any bickering over the family heirloom will be left to son Hayden and his younger sister, Pemberley Jennifer Dunn, named after Reagan’s late mother. “I want my kids to know that their grandmother was a very special person. She got through a lot of glass ceilings...someone who helped put Washington on the map, someone who cared a lot about their community. They had a grandmother who was a very, *very*, special, unique and wonderful human being. ...She grew up in an era that was sort of the *Leave It to Beaver*, stay-at-home-mom era. Men dominated the workforce. She bucked the trend. She was a trendsetter for women, in politics in particular. It shows you can do it. You can be in Congress.”

Reagan sat on the Metropolitan King County Council and ran a hard-fought campaign for attorney general in 2012. “As anyone who runs for office will tell you, there is a time to run. When Mom died, and I had been on the council for three years, it strengthened that. It sort of lit the torch even *more*.”

Dunn’s oldest son Bryant, a great outdoorsman, owned Smokey Mountain Outfitters in Idaho. He married Debby Dunn and is father to Amanda and Madeline with Jessica Wolcutt.

For Thomson, life resumed in California where he fought bone cancer and found solace in daily conversations with his late wife. “We talk all the time,” he said. “I was talking to her about Reagan and Bryant and how they are coming along...Clearly, I was madly and wonderfully in love with her and that inspires me.” Thomson lost his long battle in 2012.



“Her love was pure, it was perfect, and it was permanent.” —Bryant Dunn.
Keith Thomson



With daughter-in-law, Paige Dunn. *Dunn Family*



Pemberley Jennifer Dunn. *Dunn Family*

TWENTY YEARS after her first congressional election in the Year of the Woman, another wave of female officeholders came into power at the nation's Capitol. New Hampshire boasted the first all-female delegation in American history. In the House Democratic Caucus, white men became the minority. Women filled 20 U.S. Senate seats, an all-time record. With some races too close to call as of this writing, at least 80 women, the most ever, will take their seats in the House. One will be Cathy McMorris-Rodgers, who still treasures a message from Jennifer, delivered in 2004, when the congressswoman-elect basked in the glow of her victory.

"I'm so proud of you. You're going to do great. I'm going to be your biggest PR agent. I think the world deserves you, especially after the good sense in reelecting our president. This is the beginning of a wonderful new world for you. Have a glorious day. You've earned it."

"I didn't run for Congress thinking I was going to be focused as much on women and recruiting women," McMorris-Rodgers said. "But now that I'm there, I see that there is a real need. I look back now and I think, 'Jennifer! That's what she was all about.'"

ISSUES



Keith Thomson

What the GOP has done for Women by Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn

According to Congresswoman Dunn's office, this speech was given dozens of times as she travelled around the country during the 1996 campaign on behalf of male Republican Congressional candidates to help with the "gender gap."

When women back home in my district talk to me about what this Congress is doing these days, I tell them that Congress is dealing with the very problems that women are concerned about.

Well, what is it that we women care about? We want opportunity for ourselves and our families. We want some sense that there will be a retirement system we can count on.

We want a healthy environment. We want a good education for our children. We want personal safety. We want health care security. We want the folks who really need help in our society to get that help. We want homemaker IRAs, because we know that the work done inside the home is every bit as important, if not more important, as the work done outside the home.

What has the Republican Congress done to answer these needs? This Congress has indeed been supportive of women and the family. We passed a \$500 per child tax credit; We passed marriage penalty tax relief; We passed tougher laws on sexual predators and stalkers; We are supporting employees having the option of selecting either time-off or cash instead of overtime wages. For too long parents have had to choose between work and spending time with their children. A working mother may prefer to see her daughter in a school play rather than be paid time and a half for staying at her job. She should have that choice.

And women care about their families. Much of what we care about concerns the family.

Don't let the media fool you when they say this isn't a "family friendly"

Congress. It may not seem so to those of us who spend hour after hour, day after day, month after month fighting the battles in the Congress! But it truly is friendly to families.

We increased day care money and child support enforcement provisions in our welfare reform plan—\$4.5 billion more dollars than the current welfare system. We support funding for the “Violence Against Women Act”—which will help state and local governments to focus tax dollars on preventing crimes targeted toward women, like domestic violence.

We support tax credits for couples who choose to adopt a child; We support tax credits to help families care for elderly parents and grandparents in a loving home as long as they can stay there. We passed the “Domestic Violence Insurance Protection Act”—which forbids insurance companies from treating domestic violence victims as having a pre-existing condition.

We passed steps to amend Medicare regulations to include the treatment of breast cancer with a proven cancer-stopping drug. We support increased funding for women’s health care research—given how hard this Congress has worked to balance the budget, an increase illustrates our high level of commitment to women’s health issues. And we have passed a bi-partisan “Safe Drinking Water Act” that has been heralded by environmentalists.

Please don’t believe the rhetoric—rather, look at our record and look at what we’ve done. For instance, take a look at our record on small business—the real engine that creates new jobs and energizes the economy. Small business built this country. Today, more people are employed by women-owned small business than by Fortune 500 companies. And according to the SBA, women are starting businesses at twice the rate of men. It is anticipated that women will own 50 percent of the small businesses in America in the 21st Century.

What are these women small business owners and workers interested in? Growth and prosperity, less regulation and lower taxes, common-sense laws, and health insurance deductibility for the self-employed. Women

small business owners can be assured that their concerns are in sync with the Republican Congress' work on behalf of small business.

Look at what we've passed: regulatory relief paperwork reduction and elimination health care deductibility for the self employed we ensured the solvency of the principal lending programs at SBA we made tax compliance for "S" Corporations less complicated we provided small businesses the ability to quickly write-off the money they spend on practical things like computers and office furniture. In fact, if Congress gets its way—and President Clinton keeps his veto pen in his pocket—women business owners can expect sustained growth, more jobs and better wages...sounds a bit like the American Dream, doesn't it?

I've found that my women friends at home in Washington State care about the very same things that this Republican Congress does: helping families keep more of their paychecks so they can decide how to do more for their families and their communities; saving Medicare for our parents and welfare for the folks who are truly in need, and encouraging local answers as we solve the problems of increasing crime, and declining education and protecting the environment. Our solutions are not complicated. Our solutions do not require Congressional studies, or Committee Hearings or "expert" testimony. Our solution is to listen. I've have found that if you listen to the American woman and respect her advice, the answers are all right there.

The Republican Tax Cut Plan:

Its Direct Impact On Women and Families

Jennifer Dunn

September 28, 1996

I want to take a few moments to focus on what I believe is the most overlooked, underreported aspect of the Republican tax cut plan: its direct impact on women and families. For starters: The Republicans want a \$500 per child tax credit for working families with children. Under our present tax code, parents in working families, especially working mothers, have less and less time to spend raising their children. In fact, government figures show that the average working mother spends more time working to pay her taxes than she spends with her child each week. As a working mother, I can tell you, that is very, very tough. It's stressful and it's painful. A Republican Administration will give families the tax relief that they were promised in 1992, but never received. Well, you know the old saying, "better late than never." That extra \$500 each year for each child under age 18 will be actual dollars not paid in income tax and will remain in the checking accounts of the parents so that they can decide how to spend it. Now let's take a look at how the Republican tax cut plan will impact single-working women. Did you know that there are over 25 million single working women in America? That's a lot of independent and self-supporting people. And each and every one of them is overtaxed. But those days will soon come to an end. Under the Republican 15% tax cut, a single woman with no children earning \$30,000 in annual salary will save over \$500 in income each year. A single mother with two children will save one thousand five hundred and nineteen.

I asked a young, single woman I know what she would do with the extra money she would save under the Republican 15% tax cut plan. Without even having to think about it, she said she would do four things: 1] she would take a trip home to see her family in Seattle, 2] she would move into

a safer neighborhood, 3] she would put some money away in savings, and 4] she would quit her second job. That's a pretty important list of improvements she would be able to make to her life. I suspect that every woman in America could think of a few things she would do with a little extra money.

The Republican 15% percent tax cut is simple, it's fair, and it will apply to every single woman, regardless of income. More single women will be able to save and invest for their future in a way that they choose. And for those women, more take-home pay and more savings does not just mean a more secure retirement—it also means more money for education, or medical emergencies, or the purchase of a home. I can't think of a better way to empower the hardworking, American woman.

And let's take a look at how small business will be affected by the Republican plan: Today, by the way, more people are employed by women-owned small businesses than by all the Fortune 500 companies in the world. But when you think of small businesses—you usually don't think of women. You should. Today, 6.4 million women own small business in America and, women are starting new businesses at twice the rate of men. In fact, it is anticipated that in the 21st Century, women will own half of all the small businesses in America.

So what are these women owned businesses looking for? Exactly what do all of America's small businesses want and need? Growth and prosperity, less regulation, lower payroll taxes, sensible laws, and health insurance deductibility for the self-employed. That's a tall order, but we can get it done. Just look at what the Republicans will do for small business men and women:

We will increase the estate tax exemption for businesses so that family owned businesses can stay in the family.

We will cut the Capital Gains tax rate by 50%, which will help small business owners and also free up new capital that can be invested in new and growing small businesses.

We will restore a meaningful home office tax deduction to provide relief to the growing number of home-based small businesses, and we

will increase to 100% the tax deduction for health insurance costs for self-employed, small businesses. In fact, when we have a Republican administration—as well as a Republican Congress—small business owners can expect sustained economic growth, more jobs and better wages... Sounds a bit like the American Dream? Well, that is part of the American Dream.

Working mothers... women small business owners... and single, working women. The bottom line is: women and families will simply do better in a Republican Administration. The Republican Party is committed to moving America forward—without leaving anyone, especially women, and children behind. At every opportunity, Republicans will be talking about their plan that will let you keep more of your hard earned dollars in order to spend, save, and invest them as you see fit. That's why we've proposed the 15% across the board tax reduction, and a \$500 per child tax credit for lower and middle-income families. Our economic package will reinvigorate the economy, and it will provide more jobs and more opportunities. Think about it, more opportunities for our children. More opportunities for our parents. More opportunities for women.

So I ask you, what impact will the Republican tax cut plan have on women and families?

Here's what it will do: it will put the American Dream within reach of each and every one of us.

DebateChats 2000 with ABC NEWS

From appearing on daytime talk shows to focusing on issues of importance to women, both presidential candidates have acknowledged how critical the women's vote is this November. Lifetime Television invites the public to chat with prominent leaders in the women's community about the issues that will drive them to the polls this election season. Rep. Jennifer Dunn, R-Wash, currently serves on the House Ways and Means Committee and was the Vice Chair of the House Republican Conference. Marie Wilson is president of The White House Project, a non-profit, nonpartisan public awareness campaign that encourages women to run for key elected positions, including the U.S. presidency. Dunn and Wilson participated in a live chat on ABCNEWS.com.

Moderator: This live chat is part of a joint initiative by Lifetime Television's "Our Lifetime Commitment: Every Woman Counts" and the Commission on Presidential Debates to inform and educate women about election issues and encourage women to vote in November, 2000. [Click here to suggest a topic for the presidential debates!](#)

CARTER YANG, ABCNEWS.com: Welcome to our live chat on women and the vote. We're joined now by Republican Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn of Washington. With us at 4:30 p.m. ET will be Marie Wilson of The White House Project, a nonpartisan group dedicated to helping women obtain leadership positions in politics.

YANG: Representative Dunn, thanks for joining us.

Rep. Jennifer Dunn (R-Wash): It's my pleasure to be with you. I'm enjoying being able to talk about women a little more than usual these days.

YANG: Women are in many ways the “battleground” voting group of the 2000 campaign. Both major party presidential candidates are aggressively courting female voters and many experts say they may decide the outcome of the election. Why is that the case and what impact is it having on the race?

REP. JENNIFER DUNN (R-WASH): Women make up 52% to 53% of the voting electorate these days, and we certainly ought to have a huge effect on the races this fall all over the nation, but also in the presidential race. Women are making eighty percent of consumer decisions, and there are issues being debated this year that are particularly important to women. There are no “women’s issues” any more, because women have a stake in every issue, but there are ways to look at every issue from the point of view of a woman, and that’s why the candidates are speaking to women and trying to attract the attention of women on these issues.

YANG: Do you think candidates’ appearances on television shows such as “Oprah” with large female audiences really help to sway women voters?

DUNN: They do help to present factors important to women voters. I don’t take the burden—I don’t accept the burden that watching a kiss at a convention will sway my vote. But I believe that women want access to the candidates, and shows like “Oprah” or “Regis” or “Larry King Live” are shows that provide a further look into the personalities of the candidates and the issues they espouse.

VOTER: The kiss—do “pollsters” in DC really believe that women are flocking to Gore because of that? With that kind of logic, Fabio would be the perfect Presidential candidate. Don’t they think we vote on issues like education and health care?

DUNN: Yes, yes, yes! It's demeaning to women, and it's mostly—if you listen—men who are claiming the kiss makes the difference. It is nice to know, though, that Gore has a heart.

YANG: It's interesting to me that women tend to focus on different issues than men. For example, 81 percent of women say health care is “very important” to them, but only 58 percent of men say so. Why is there such a difference?

DUNN: Women are the ultimate consumers. They make eighty percent of consumer decisions. They are also nearly always the caregivers. They are the ones that take the children to the doctor or go to the school counselor and therefore they are more personally connected to these issues. Women go through phases in their lives. I remember the phase when my children were in school, and I served on the school board, and education was even more important to me at that time. Many women as they near retirement become particularly concerned about medical issues and social security. Natural progressions in women's lives. Fortunately, we have women in Congress who can relate. And so we serve a purpose, and that purpose is: “Never forget the women.” Sometimes men forget.

YANG: After the Republican convention, Bush had a nine-point lead over Gore among women voters, according to our polling. Now, Gore has an 18-point lead. That's a huge shift. What do you think was behind that?

DUNN: As we moved to the conventions, Governor Bush's support was ninety-four percent of his base. As Gore moved to the convention, Gore's support was seventy percent of his base. Therefore there was greater room for increase in his support from his base. And I think that's a generic comment, it's not just women. But in addition, for people who are busy people, meaning women balancing careers and schedules and husbands, it was a concentrated time for them to take a look at Vice President Gore. He did

a great job in his speech in making promises to people, particularly on issues where women want to see a safety net provided. Do I think it was the kiss? No, no. The kiss might have been part of it, but I think it was the first opportunity for busy women to focus in on Al Gore, and it paid off for him. We are seeing that lead, by the way, diminish among women, and you will see that continue as you capture through the polls his appearances on “Oprah” and so forth.

VOTER: What will it take for a woman to get elected president? Is it more likely that the first woman elected be from the Democrats, Republicans or a third party?

DUNN: Definitely not a third party. I have always believed the first woman will be a Republican, and many women were credentialed during the terms of Reagan and Bush. By “credentialed,” I mean they were given the opportunity to show how well they do in those administrations and were prepared to move up in the next Republican administration. I think the first woman president will be a very strong woman, a focused person who has the air of credibility, strength. I think she’ll be a Republican. You’ll see many women as we move into this next administration—I believe it will be a Bush administration—people like Elizabeth Dole holding high public service offices on the Cabinet, preparing to be able to hold the highest post. The first woman president will be a Margaret Thatcher type.

Let me just tell you that I went back and looked at the poll I was looking for. The most recent poll that I’ve seen of support for Bush among women is that he is four points behind Vice-President Gore. It was Zogby, a very credible poll.

YANG: You are a prominent female Republican officeholder and a former member of the House leadership. Is it frustrating to you that women still tend to vote Democratic?

DUNN: Yeah, I hate losing any votes to Democratic candidates. I think that when that happens, I always believe that I, or we the Republicans, bear the responsibility. We're not getting the message out, or the constituency doesn't understand the position on an issue. And I always hold it as a personal responsibility to be out there promoting our positions. So I don't blame anybody when that happens. In some cases I'm sure the Democratic candidate is the better candidate, and that's our problem in recruiting. When women do understand Republican positions, most of the time they agree with them. And so the challenge for us as we talk about lowering the burden of taxation or providing women with the opportunity to invest a portion of their social security taxes through responsible management companies in the private sector, most of the time the problem is not connecting with women as we talk about our positions. We can do a better job, and we will. Bush actually does a very good job of communicating with women, because he talks in terms of the heart, of "leaving no child behind," talking about "the subtle bigotry of low expectations in education," or "no child is a second-rate child," and as we move toward the election, women will pick up on this language. Language is very important in connecting issues to busy people.

VOTER: Women are obviously so diverse. Does it make sense to define something as the "Women's Vote"?

DUNN: No. I agree, Jamie. It does not make sense, because women are not monolithic, and every time we come up toward an election, the pundits out there try to make it sound like we're monolithic. It doesn't work that way. We are in various phases of a complicated life. We have different levels of education and interest. Sometimes the struggle, as it is with anybody who lives in this busy time, is simply to create interest in an election, among women or men. We will never all vote the same way. We are beyond the day when a woman would reflect her husband's point of view. And that makes it all the more fascinating, and all the more unpredictable.

YANG: What message would you like to send to women voters who don't feel the Republican Party speaks to their issues and concerns?

DUNN: Give Governor Bush a chance. Listen to what he says. He has a positive message. An optimistic message. A message of belief in the individual, of local control that strengthens public schools, of tax relief for women (and by the way, his tax plan takes six million people off the rolls, a single woman with two children under Bush's plan can make \$31 thousand a year before she begins to pay income taxes). A message on Social Security that all seniors can rely on current benefits and no tax increases, but younger women will be able to increase their return from Social Security's two percent by investment through a responsible management company in the private sector, if they choose. That this is a man who brings people together to get things done. And that his work in the area of education is personal to him, and important to him. He's worthy of their attention. And then let them decide whom they're going to vote for.

YANG: Congresswoman, thank you very much for joining us today.

DUNN: I would add one point. The quality of the women on the Bush team is phenomenal. Not only some of us in the House and the Senate, but the head of his foreign policy team, Condoleezza Rice, his political advisor, his mother and wife, all of these are contributors to why he has such regard for women, and why they will have a strong voice in a Republican administration.

Child Care

Jennifer Dunn

Deborah Pryce (R-Ohio)

As working mothers, we can identify with the millions of parents across this country who find themselves torn between the competing responsibilities of work and family. For many families, there is no choice harder to make than whether to work, and put your child in the care of others, or to forego a second income to care for your child yourself.

Poll after poll reveals that the majority of mothers would prefer to work part time, or not work at all, in order to care for their children. Unfortunately, that choice is not financially feasible for most Americans. High taxes limit parents' freedom and ability to address the needs of their families. Mothers and fathers don't need experts and polls to tell them what they already know in their hearts to be true. What parents really need is more time to spend with their children, and more money to meet the financial needs of their family.

President Clinton has proposed a child care package that ignores these fundamental concerns of parents. His plan creates a bias against mothers who have sacrificed an income to raise their children at home.

Families should not be penalized by Washington, DC for the personal choices they make, since parents—not bureaucrats—know what is best for their children. That is why Republicans in Congress are exploring options to address the fundamental concerns of parents by following this basic set of principles:

Government's responsibility is to foster choices for parents, not make choices for them.

The government should reduce the excessive tax burden it places on all families, so parents can have more resources to meet their children's needs.

More money should be put in the family budget, not the government

budget. All families with young children should be treated equally. Government should not discriminate against parents who choose to forego an income to raise their children.

Child-care assistance should go directly to parents whenever possible. Parents are best able to choose how to use that aid on behalf of their children. Working parents should have greater flexibility in the workplace so they are able to spend more time with their children.

As two moms who had to make the very difficult choices about child care, we understand the struggle of today's parents, and we agree with the President that something should be done to help. But we know when it comes to raising your child, the last thing parents want to hear is "hi, I'm from the government, and I'm here to help you." What they do want is the choice to make their own decisions that are right for their own child. By providing broad tax relief for all families with children, government can provide a better environment for them to make those decisions.

The choice for parents need not be between full time employment outside the home, or full time child rearing inside home. Many employers now offer flexible hours, job sharing, and telecommuting to accommodate their employees who want to spend more time with their children. Republicans believe these innovations in the workplace should be encouraged to give parents more choices. That is why Republicans are supporting legislation to give employers and employees the option of substituting overtime wages for time off, so parents can spend more time at school plays, little league games, or even on a family vacation.

Improved System Needs a Few Tweaks

By Jennifer Dunn

Special to *The Seattle Times*

May 15, 2002

The 1996 welfare-reform act has been one of the great success stories of federal policy, truly credited with improving the lives of American families. Prior to the sweeping changes made to the system that year, welfare had been viewed as a permanent lifestyle that presented many obstacles to families who wanted to be financially self-sufficient. It rewarded children for having babies, discouraged marriage and made it difficult, if not impossible, for single mothers to get the training they needed to get a good job.

As a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, which oversees welfare policy, I am proud to have been involved in the bipartisan effort that resulted in successful reform. In 1996, we recognized that simply injecting more money into the program would do nothing to empower families to overcome the obstacles leading to permanent welfare dependency. The reforms broke the vicious cycle in which so many families were trapped.

Specifically, we reconstructed a wheel that was broken, creating a program that not only requires able individuals to work, but gives them tools to move from welfare to financial self-sufficiency. We changed the name of the program from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

These changes have worked. Since 1996, national welfare caseloads have fallen more than 50 percent. The employment of single mothers, who are at the highest risk of living in poverty, has risen to an all-time high of more than 70 percent. In addition, two million children have left poverty.

After reform of such a huge and complicated program, however, there always is a need to evaluate whether some families may have fallen through the cracks of an otherwise successful reform.

In preparation for the vote on reauthorization, I have met with dozens of families and experts in the Puget Sound region to get their feedback on the 1996 welfare reform legislation and what aspects of the program need changing.

In Washington state, our TANF program is known as WorkFirst. The comments of families who are involved with WorkFirst and some who have successfully graduated and moved on to careers are similar: more local flexibility and more help with child care are needed.

The reauthorization proposal addresses the concerns of these families.

In our current plan, overall funding for child care remains at the same level of \$16.5 billion per year, even though the number of caseloads has plummeted. It also calls for historically high levels of funding for child care (\$4.8 billion) through the Child Care and Development Block Grant sent to the states. Despite these efforts to meet the child-care needs of working parents, I believe that more can be done.

I am currently working with the House leadership and some of my colleagues on Ways and Means to identify more dollars for child care. My hope is that we can better meet the child care needs of parents who may work jobs with nontraditional evening or weekend hours or have children with special needs.

The issue of more flexibility is addressed through the proposed work requirements. We have learned that requiring welfare recipients to work a typical work week—40 hours—can help families work toward better careers. Even more important to advancing along a career path, however, are training and education. A single mother raising children alone while also working full time has little time left to engage in activities that will help her find a better job. Our legislation enables individuals to spend up to 16 hours each week in school, at a job or in vocational training.

For individuals who may need additional job training, our plan allows up to four months of full-time education or job-training activities and up to three months of substance-abuse counseling.

The plan also phases in from the current 50 percent to 70 percent the

number of families on welfare who are required to work. Special accommodations are made for parents with infants and special-needs children or those who require substance-abuse treatment.

Other notable provisions in the legislation are financial incentives for states to collect back-due child-support payments given directly to families and a new program to allow states to offer counseling that encourages healthy marriage.

We all know that marriage is not the best option in every situation—especially where abuse might occur. But two-parent families are statistically more likely to live above the poverty level and raise children with fewer problems. Young couples need to know that marriage is an option. Our plan directs up to \$300 million for states to develop programs to provide marriage counseling for those who choose to participate.

These are just a few of the positive additions we plan to examine as we reauthorize welfare. I look forward in the coming weeks to continued feedback from Washington state families who know firsthand what is needed to help families move permanently from welfare to work and rewarding careers.

Most families and single mothers are not on welfare because they want to be. They are there because they want to feed their children and often they have no choice. It is my hope that we can help even more parents get back to work so that they restore their dignity, self-worth and financial self-sufficiency.

—*U.S. Rep. Jennifer Dunn, R-Bellevue,
represents the 8th Congressional District*

Every Community Should Have the Amber Alert System

By Rep. Jennifer Dunn

The King County Journal, March 23, 2003

A remarkable and refreshing diversion from world news occurred when America learned that Elizabeth Smart, the 15-year-old Salt Lake City girl who was abducted from her home last June, was found and returned safely to her home.

Losing a child is the worst nightmare any parent could face. Prior to Elizabeth's return home, the pain of her absence was always clearly evident in the expression and manner of her father, Ed Smart. Desperate to bring his daughter home, he was committed to doing everything possible to make this happen.

Ed's pain turned to true joy as Elizabeth was reunited with her family and friends. He reaffirmed his resolve to help prevent other parents from experiencing the same horrible situation that the Smart family endured for nine months. He also called on Congress immediately to pass AMBER Alert legislation.

Every year, thousands of children are reported missing and abducted in the United States. In 1999, 58,200 children were abducted in this country. Half of these children were snatched in public areas such as parks or playgrounds. And sadly, only a very small percentage of children who are abducted by a nonfamily member are ever returned home.

We know from several studies, including a 1997 Washington state child homicide study, that the first three hours after a child is abducted are absolutely critical to bringing that child home safely. The AMBER Alert takes full advantage of these first precious hours.

The AMBER Alert was created in 1996 after 9-year-old Amber Hagerman was kidnapped and brutally murdered in Arlington, Texas. The incident prompted regional law-enforcement agencies and the Dallas/Ft.

Worth Association of Radio Managers to develop an innovative emergency alert plan to help recover missing children.

AMBER Alert has proven to be effective. It has been credited with the safe recovery of 52 children, the most recent involving a 12-year-old girl in California only a few days ago. There are 88 state and regional AMBER Alert programs throughout the nation. But AMBER Alert will be even more effective if it is available to every community that chooses to launch it.

Washington state and King County both launched AMBER Alert programs last fall. Not all states are so fortunate, however. If a child were abducted in Washington state and taken across state lines to Idaho, which does not have a statewide AMBER Alert in place, it would be more difficult for law enforcement agencies to work with the media to help track an abducted child.

My bill, co-authored by Rep. Martin Frost of Texas, will make AMBER Alert available to every community that wishes to launch the program. It creates a permanent point person within the Department of Justice to help coordinate AMBER Alert efforts, provides grant dollars to help pay for the program, and helps pay for Department of Transportation signs that are also a vital part of the communication effort to find a missing child.

Last year, President Bush called on Congress to pass a voluntary national AMBER Alert bill. With 208 co-sponsors, my bill is expected to pass the House as part of broader child abduction prevention bill. A similar AMBER Alert bill passed the Senate earlier this year. I have been working with House leadership to ensure that the AMBER Alert bill does not languish in the legislative process and that it makes its way to the president's desk by Easter.

As the Smart family can testify, cooperation between the media and local law enforcement is vital to bringing an abducted child home. As we celebrate Elizabeth Smart's return home, we will also soon celebrate the fact that local communities will have been given the tools they need to help bring more children back to the arms of their parents.

—Jennifer Dunn represents the state's 8th congressional district, which includes most of Bellevue, Issaquah, Renton, parts of Kent, and parts of southeast King County, south to Mount Rainier

Statement on the Introduction of the Software Export Equity Act

by Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn

January 7, 1997

Mr. Speaker, on this, the first day of the 105th Congress, I introduce the Software Export Equity Act and urge my colleagues to support its swift enactment. The Software Export Equity Act enjoys tremendous bipartisan support as demonstrated by the members that join me as original co-sponsors, Messrs. Matsui, Herger, Jefferson, Crane, Neal of Massachusetts, McCrery, McDermott, English of Pennsylvania, and Weller.

Today, the U.S. software industry is a vital and growing part of the U.S. economy, exporting more than \$26 billion worth of software annually. U.S. software companies perform a majority of this development work here in the United States. This measure will do more to ensure the competitiveness of the U.S. software industry worldwide than any other single legislative change we can enact.

Congress enacted the FSC rules to assist U.S. exporters in competing with products made in other countries which have more favorable tax rules for exports. The FSC statute was carefully crafted to ensure that only the value-added job creating activity qualified for FSC benefits. When the statute was enacted in 1971, the U.S. software industry did not exist.

However, due to a narrow IRS interpretation of the FSC rules, the U.S. software industry is the only U.S. industry that does not generally receive this export incentive. Nearly every other U.S. manufactured product—from airplanes to toothpaste—qualify for FSC benefits. Although the Treasury Department recognized the inconsistency in providing FSC benefits to licenses of films, tapes and records, all industries that were in existence when the law was created, but not to licenses of software, they stated their belief that this problem needed to be addressed in legislation rather than by regulation. Treasury has further stated their strong support

for legislation to extend FSC benefits for licenses of computer software.

To illustrate the inequitable IRS interpretation of FSC rules with regard to software exports, suppose we have two CD ROM's—one containing a musical recording, the other containing a multimedia software product that also provides music. If the master of the musical recording is exported with a right to reproduce it overseas, the export qualifies for FSC benefits. If the master of the computer software is exported with a right to reproduce it overseas, the export does not qualify for FSC benefits, a result that makes no sense from either a policy or practical perspective. The ability to export software, accompanied by a right to reproduce that software in the local market, is essential to the way the software industry does business. Denying the benefits of the FSC rules to software exported through established industry distribution networks poses an impediment to the competitiveness of U.S. manufactured software.

The United States is currently the world leader in software development, employing hundreds of thousands of individuals in high-wage, high-skilled U.S. jobs. Much of the expansion of the industry is due to the growth of exports. The software industry, like other U.S. exports, needs FSC benefits to remain competitive and keep U.S. jobs here at home.

FSC benefits are extremely important in encouraging small and medium-sized software companies to enter the export market by helping them equalize the cost of exporting. In addition, FSC benefits are needed to help keep high-paying software development jobs in the United States at a time when foreign governments are actively soliciting software companies to move those jobs to their countries. I do not propose any special or unique treatment, nor seek any new or special tax benefit. All that I propose in this measure is fair treatment under existing law.

If the goal of this Congress is to pass legislation promoting economic opportunity and growth in America, then common sense dictates that we enact the Software Export Equity Act.

Condemning the Bombing Outside the Mercer Island Jewish Community Center

Jennifer Dunn

In the House of Representatives

March 13, 1997

Mr. Speaker, last week a bombing occurred outside the Jewish Community Center on Mercer Island, a city located in the congressional district I represent. It was a rare and threatening display of criminal behavior on Mercer Island and a crime that will not go unpunished.

There is an extremely dangerous individual at large who is responsible for this bombing, a coward of the highest magnitude, and who remains a threat to the Jewish community. Whether a dangerously immature prank or a deliberately anti-Semitic effort to terrorize this peaceful community, I condemn this act in the strongest possible sense. Local community leaders and I are relieved that no one was hurt and the center went undamaged. Bringing those responsible to justice is my highest priority, and I publicly declare my intention to fully support law enforcement officials toward that end.

It is particularly ironic, having recently witnessed on Israeli soil the finalizing of the Hebron agreement, that despite the historic and committed peace underway in one of the most traditionally volatile regions of the world, the community of Mercer Island is living with violence. I am proud of my neighbors on Mercer Island who refuse to allow this violence to terrorize them into retreat. They have reacted with calm, and their composure is noble and to be greatly admired.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress, indeed all of us, should note that what could have been a disastrous situation characterized by loss of precious life and honored property is instead a reminder of the work that lies before us. The good, peaceful, and law-abiding citizens of our communities and our country are ready to take this country back from terrorists and

vandals. They will apprehend the lawless, prosecute them, and protect their communities. That's what the people of Mercer Island and the Jewish community are doing. I stand ready to help.

Republican Response to the State of the Union Address

January 20, 1999

Rep. Jennifer Dunn (R), Washington: Good evening, I'm Jennifer Dunn. I represent the people of the 8th District of Washington State.

Rep. Steve Largent (R), Oklahoma: And I'm Steve Largent from the 1st District of Oklahoma.

DUNN: As you might imagine, if you'd been sitting with us in the House chamber tonight as the president was giving his speech, you could have felt the swirl of history. These are disturbing and controversial times in our nation's capital.

A couple of weeks ago, I heard a network anchor say, the capital is in chaos. Another proclaimed we were in the midst of a constitutional crisis.

Ladies and gentlemen, our country is not in crisis. There are no tanks in the streets. Our system of government is as solid as the Capitol dome you see behind me.

Our democracy is sound. Our economy is prosperous. The state of our union is strong. And no matter what the outcome of the president's situation, life in America will go on. Our lives will continue to be filled with practical matters, not constitutional ones.

I've been a single mother since my boys were little—6 and 8. My life in those days was taken up trying to make ends meet, trying to get to two soccer games at the same time on two different fields, worrying about dropping the boys off early at school in order for me to get to work on time. I know how that knot in the pit of your stomach feels. I've been there.

I'm still a practical person. You heard the president make a lot of promises to a lot of people tonight, but I'd like to talk to you about two very practical Republican priorities: tax relief and Social Security reform.

Our current tax system is a burden on the economy and on the American people. Let me tell you a story about a fellow I represent from North Bend, Wash. His name is Robert Allan.

A few years ago, the IRS denied his right to file a joint return with his wife, because they said his wife, Shirley, was deceased. Well, I've seen Shirley—she looks pretty good for a dead person!

Robert took Shirley to the IRS office in Seattle. The IRS was not convinced. So the Allans brought in their family doctor, who in his medical opinion pronounced Shirley alive...the IRS was still not convinced.

It took intervention by a member of Congress, me, to resolve this comedy, which in truth is a tragedy because it's symbolic of how removed our entire tax system has become from reality and common sense.

Last year, we passed legislation reigning in the IRS...so that taxpayers are now considered innocent until proven guilty. But so much more needs to be done.

Next year there will be a \$63 billion budget surplus. Mr. President, give it back. Last year, a typical mother and father who both work paid nearly 40 percent of their income in taxes—that means 40 cents of every dollar they earned went to the government in federal, state or local taxes...that's the highest percentage of income ever paid in taxes by American families.

I don't know about you, but that really bothers me; no wonder so many American families are struggling:

Get married, and your taxes go up...

Save for your children's education, and your taxes go up...

And when you die—that's right—your taxes go up. The government gets a bigger piece of your life's work than all your children put together. So what can you expect from Republicans?

Expect action.

First, tonight we're proposing a 10-percent, across-the-board cut in tax rates for every working American. That is the down payment on a simpler, fairer, flatter tax system.

Second, we must end the marriage penalty. We should honor commitment, not tax it.

And third, we must cut death taxes so that families don't have to sell their businesses and farms when Mom and Dad die.

In all our tax policies, we start from this premise: The people's money belongs to the people, not the government.

The second thing I want to talk about is Social Security. A year ago in his State of the Union speech, the president said he was committed to saving Social Security. I'm glad to hear him discuss it again this evening. We are interested in his ideas on how to spend the surplus. Unfortunately, the president still hasn't given us his plan to save Social Security.

Mr. President, we're still waiting for that legislation.

Social Security will begin to go bankrupt in about 15 years... if we don't find solutions now.

We have reserved H.R.1... the very first bill of this Congress... for the president's Social Security plan.

Words may be a comfort, but we need action. There's one thing we can all agree on—one non-negotiable principle... we must keep our contract with our senior citizens who depend on Social Security for part or all of their retirement income. This nation made that promise long ago and we will keep that promise.

But Social Security needs not just to be saved, it needs to be updated for the 21st century. People today want and expect to have more control over their lives and their money. But President Clinton's approach, as you've just heard, gives the government more control of your retirement income.

The Social Security dollars deducted from your paycheck currently earn less than 3 percent a year. That's not enough of a return; that's not going to keep Social Security solvent; and it's especially not fair to young people and women. For example, the current system works against mothers who choose to step out of their job for a while, away from their career, to raise children or to care for parents.

It works against wives, who more often than not, survive their husbands

and end up living for more years on fewer dollars. And it works against young people who believe they'll never see a Social Security check.

Here's a better way: Give working Americans the choice to invest some of their Social Security dollars in personal retirement accounts. We can do this without touching a DIME in Social Security funds... without raising one NICKEL in taxes... without touching one PENNY of current benefits.

A new century requires a new beginning... in approaches, in ideas, and, yes, in civility and cooperation between political parties.

I'd like to close on a personal note. I'm a mother, a gardener, a Republican and a member of Congress. Believe me, all four take patience. My boys thankfully turned out to be wonderful young men. My plants at home unfortunately need a lot of work. And as for my efforts in the Congress, I am constantly planting and watering.

And as one citizen to another, in spite of all the troubling things you hear about our nation's capital, I believe that good ideas can take root here, good things can grow here and good things can blossom here.

Congressional Medal of Honor to Ronald and Nancy Reagan

Testimony of The Honorable Jennifer Dunn
Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy
Banking and Financial Services Committee
March 15, 2000

Just last month, Ronald Reagan celebrated his 89th birthday. To commemorate this occasion, I have joined my colleague, Jim Gibbons, in introducing legislation to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Ronald and Nancy Reagan.

Together, the President and First Lady selflessly dedicated their lives to lifting the American spirit and bettering the quality of life for every American. I continue to be inspired by Reagan's ideals of lower taxes, stronger families, limited government, and peace through strength. My first call to action in support of these ideals took place in 1976 when I was a Reagan delegate to our national convention. And until recently, Ronald Reagan remained the sole presidential candidate that earned my steadfast support from my heart as well as my head.

One of my fondest memories of Ronald Reagan takes me back to a cold and rainy October night nearly thirty-five years ago. I clearly recall listening to a speech he gave in support of Senator Barry Goldwater's campaign for President of the United States. Ronald Reagan's message was so compelling... and I took his words to heart when he said, "You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We will preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we will sentence them to take the last step into a thousand years of darkness. If we fail, at least our children, and our children's children, will say... we did all that can be done." Although these words were spoken at a time when most of us knew that Senator Goldwater was going down in defeat, his words lifted my spirits as they did a whole nation of people who still remember that speech as the beginning

of a great political career.

In 1989, I had the opportunity to personally thank him for his contributions to America... that was shortly after the Berlin Wall fell and the land he once declared “an evil empire” began to finally dissolve. The fall of the Soviet Union would not have been achieved if it had not been for Ronald Reagan’s insistence on a strong military. During his tenure in office, he boosted the morale of our military personnel by providing them with the equipment, training, and support they needed to be successful. By restoring our national defense, he protected democracy and rebuilt national pride.

President Reagan’s policies helped lift us out of the malaise of the Carter years, when interest rates were 21%, unemployment was at record highs, and inflation reached double digits. The economy recovered, and more Americans were working than ever before. President Reagan believed that cutting tax rates would increase, not shrink, federal tax revenues and he was right. In 1981, he worked with Congress in a bi-partisan manner to turn that belief into law.

The unprecedented economic prosperity America is now experiencing is due in no small part to the idealistic spirit and the anchored beliefs Ronald Reagan brought to his agenda as our President. Today, that historic bipartisan effort continues to be recognized as a defining achievement that fostered economic growth and human ingenuity to raise the quality of life in America.

Though he has withdrawn from public life, we will never forget his great achievements evident all around us. Now is the right time for America to say “thank you.” Some people have thanked him by naming airports, schools, and buildings after him. I have a son who is proud to carry his name. And here in Congress, we can begin by awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to our former President and his First Lady who shared his burdens and joys, Ronald and Nancy Reagan.

**Approved by Congress on July 27, 2000.*

Export-Import Bank Annual Conference

Jennifer Dunn

Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.

May 3, 2002

Good morning, everybody. I am delighted to be with you here today. It's a quiet day on the Hill and I'm so sorry about J.C. Watts not being able to come and visit with you yesterday. It wasn't by his choice, but when we have votes on the floor, some people think that's why we've been sent to represent them in Washington, D.C., so he really had very little choice on his activities. The same thing has happened to me and I'm sure you've been in groups where members of Congress have not been able to show up even though they very much wanted to. I want to thank your Vice Chairman, Eduardo Aguirre, for having me here today. And also, I want to thank the Ex-Im Bank's Board of Directors for inviting me to speak to you. It's such a pleasure to be here to discuss our trade agenda and, particularly, during a week when we actually did complete passage of the Ex-Im Bank legislation on the floor of the House.

And you will, by now, know that since it passed in the Senate about a month ago, we're at a point where we go into the Conference Committee, and very likely, possibly even before the Memorial Day break, we'll be able to have the predictability of those dollars set aside for such an important thing. A few days ago, the House of Representative passed legislation to reauthorize the Ex-Im Bank. Although the debate was very contentious at times, still, it had the full support of the House of Representatives. In fact, we passed that legislation on a voice vote, very unusual. And I think that that reflects a belief that the Ex-Im Bank plays a very important role in helping United States companies remain competitive overseas. For most American companies, access to foreign markets is no longer an optional business practice, but a necessity for our companies to survive.

To compete and succeed in the global market, the United States must

provide funding and access to financing for companies that are trying to compete with others and, while at the same time reducing barriers to trade. Simply stated, access to foreign markets without access to financial resources will not help United States companies expand overseas. While all businesses benefit from Ex-Im's financing, I want to highlight the very important of the Ex-Im Bank on behalf of a little company in my state, one that Dan mentioned, the Boeing Company. We still claim the Boeing Company, by the way, for the State of Washington, even though it has moved its corporate headquarters to Chicago, as you all know. But it wasn't a complete disaster because the company left 55 percent of its operations—the whole commercial line—in Seattle, so I find myself continuing to represent the district in the United States with the largest number of Boeing employees. We have 25,000 Boeing employees who live in my district. Over the past five years, Boeing and its workers have benefitted from \$19.5 billion of loans from the Ex-Im Bank for the sale of aircraft overseas. Of the planes sold overseas, over 20 percent are financed by the Ex-Im Bank. The financing has been critical in keeping Puget Sound businesses competitive overseas, while creating jobs needed to stimulate our economic recovery. As some of you know the Boeing Corporation has laid off nearly 30,000 employees. And it's a very difficult time for this company. I think they would claim that they would not have survived if it had not been for the Ex-Im Bank. Reducing trade barriers has never been more critical for the recovery of our Puget Sound economy. In my state, where, as Dan said, one out of three jobs is related to international trade. If we fail to expand overseas, if we fail to develop exports and to develop new markets where we can sell them for Boeing jets and for Microsoft software—another one of the companies that I represent in Washington State—then it's very simple, we simply lose jobs. My colleagues and I who are free trade supporters are focusing on the need to reassert American leadership in international trade.

You might want to give some thought to where we stood on January 2001. During the last 10 years, the United States had signed only two trade

agreements. The European Union, as a contrast, had signed 28 trade agreements with other countries. The Seattle WTO ministerial meetings did not lead to a new round of trade liberalizations. In fact, although we—I claim to be from the most beautiful city in the world, Seattle, and hated seeing that city defiled because of that WTO administration, it truly was a fiasco. It wasn't just the tempestuous environment you saw in that city during those terrible days, but it was the difficulty in going into a ministerial without an agenda set up ahead of time. And it was also, of course, as some of you who were involved know, was partly due to the green-room strategy which largely left developing nations out of putting together our agenda. And during that time, also, passage of trade promotion authority, which was called fast-track trade negotiating authority at that time, was illusive to us because of a lack of consensus in the Congress. And a President who was burdened with some alliances that were very important in keeping United States from getting TPA, environmental and labor constituencies, for example.

Now, however, we're in a very fresh environment. With President Bush and Ambassador Bob Zellik's leadership, we've taken steps to reverse this trend. So let me sum up what's happened for you since January 1, 2001. Congress and the Bush Administration have passed the United States Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement. The United States Jordan Free Trade Agreement has been passed by the Congress and signed with, by the way, some very interesting new language regarding labor and the environment that I think will become a standard for many of our agreements in the future. We hope to complete both the Singapore and the Chilean Free Trade Agreement. I as at a dinner the other night with Lee Kwan Yu, he says they are nearing the final point of being prepared to qualify for our free trade agreement.

We begin consideration of other agreements with partners, such as Australia and, separate from them, New Zealand, very important countries for the United States to engage with. Furthermore, the House of Representatives has passed legislation to renew the Andean Trade

Preference Act and the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program. Those are still being debated in the Senate. You may know that we hope to make progress here because much of that is related to TPA which is being considered in the Senate. We're continuing our efforts on the free trade are of the America's FTAA. As you know, Latin America is emerging as the fastest-growing United States regional trade partner. Between 1999 and 2000, total United States exports and imports with Latin America grew by 219 percent. An increase much greater than with other regions in the world. Washington State, alone, exported \$1.5 billion worth of products to Latin American countries.

Also the Do Ha Ministerial meetings were successful, not only in the smooth inclusion of China and Taiwan as members of the WTO but, also, in the agreement to complete a new round of trade liberalization by the year 2005. Most importantly, we passed trade promotion authority to grant President Bush authority to negotiate free trade agreements. We are closer today than we have been in the last eight years to passing TPA. You will hear from some members of Congress disagreement with the idea of the President being able to negotiate free-trade agreements without the amendment by 535 members of Congress. I will tell you I do not believe it is usurping constitutional authority away from the Congress at all because we have very carefully written in Trade Promotion Authority the need for consultation all the way along the line. And at the end of the process, the Congress gets an up or down vote. If consultation hasn't been adequate, then they will vote it down. So they are very—Congress is very well protected as we look at Trade Promotion Authority. In the Senate, the progress this week continues to be very slow. The Trade Promotion Authority is based on the Andean Preference Trade Act as the base bill. There is great discussion over issues like coverage for health care insurance in our Trade Adjustment Authority, which is our assistance to those who have lost jobs as a result of losing trade. I don't believe I'm an optimist in all of this. I think I'm quite realistic when I say despite the slow movement on TPA, I believe we will see a Trade Promotion Authority this year. And, certainly,

all of United States who have an interest in free trade and, particularly in opening up markets for those companies in the United States will be very helpful in supporting this publicly and behind the scenes with our friends in the Senate. Let me give you a few examples of why TPA is important to the United States: For our farmers: TPA means more consumers will have access to more products and the finest products in the world. My state, Washington state, exports \$1.8 billion worth of agricultural products each year, that is a 1999 number. In fact, one-third of our commodities are bound for the international market.

For our high-tech firms, TPA means strengthening intellectual property standards. The software industry loses \$12 billion annually due to counterfeiting and piracy in nations around the world. Reducing piracy in China, alone, could generate \$1 billion of revenue for the Northwest part of this country. Many nations have enacted laws dealing with intellectual property. And the problem is not that. The problem is with the enforcement of these laws. And, certainly, TPA will help United States to negotiate at least the beginning steps of that sort of legislation and enforcement. Take a look at women entrepreneurs. Many women around this country are leaving the corporate structure because it's not flexible enough. And they have the problems of balancing their lives with the lives of their families. And they are setting up business—some of them in second bedrooms in their homes. But all of them, with great idealism and hope. And, also, we find with women entrepreneurs, great interest in being—in having access to foreign markets.

TPA means succeeding in a global economy for women entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurial spirit knows no race or gender. In the United States, women are starting businesses at twice the rate of men. In Brazil, Mexico, Argentina—20 to 30 percent of women business owners are involved in international trade. So it's not just limited to the United States. In several sub-Saharan countries where I have visited, women actually comprise a majority of total business ownership.

No other factor contributes more mightily to the advancement of

women around the world than the grasping of economic power and the educational opportunities that come with it. Today, the United States has two choices: To become protectionist and shy away from opening markets overseas or to meet the challenges of the new economy by expanding trade.

America must choose to lead the world. We must be decisive in promoting global economic recovery through trade liberalization because we understand that a freer economy leads to freer society. So, in conclusion, I would simply say to you that with all the optimism that I am showing you and that I believe we see in the actions of the United States government today, I know that many challenges remain.

Some people perceive that further trade liberalization is a threat to their jobs, to their communities, and to their values. I agree that there are legitimate concerns about labor, the environment, about gender equity, and about human rights. Nevertheless, we must address these issues, not through trade sanctions, but by working toward lowering tariffs, by working toward eliminating non-economic barriers, and by working toward developing greater aspects to markets. The best way to improve the lives of all the people is to build economies all over this world through more trade. Thank you very much.

The Mount Rainier National Park Boundary Adjustment Act

Jennifer Dunn

In the House of Representatives

October 1, 2002

Mr. Chairman, today I am introducing the Mt. Rainier National Park Boundary Adjustment Act. This legislation will enable the National Park Service to rebuild a road and popular campground located in the Northwestern corner of the park that has been devastated by years of re-occurring floods.

As a life-long Washingtonian, I appreciate the importance of maintaining our most treasured natural resources. Mt. Rainier National Park is one of the crown jewels of the national park system. To enhance the enjoyment of the park, this legislation will allow visitors greater access to an area of the park that hosts a temperate rainforest.

Unfortunately, the road leading into Ipsut Creek Campground is below the Carbon River in several spots, resulting in frequent road washouts. Consequently, it is difficult if not impossible for visitors to drive safely to the campground. With the boundary adjustment, the park will be able to move the campground to a more secure area and provide for safe travel into this area.

To accomplish the boundary adjustment, land will be purchased from Plum Creek Timber Company and the U.S. Forest Service will transfer land to the National Park Service. In the end, the boundary adjustment will include approximately 1000 acres of both private and U.S. Forest Service land. This legislation will also allow the Secretary of the Interior to acquire land in the vicinity of Wilkeson, Washington for a visitor's center. This center will provide vital information to people accessing Mt. Rainier National Park in the Carbon and Mowich Corridors.

I look forward to working with the Resources Committee and my colleagues to bring this boundary adjustment to fruition.

Front Lines Not Forgotten by Administration, Congress

By Jennifer Dunn
Special to *The Seattle Times*
March 4, 2003

It is unfortunate that the facts have taken a back seat to partisan politics regarding federal dollars spent on homeland security (“The ‘front lines’ need help with the bottom line” guest commentary by U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, Feb. 24).

The primary mission of the new Department of Homeland Security is to protect Americans from another terrorist attack. Following 9/11, we have learned a great deal with about who our enemies are and where our vulnerabilities lie. Congress and President Bush have swiftly reacted accordingly and thus we are better prepared than ever to protect ourselves from those wishing to do us harm.

In our post-9/11 world, the administration and Congress have devoted unprecedented resources toward securing our homeland.

This is exactly what the president and Congress have funded:

- In 2001, Congress passed a \$40 billion emergency spending bill for homeland security.
- In 2002, we approved an additional \$37 billion for homeland security, \$3.8 billion for the Transportation Security Agency and \$5.5 billion for assistance to New York.
- Just two weeks ago, Congress approved an omnibus spending bill that included an additional \$35 billion for homeland security, \$3.5 billion of which will be available to local governments to fund first-responder efforts.

Millions of dollars have already benefited first-responder programs in Washington state and the Puget Sound region. And it is important to note the substantial increase in dollars we have received over the past two years.

For example, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), one of several agencies that assist local communities with first responders, increased its funding for such efforts in Washington state from \$1.5 million in 2001 to \$7.5 million in 2002.

Ironically, a few months ago, Mayor Greg Nickels personally accepted \$462,000 from FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh for the Seattle Fire Department. These dollars helped pay for training and equipment to better prepare the department to respond in the event of a terrorist attack or other emergency. But this is only one example from one agency of funds that have been distributed to our area for first responders.

The U.S. Department of Justice has also been very supportive of our local police departments. Last year, King County received \$12.9 million through the same program.

Congress and the administration are committed to providing resources to those who respond to emergencies. But we should not let this distract us from the priority mission: preventing an attack from happening in the first place.

Families want to know that when they board an airplane for a vacation, their flight will be safe because all passengers and baggage on board have been thoroughly screened. Parents want to know that their children will be safe when attending school or sporting events.

And we all want to know that everything possible is being done to ensure that dangerous cargo is not entering our ports and that individuals wishing to do us harm are not entering our state through our borders.

That is why Congress and the president created the Department of Homeland Security. This department, the largest since the creation of the Department of Defense over five decades ago, is responsible for overseeing homeland security efforts at many different levels. The department has already begun fulfilling its mission of coordinating intelligence gathering among various agencies, educating Americans about how to prepare for an emergency, educating local law-enforcement agencies about how to prevent attacks, and upgrading our nation's overall preparedness.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert recently appointed me vice chair of the newly created Select Committee on Homeland Security. This committee will oversee the Department of Homeland Security as it continues its efforts to organize and strengthen our national security. I will use my position on this committee to ensure that this new department is meeting its objectives and that the unique concerns of Washington state are taken into account.

Do we wish that dollars for homeland security and other programs were without limit? Of course we do. But to claim that homeland security is not a priority to this administration or Congress is entirely inaccurate. The record of accomplishments since Sept. 11, 2001, speaks for itself.

—U.S. Rep. Jennifer Dunn, R-Bellevue, represents the
8th congressional district of Washington state.

Congress: Take the Sting Out of the Death Tax

Jennifer Dunn

The Seattle Times

June 14, 2006

The Senate failed to move forward on repeal of the death tax, but I am a realist. With support for outright repeal apparently lacking in the Senate, Congress can still achieve an honorable bipartisan compromise that is in the best interest of millions of American families, small businesspeople and farm owners.

We are in this situation because we failed to adopt a permanent solution in the past. While Congress passed the estate tax repeal legislation I sponsored, with bipartisan support, in 2000, President Clinton vetoed it. The election of President Bush meant that proponents of repeal had an ally in the White House, and the Economic Growth and Tax Relief legislation we passed in 2001 provided for a phasing out of the estate tax by 2010, while increasing the level of assets exempt from taxation to \$3.5 million for individuals (\$7 million for couples) in 2009. But, because of a “sunset” provision in the tax-cut legislation, that solution is not permanent; on Jan. 1, 2011, we go back to the way things were in 2000, at the exorbitant tax rate of 55 percent for assets over \$1 million. That is, unless Congress acts. Whatever one thinks about the estate tax in principle and in practice, the current lack of predictability makes long-term estate planning a nightmare for affected taxpayers. Simple fairness dictates that Congress must act to at least take the confusion and guesswork out of the current situation. The question is, how best to fashion a long-term solution.

President Bush would sign permanent repeal into law, but the Senate has not been able to agree to the repeal legislation that the House has repeatedly passed over the past four years. Under Senate rules and procedures, you need the support of 60 senators to get anything done (unlike

the House, where the Majority rules), and those votes simply are not there.

What is needed, then, is a critical mass of senators, some centrist Democrats joining the majority of Republicans, who recognize that we can't just let this issue drift much longer.

Sen. Jon Kyl, Republican of Arizona, has proposed compromise legislation that would:

- Fix the estate tax rate at 15 percent (the same rate as capital gains);
- Increase the exemption to \$5 million for individuals and \$10 million for couples (indexed to inflation); and
- Provide a stepped-up basis in estates to current appreciated values.

Opponents of estate-tax repeal have sought to discredit those of us who are working for repeal, or at least significant reform, suggesting that this initiative is driven by millionaires unwilling to pay their fair share of taxes.

In fact, it is the wealthiest Americans who are best able to take advantage of elaborate tax-avoidance schemes. Regular middle-class taxpayers who can't afford the lawyers and accountants to help them beat the system are the ones who get hit the hardest—family businesspeople and the farmers who are land and equipment-rich but cash-poor often have to sell property to settle their debt with the government. Families frequently have no other option but to sell their businesses before the death of the owner to avoid the death tax and to take advantage of the lower capital gains rates, precluding ownership by future generations of family members.

To those who argue that we can't "afford" to get rid of the death tax, I ask how much good it does for the federal revenue stream in the long run if millions of modestly successful businesses and farms are forced to cash out, costing jobs and prospects for future business expansion.

The death tax is punitive and way out of step with the rest of the tax code. The 55 percent rate we had until 2001—and which we could revert to if nothing is done—vastly exceeds the highest rates on personal income (35 percent) and dividends and capital gains (15 percent). In response to

those who argue that we need a way to make sure that the appreciation of assets is taxed, I would argue that applying the same tax rate that would have applied if the assets had been sold during the decedent's lifetime, the capital gains rate, makes perfect sense.

A bipartisan plan to reform the estate tax would turn down the rhetorical temperature on both sides of the issue, and win broad-based support across the current ideological divide. A good-faith resolution would provide a sense of fairness and predictability for families' estate planning and contribute to long-term efforts to get our fiscal house in order.

Benjamin Franklin said, "In this world nothing is certain but death and taxes." We can't change that first certainty. But this year, Congress has the opportunity to stop adding insult to injury for families grieving over the loss of a loved one. If we can't bury the death tax, let's at least dull its sting.

TRIBUTES

Statement on Representative Jennifer Dunn's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

George W. Bush

January 31, 2004

Jennifer Dunn is a good friend and an outstanding public servant. For more than a decade, she has delivered results for the people of Washington State. She has championed sound policies that encourage economic growth and create jobs. She has led the way in providing tax relief for the American people; promoting the advancement of small and women-owned businesses; helping America's children, including by sponsoring the AMBER Alert bill; and protecting the environment. She is a superb legislator and a strong leader who has stood for the best of Washington State's values and who has improved the lives of its people. Laura and I are grateful for Jennifer's friendship, and we extend our best wishes to her, her husband, Keith, and her two sons.

National Federation of Republican Women

With heavy hearts, we fondly remember our friend, advocate, benefactor and inspiration, Congress- woman Jennifer Dunn (1941-2007).

Jennifer leaves two sons, Bryant and Reagan Dunn, her husband Keith Thomson and stepson Angus Thomson. She also leaves a multitude of colleagues, admirers, and friends—locally, nationally and internationally.

As a member of the Bellevue Republican Women's Club, she also served a term as Newsletter Editor for the Washington Federation of Republican Women. We are forever indebted to her years of service on the behalf of women in politics and for her generous support of the WFRW, its programs and events.

There was never a woman so poised, so sophisticated, so generous, loving, friendly and helpful as Jennifer. She holds her own very special place in the hearts and minds of WFRW members. God bless you, Jennifer, and may you hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

Keith Thomson

I lost the love of my life on September 4th, and at that moment, America lost one of its best. Jennifer’s quarter century of public service was extraordinary.

With her warmth, intelligence, passion and caring conservatism, she touched so many. At her funeral, scores of people, many of whom I had never met, lined up to tell me what Jennifer meant to them. They told me how she had helped them—how she had been there when they needed someone. Young people, especially women, spoke to me of how she encouraged them in school, pushing them to do their best. Others told me how she became their mentor, counseling them and then celebrating their accomplishments. They spoke of how she helped them find their first internship, or made phone calls to open doors for them. So many of them said, “Jennifer was my role model—she showed me how to do it, with grace.”

Jennifer was a Member of Congress from 1993-2005. She served on the House Ways and Means Committee, the Joint Economic Committee, the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, the Committee on Public Works and Transportation, the Committee on Science, Space and Technology, and the Committee on House Administration. She became the highest-ranking woman in the House of Representatives when she was elected vice chair of the House Republican Conference.

But it was her love for her family that gave her lasting joy, particularly her sons Bryant and Reagan, and their wives Jessica and Paige, and more recently, my son Angus and his fiancée Angela. She loved and cared for them; she counseled them; she delighted in their accomplishments. Jennifer was a great beacon, and she will be missed.

Those of us who loved her and knew her passions are trying to make

sure her legacy lives on. We are creating a foundation to remember and honor this extraordinary woman.

The foundation will continue Jennifer's support of young people by providing scholarships at both the state (particularly Washington State) and federal levels to assist young people, particularly women, wishing to enter service.

Her beautiful legacy will live on.

Longtime WA Political Powerhouses Pass Away

Time, CNN

September 5, 2007

SEATTLE—Former Rep. Jennifer Dunn, a six-term Republican who at times anchored the Washington State Republican Party, died today of a pulmonary embolism at her apartment in Arlington. She was 66.

Dunn represented Washington's 8th District from 1993 to 2005. In 1998, Dunn ran for Majority Leader, losing out to Texas Rep. Dick Armey, and was an early supporter of then-Texas Gov. George W. Bush, serving on his exploratory committee.

Dunn becomes the second powerful Washington woman to pass away recently. Last week, former State Democratic Party chairwoman Karen Marchioro lost her long battle with cancer; her memorial service is set for today.

Marchioro, whose career in politics spanned forty years, was a must-have endorsement for any major candidate hoping for a strong showing in Washington State. She was one of four representatives to the Democratic National Committee after serving as chair until her death.

Both Dunn and Marchioro, who served as state party chairs concurrently, were the first women to chair Washington State political parties, and their legacies are still widely felt. Forty-eight members of the 147-seat legislature are women, while the state is the first to have two female senators and a female governor.

UPDATE: GOP Conference chairman Adam Putnam (R-FL) released the following statement on Dunn's passing: "All those of us who have had the privilege to know and serve with Jennifer Dunn are deeply saddened to hear of her death. "Jennifer's career has been described as a 'series of firsts,' and rightly so. In addition to being a pioneer, Jennifer was a great stateswoman who will long be remembered as a tireless leader on tax issues and a dogged advocate for working families. "At this most difficult time, we send our sincerest condolences to Jennifer's husband, Keith, and her two sons."

Washington State GOP chair Luke Esser added his own condolences: "We are deeply saddened and shocked by the passing of Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn. She was a real champion for the State of Washington and will be truly missed. Jennifer embodied the principles we expect from leaders of political parties and elected officials. Her dedication to public service and record of accomplishment is an inspiration to all.

"Jennifer was a trailblazer for women who cleared the way for others to follow with a career of firsts: first woman to chair the Washington State Republican Party; first freshman woman to win a place in the House Republican leadership team; and the highest ranking Republican woman in leadership as the vice chairman of the Conference. Her enduring legacy is an entire generation of Republican grassroots activists who learned through her to fight for their principles and values with thoughtfulness and grace.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Jennifer's husband, her sons, and to her entire family during this very difficult time."

Boehner Statement on the Death of Former Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn

September 4, 2007

House Republican Leader John Boehner (R-OH) today issued the following statement on the passing of former Rep. Jennifer Dunn (R-WA):

“Jennifer Dunn was a dynamic spokeswoman for the Republican Party and a fearless advocate for American taxpayers. As a strong, principled voice on the Ways and Means Committee, she never lost sight of the need to reduce the tax burden on behalf of American families and small business owners.

“On priorities from free trade to welfare reform to estate tax reform, Jennifer’s contributions to our nation will be felt for years to come. She was a hard-working, focused colleague who never lost sight of our shared Republican vision on the issues that matter most to the American people. My thoughts and prayers are with her family during this difficult time.”

Granger Statement on Passing of Former Rep. Jennifer Dunn

September 5, 2007

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Congresswoman Kay Granger (R-Fort Worth), Vice Chair of the Republican Conference, today released the following statement after learning of the death of her friend and former colleague, Jennifer Dunn.

“I was stunned and saddened to hear that my friend and former colleague Jennifer Dunn passed away last night. My condolences and prayers go out to her family at this time.

“As the first freshman woman to be elected to the Republican House leadership, Jennifer paved the way for other women in the party and encouraged women across the country to get involved in politics and aspire

to leadership positions. She was a vocal advocate for the party and her vision and determination made her the strong leader she was.

“Her leadership and presence will be missed.”

U.S. Rep. Dave Reichert Statement on the Passing of Jennifer Dunn

“Today, I join my colleagues, friends and the State of Washington in mourning the loss of Jennifer Dunn, my predecessor as U.S. Representative to the Eighth District and my friend. I am shocked and saddened by the news. My condolences go out to her family—her husband, Keith, her children, Bryant, Reagan and Angus, their wives, and the grandchildren who meant so much to her.

“When Jennifer asked me to run for the seat she was leaving, I was honored to follow such a fine lady and superb Member of Congress.

“I have always said I can only hope to fill Jennifer’s shoes in Congress and I could not have asked for a better example than Jennifer Dunn. Jennifer was a true friend and mentor who was well-respected not only in the Eighth District, but all across the State of Washington, in Congress and nationally. When I came to the House of Representatives, it was obvious that Jennifer Dunn’s reputation preceded her. Everyone spoke of her integrity and their respect for her, and I found myself explaining not that I was Dave Reichert, but that I was hoping to be the new Jennifer Dunn. Jennifer was a dear friend, one you could always look to for encouragement and who I know genuinely cared about the people she served and that she worked with. The State of Washington and the country is a poorer place without Jennifer Dunn, and she will be greatly missed.”

Sidelining a “Silent Killer”

March 16, 2009

By Representative Lois Capps (D-CA) and
Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)

A potentially life-threatening health condition affects millions of Americans each year but, tragically, most aren't aware of the signs, symptoms or risk factors until it is too late.

The condition is deep-vein thrombosis, commonly referred to as DVT. While up to 2 million Americans suffer from DVT annually, most people know far less about it than they do about allergies. A survey found 79 percent know “something or a great deal” about allergies, while just 25 percent know that much about DVT.

DVT is a blood clot, often found in your legs, which can break off and travel to your lungs causing a potentially fatal condition called pulmonary embolism or PE.

The statistics surrounding DVT and its related complication, PE, are staggering: approximately 300,000 Americans die each year from DVT and PE, and complications from DVT kill more Americans than breast cancer and AIDS combined. DVT-related PE is the most common cause of preventable hospital death in the United States.

DVT is a national public health crisis, but many patients—and even healthcare professionals—are unaware of the risk. There is progress being made, including a Call to Action on DVT and PE released last year by the Office of the Surgeon General. It is designed to drive awareness in order to reduce the number of cases of DVT in the United States. However, there is still more work to be done.

We decided to become more involved in the effort to prevent DVT because both our lives have been tragically touched by this condition.

In 1997 Congresswoman Capps' husband, Congressman Walter Capps, died from a cardiac incident which may have been caused by DVT and Congresswoman Cathy McMorris-Rodgers' mentor and friend, former Washington State Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn, died due to DVT-related conditions in 2007. It is our hope that this resolution is just the start of several policy initiatives that will raise awareness of DVT and ultimately reduce the preventable deaths caused by this condition.

This year we joined forces with the Coalition to Prevent DVT to help stop DVT before it strikes. We've introduced a resolution recognizing the second Tuesday in March as National DVT Screening Day. Through this resolution, we hope to highlight DVT as a national public health priority and honor the memory of beloved Congresswoman Dunn, who died due to DVT-related complications in 2007. Her son, Seattle's King County Councilman Reagan Dunn, was present during the introduction in honor of his mother.

Recognizing the importance of this resolution, the Coalition to Prevent DVT is launching a nationwide DVT RV tour—Driving to Reduce the Risks of DVT—on the first DVT Screening Day to drive dialogue about the need for proper DVT screening. By bringing this national health issue to local communities, the Coalition hopes to highlight the burden of this condition and underscore the need for greater risk assessment and proper treatment.

For more than six years, the Coalition to Prevent DVT, made up of more than 60 members from medical societies, patient advocacy groups and other public health organizations, has been committed to making a difference for patients and their loved ones and has worked tirelessly to increase public awareness and establish DVT as a national health priority.

Through efforts such as National DVT Screening Day and the Driving to Reduce the Risks of DVT RV tour, we challenge healthcare professionals to properly screen and treat patients for DVT in hospitals and healthcare offices throughout the country. With these goals in mind, we strive to reduce the incidence of DVT and PE.

March is DVT Awareness Month but our efforts won't end when the month does. The DVT RV tour is taking to the road to educate doctors and patients about the risk factors and ways to prevent DVT. Look for the RV in a city near you sometime between now and May and join forces with the millions of Americans who've been affected by DVT, the Coalition and ourselves to spread awareness about this serious, yet preventable condition. With your help, DVT risk can be reduced. Visit preventdvt.org for more information.

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