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Remarks at the Memorial Service for Congressman Henry J. Hyde, Friday, December 7, 2007, St. Charles, Illinois

John Boehner
United States Congress

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Remarks at the Memorial Service for
Congressman Henry J. Hyde
Friday, December 7, 2007, St. Charles, Illinois

Congressman John Boehner

Henry Hyde was not just a congressional hero. He was an American hero. And on a personal note, he was my hero. I have served with thousands of fine people during the 17 years I have been in the House. There is no one I admired more than Henry Hyde. No one.

He was a loving father, grandfather, and devoted husband. Henry Hyde was also a leader. He never served as Speaker, or Majority Leader, or Minority Leader. He was a legislative giant in his own right. He left an indelible mark on our institution through the sheer force of his presence, his intellect, and the example he set for all.

His accomplishments in Congress were broad and numerous—so broad and numerous they are difficult to fully chronicle. He led a movement in Congress to ensure our nation's laws respect the sanctity of every precious human life. He led the men and women of our institution, teaching us about honor, dignity, and service to country through his own humble actions. He led the people of his Chicago district for many years, providing them with distinguished service always marked by wisdom, class, and grace. He led a committee in Congress that stood strong, like a rock, when the constitutional principles at the heart of our democracy were challenged. Most of all, he led by treating all men and women with dignity and respect, regardless of who they were or what they believed.

Treating everyone with dignity and respect came naturally to Henry. Not just because he was kind and full of decency, but because he truly believed all human life is precious. Henry was at peace in the presence of others—even those who disagreed with him most—because of his unshakeable faith in the sanctity of every human life. In a vocation often marked by senseless, noisy debate, Henry Hyde was a clear, calm, and commanding voice for justice; for the defenseless; for the innocent. Always.

There is a famous prayer called the Serenity Prayer, known to many

who practice the Christian faith. Henry probably said it many times, perhaps in his own unique way. In this prayer, we pray God will give us the courage to change what we can change; the serenity to accept what we cannot change; and the wisdom to know the difference. If ever there was a life that offered irrefutable evidence that the Lord hears this prayer and answers it, it was the life of Henry Hyde. He was the definition of courage, serenity, and wisdom. He had all three, in seemingly endless supply.

Those traits are now his legacy. From the streets of his hometown in Illinois to the halls of the United States Congress, his words and deeds will echo for generations to come. Henry Hyde: your nation will never forget you. Rest in peace, my friend.