

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 020694)

RESOLUTION

Mourning the death and celebrating the life of Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone.

WHEREAS, On Friday morning, October 25, 2002 Senator Paul Wellstone, his wife Sheila, his daughter Marcia, staffers Tom Lopic, Mary McEvoy and Will McLaughlin and co-pilots Captain Richard Conry and Michael Guess were all killed in a plane crash; and

WHEREAS, Senator Paul Wellstone was more than a senator from Minnesota, he was a champion of all the issues that affected ordinary people. Throughout his career, he championed universal health care, the rights of the mentally ill, organized labor, women's rights, the environment, full public financing of elections, equitable funding of public education, decent child care, the family farmer, and the poor. He was a staunch opponent of Bill Clinton's 1996 welfare reform law, and he virtually single-handedly stalled the pending bankruptcy legislation, which would impose onerous new burdens on the indigent; and

WHEREAS, Despite his liberal and left leanings, Wellstone made friends and forged bipartisan alliances. In what may be his proudest legacy, he and Republican Senator Pete Domenici joined ranks to author legislation to require health insurance plans to provide "parity" coverage for mental illnesses. While their bill was scaled back, President Bush recently endorsed the concept, and it is seen as a pioneering step toward helping a huge segment of sick, but often ignored, Americans; and

WHEREAS, Wellstone's first run for the Senate in 1990 defied all the odds. Never having won elected office and massively outspent, he managed to win, 51-to-49 percent, by running a grassroots campaign, traveling the state in a green school bus and using humor and never flinching from the liberal label; and

WHEREAS, Paul David Wellstone was born in Washington on July 21, 1944, and grew up in Arlington, VA. His father, Leon, left Russia as a child to escape the persecution of Jews, and worked as a writer for the United States Information Agency.

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 020694 continued

His mother, Minnie, the daughter of immigrants from Russia, worked in a junior high school cafeteria; and

WHEREAS, Growing up, Wellstone was more interested in wrestling than politics, and he had some difficulty in school because of what he later found out was a learning disability. He scored lower than 800, out of a total of 1,600, on his College Boards, and this led him as a senator to oppose measures that emphasized standardized test scores. In an interview, he once said that even as an adult he had difficulty interpreting charts and graphs quickly but that he had learned to overcome his disability by studying harder and taking more time to absorb information; and

WHEREAS, Partly because of his wrestling ability — he was a conference champion at 126 pounds — Wellstone was admitted to the University of North Carolina and, galvanized by the civil rights movement, he turned from wrestling to politics. He graduated in 1965 and stayed in Chapel Hill for a doctorate in political science. He wrote his thesis on the roots of black militancy; and

WHEREAS, In 1963 Paul Wellstone married his high school sweetheart, Sheila Ison, who became his most trusted advisor as well as revered friend and cherished companion. Sheila also became a national galvanizer on the issue of domestic violence, helping create the National Violence Against Women office which became the means for directing federal dollars to this critical issue. And, as a result of Sheila Wellstone's tireless advocacy, the man believed to be the Washington, D.C. area sniper was first held under a federal law that prohibits those under a restraining order for domestic violence from possessing a firearm. It was Sheila Wellstone who put the proposal together and Paul Wellstone got it passed as part of the Domestic Violence Firearms Prevention Act; and

WHEREAS, In 1969, as a Political Science professor at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, Wellstone early on was "a believer in grassroots organizing, in grassroots politics," as he writes in his autobiography. At twenty-five, he was determined to use his academic skills "to empower people and to step forward with people in justice struggles." So he studied, and began organizing, the poor people of Rice County, Minnesota. For that, and other political stances, he was fired. But the students rebelled and got him reinstated; and

WHEREAS, Wellstone remained true to his activist roots after his election and re-election to the Senate. In the spring of 1997 he launched a well publicized "poverty tour" patterned after a trip made by Robert F. Kennedy in 1967. Traveling through Mississippi, Appalachia, Chicago and Los Angeles, as well as his Twin Cities home base, he sought to publicize the plight of the poor, especially children, in the midst of a record period of economic growth; now therefore

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 020694 continued

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby mourns the death and celebrates the life of Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone, his wife of 39 years Sheila Wellstone, his daughter Marcia and all the passengers of that tragic plane crash. The loss to our country is profound.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Wellstone family as evidence of the heartfelt condolences of this legislative body.

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 020694 continued

CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the thirty-first of October, 2002.

Anna C. Verna
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Marie B. Hauser
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Ortiz, Kenney, Council President Verna, Tasco, Nutter, Goode, Reynolds Brown, Mariano and DiCicco

Sponsored by: Council President Verna, Councilmembers Ortiz, Kenney, Tasco, Nutter, Goode, Reynolds Brown, Mariano, DiCicco, Cohen, Miller, Rizzo, Krajewski, Blackwell, O'Neill and Clarke