

Recognizing the Life and Legacy of Margaret Chase Smith

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By Gary Friedmann

Gary Friedmann delivered a speech on the floor of the House chamber in recognition of the remarkable Margaret Chase Smith and how her work continues to influence and shape politics, even in this tumultuous time. A transcript of his remarks are below:

Mister Speaker, distinguished members of this body, I rise today to thank my colleague from Woolwich for introducing her motion honoring that remarkable daughter of Maine: Margaret Chase Smith.

And I rise today to encourage my colleagues to follow her example. Margaret Chase Smith is rightly remembered for her independence of thought.

At a time when our nation faced great strain she fearlessly put aside politics and party so that she could speak out for what is right, speak against what is wrong and speak up for the people of Maine. Today, Mainers are again in need of such strong and brave voices.

Today our state's most vulnerable residents are facing serious hardships because the decision-makers down in Washington don't seem to appreciate that their actions are causing real-world harm.

In just this past year, they've passed laws or supported policies that give big handouts to the wealthy while forcing the less fortunate to pay more for housing, pay more for healthcare, pay more for food and pay more just to keep warm in the winter.

In my own district, my neighbors are facing catastrophic increases in the cost of their health insurance. Our hospitals and clinics are being forced to reduce services or even close our food banks are seeing increased demand.

Some of those being hurt are Democrats. Some are Republicans or Independents. Some don't vote at all. It doesn't matter to me because they are all Mainers.

And my job is to speak up for them.

Across this state – our state more than 50,000 won't get adequate healthcare this year because of cuts to Medicaid and Affordable Care Act tax credits. Thousands of Maine families will go hungrier this year because of cuts to food aid.

Thousands of Maine veterans and vulnerable Mainers will become homeless this year because of cuts to housing assistance.

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The good news is that if we stand together as Mainers we can protect our state's most vulnerable residents from the reckless decisions being made in Washington.

This legislature has the authority to direct resources to those most in need. And, in fairness, we can ask those benefiting the most from today's policies to help out those who are being harmed.

I understand that, here in this Chamber, some of us are Democrats. Some are Republicans. Some are Independent. But it shouldn't matter in the end because we are all Mainers. And it is our job to speak up for the people of our state, especially those who have less power and influence than we do.

Margaret Chase Smith understood that there are times when you must fearlessly put aside politics and party so that you can speak out for what is right, speak against what is wrong and speak up for the people of Maine.

This is one of those times.

Let's honor her memory by pulling together and working together for all of Maine's people.