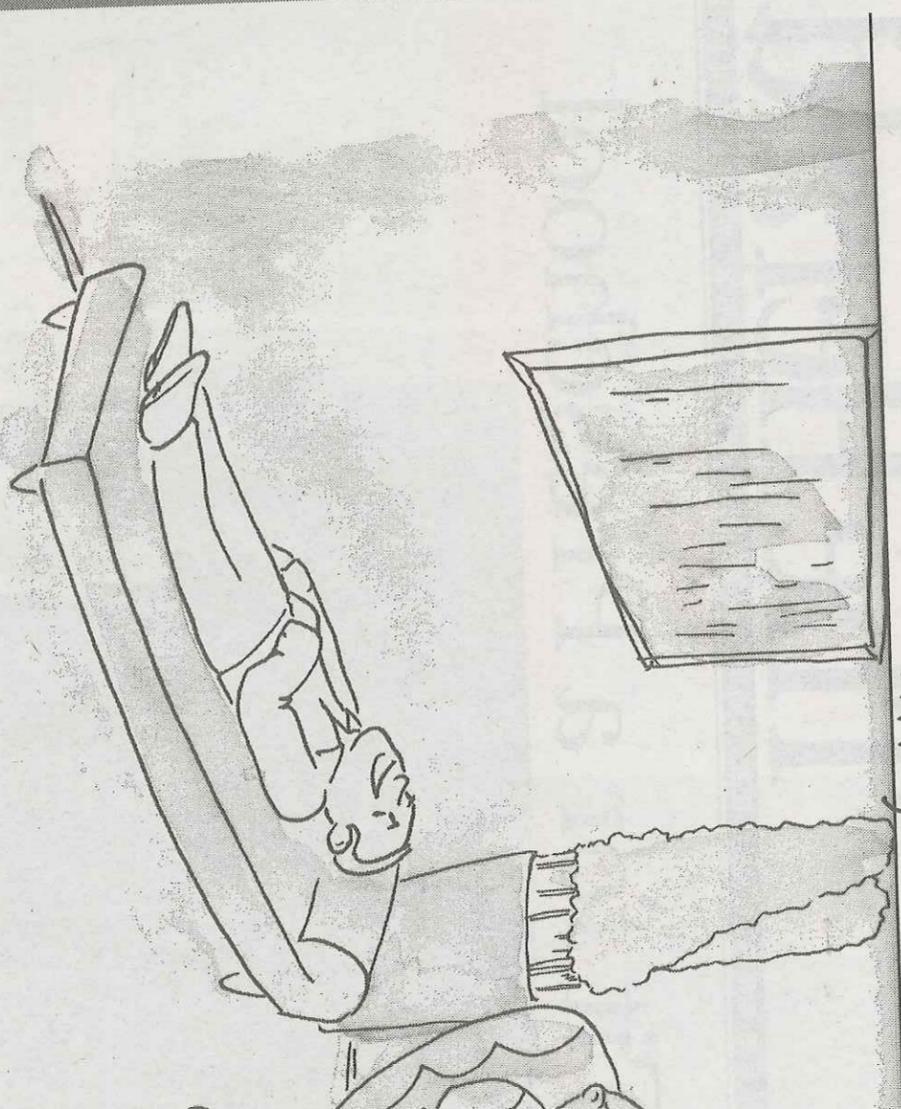


littlejohn

by Isaac Littlejohn
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"Happiness isn't making me happy"

Editorial/ Comment

Legislating Is an Art

When U. S. Rep. Peter Welch was first elected to Congress in 2006, he was one of very few new Congressmen who had substantial experience in the business of legislating. Many of his peers were former governors, and a number of them had been successful in business or other pursuits, but that history did not necessarily leave them with the skills of negotiation that Welch developed during his years in the Vermont legislature, many of them in leadership positions.

Since his election, Welch-watchers have noted that his career in Congress has fared well, with excellent committee appointments and good relationships on both sides of the aisle (a rarity in today's Congress).

All that expertise and all those relationships were on the line this fall after Tropical Storm Irene rained down its horrendous damage on Vermont and other states. Usually, after a disaster, Congress jumps to provide funds to help affected states recover. But these are not normal times. Budget consciousness and downright stinginess have so affected Congress that it was clear that it was going to be a tough job to free up the disaster aid that would normally be expected.

The Senate, with a Democratic majority and a Democratic powerhouse in Sen. Patrick Leahy, was not expected to be a problem, but the U.S. House was another matter. The well-mobilized Republican majority there seemed to be poised to deny or greatly cut disaster aid. And as a representative from Vermont, whose reputation in the House is undoubtedly tarnished by rants of Bill O'Reilly and company, Peter Welch would seem to have been in an unenviable position, as he battled for disaster aid for his liberal little state. And he knew it.

"I thought we were probably going to lose," he admitted to The Herald during his visit to Randolph Tuesday.

So Welch drew on his legislative experience. A lone Democrat in the Republican House wouldn't have much pull, so what was needed was a coalition, he realized. The reach of Irene meant that a lot of states needed help. And those states were represented by Republicans as well as Democrats.

Pulling together an effective, focused coalition of these states and their representatives was Rep. Welch's signature achievement this fall. He admitted he had to incur the wrath of Democratic Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi at one time, but in the end his Hurricane Irene Coalition carried the day and brought disaster relief to the affected states.

Welch's public statement after the passage of the aid bill last Monday reflected his coalition-building role. Among those who earned his thanks were three of the House of Representatives' most stalwart Republicans—Speaker John Boehner, Majority Leader Eric Cantor, and Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy.

They and other House members "are operating in an extraordinarily difficult budget environment," Welch acknowledged. "This (bill) could not have been done without their help."

In this ideologically riven era, it's nice to see a Democrat giving prominent thanks to Republicans. And it's even nicer when they deserve it.

Letters to the Editor

Husband Located After Long Search

On the night that Fire Chief David Aldright was not at the baseball fundraiser at VTC, last week, he and many other Bethel Volunteer Firemen were called out for a search and rescue. The Department was in the woods searching nearly all night for my husband, Leo Griffin, when he did not return home from deer hunting that day.

My members and the men from the Cayer camp, combing the nearby woods until almost 3 a.m.

The following morning at approximately 6:30, eight K-9 units were brought in continue the search, while Keith Bollman and Bob Dean searched by air. Many people that are unknown to me helped in many ways.

Huge thanks are due to Christi and Keith Bollman, the Bethel Fire Department, Bob Dean, Vermont Department, Cooper, Paul Feeoney

Letters to the Editor

Congress Becomes The Enemy

Sarah Palin wrote an editorial in the Wall Street Journal on November 18 blasting members of both parties in Congress whose "stock portfolios outperform even the best hedge-fund managers" with Congress members "accepting sweetheart gifts of IPO stock from companies seeking to influence legislation, practicing insider trading with nonpublic government information, earmarking projects that benefit personal real estate holdings, and even subtly extorting campaign donations through the threat of legislation unfavorable to an industry."

Palin makes reference to the source of these allegations: a new Peter Schweizer book, "Throw Them All Out", which is based on information from public records.

It is so discouraging to think that far from working for our economic recovery, Congressional rep-

resentatives are as much a part of the problem as corporate America and Wall St., with whom legislators have cynically chosen to join in the feeding frenzy of unethical and immoral business practices. The news program, "60 Minutes," recently brought attention to the "Stock Act," which would make certain business activities illegal for Congressmen and women that are already illegal for the rest of us. Rep. Louise M. Slaughter has been working on this bill for six years but it doesn't seem to get anywhere in Congress—such as to the floor for a vote.

If we cannot rely on elected representatives, it is little wonder that we are experiencing spontaneous protest movements like the "Tea Party" and "Occupy Wall Street." While these demonstrations can seem so small, futile and doomed to failure, what other voice do Americans have?

Karl Miller
Randolph

Halloween At Thanksgiving

For a yet-to-be-revealed reason, this past Saturday was fused to the adjacent of Halloween and Thanksgiving. I was engaged in my Saturday rush to beat the time of the bank and was hurrying about on the platform at the transit (something about haste going together).

Carrying a box of both about and couldn't see to the platform, causing propelled me forehead-into-giving steel of the door. This opened a nudge above my left eye protected the eye; than for shatterproof optics will need repair, but their Upon its own repair, now has me looking so Frankenstein's monstering me look like I'm

River Street, Irene, and Candlelight

Hilary Mullins of Bethel has contributed a riveting first-person report to Numero Cinc magazine about what it was like during the afternoon and evening of August 28.

The 3000-word account is too long to reproduce in The Herald, but with her permission we are printing a short excerpt. The full story can be found online at: <http://numeromagazine.com/2011/10/28/hurricane-irene-what-it-was-like-from-hilary-mullins-in-bethel-vermont-2/>.

By Hilary Mullins

Before I even reached River Street, I could see the emergency lights straining the cement embankment opposite, the eerie flashing colors of danger in the night. I went down the hill. Under the railroad overpass, there was a bar-

ricade. On this side of it, 10 or 15 people were milling, some talking in clumps, some standing closer to the underpass, their hands on the railing of the barrier. On the other side of the barricade was water over the road, a wading announce but not moving, and beyond that, the River Street Bridge. I could see the front of it but not more. Just in front of it, about a hundred feet away, I could see the front of my friends' houses and their yard along the road. No water there but it was getting darker.

"Do you know," I asked a man in a yellow vest, "if the people in that house have left?"

"Well, I did see," he said, "two or three right leave here, so maybe they have, but I'm not sure—I don't know them."

"Your mind if I check?"

"Your feet are gonna get wet!" he said. I looked again. So maybe I didn't want to g

Haviland Smith

Our Mid-East Wars Are Mortgaging Our H