



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 168

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2022

No. 92

Senate

REMEMBERING DONALD ROSS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart to pay tribute to Donald K. Ross, a tireless organizer for democracy. Sadly, Mr. Ross passed away on May 14, 2022, at the age of 78. He will be remembered for his lifetime of civic service and advocacy.

Born in the Bronx, NY, Mr. Ross was a leader from an early age. As student body president, he successfully revived Fordham University's football program, an experience he credited with teaching him how to organize. Upon graduation, Mr. Ross spent 2 years with the Peace Corps in Nigeria, before graduating from New York University's law school in 1970.

From there, Mr. Ross joined consumer advocate Ralph Nader's Public Citizen movement, becoming one of the original "Nader's Raiders." In 1971, they co-wrote "Action for Change: A Student's Manual for Public Interest Organizing," which led to the organization of Public Interest Research Groups—PIRGs—across the country. These organizations combine research and public action, encouraging public citizens to get involved in important advocacy issues. Mr. Ross became the director of the New York PIRG, where he advanced a number of political reforms and advocated for increased government transparency.

Mr. Ross was also an outspoken anti-nuclear advocate. After the tragic accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania, Mr. Ross organized anti-nuclear rallies that drew hundreds of thousands of demonstrators. That he was able to mobilize so many people in mere weeks after the accident is a testament to his leadership skills and passion for the cause.

In addition to his organizing expertise, Mr. Ross was also a dedicated philanthropist. From 1985 to

1999, he was director of the Rockefeller Family Fund, a charitable organization where he worked to expand access to grants for charitable causes. Additionally, Mr. Ross cofounded and managed the Environmental Grantmakers Association, which has grown to include over 200 member foundations around the world. A champion of numerous causes, Mr. Ross directed the National Campaign to Reform Juvenile Justice Systems from 2009 to 2017.

In my home State, Mr. Ross organized the Connecticut Citizen Action Group, a statewide organization dedicated to actively engaging residents to build a more sustainable, just society. In this and every endeavor he undertook in his remarkable career, Mr. Ross was on the frontlines of democracy, fighting to make our world a better place.

Connecticut and the Nation have lost a great civic organizer and champion of democracy. Mr. Ross's tireless devotion to many worthy causes—from environmental protection, to consumer advocacy, to criminal justice reform, and so many others—serves as a model of dedication and civic engagement. Through his work and his writings, Mr. Ross has inspired a generation of citizens to become engaged in their communities and fight for a more just world. While he will be sorely missed, his legacy will live on in those who continue his work.

My wife Cynthia and I extend our deepest sympathies to Donald's family during this difficult time, particularly to his wife Helen, and his children Katherine, Margaret, and Mike. May their many wonderful memories of Donald provide them solace and comfort in the days ahead. I hope my colleagues will join me in remembering Donald K. Ross.