Phyllis Schlafly, 1924-2016

By Andy Schlafly

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Phyllis Schlafly was with us a glorious 92 years, and active in politics for more than 70 of them. It is difficult to identify any issue that she was not on the right side of, typically years or decades before others rallied beside her.

She wrote or spoke out on nearly every controversial American political matter, and the conservative movement today is based largely on work that she did five, ten, twenty, and even sixty years ago. Though we grieve her passing, she leaves us with a legacy that will take us our own lifetimes to fully appreciate.

Donald Trump, in his remarkable eulogy to Phyllis last Saturday at the beginning of her funeral, observed that Phyllis has shaped American politics for one quarter of its entire existence. He commented that she always put America first, as he does, and the massive crowd of attendees gave a standing ovation to Trump in immense gratitude to him for so honoring Phyllis.

Phyllis wrote a bestselling book in 1964 called *A Choice Not An Echo*, which foreshadowed Trump's meteoric rise. The book exposed how the political system is rigged by kingmakers, and she was thrilled by the arrival of Trump as a candidate for president, 52 years after publication of her work, to take on and defeat the kingmakers in the Republican Party.

Phyllis anticipated and led on so many political issues that it would require another book just to list them. Her *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, now in its 50th year, is probably the longest continuing political newsletter in history, and its inaugural edition discussed the importance of our Panama Canal a full decade before that became a hot issue propelling Ronald Reagan to his successful campaign for president.

In defeating the Equal Rights Amendment, the work for which Phyllis is most famous, she took an initially unpopular stance years before others joined her. Her successful STOP ERA effort did more to define the conservative movement today than any other struggle.

But unlike most political leaders, Phyllis also had a tremendous cultural influence, by establishing respectability for those who stay at home and raise their children. Even

many liberal-leaning women who attained adulthood in the 1980s and beyond are grateful to Phyllis for carving out space in our culture for them to spend some time away from the rat race to raise their children, and educate them at home.

Indeed, one of Phyllis's proudest achievements was that she taught her children how to read at home, which she did for all six of them in the 1950s and 1960s. This was decades before the homeschooling movement blossomed as an expansion on the same concept.

Recently some have called Phyllis the "Iron Lady," but that term fails to capture the enormous good humor and charm that she always had in the face of intense hostility. Many middle-aged people today had the benefit of attending a debate or presentation by Phyllis on a college campus, where she would invariably withstand a hostile opponent or audience with remarkable grace.

The funeral Mass on September 10th was held at the Cathedral Basilica in St. Louis, the same place where Phyllis was married in 1949 to Fred Schlafly, a blissful union that lasted until his death in 1993. But far from slowing down as a widow, Phyllis continued her work for another 23 years by both building on her prior efforts and expanding into new topics.

For example, she wrote her book on *The Supremacists* in 2004 to explain the growing problem of judicial supremacy, which foreshadowed the shocking court decisions in recent years and the crisis that we face in this election as the replacement for Justice Scalia hinges on the outcome. Her more recent book on *No Higher Power*: *Obama's War on Religious Freedom* (2012) exposed the anti-Christian agenda of the Obama Administration.

Phyllis attended Republican National Conventions over a span of 64 years, from 1952 to 2016, and I had the joy of being with her for nearly two weeks in Cleveland this summer at her final convention. The party platform now embraces Phyllis's positions on everything from building a wall to stop illegal immigration, to being strongly pro-life, to attaining military superiority, which were all positions that she staked out decades ago.

Phyllis never stopped writing, speaking, and organizing. The very day after her passing away on September 5th, the anniversary of Mother Teresa's death, Phyllis's 27th book was released: *The Conservative Case for Trump.*

William Shakespeare left this world with a legacy in playwriting that took generations to admire fully. Phyllis Schlafly produced more during her lifetime than the rest of us could keep up with, and it may take us decades simply to realize all the good work that Phyllis, the "conservative hero" in the words of Trump's eulogy, has left us with.

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