

Rep. Schakowsky Reflects On Her Friend Senator Wellstone

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Just 11 days before Election Day, Sen. Paul Wellstone, an outspoken liberal Democrat, was killed in a plane crash that also took the lives of his wife, daughter and staff members. The tragic crash happened on Friday, Oct. 25 in northern Minnesota. Wellstone, 58, was on his way to the funeral of the father of a state lawmaker when the private plane went down in freezing rain and light snow. Wellstone's wife, Sheila, daughter, Marcia, three campaign staff members and two pilots were killed in the crash.

"He was widely admired," said Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, on the same day of the crash. "The loss of his voice will create a real void."

She described Wellstone as very outspoken and compassionate. She said that he was thoughtful of poor people and people with disabilities. A college professor at Carleton College in Northfield, he was also known for his grass roots efforts.

"He constantly reminded us what are mission is," said Schakowsky.

Wellstone's campaign was creative and unique, conducted out of a "rickety" green bus. Another unique concept of his campaign is that he would sometimes hold time-raisers instead of fund-raisers in order to encourage people to donate their time and participate, despite their inability to donate funds.

Schakowsky once held an event for Wellstone in her backyard in which 200 people were in attendance.

Wellstone was up against Republican Norm Coleman, a former mayor of St. Paul and President Bush's choice to challenge the two-term incumbent. A spokesman from the Coleman campaign said that their prayers are with the Wellstone family. Wellstone is survived by two sons and six grandchildren.

State law allows the governor to fill a vacant Senate seat, but also allows for the party to appoint a replacement when a nominee passes away. According to State Democratic Party Spokesman Bill Amberg, he is confident the party would be allowed to offer a replacement.

Congressman Henry Hyde extended his deepest sympathy to Wellstone's family, friends and the people of Minnesota and the family and friends of the other victims. He said that Wellstone has paid the ultimate price for his dedicated and devoted public service.