

Tribute to Speaker Busch

(Given April 8 - Maryland Statehouse Floor)

Today is a sad day for Maryland as we mourn the loss of one of the all-time great leaders of our state. I have never met a more dedicated public servant than #IronMike Busch. He gave his all, every day, for us, the people of Annapolis and of Maryland. He exuded love – love for his family, for public service, for our state, for the House of Delegates, and – especially – for his job leading the House and those of us who were fortunate enough to serve as his colleagues.

When I moved to Annapolis, one of my earliest impressions from local democratic club meetings was that “Maryland’s Speaker, OUR Delegate” was beloved by our community. He was known for his integrity, work ethic, political acumen, and wit. Like everyone in Annapolis, I saw him around town regularly and appreciated that even though he was Speaker, he was also just one of us, our neighbor in the very best sense. He had a way of making all who knew him feel important to him and was somehow both larger than life and always down to earth.

When I contemplated running for office, I wanted to know my potential seat-mate better. I studied his voting record, his statements and speeches, and I realized that behind his down-to-earth demeanor was a master politician and public servant who was strong in his convictions, brave in his actions, and kind in his deeds. While I was initially on the fence about running, once I fully understood that a person like Mike Busch would be my district-mate, I was all in.

On the campaign trail, we did more Meet and Greets and candidates’ forums together than I could count. His stump speech varied, but was always full of wisdom and humor. I knocked on countless doors where as soon as the voter heard I was running on a slate with Mike – as they always called him – they said he had been their coach, or a family member’s coach and, inevitably, those conversations concluded with the voter telling me that if I was on Team Mike I had their vote.

My favorite memory of him was after the election, on Thanksgiving, when we were serving holiday meals together. During a break it was just the two of us. We chatted, parent-to-parent – he told me about his daughters, Erin and Megan, who he clearly adored so much, and I told him about my sons, and we both lamented how fast they grow up. I asked how he was spending the rest of day and his face lit up as he told me that he and Cindy were celebrating their anniversary. No matter how much he loved his job in the legislature or coaching, his first love was clearly his family.

Shortly after the election, the Speaker, Senator Elfreth and I held a town hall at the local recreation center. There was a tremendous turnout of over 100 people and we had a robust discussion on what felt like over 100 issues! I ran into President Miller a few days later and he said he had been ribbing the Speaker about doing a town hall right after the election after 30-plus years on the job and had asked him why. President Miller chuckled as he said the Speaker had replied, “I know, I know, but Alice and Sarah wanted to do it and somebody needed to be there who knew all the answers!” I think that story sums him up well – he went the extra mile for us, with a smile. He didn’t have to be there but he wanted Sarah and me to be successful in

our public debut as incoming elected officials – so he showed up and made sure we had the benefit of his wisdom and experience as we made the transition from candidates to legislators.

Above all else, I'm just so grateful for having had the chance to get to know Mike Busch as a coach, mentor, and friend. I am a better person – and will be a better legislator for our district – for having had the opportunity to work with him and to learn from him.

I saw him give his all for the people of Maryland every day. The best thing we can do to honor him is to do the same, today and every day. Let's be there for each other, as he was there for us – and make our coach proud.