

BOBBY L. RUSH

1ST DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

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February 1, 2012

Tony Hunter, Chief Executive Officer
Tribune Publishing
435 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Dear Mr. Hunter:

I am writing to express my deep disappointment and great dismay in the article written by Ms. Katherine Skiba, *Rush, Gutierrez Rank High in Missed Votes*, appearing on January 17, 2012, in the *Chicago Tribune*. In my view, the article was extremely unbalanced and unfair. Her motivations for authoring the story and her methodology in arriving at her conclusions about my commitment to serving the people of Illinois' 1st Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives are highly suspect.

The Tribune article asserts that my voting record in the House was among the worst of the "current" members of Congress. Ms. Skiba uses data from the web site Govtrack as her primary source. While Govtrack does compare the voting records of Members of Congress, it makes those comparisons irrespective of their tenures in office or number of votes cast. Elected in 1992, I have cast over 12,700 roll call votes. 21.4% of the current members of the House are freshmen having voted less than 1000 times. Accordingly, Ms. Skiba's statistical source and methodologies are fundamentally flawed and tell a partial and incomplete story.

Beyond being highly offensive to me, her so-called "political journalism" supports a simplistic and erroneous thesis that the measure of an effective legislator is a perfect, or as near to perfect voting record as possible. As you may know, voting percentages do not account for the "storms in life" which we all must deal with, some more than others. With each passing year I have been privileged to serve in Congress, I have come to know that voters do not elect and send representatives to Washington exclusively to vote or to perfect their oratorical skills in debates on the House floor and in committee hearing rooms.

In fact, in a rather lengthy Tribune article that Ms. Skiba wrote about me September 19, 2011, she cited DePaul University political scientist Michael Mezey, who pointed to a complex of factors that can distinguish legislators from one another and notes that Rush "does his job...shows up for work...takes care of his constituency".

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Notwithstanding the political perspective of Ms. Skiba, I can cite numerous political commentators and academics, including Morris P. Fiorina, Bruce Cain, Gerald D. Sturges, Gregory J. Wawro, George Serra, David Moon, and R. Douglas Arnold, who each have held that voting is not the dispositive mark of an effective legislator. Even Norm Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute, who Ms. Skiba quotes in her January 17th article concedes that voting “[m]ay not be the most important part of the job...” (emphasis added for clarification).

In addition to voting on hundreds of bills and resolutions in each session of Congress, which span from the most critical pieces of legislation to the most trivial, my constituents want me to come back TO the District. They have an expectation that I will return to engage them on the issues and matters that affect them and their quality of life. While I am not alone as a Member of Congress in consistently returning to my district when the House is out of session, there are Members, including some cited in the Tribune article, who rarely missed votes because in large measure they rarely return to their districts.

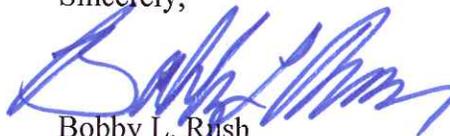
Citizens are scratching their heads now to understand what their legislators are voting on because they aren't seeing the results that those votes purport to represent as impacting their lives in any meaningful way. My constituents are looking at results, not voting records. This is what I've been focused on during my nearly two decades of service in Congress, a decade of service in city government, and lifetime of service to people.

During the first session of the this 112th Congress alone, I authored and introduced eight (8) substantive bills, two (2) resolutions, and offered eight (8) substantive amendments to major pieces of energy and environmental legislation, which were voted upon on the House floor. These numbers do not include 225 other bills and resolutions introduced by other Members of Congress that I have cosponsored this session. Additionally, as the top Democrat on the House Energy and Power Subcommittee, I led Democratic efforts at 25 Subcommittee hearings, 7 Subcommittee markups, and 6 full Committee markups.

I'm a public servant and scrutiny is part of what I signed up for. I do not argue with the media's watchdog function. The work of The Fourth Estate is an essential element of our democracy. The framers of the Constitution were wise in creating a system where people are free to criticize their government and those who work in it. But the watchdog that barks too often at shadows will soon be ignored.

It is my sincerest hope that the Chicago Tribune will regain its high standard of journalistic integrity and excellence and editorial oversight and refrain from being a captive of “gonzo journalism” as unfortunately has befallen far too many of our nation's news outlets.

Sincerely,



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress