

Member of Congress is immensely well-educated. She is very attractive, and she is very articulate. But the best thing about her is, she fights, she works, and she doesn't give up.

There are a lot of smart people in the world; there are a lot of attractive people in the world. The people who make a difference are the people who take whatever the opportunities and the burdens life gives them, and they fight for their dreams and for the welfare of other people. And that's the kind of Member of Congress Sheila Jackson Lee is.

Now, all of you know that. But no longer than she has been in Congress that she really has established a truly astonishing record across a very wide range of issues. I can't think of any Member from any district that's been there the length of time she has that's done so much in so many different areas, and I appreciate that—in housing, in mental health services, especially in mental health services for children, something that I think is profoundly important. She's the leader of the congressional children's caucus and a great leader doing the things that we think need to be done to reduce violence against children, to have sensible measures to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, to have after-school programs for children, to have mental health services in our schools for the children who need them. And in all of these areas she has actually had an impact. It's not just—because she doesn't just give a speech and then go away. She understands that words just drift into air and disappear unless they're backed up by deeds, and not just one day's worth but consistent, systematic, determined effort. Fast and hard. [Laughter]

I loved it—on the way over here tonight, my Chief of Staff and I, John Podesta, were sitting in the car saying, "I wonder what old Sheila is going to ask us for tonight." [Laughter] Then we pull up in the driveway, and there's Mayor Brown and Sheila. And I said, "My God, they want me to move the Capital to Houston." [Laughter] If she decided that was the right thing to do, I wouldn't bet everything I own against it getting done. [Laughter]

I say this with respect. You see, I think—and I know I can say this for Lloyd Bentsen, who is one of the finest public servants I've even known—public service is an honor. And most people who do it are honorable people. But the special people who do it are not only

honorable and passionate, they stick, and they work, and they get things done.

The reason I asked him to be my first Secretary of the Treasury is I thought he was the best Senate finance chairman I could ever imagine. And I knew if I named him to be Secretary of State—Treasury, people would be serious. They'd say, "This guy really is putting the economy first. This President really is going to turn the economy around."

Serious people are people that are not only smart and articulate, they get things done. That's what Sheila Jackson Lee does. I could give you a lot of other examples. She's been so active in Africa and the fight against AIDS in Africa, in the Africa trade bill, and trying to pass the Caribbean Basin Initiative trade bill and just on and on and on. She is the ranking member of the subcommittee of the Judicial Committee on Immigration, a big deal for Texas and to the United States.

Yes, we should enforce our immigration laws. And people who wait their turn should not be discriminated against by people who don't. But we should never forget, looking around this room, that we are a nation of immigrants. Except for the Native Americans, we all came here from somewhere else. And even they did, but it was across a landmass that no longer exists, many millennia ago. And we should never forget this. All of us, one way or the other, got here by the grace of God from somewhere else.

And so, what—we've tried to make it clear that America is stronger because we're a nation of immigrants, that our freedom to practice our faith is stronger because we welcome people of all faiths to our country, and offer them the protections of our Constitution for their religious and cultural practices and their right to free speech. And she carries the banner of protecting those values in the United States Congress.

Like I said, she just got there. Another thing I said to my Chief of Staff, I said, "You know, if Sheila had been in Congress for 20 years, it would take me 3 hours to introduce her." [Laughter] She will have done so much by then, we'll just have to forgo the introduction. [Laughter] This is very important. We need people like this.

You know, I read—as a lot of you know, I read a lot of American history, and I spent a lot of time when I was asked by one of the major magazines to write an essay on the person I thought should be considered the person of