

Greetings, State Senators:

Thank you for your consideration of SCR 210/In Memoriam: Mike Donahue, 1946-2023.

Why should a state government formally recognize a journalist, during this era when unbiased, fact-based reporting of local, state and world events has been so widely lost? When so many reporters have turned into commentators with their charged words and raised eyebrows.

I believe your vote for this bill will encourage a new high bar for the fourth estate ---the journalist watchdogs of our government, so vital to democracy. Students interested in journalism will be inspired reading about Mike's 40 year storied career. And the many deserving, reputable journalists still in the field (including a few veterans who know of, worked with and strive for Mike's high standards) will be encouraged to keep up the good fight.

Some of you still in the Senate have worked with or been interviewed by Mike. You knew when you talked with him, you could trust him to be fair and honest — and tough.

For 20 years I had the unique honor of sitting next to Mike, on the anchor desk, in the newsroom and out in the field. We covered everything from the Rose Bowl to the Rose Parade, to town halls on gang violence and the near Rajneesh takeover of our state government. Mike never failed to treat everyone – from Presidents to taxicab drivers -- with the same kindness and respect. "Is he always that nice?" I was often asked. "Yes," he's otherworldly, an angel, isn't it annoying?" I'd joke.

Mike travelled the world to help Oregonians understand how economies and atrocities affect us here at home — to the Middle East with Governor Atiyeh to understand trade; to Africa to understand the famine and refugees; to Russia so we could appreciate the treasures and history on their way to the Portland Art Museum.

Dedicated to his job to the point of exhaustion, sometimes, Mike was the one who never took lunch or dinner at his desk. He was always in pursuit of a new lead for advancing his story from one newscast to the next, triple checking his sources, flipping through his enviable "rolodex", always up for a challenge and willing to humble himself to get the real story (voluntarily entering jail to understand the living conditions). Making sure for every story he "got it right."

Mike was also part of the "resistance" — the pressures to sell out and sensationalize the news for ratings sake.

Mike put his job on the line, trying to sway management to make better leadership choices. And many of us remember the one and only time he lost his temper — when a manager pushed him too far, trying to change who he was and what he believed in.

There are still many excellent reporters out there, fighting to hold onto their mission as responsible and honest watchdogs. Let's encourage them and a new generation, by recognizing the excellence that is Mike Donahue.

Our Albany, Oregon boy. University of Oregon standout. Army veteran. And proud father of his beautiful wife and two exquisite daughters. And without question, our Walter Cronkite of Oregon.

Thank you!

Kind regards,
Shirley Hancock