

Show Horse or Work Horse?

By

Daniel E. White January 15, 2024

Carl Hayden was U.S. Senator from Arizona for forty-two years, from 1927 to 1969, the first ever to be elected to that many terms. Before that, he had been elected to the House of Representatives when the state was admitted to the Union, and he had served in the House for eight terms. He held the record for many years as the longest serving member of Congress.

If Arizonans know Hayden today, it is likely because they have driven over the Hayden-Rhodes Aqueduct, completed in 1985, bringing Colorado River water across the state. It is likely, though, that few actually know who he was, perhaps because he was known in Washington as the “Silent Senator.”

Barry Goldwater is more well-known. He served as U.S. Senator from 1953-65 and 1969-87. The Goldwater Department Store was a major institution in the state, helping to ensure voter name recognition. From the start of his political career, he was a prominent member of the conservative wing of the Republican Party, opposed to much of the New Deal.

Less known about Goldwater is that he was a lifelong member of the NAACP, instrumental in integrating the Arizona Air National Guard, a key political figure in the desegregation of public schools a year before *Brown v. Board of Education* and awarded the 1991 Humanitarian Award for 50 years of service to the Urban League. He also supported gays in the military, gay rights in general, abortion rights, and the legalization of medical marijuana. These political positions seem inconsistent with a generally-held idea of what a conservative believes.

If any of the above seems beyond belief, check the biographies of these two men. Even just consult Wikipedia as a shortcut. Ask, why is one so well-known and the other not? One answer is obvious: one was known for being quiet about his work, the other, also influential and a true believer in his political philosophy, surprising as aspects of that philosophy were, was a presidential nominee, known across the country.

Hayden offered advice to another U.S. Senator from Arizona when he came to the Senate. “You can be either a show horse or a work horse.” Hayden clearly chose to be a work horse. Goldwater’s career was split; for much of it, he was a work horse, influential behind the scenes in ways that don’t match the popular concept of Goldwater.

But work horses do not become the nominee of a major party for the presidency. So, for a time, he was more of a show horse. Losing the presidency changed that.

The man Hayden advised later became known as “the Father of the G.I. Bill” in the Senate. Three times he sponsored laws raising Social Security Benefits for seniors. With

Hayden, this Senator championed CAP, the project bringing Colorado River water to the state, and argued Arizona's case before the U.S. Supreme Court. He was Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate for two years.

Later, as Governor, he created the Arizona State Park system. Tucson got a State Office Building because of him, and Arizona State became a university. Still later, he was Chief Justice of the

Arizona Supreme Court, becoming the only person to hold the top jobs in the three branches of government. His list of accomplishments is hard to match.

But who knows the name Ernest McFarland? He took Hayden's advice seriously. In the process, he became a forgotten figure.

Show horses crave attention but seldom try to govern well. D.C. and state capitals teem with show horses. Show horses live for the headlines. They seem to run for office for the specific purpose of being in the news constantly rather than participating in the legislative process. Show horses are seldom bi-partisan, chiefly because bi-partisanship is generally collaborative, and collaboration makes for comparative indifference from traditional and social media.

There are very few examples of laws bearing the name of show horses. Even their rate of bill- introduction is low. If they care about their constituents at any time other than elections, they view their job as ensuring that nothing proposed by the other party ever troubles the people on whom show horses depend upon for election.

The political leaders who actually make the system work choose, as their job, making the system work to benefit those who elected them. These people don't care about publicity because, if their work results in something valuable for their constituents, the voters will be able to figure out who got something done.

We lived in a state for many years where the senior Senator was known for the many ways in which he attracted infrastructure improvements to the state accomplished with federal support. If Senator Inouye was known outside Hawaii, it was likely because he was of Japanese descent and a World War Two veteran who had lost an arm. He did not crave headlines.

Years ago, South Carolina had a Congressman, L. Mendel Rivers, who looked out for his constituents well. As a result, there are things in the state named for him. He might have been a "king of pork," but he served the people who elected him without much fanfare beyond his district and state.

When we go to the polls this year, might it be prudent to decide which candidate is the work horse and which is the show horse?

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