

# Republican Perspective

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by John Littig

## No Greater Love

The January 29 U.S. Navy SEAL operation in Yemen went awry when the SEALs lost the element of surprise. Chief Petty Officer William “Ryan” Owens was killed in the ensuing battle. In his February 28 address to a joint session of Congress, President Trump honored Ryan and his widow, Carryn.

Trump said: “...the Bible teaches us there is no greater act of love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. Ryan laid down his life for his friends, for his country, and for our freedom---we will never forget him...Ryan’s legacy is etched into eternity.” The wall-to-wall standing ovation lasted for what seemed an eternity.

Trump’s gesture was widely acclaimed by commentators across the political spectrum. You can’t get to the Left of CNN’s Van Jones, whose praise was effusive: “He became President of the United States in that moment, period...That was one of the most extraordinary moments you have ever seen in American politics, period.” Jones continued: “He did something extraordinary. For people who have been hoping that he would become unifying...they should be happy with that moment.” And Jones even suggested “...if he finds a way to do that over and over again, he’s going to be there for eight years.”

Paying tribute to heroes and their families in presidential speeches is not new. A few examples: President Obama did it with a severely wounded Army Ranger, Cory Remsburg. President Bush (the younger) acknowledged the widow of Johnny “Mike” Spann, the first American death in Afghanistan. President Clinton acknowledged the widows of police officers killed in the U.S. Capitol shooting incident in 1998.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that such tributes have become common practice, and despite the fact that Trump’s gesture has drawn praise from Republicans and Democrats alike, not everyone was delighted. Some examples from the fringe:

MSNBC’s Chris Matthews called it “grotesque.” Bill Maher said “I wish she hadn’t allowed herself to be used as a prop.” Activist and director Rob Reiner called it “disgraceful.” One of the ladies of “The View” said “He [Trump] exploited that widow” and another “hated it last night.” And of course Michael Moore heavily weighed in,

saying that Trump used Carryn's loss to score political points: "And to use that as, just put another notch on his belt."

But worse was yet to come. At least Moore, Matthews, Reiner, and the ladies of "The View" were criticizing Trump---and Carryn only tangentially. Dan Grilo came right out and insulted Carryn herself. Grilo is a self-confessed volunteer for both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. He tweeted: "Sorry, Owens' wife, you're not helping yourself or your husband's memory by standing there and clapping like an idiot. Trump just used you."

Grilo apologized for his "poorly worded tweet." Grilo's Twitter account was soon deleted, and he was promptly sacked by his employer Liberty Advisor Group. Liberty posted an apology and explanation on its web site, which concludes: "Liberty's culture places a high value on the men and women of America's military who fight to defend us...We honor them. We want to express our sincere condolences to Mrs. Owens. We also apologize to all those who have served this nation...and anyone else who was offended by [Grilo's] comments." Perhaps he'll show up as a commentator on CNN or MSNBC.

Certainly there are others that shared such hatred of Trump's tribute to the Owens but fortunately had the common sense or common decency to skip the opportunity to attack the gesture.

Taya Kyle, widow of "American Sniper" Chris Kyle, commented on Moore and his ilk who had insinuated that the tribute was a publicity stunt. She said the classless response "...makes me sick to my stomach...makes me angry because he's saying that she's a fool and doesn't know she's being used..." And: "It totally negates the meaning behind this. And the meaning of it---for all the people watching who cried with [Carryn]---is that some valiant people are out there fighting, not for Republicans, not for Democrats. They're fighting for this country. And God bless them for it."