

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for his humanity and courage to deal with this issue.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps it is important for those of us in this Chamber to first remind ourselves again of why we are really all here. Thomas Jefferson said, "The care of human life and its happiness and not its destruction is the chief and only object of good government."

Mr. Speaker, protecting the lives of our innocent citizens and their constitutional rights is why we are all here. The phrase in the 14th amendment capsulizes our entire Constitution. It says: "No State shall deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law." It is unconscionable that judges holding responsibility to protect Terri Schiavo's constitutional rights have chosen to abandon those responsibilities so that now Congress has no honorable alternative but to respond as we are.

Hubert Humphrey once said that a society is measured by how it treats those in the dawn of life, those in the shadows of life, and those in the twilight of life. It is true that Terri Schiavo lives among us in the shadows of life. But she is not brain dead or comatose. She is awake and she is able to hear, she is able to see, she is often alert. She can feel pain, she interacts with her environment, she laughs, she

cries. She expresses joy when her parents visit her and sorrow when they leave.

Mr. Speaker, she reminds me so much of another woman, whose name I will not mention, who was in much the same circumstance as Terri and a young nurse insisted every morning on singing to this patient. Of course, her colleagues upbraided her and said, well, she can't hear you; those are just reflex actions. But she continued day after day, year after year, to sing to her every morning. Finally she left the hospital, and yet a few years later, the patient regained her state of mind and came back, as it were, to a healthy, clear mind. And all of the nurses gathered around her and met with her and they said, Do you remember? Do you remember when we took care of you, when we turned you to keep you from getting bed sores? When we washed you? When we tried to feed you?

And she said, No, I don't remember anything except someone singing.

Mr. Speaker, Terri Schiavo represents the mortality and helplessness of us all as human beings. And whether we realize it or not, we are at this moment lying down beside her listening for that song of hope. If we as a Nation subject her to the torture and agony of starving and thirsting to death while her brother, her mother and her father are forced to watch, we will scar our own souls. And we will be allowing those judges who have lost their way to drag us all one more ominous step into a darkness where the light of human compassion has gone out and the predatory survival of the fittest prevails over humanity.

If the song of hope is to be silenced, Mr. Speaker, let it not be tonight.