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## What was Vera DeJaegher's gift to her community? Editorial She stood by her man

### The Dispatch

It wasn't all that long ago that a new kind of political wife suggested to American voters that she wasn't going to be a "Tammy Wynette" kind of spouse; staying home and baking cookies.

Hillary Rodham Clinton was variously villified or celebrated for bringing political wives into a new century. But the fact is that for years those stoic, dedicated and loving women had as much to do with their husband's success as the husbands did, they just did it quietly. Back then politicians, nearly all male, didn't juggle home, family and politics; they juggled politics. Meanwhile most political wives had several balls floating in the air.

Vera DeJaegher seemed to be that kind of woman. She was the wife of prominent longtime Rock Island County politician Marcel "Bob" DeJaegher, but you'd have to look awfully hard to find many public references to this loving wife and mother. And yet it's hard to believe that her husband could have risen to county board chairman, innovative township supervisor or, ultimately, state representative without her support and assistance, however quiet it was.

Indeed, the long-time Democrat's devotion to his wife and gratitude to her were obvious as he gradually, reluctantly, but willingly dropped from public life to care for her. She was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease several years ago and her illness would lead her husband to work tirelessly in Springfield for other such victims. She was, he said, "a great woman."

On Dec. 30, the former Vera Wendell gave up her fight. She was 84. Our sympathy goes out to her husband of more than 60 years and to her children and grandchildren.

Her obituary earlier this week said, "Vera loved her family and enjoyed taking care of others." We doubt if it tells the full tale. Standing by her man may not have been Sen. Clinton's style, but it suited Vera DeJaegher beautifully.

New position most welcome

The Rock Island Argus



Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan has struck a blow for freedom of information by creating a public access counselor within her office to enhance understanding of and compliance with the state's sunshine laws such as the Freedom of Information and Open Meetings laws. The position is a first in the attorney general's office.

``Open and honest government depends on the full participation of citizens in their government and the free exchange of information between government and its citizens," Attorney General Madigan said. ``Here in Illinois, we have two important laws designed explicitly to ensure that citizens have access to information regarding the affairs of government: the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act. It is critical that both the public and public officials understand these laws and that all public officials know their obligations under these laws."

As the state's chief legal officer, Attorney General Madigan and her office have worked closely with members of the public, the media and government to resolve disputes under these laws and ensure compliance with them. The creation of the public access counselor position can do nothing but help protect the state's open government laws.

Terry Mutchler, an assistant attorney general, is the new PAC. Known for her passion for making sure government abides by both the letter and the spirit of open-government laws, the former newspaper reporter is highly qualified for the important job. We join the Illinois Press Association -- which began the push for the appointment of an public access counselor several years ago -- in applauding the announcement and commending Attorney General Madigan for making access to public records in Illinois a priority.

Though reporters may seem to be over-inquisitive at times in seeking access to governmental decisions, experience has taught them that when the right comes to be regarded lightly there is danger that it will be flagrantly ignored. Freedom of information is not, basically, a right of the press, but of the public. That makes the creation of Ms. Mutchler's new position most appropriate.

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