



**Liberty Hall  
Lawrence KS  
July 9, 2008  
Senator Laura Kelly  
Kansas State Senate  
“For Jana”**

We’re reminded at times like this of how quickly things can change. How suddenly someone who brought so much happiness to the world, and who was a tireless advocate for justice, can be so unjustly taken away. But as quickly as tragedy can fall upon those least deserving of it, the legacy left behind lasts far beyond the shock and the sorrow. So though a shining light has been extinguished, a glow remains. Fainter, yes, but still present in all our lives.

All of us knew Jana as a passionate advocate, someone who didn’t just talk the talk, but walked the walk, everyday. Jana was never a whiner. Setbacks were just temporary. Problems were just hurdles to overcome. She was always looking for a way to move her issues forward, to help the folks she dedicated her life to serving.

Jana gave a voice to those in our society who too often were ignored, victimized or even persecuted. She was deeply committed to social justice, and to the belief that equality wasn’t just a word, but something we must strive for. She advocated not for civil rights, or women’s rights, or gay rights, but for human rights – for the right of everyone to pursue life, liberty and happiness in his or her own way.

Pedro Irigonegaray told me that Jana, “was to our United States and Kansas Constitutions as light is to stained glass. She was an intelligent, strong and courageous advocate, fearless in her pursuit of freedom, justice and equality for all. Jana took the lofty principles found in our constitutions and worked hard to insure their protection and application.”

Anyone who knew her – or who was unlucky enough to find themselves on the other side of an issue from her – knows that she was a smart, tireless advocate. Jana was brilliant in general, but she was also a brilliant student of the process by which things get done. She was always seeking to learn and understand, and to share that knowledge with others. Whether it was politics or the law, she strove to understand the playing field – often surpassing those who had been around for years – so that she could improve her chances of victory.

Jana was calm and methodical in her approach, recognizing the sometimes glacial pace of change, and also understanding her job was as much about building walls – brick by brick – to prevent bad policies from moving us backward, as it was about building bridges to move us forward.

She was a fearless and dedicated advocate, but Jana also knew how to laugh, and how to make others forget about the troubles and trials of their lives. Many a legislator and lobbyist got a much-needed respite from the worries going on inside the dome by stepping out onto the Statehouse steps with Jana, often in the bitter Kansas cold, for a quick break and a good laugh. And after the day was done, you may have seen Jana at Donnie's, sometimes still chasing down votes, but always having a good time in the process.

When I think about this tragedy, I wonder what Jana would have done if she were still here with us, and not the victim. My guess is she would have become more passionate, worked harder and smarter, and reached out to touch even more lives than she had already.

So now, as we celebrate Jana's life with thoughts and memories, let us also truly remember her and honor her by picking up the fallen torch – really torches – that Jana has left us, and carrying her causes forward.

Let us ask ourselves in the coming days and weeks, months and years – What would Jana do?

Jana advocated for women – for equal pay and equal rights, and for the right of women to make our own health care decisions. And she strove to see a day when women could live free of the threat of violence, domestic or otherwise – a day that, tragically, has not yet come.

When it comes time to take a stand on these most critical issues, let us ask ourselves what Jana would do. Then, go do it.

Jana advocated for gays and lesbians – opposing discrimination and seeking to create a society in which all are not just free from intimidation, but truly accepted as equals. She knew our nation would never truly be free until we were all truly equal.

When we must stand for the equality and dignity of all Kansans, let us stop for a moment to ponder what Jana would do? Then, go do it.

And Jana advocated on behalf of those seeking justice – beginning this summer as part of her legal education to represent prisoners making appeals, steadfast in her belief that everyone deserves representation and that all are equal before the law.

When we face a time when justice is threatened, we must be sure to ask ourselves, “What would Jana do?” Then, go do it.

Our remembrance of Jana must go beyond candles, flowers, memorials and blogs. It must be an effort to make the changes that Jana fought for. She worked every day to improve the systems that she held so dear, to make them more humane and more just so that they better represented our values.

So we have a duty to become informed, to become active in our communities, state and nation. We must respond proactively to injustice. We can't just assume others will do it

for us; that someone else will pick up the torch and carry it forward. Jana didn't wait. She didn't assume another would do the job, and she wouldn't want us to either.

If we do that, if we truly remember and honor Jana, then we can return a little of the light that has been lost. It may never again shine as brightly, but its glow, Jana's glow, can still warm our hearts and change our world.