

= Berkley Bedell =

Berkley Warren Bedell (born March 5 , 1921) is a former U.S. Representative from Iowa . After starting a successful business in his youth , Berkley Fly Co . , he ran for the United States Congress in 1972 , but was defeated by incumbent Wiley Mayne . In 1974 , however , Bedell beat Wiley Mayne and was elected to Congress .

He was known for his support of representative democracy and his populist style . For example , he would hold town halls and let constituents vote on motions to decide what he would do in Congress on their behalf . These meetings helped Bedell understand the problems of his constituents ; as a result , he backed issues that were important to his farming constituency , such as waterway usage fees and production constraints .

He did not seek reelection in 1986 after contracting Lyme disease from a tick bite . Though he no longer serves in Congress , Bedell remains active in Iowa politics , strongly supporting Howard Dean in 2004 over John Kerry . In the 2008 presidential election , he met several times with Chris Dodd , but endorsed Barack Obama in the end .

= = Early life = =

Born in Spirit Lake , Iowa , Bedell was educated in Spirit Lake public schools . He graduated from Spirit Lake High School in 1939 , where he earned spending money with a business in the midst of the Great Depression . His business involved braiding dog hairs around fishhooks , the result of which could be sold as trout flies . He began tying the fly @-@ fishing lures in his bedroom , then he moved the business into his parents ' basement . In time , he got space above a grocery store to continue the business full @-@ time .

After graduating from high school , he attended Iowa State University from 1940 to 1942 , where he met fellow ISU student Elinor Healy from Grand Marais , Minnesota . Berkley and Elinor married in Minneapolis on August 29 , 1943 and their son Kenneth was born in 1947 , Thomas in 1950 and daughter Joanne in 1952 . Berkley ' s college and personal life was interrupted in 1942 when he joined the army . He served in the United States Army as first lieutenant and flight trainer from 1942 to 1945 . When he got back , he began to garner success from his fish tackling business . His business became larger , with hundreds of employees and international operations ; he had become a millionaire by the 1960s . He served as member of the Spirit Lake Board of Education from 1957 to 1962 .

= = Political career = =

= = = Running for Congress = = =

By the early 1970s , Bedell had decided to run for political office . In 1972 , he ran against Wiley Mayne , a Republican incumbent in Iowa 's 6th congressional district . Mayne was a staunch supporter of Richard Nixon and secured victory along with the President in a year favorable to the Republicans . Mayne , however , would politically suffer after Watergate (he was one of only a few Republicans to vote against impeaching the President on the judiciary committee .) The damage had already been done , and Bedell defeated Mayne in a 1974 rematch .

During his time at Congress , Bedell took efforts to uphold representative democracy . He held town halls regularly with his constituents , and he would let them vote on motions to decide what he would do in Congress on their behalf . This type of communication told Bedell of the types of issues affecting his farming constituency . Thus , though Bedell had not farmed in his life , he would take steps in Congress to benefit farmers .

= = = Waterway usage fees = = =

Bedell sponsored several bold initiatives during his tenure in the United States House of Representatives . One initiative , which came from his constituents ' problems with the barge industry , focused on waterway usage fees . He introduced legislation in 1977 that would require the barge industry to pay a fee for using the waterways which , Bedell pointed out , the Government paid millions of dollars to create and maintain . Bedell 's original plan set the rate the barge industry paid as directly related to the amount the Government spent on waterway projects . This would have the additional effect of helping curb unnecessary waterway projects , and it was the same plan proposed by Pete Domenici in the Senate .

Congress eventually passed a watered @-@ down version of the original plan put forward by Bedell and Senator Pete Domenici . The compromise version enacted a tax on the gasoline barges used and put it into a " trust " for waterway projects . While other supporters of waterway usage fees , including Domenici , backed the compromise , Bedell gave a passionate plea for his colleagues to oppose it . He viewed it as lacking a crucial element of the original plan - that of capital recovery . The trust was optional , and the Government could spend money on waterway projects irrespective of the trust . The compromise was eventually signed by Jimmy Carter . Bedell 's original plan never made it through the House of Representatives , but he continued to introduce it in succeeding sessions . It would not , however , get a floor vote in succeeding sessions .

= = = Farming issues = = =

In 1985 , Bedell put forward an agricultural plan that he thought would increase production controls for farmers , thus raising prices for crops . This plan , backed by labor unions and certain Democrats , passed the Agriculture Committee as an amendment to farm legislation . It mandated a referendum that would then be used to determine what types of production controls to enact . The purpose of this plan was twofold : production controls would decrease the aggregate supply of crops , thus making individual crops cost more (which would benefit farmers , who were in the middle of an acute debt crisis .) Second , by styling it as a referendum , the farmers would get to decide the severity of the controls .

On the other hand , opponents of the Bedell plan had a very different view of this legislation . Representatives such as Pat Roberts claimed that the referendum was redundant because the farmers already voted the politicians into office , and this bill was an example of the politicians not doing their jobs . The Reagan Administration opposed the bill because of their opposition to production controls , and the President threatened to veto the farm bill if Bedell 's plan was left in place . When the bill got to the floor , an amendment was proposed to strike this provision , and it was passed 251 @-@ 174 .

= = = Investigations of large businesses = = =

While in Congress , Berkley Bedell was Chairman of the Small Business Subcommittee , and he used this position to investigate underselling on the part of large oil companies . He also claimed that certain large oil companies underpaid their " windfall taxes " in certain cases and wanted to pass legislation to increase regulations on these corporations .

In these investigations , Bedell quickly gained the support of small gasoline marketers and Congressman Bill Nelson . The chief target , ARCO , was accused of not paying all of its taxes on Alaskan crude oil . In the end , the government tried to make a case against ARCO , but it was eventually dropped in 1985 . Bedell used this opportunity to attack the Administration for " not caring " about small business owners , and he advocated that Governmental agencies put aside 1 @-@ 3 % of their research and development money for small businesses .

= = = Clash with Reagan = = =

In late 1982 , Congress passed a law which forbade the United States from funding groups aiming to overthrow the Sandinista government of Nicaragua . Then , in 1983 , Bedell visited Nicaragua and

Honduras along with Representative Robert G. Torricelli . During the trip , Bedell spoke with soldiers , generals , governmental officials and members of the contras . His conclusion at the end of the trip was that Ronald Reagan was aiding the contras in violation of federal law . He promised to hold hearings after returning to Congress . Bedell would later join other House Democrats in demanding documents from the White House related to the contras , but the Reagan Administration refused to provide them . Bedell became angrier with the Reagan Administration as the decade wore on . He called his Central American policies " sheer lunacy , " saying that the mining of harbors was an acts of war . Bedell would retire from Congress before Reagan 's acts in Central America would culminate with the Iran @-@ Contra Affair .

Furthermore , Bedell was a sharp critic of Reagan 's agricultural policies , calling for John Block to resign after calling his agricultural plan a failure that was " dead on arrival " in both the House and the Senate . Reagan 's agricultural plan consisted primarily of a gradual reduction in farm subsidies . He also attacked the Department of Agriculture for " looking backward " when it dismissed the only expert on organic farming . Also , as chairman of the subcommittee on Department Operations , Research and Foreign Agriculture , which was in charge of regulating USDA operations , he opposed the proposals Reagan had for reforming the organization . The proposals generally involved shifting costs for meat inspections and other USDA duties from the federal government to the industry .

= = = Controversy = = =

In 1981 , it was revealed in internal memos that Bedell may have known about potential customs violations that his company engaged in . It asserted that Bedell had gone to Taiwan in 1973 to discuss " prior violations of customs law " in regards to the sale of fishing rods from the company 's Taiwan subsidiary . Bedell responded by denying any wrongdoing , saying that he has not been personally involved in the company in years . In the end , no charges were levied against him , and he was reelected after the story was published .

= = After politics = =

Bedell decided not to seek reelection in 1986 after contracting Lyme Disease from a tick bite . Since then , he has founded a center for alternative medicine and is a noted advocate of health freedom . Due largely to his friendship with Tom Harkin , he remains an important political figure in Iowa , with politicians such as Howard Dean meeting him in their trips to the state . Also , the Elinor Bedell State Park was established in 1998 on land donated by Berkley Bedell . The park is named after the Congressman 's wife .

As an opponent of the Vietnam War , Bedell signed a petition urging against United States military intervention in Iraq . This petition was signed with the names of 70 former Congressmen from the 1970s and was presented in a press conference on March 15 , 2003 . Bedell said that it was unbelievable for the United States to settle disputes with war , and he said that an Iraq war would be similar to the Vietnam War .

In the 2004 presidential election , Bedell attacked John Kerry for voting for Newt Gingrich 's Freedom to Farm Act , which Bedell claims wrecked the farm program . Bedell would later officially endorse Howard Dean 's candidacy . For the 2008 election , Bedell met with Chris Dodd . However , in December 2007 , he announced his endorsement of Barack Obama .