

Jessica Echard Zeigler - My Eagle Forum Story



Although I grew up in a conservative family in the heart of West Virginia, I had never heard of Phyllis Schlafly when I started my college internship at another pro-family group in Washington, D.C. in the summer of 2002. I attended the Eagle Forum Collegians Summit and was blown away by the speakers, the topics, and this little older lady who manned the microphone and made great jokes about liberals. I was also impressed with the young woman leading the Eagle Forum lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill, Lori Waters. She wasn't much older than me and was keeping congressmen in line fearlessly! I loved that EF battled all the issues, not just a few social ones, on an intellectual front with sharp analysis.

When CPAC rolled around the next winter, I interviewed with Lori for a post-graduation internship that would turn into a full-time job after the summer. Lori let me know she was essentially hiring her replacement so I could train under her. Despite my parents being fearful of their little West Virginia girl moving to DC to run with the political big dogs, I knew this was what God had called me to do and I couldn't wait to take on the world . . . even though I was only 21. Not many organizations would give a chance like that to such a young person. Phyllis did.

In the meantime, my College Republican group (Marietta College in Ohio) received a donation from Bill and Prudence Fields, whom I didn't know and were longtime Eagle Forum members. They were funding a series to bring conservative speakers to the MC campus, including Phyllis. Only six months after I graduated Phi Beta Kappa, I returned to my alma mater to introduce my new boss, Phyllis Schlafly and watch the sparks fly. This event began a longtime friendship with the Fields, who supported me tirelessly for many years. I am honored to know them and am grateful for their service to Eagle Forum.

I continued to work for Eagle Forum from 2003-2008. Those five years changed my life forever. Phyllis sharpened my intellect, improved my writing (for an English major, I thought was pretty good, but Phyllis cut my word count in half!), and taught me the rules of the highest stakes game in America—DC politics. There was no better mentor.

I was bold and brave in the battle because I knew Phyllis had my back. When I had just taken over for Lori, I sparred with a Bush administration official in front of 100+ staff persons at a center-right coalition meeting in D.C. I was 24. A guy in attendance asked one of my friends, "Who does she think she is?" My friend replied, "She works for Eagle Forum." Enough said!

Jessica and her husband live in Northern Virginia, where she stays at home to care for their daughter.