

LORI (COLE) WATERS' EAGLE FORM STORY...



Sometimes missing a day of school is life-changing. When I was 15 years old, my mom planned a “field trip” for us to participate in the final day of the Georgia legislative session. She had started lobbying with a group of moms and grandmothers, the Georgia Eagles, and she thought I would benefit from seeing government in action. That spark of excitement being part of the legislative process ignited my passion for politics, and I became a second generation Eagle.

Before I knew it, I was attending Eagle Council with my mom and stirring controversy as a columnist for my school newspaper. Being a pro-family conservative teen was not always popular. Taking my cues and lessons from Phyllis and the Eagles, I learned to debate students and teachers. Upon learning that I was a conservative, one atheist professor commented, “Oh this is going to be fun,” and I knew I was in for a battle. Even though it sometimes brought social challenges, I felt compelled to represent the conservative viewpoint, even when those who agreed with me sat in silence. I learned early on how the left used fear and mockery as a weapon attempting to silence opposing viewpoints.

While pursuing a Political Science degree, my semester away experience brought me to Eagle Forum’s Capitol Hill office as an intern, where I met Kris Ardizzone Ullman. What an amazing summer working on issues, such as defunding Planned Parenthood and defending traditional marriage. I knew that I had to return to DC and work for Phyllis. After graduation, I became the EF National Collegians Director to help empower other young people to speak up against the leftists overtaking their campuses.

With a small DC office of 2 to 4 women, Phyllis was always preparing young women and men to take on the political power players, while also develop relationships with friendly conservatives in the executive and legislative branches. As Kris moved on to work with Senator Ashcroft and then Sheila Moloney left for the House Republican Study Committee, my duties expanded to legislation, media, and elections. These pieces were so intertwined.

We knew that electing the right person to office was one way to completely alter the legislative landscape, so through the political action committee, we would mobilize voters as well as financially support conservative candidates answering the call to serve. I recall interviewing this one particular Reaganesque candidate, who had been a radio host from Indiana. He had passion and a servant’s heart. He spoke our language, and the Eagles backed him 100 percent. We went

all in for him. Yes, Mike Pence won his election to the House of Representatives that year. I always thought he had what it took to move up-ticket.

With Phyllis as my coach and critic, I became a frequent guest on political news and commentary television and radio shows. When I appeared on Bill Maher's Politically Incorrect, I was likely the lone conservative and Christian in the entire studio. They used humor to make fun of me (teenage stuff - been there, done that), but their arguments crumbled when confronted by truth. In one instance, Chevy Chase just told me to "Shut up," to which I responded, "No,"



along with a punch to his arm. He wasn't quite expecting that from a petite, 24 year-old woman. But that is what the left wants us to do - to be quiet and do nothing. However, Phyllis was my mentor, and because of her, I learned to use my voice, of course with a smile rather than a feminist frown.

My involvement in politics soon changed. Given the grassroots training I had received through Eagle Forum, I decided to run for local office. After defeating a liberal incumbent, I became the youngest woman elected to the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors. My duties in office and the desire to become a mom brought my formal time in the Eagle Forum office to an end. It was time for Phyllis to guide other young women through the DC Swamp and liberal media. It was my turn to "pass the torch" to Jessica Echard Zeigler.

My grassroots training with Eagle Forum helped tremendously in organizing my campaigns and creating coalitions for important initiatives. I learned how hard it is to govern, but I relied on my conservative principles, Reagan's 80% rule, and a coalition of supporters to balance the needs of a growing community. The bureaucracy resisted change, but perseverance and a group of moms can be more powerful.



After eight years in office and carrying two babies to Board meetings, my husband and I decided to "retire" from the center of politics and move to Florida. Really though, for this season of life, my political battlefield merely shifted. Based on the needs of my children, including one with dyslexia, we've moved from public school to charter school to homeschool and now to a private Christian school. Parental involvement in education is more important than ever. Thanks to Eagle Forum, I know my rights and how to be vocal. Don't mess with this mama bear.

Sometimes I wonder about the political life I left in DC and Virginia, but I know God has a plan so much better than mine. Recently on the final day of school, our Director of Education ended with Isaiah 40:31. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.” It was surreal as if Phyllis was standing at the podium ending Eagle Council and calling us to action.

That was all I needed to hear. God calls some to serve in elective office, but God calls many more to serve in our communities. Elected leaders cannot protect our liberty and values alone. We are the force to restore American greatness. We are the voice to challenge liberalism and progressivism. We are the mentors to the next generation of leaders. So, who wants to take a field trip?