

Sunday, August 31, 2008

Stephanie Tubbs Jones departs the planet.

People rarely die. Even after their heart stops beating, something about them usually keeps influencing the living and future generations in some small or big way, whether or not that influence is a good one. Someone like Stephanie Tubbs Jones did not have the capacity to die, but she did leave the planet on August 19, of a ruptured brain aneurysm that happened the day before. Joe Biden suffered the same injury two decades ago, but recovered. In late July 2005 on a plane returning to Maryland from depositions of federal employees in Cleveland, I met Stephanie Tubbs Jones sitting next to me. Before I knew she was a member of Congress -- I still carry strong presumptions against politicians, and, to boot, she previously prosecuted and judged -- I was impressed by how genuinely (as it appeared to me) and effectively she engaged so many of the passengers boarding the plane. They were her constituents. I do not know what pet political issue I raised with her -- possibly opposition to the criminal sentencing guidelines and mandatory minimum sentences, the general overall unfairness of the criminal justice system, marijuana legalization, or drug decriminalization -- but she was happy to have an engaging and meaningful conversation on the topic that I chose. Stephanie was genuinely upbeat about life and people. She told me that when she would conduct wedding ceremonies, she would recite the Indian wedding prayer. This prayer means so much to me that I spoke it to my wife at our wedding. For that alone, I very much appreciate Stephanie. Stephanie was only thirteen years older than I when she passed. I send my condolences and best karma to her survivors, including her son Mervyn Jones, II. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Jon's news & views at 00:00