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Cong. Elijah Cummings "Phenomenal Moral Mentor For The Nation" Says Bob Weiner, Former White House & Congress Staff

Gave Last Major Public Speech at National Press Club August 7

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[Robert Weiner Associates](#)

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WASHINGTON, October 17, 2019/PRNewswire/ -- Cong. Elijah Cummings(D-Balt), Chair of the House Oversight Committee, died Thursday at 68. Cummings, who set a moral tone for the nation with his statement, "We are better than this," and whose committee is one of the three main House investigating bodies for the current Trump impeachment inquiry, gave his last major public speech at the National Press Club on August 7. Weiner said that Cummings, who had been attacked by President Trump personally, particularly took offense to the President's attacks of Baltimore in the two weeks prior to his speech. Yet he told us he would not attack Trump directly— "I won't even mention his name," he told Weiner the week before his speech. He informed Weiner, who organized the event, that he would keep the dialogue at a "higher ground" of "the nation's values." The media wondered why he was not in the media commenting on the personal attacks, but his office had told the Club that he'd be "holding his fire" for the National Press Club speech – that's how much it meant to him.

Weiner, who served as spokesman for the House Government Operations Committee for six years under Chairman John Conyers prior to Cummings' Chairmanship and later as spokesman for the White House Drug Policy Office under close Cummings friend 4-Star General Barry McCaffrey, joined Cummings and McCaffrey in several visits to Cummings' Baltimore district and spoke with him periodically in the House office buildings. He was the event organizer of Cummings' recent Press Club speech **and said he considered him a "phenomenal moral mentor for the nation."**

In his speech, Cummings said, "Coming from sharecropper parents to speaking at a sold-out National Press Club luncheon, I've come a long way."

The night before the Club event, Cummings' trusted top aide Jean Waskow came over, looked at, and helped arrange all the logistics from entry to lunch chair and podium with stool behind. The morning of the event, with Chairman Cummings in a wheel chair, she said, "He's not doing so well," and Cummings asked if he could cut the questions off early. We told him he could, but that C-Span covers gavel-to-gavel live for a sharp hour. Cummings immediately responded, "We'll do it, we'll do what we have to do." He gave his entire speech without using the stool, and then answered questions moderated by former Club President Jeff Ballou in a two-armchair format arranged by Club staffers.

In his speech, Cummings stuck to his plan and laid out what he believed the President should be doing. He cited his Committee's investigations into prescription drug prices, security clearances, and compliance with congressional oversight subpoenas, according to Weiner. Cong. Cummings defended the "great work" being done by the people of Baltimore and said he would "welcome" the President's help and a trip to the City. He reiterated his statement, "We are better than this," which many in Congress and several Presidential candidates have repeated. Of President Trump's demeaning many groups and Baltimore, Cummings said, "We all are sick of this. We all want decency and respect, decency and respect."

In the speech he also urged Congress to return from recess to address gun violence and said his mother on her deathbed emphasized protecting "the vote" – "It was the last thing she said."

Weiner expresses his deepest sympathy to Congressman Cummings' family, staff, and many friends.

C-Span coverage of Rep. Cummings' August 7 NPC speech:

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?463145-1/representative-elijah-cummings-dies-age-68>

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SOURCE Robert Weiner Associates