

MONUMENTAL

HE SAID, SHE SAID

The Parent Track

Judge **Leslie A. Meek** and Congressman **Kendrick B. Meek** talk about maintaining the delicate balance between work and family life.



The Meek family: Leslie, Kendrick Jr., Kendrick, and Lauren.

JUDGE LESLIE A. MEEK:

As working professionals, Kendrick, my husband, and I are passionate about our careers. I work as a DC administrative law judge, presiding over cases before the Department of Employment Services; my husband represents parts of Florida's Miami-Dade and Broward Counties in the House of Representatives. I recently completed my term as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Spouses, and my husband is presently chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Our days are filled with responsibilities, but our most important job is being good parents and role models to our children, Lauren, 13, and Kendrick Jr., 10. Working is a vocation; parenting is a lifelong career.

We play an active part in our children's lives. We participate in parent-teacher meetings, attend school performances, and review the kids' homework and assignments. Dinner may be at the kitchen table in our Capitol Hill home, at a booth

in a restaurant, or a banquet in a hotel conference hall, but we always try to eat together. We all lead busy, active, and fulfilling lives, but we do so as a family—we wouldn't have it any other way.

CONGRESSMAN KENDRICK B. MEEK:

On a typical weekday morning, the alarm clock blares at 6 A.M., and reaching for the snooze button just isn't an option. Our daughter, Lauren, who hopes to become a veterinarian or an artist, has her junior high school basketball practice; Kendrick Jr., our son, says he hopes to follow in my footsteps and run for public office, but while he'd like to join me at the US Capitol, today he's needed in elementary school.

Driving Lauren and Kendrick Jr. to school in

the morning is my responsibility, and Leslie picks them up in the afternoon. We take this time to talk about our daily activities, discuss the news, or plan our weekend. The life of a congressman is a busy one, but I want to share that life with my family, which is why we decided to live in the nation's capital. Miami is our permanent residence, but Washington, DC, is becoming our adoptive home as I represent my South Florida constituents in Congress.

When the nation paid tribute to former President Gerald Ford and civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks as they lay in state under the Capitol dome, our children were there. When Nancy Pelosi became the first female speaker of the House of Representatives, our children were watching from the floor of the House. Lauren and Kendrick Jr. may not fully realize it now, but they are witnessing history firsthand, and their lives will be forever enriched by these experiences. ★

photograph by Erik Johnson