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COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

MEETING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, MAY 3, 2007

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CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 811 AND CONSIDERATION OF RUSSELL V. BROWN-WAITE; GONZALEZ V. DIAZ-BALART; CURTIS V. FEENEY; AND COX V. McCRERY

THURSDAY, MAY 3, 2007.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 11:45 a.m., in Room 1310, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Robert A. Brady presiding.

Present: Representatives Brady, Lofgren, Capuano, Gonzalez, Davis of California, Davis of Alabama, Ehlers, and McCarthy.

Staff Present: Liz Birnbaum, Staff Director; Charles Howell, Chief Counsel; Matt Pinkus, Professional Staff/Parliamentarian; Janelle Hu, Election Counsel; Kristin McCowan, Chief Legislative Clerk; Robert Henline, Staff Assistant; Fred Hay, Minority General Counsel; Gineen Beach, Minority Counsel; and Bryan T. Dorsey, Minority Professional Staff Member.

Mr. BRADY. I would like to call the committee meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone, Members of the Committee and guests.

I take the chairman's gavel today with a heavy heart. As you know the Committee on House Administration lost our leader, Chairwoman Juanita Millender-McDonald, on April 22 after her too-short tenure in the Chair. I would like to have a brief moment of silence to remember the Chairwoman and all she meant to this committee and to this Congress. So I would ask for a brief moment of silence.

Thank you all.

I also would like to welcome today Congressman Artur Davis, who was just appointed as the newest member of committee. Congressman Davis, I am sure you will find the work of this committee and its responsibilities for the operation of the House both interesting and as inspiring as we all do. Welcome aboard.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BRADY. We are here to talk about marking up H.R. 811. We have amendments on our side, and we have given them to the gentlemen on the Miniority side. We also understand there are nine or 10 amendments that they would like to offer today. We just think, in order to be fair, there may be some good amendments there, and we have not had a chance or opportunity to look at them.

We think we need time to look at those amendments. We are always for making any bill that we have in front of us better. So

again, to be fair, we would like time to look at those amendments. We just can't give them the attention they deserve in this short period of time. So I am going to adjourn this meeting until next Tuesday.

With that, I would like to recognize our Ranking Member, Mr. Ehlers.

Mr. EHLERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I share your grief and concern about our previous Chair and her family. It was a shock to all of us. I have been bothered for months, because I knew something was wrong, but she was such a courageous and private person she didn't want to share her difficulties with anyone. I am sorry it came to such a sad conclusion. She worked very, very hard in the Congress.

I got to know her shortly after she arrived. We inadvertently discovered we were both preachers' kids, and that formed an instantaneous bond. There is an incredible bond between preachers' kids. We grew up with all our friends expecting us to be as evil as they were and all our friends' parents expecting us to set an example for their kids that we couldn't meet. She and I often shared stories on that.

She was a great person, and when we had the speeches on the floor, I think Representative Lois Capps expressed it well, that she was a woman of elegance and grace. That is a very accurate description of her, and we are all certainly going to miss her.

I want to extend my congratulations to you on the chairmanship. If you win your primary in a few weeks you will have a tough decision whether to stay here in this tremendous position or to govern the City of Philadelphia. But I wish you well, no matter what happens.

Mr. BRADY. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. EHLERS. I also join in welcoming our new member. I welcome you and congratulate you, but I may send you a sympathy card as well in a day or two.

This is an interesting committee. It is a great opportunity to be of great assistance to our colleagues and to the entire institution. It is a tremendous honor to be here, and we have so many opportunities to do good things for our colleagues and for the people. So I think you come to realize how important this is.

Finally, I want to thank the Chair for postponing this meeting. It first of all spares me the dishonor of giving an inflammatory diatribe about receiving the bill at about 9 o'clock last night and not having time to study. We scrambled to prepare amendments as best we could, but we very much appreciate not only your willingness to look closely at our amendments but also appreciate the extra opportunity to review what you have done.

This is an extremely important issue, and I have here—this is just the beginning—I have a folder filled with complaints and opposition from local, county, city and State election officials objecting to the bill in its present form. I think we have to take all the comments seriously. I will not bother to put them in the record today, but I eventually will if the bill does not change substantially.

I think a good model to use is the work that was done on the original HAVA, and I understand not everyone agrees with that bill. Some people think it is terrible. Some think it is marvelous.

Nevertheless, this committee worked extremely hard. I don't know that there are any members remaining from that original committee on this committee except for myself. But Representative Steny Hoyer, the majority leader, is doing a very good job in that position, was a real mainstay on that whole process; and it would be worth talking to him just to find out.

We spent a couple of years on this. We thought we would get it done very quickly, but by the time we finished negotiating with each other, negotiating with all the election officials around the country, and negotiating with the Senate, that consumed almost 3 years. The product was vastly improved by engaging in that process.

I hope we can follow the same procedure here. It should not take 3 years, by any means, but I think we should check with all the parties involved and proceed thoroughly, carefully and cautiously so that we produce the fine product that we are capable of producing.

With that, I congratulate you again, Mr. Chairman, and yield back.

Mr. BRADY. Thank you.

I would like to recognize the lady from California, Ms. Lofgren.

Ms. LOFGREN. I will be very brief, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to just speak briefly about our late colleague, Juanita.

Not only did I know her as a colleague on this committee, but I chair the California Democratic Delegation, and we were very proud to have Juanita as a member of our group.

I would just like to report that at the service that we held we had three planeloads from Washington and a tremendous outpouring of love to Juanita's family and constituents and a very large delegation not only from the California delegation but others; and certainly her family was appreciative and happy to know, once again, the love and affection that she had from her colleagues in the Congress.

We will miss her a great deal.

I thank the chairman for postponing this. I think it just shows everything we already knew about you, which is you go the extra mile to be fair and to make sure that everything is in order. So we appreciate that very much, Mr. Chairman; and I appreciate the opportunity to report on the services we had for a marvelous person who we all admired and loved.

And I yield back.

Mr. BRADY. Thank you. This meeting is adjourned until next Tuesday.

Mr. EHLERS. Comment.

Mr. BRADY. Comment, sure.

Mr. EHLERS. Just a question, actually. We have several election contests before us, one major one which is going to take considerable time, but four minor ones; and I thought we were going to dismiss those quickly this morning.

Mr. BRADY. We might as well just adjourn and get it all done on Tuesday, if that is okay.

All right, the meeting is adjourned until Tuesday.

Mr. EHLERS. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:00 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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