

ANOTHER ATTACK ON
ANTIDISCRIMINATION PROGRAMS

HON. WILLIAM (BILL) CLAY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 1995

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, the fight for fair housing is far from over. But tragically, those Americans who suffer the indignities of housing discrimination are about to become the victims of an unnecessary bureaucratic nightmare. The legislation moving all fair-housing enforcement from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to the Department of Justice is a travesty of justice.

When will the leadership of this Congress halt its attack on programs enacted to end discrimination against blacks and Latinos?

I would like to share with my colleagues a timely editorial which appeared yesterday's St. Louis Post Dispatch.

HUD MAY LOSE FAIR-HOUSING FUNCTIONS

The Senate may take up as early as today a proposal to give the Justice Department fair-housing enforcement responsibilities that it doesn't want and shouldn't be required to accept.

Up to now, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has been the lead agency in enforcing this section, known as Title VIII, of the Civil Rights Act. HUD is charged with investigating fair-housing complaints and seeking voluntary conciliation in each case. The idea is to settle disputes before they reach litigation and work with the housing industry for voluntary compliance with the law.

The HUD appropriations bill in the Senate includes a rider to shift all fair-housing enforcement to the Justice Department. Assistant Attorney General Andrew Fois has urged the Senate to reject this change, and he is right.

He notes that his department is being asked to undertake a new function for which it is ill equipped. The new responsibilities would require the agency to set up a bureaucracy to handle the nearly 10,000 fair-housing complaints filed annually. Moreover, Mr. Fois notes that these changes would take time and might harm victims of housing discrimination.

The bill also would prevent HUD from addressing insurances red-lining, a problem that the agency has pursued as part of its fair-housing responsibilities. The Senate bill says that, at the end of this month, HUD would be barred from continuing settlement negotiations in current fair-housing and insurance red-lining cases.

HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros argues that both housing bias and red-lining are major problems in urban areas. He cited HUD's role in housing-bias cases in Missouri, Mississippi and California in trying to bolster his argument for keeping fair-housing functions under HUD's umbrella.

Typically, Senate Republicans held no hearings or made no analysis before voting in the Appropriations Committee earlier this month to strip HUD of its fair-housing responsibilities. The GOP-controlled Senate may well ignore Mr. Cisneros' advice even though these riders would do unnecessary harm to victims of housing bias and insurance red-lining.

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY
FOR VOCA

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 1995

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, today, this Member would like to recognize the 25th anniversary of Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance, known as VOCA. Since 1970, VOCA has been indispensable in promoting sustainable development throughout the world by harnessing the American spirit of volunteerism to teach people in developing countries how to help themselves. Thousands of VOCA volunteers, including agricultural, commercial, and environmental experts, have donated their time and expertise in 112 countries in the last 25 years. These volunteers, from this Member's congressional district and many others, are in Washington this week to take part in their organizations' 25th anniversary "Celebration of International Cooperation."

VOCA's ambassadors of good will represent a growing cadre of Americans who have participated in a small, but powerful program to provide technical assistance to the developing world and emerging democracies. In 1985, this Member led the congressional effort to authorize the Farmer-to-Farmer Program, and in 1986, it began as a pilot project focusing on development efforts in Latin American and the Caribbean. Because of its early success, the Farmer-to-Farmer Program, still modestly funded, has since mushroomed into a program of global dimensions that is also now a major component of United States assistance to the struggling republics of the former Soviet Union.

At a time when our taxpayer dollars are scarce and our foreign assistance programs are under increasing scrutiny, VOCA and the Farmer-to-Farmer Program represent a cost-effective and efficient delivery mechanism for important U.S. aid. The Farmer-to-Farmer Program is simple in design and execution and it avoids Government red-tape by contracting the administration to VOCA and similar organizations. Federal funding goes a long way because administrative costs are limited to volunteers' travel expenses, food, and lodging. Therefore, while U.S. foreign assistance efforts generally remain controversial, the Farmer-to-Farmer Program and VOCA's volunteers have demonstrated that U.S. foreign aid can achieve enormous successes and build international good will with a relatively small investment of taxpayer dollars.

Usually volunteers are encouraged to live with host families—not just to cut costs—but as another means of building friendship bonds and maximizing the likelihood of success. The short-term nature of the assignment has also encouraged the volunteers to begin work immediately and maximize every day until the job is done. But for VOCA volunteers, the work never seems to be done. Often these outstanding individuals return from their assignments and continue to assist their overseas clients at their own expense.

VOCA volunteers have come from every sector of the farming and food community: cattlemen, ranchers, dairy farmers, vegetable

and fruit growers, peanut farmers, canners and food processors, beekeepers, and agricultural cooperative representatives. Some are active farmers at the time they volunteer for the program; others are retired from farm or land grant universities, eager to share a lifetime of experience with their counterparts in host countries.

VOCA volunteers inject a spirit of private enterprise into the farming community. By suing personal initiative and individual responsibility, volunteers support private enterprise activity as opposed to government activity. They encourage farmers to assume responsibility for their own operations, rather than depending on Government support or control. Oftentimes, too, involvement of the local people in a farmer cooperative is their first and crucial experience in participatory democracy.

Quite amazingly, small or simple suggestions by VOCA volunteers often achieve significant results in lesser developed countries. For example, the late John Tesar of Bellevue, NE, went to Honduras in 1988 to help the El Murrano Company—The Little Pig—improve its processing techniques and help them introduce new products into the local market. Within a few weeks of his arrival, the company had reduced its spoilage losses by 100 percent. How? Tesar discovered that the fans on the back walls of the plant were clogged with grease, thus cutting cooling efficiency and causing pork fat to become rancid almost immediately. A simple recommendation to clean the fans solved the temperature problems.

The generosity of VOCA volunteers helps both their overseas clients and the United States. It isn't accidental that some of our largest customers for U.S. agricultural commodities are former benefactors of this program. For example, the California raisin industry now sells \$500,000 of raisin concentrate each year to Uruguay because a VOCA volunteer provided information to a United States business colleague on marketing opportunities.

Over the years, this Member has spoken to many returning volunteers. Their stories are more than heart-warming and inspiring. They reinforce this Member's belief that the strength of our American democratic and economic system can best be demonstrated through positive contacts between individual American citizens and our foreign neighbors. VOCA and the Farmer-to-Farmer Program give people around the world an opportunity to meet and work side by side with ordinary Americans who are generously putting their special talents and experience to work helping them in their struggle to survive, prosper, and escape oppression.

Since 1985, VOCA has implemented more than 1,200 Farmer-to-Farmer Program assignments. As the author of that original legislation, this Member strongly supports that successful partnership and will try to ensure that it continues. Congress certainly appreciates the enormous efforts of the VOCA volunteers and staff who have given many Members a reason to say they support this country's efforts to help those less fortunate throughout the world.