

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RONNIE SHOWS

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2000

Mr. SHOWS. Mr. Speaker, I was away from the floor of the House on Monday, June 26, 2000, to attend to official business in my congressional district. I was unable to cast recorded votes on Rollcalls 322 through 326, relating to Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2001, and on Rollcalls 327 through 330.

Mr. Speaker, I regret not being able to vote on any of these rollcalls, but I particularly regret being unable to cast my vote in favor of Final Passage of the Commerce Appropriations Bill, H.R. 4690. This bill includes funds, which I requested, to repair the National Weather Service Melba Warning Tower in Jefferson Davis County.

Tornadoes and hurricanes are a constant threat and have caused serious damage in our area. I have been working to repair the Melba National Weather Service emergency warning tower, which serves Jones, Covington, Jefferson Davis, Simpson, Lawrence, Marion, Walthall, Lamar & Forrest counties. I am pleased that the Appropriations Committee and the full House recognized the urgent need to repair the Melba Tower.

Mr. Speaker, had I been present for Rollcalls 322 through 330, I would have cast the following votes:

Rollcall 322: "Aye" on the Sanford Amendment to H.R. 4690, to strike the \$8.2 million appropriation for the Asia Foundation in the Department of State.

Rollcall 323: "No" on the Olver Amendment to H.R. 4690, to add a new proviso into the bill (relating to the Kyoto Protocols) which clarifies that the limitations on funds shall not apply to activities which are otherwise authorized by law.

Rollcall 324: "Aye" on the Hostettler Amendment to H.R. 4690, to add a new section which provides that no funds in the bill may be used to enforce, implement, or administer the provisions of the settlement document dated March 17, 2000, between Smith and Wesson and the Department of the Treasury.

Rollcall 325: "Aye" on the Vitter Amendment to H.R. 4690, to add language to the bill prohibiting the use of funds by the State Department to approve the purchase of property in Arlington, VA by the Xinhua News Agency.

Rollcall 326: "Yea" on Passage of H.R. 4690, Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2001.

Rollcall 327: "Yea" on the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, H.R. 3417, the Pribilof Islands Transition Act.

Rollcall 328: "Yea" on the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, S. 148, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

Rollcall 329: "Yea" on the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, H.R. 4408, a bill to reauthorize the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act.

Rollcall 330: "Yea" on the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, H.R. 3023, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey property to the Greater Yuma Port Authority of Yuma County, Arizona for use as an international port of entry.

HONORING WARREN BELL

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2000

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I recognize Warren Bell for his incredible success in small business and his continued involvement in his community.

Warren first came to work for the family business, Bell's Bialys and Bagels, 20 years ago, under his father Martin, a distinguished businessman. Ten years ago, Warren assumed primary responsibility for operations at Bell's Bialys and Bagels. Under his talent and care the business has expanded tremendously. The company expanded its facilities, added new products and flavors to the supreme "Bell" quality and now ships his products to Japan on a regular basis. Warren has truly perfected the art of small business.

Perhaps Warren's greatest and most commendable success is that despite all the time and energy he has put into his business, he still found time to devote to the finer things in life. His devotion to his community and family is one of a true role model. His years of work with his local school board, temple, neighborhood and borough-wide small business organizations and networking groups provides a great service to the community. Warren currently serves on the Executive Council of "Brooklyn Goes Global" and is an active member of N.A.S.F.T. and the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce.

In 1989, the Democratic Club of Brooklyn honored Warren and in 1994 he won the Borough President's "Mom and Pop" Award for achievement as a small business. This year Bell's Bialys and Bagels has been awarded the prestigious Small Business Administration's Exporter of the Year Award and the Borough President's Ron Brown Award for commitment to international commerce.

Warren has proven that in business and in public service that he is a man to emulate. He has helped to create jobs and played a major role in the economic growth and development of Brooklyn. I want to take this opportunity to recognize the achievements of Warren Bell, one of Brooklyn's finest residents and entrepreneurs.

PRIBILOF ISLANDS TRANSITION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 26, 2000

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in support of this important legislation, sponsored by the gentleman from Alaska. As Members of this body know, the Chairman of the Committee on Resources is a forceful advocate for his Alaska constituents.

The bill before the House today has improved in numerous respects from the version reported by the Committee last April. As a result of changes made to accommodate NOAA's concerns, it is my understanding that the Administration supports the bill as amended.

The history of our involvement in the Pribilof Islands, as is the case with many Alaska matters, is long and complex. Prior to the purchase of Alaska in 1867, Aleut Natives had been enslaved by the Russians to exploit fur seals. In 1910, Congress passed a law which regulated the seal harvest and provided federal support for the Native residents of the islands of St. Paul and St. George. With the Fur Seal Act of 1965, and substantial amendments to that Act in 1983, Congress has attempted to provide for a transition from federal management to local control and self-sufficiency on these remote islands.

Clearly, it is vital that the government meet its obligations to the people of the Pribilofs, including the timely completion of environmental cleanup of contaminated federal property. With the changes that have been incorporated, this legislation is intended to responsibly close out the U.S. obligations and liabilities on the Pribilof Islands as established under the Fur Seal Act.

In an attempt to strike a responsible balance in this bill, there are now caps on the amounts authorized for the economic assistance grants to the Native entities and local governments. At the request of the Minority, auditing and reporting requirements have been included for these grants. Minority concerns have also been addressed by language stating that funds authorized by this bill should not supplant NOAA appropriations as enacted in FY 2000. NOAA programs such as severe weather forecasting and the management of commercial fisheries benefit every region of the country. This language affirms the intent of Congress that funding for concluding the transition in the Pribilofs should not come at the expense of other important NOAA programs.

Mr. Speaker, I again commend the gentleman from Alaska and his staff for working with all interested parties to improve this legislation. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3417 as amended.

CLEVELAND POLICE OFFICER WAYNE ALLAN LEON**HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2000

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, today I honor the memory of Cleveland Police Officer Wayne Allan Leon, badge number 1338. Officer Leon was tragically killed in the line of duty on Sunday, June 25. He was just 32 years old.

Wayne Allen Leon was appointed to the Cleveland Police Department in the 110th Academy Class, February 1, 1994. He graduated from the police academy on June 9, 1994, and was assigned to the Third District, basic patrol. He soon distinguished himself as a police officer, going well beyond the call of duty to serve the public, in ways that were recognized by his peers and superiors. As an officer of the law, he dedicated his life to serve and protect the citizens of the state of Ohio and of this great nation. Quick with a smile, earnest, honest, sincere and extremely dedicated are but a few of the qualities that distinguished Officer Leon. He held his office with great professionalism, bravery and dignity, earning the respect and love of his colleagues

and the community he served. He was awarded the Department's highest award—the Medal of Honor—after he and his former partner broke up a drug buy on November 1, 1998. The community mourns the death of a great role model.

As a committed man of faith and family, Officer Leon will be greatly missed by his wife Grace, their children Justin, age 5, Gabrielle, age 4, and Nicholas, age 2. His father, retired Cleveland Police Lieutenant Duane “Jake” Leon, brothers Dean, Tony, and Jake, and his parents-in-law Sam and Maryann Scampitilla, also survive him. I take this opportunity to express my deepest condolences to the family.

It is a terrible tragedy when a police officer falls in the line of duty protecting the public and serving his or her country. Officer Wayne Leon exemplified the very best police departments have to offer. He will be missed by all.

I ask the House to join me in commemorating this model public servant and dedicated family man. The State of Ohio and the Nation owe him a great debt of gratitude. My fellow colleagues, please join me in honoring Officer Wayne Allen Leon.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FUEL EXCISE TAX RELIEF ACT (FETRA)

HON. MAC COLLINS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2000

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Fuel Excise Tax Relief Act (FETRA), for a moratorium on Federal fuel excise taxes until March 31, 2001.

Fuel is not a luxury, it is a necessity for Americans. It is necessary for a dad commuting to his job or a soccer mom picking up her children. Higher fuel costs don't stop at the pump because the cost of shipping is built into the price of every product purchased by families and businesses across the country.

There is not one Member in this Chamber whose constituents are not daily suffering sticker shock when they go to the gas pump, and wondering why, for the past 6 months, nothing has been done about gas prices.

A few months ago, Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson admitted he had been asleep at the switch, and promised Americans that prices would soon decline, thanks to his arm-twisting of OPEC.

Perhaps we should be asking if Mr. Richardson was twisting OPEC's arm the wrong direction and convincing the oil states to restrict production. Certainly, 3 months later, gas prices did not go lower, but went higher.

These skyrocketing fuel prices are borne on the backs of working families across this country, because they have an impact on the cost of every product or service that depends upon transportation.

I am concerned that high fuel prices could affect the economy, just as they did after the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979. Both resulted in higher interest rates and recessions.

Congress must take both short-term and long-term action now.

Presently, the United States is dangerously dependent upon foreign oil. We must work more aggressively with OPEC to increase supply. We must explore the use of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to temporarily increase the

supply. We should allow environmentally responsible oil drilling to increase domestic supply.

We should also take steps to ensure that our environmental regulations protect the environment without driving independent producers and refiners out of business. When they are gone, competition decreases, and prices rise.

We can also encourage the use of mass transit and build new systems. Tax and investment incentives will help further develop technology for fuel cells, electric cars, hybrid cars, and alternative fuel vehicles.

All of these responses take a while to affect prices at the pump. But there is one act Congress can take to provide immediate relief to America's working families.

This would be to pass the Fuel Excise Tax Relief Act (FETRA) which imposes a moratorium on Federal fuel excise taxes until March 31, 2001. I will shortly be introducing this legislation with several colleagues, and I invite your support.

FETRA would provide relief to every American of every income strata. It would reduce transportation costs which affect the price of every good or service purchased by consumers. It imposes a moratorium on the federal fuel excise taxes: cutting 18.3 cents per gallon on gasoline, 24.3 cents per gallon on diesel, and 4.3 cents per gallon on aviation jet fuel.

The FETRA tax moratorium will be effective upon enactment and end March 31, 2001. This will give the new administration and new Congress time to draw up something that has been lacking the past 8 years—a coherent energy policy.

FETRA also holds the transportation trust funds harmless from any revenue shortfalls, and will make up the difference out of general funds. None of our infrastructure projects will be affected by FETRA.

This tax relief is long overdue for American consumers. To ensure they get the benefit of this tax relief, FETRA directs the Comptroller of the United States to report to Congress on whether the tax cut is being passed through to consumers. Additionally, the act requires the Administration to prepare a report on changes in the prices of gasoline, diesel and other fuels over the previous 12 months, and the impact on prices of the reformulated gasoline mandate, and the feasibility and appropriateness of maintaining the reformulated fuel mandate.

Mr. Speaker, The American people are looking toward Congress for leadership on this issue. I agree that we must work on long-term and medium-term solutions to high fuel prices, but FETRA is where we should start.

AMENDING INTERNAL REVENUE CODE TO REQUIRE 527 ORGANIZATIONS TO DISCLOSE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

SPEECH OF

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 27, 2000

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the House has finally done something about the shadowy political action committees organized under Section 527 of the tax code which can

hide their donors, activities, and even their existence from public view. Sunshine is the best disinfectant and now some light will be shed on these stealth PACs that have been flying under the radar to avoid detection.

Very early this morning, we voted to require these tax-exempt groups to disclose their activities. The Senate adopted very similar legislation earlier this month. It has been perfectly within the rights of anyone to give unlimited sums of money aimed at influencing American elections with no limits, no restrictions, and complete anonymity.

Here's how the loophole worked: You set up a bank account, collected as many millions as you could, ran ads under whatever innocuous name you chose—Americans for a Decent Society or whatever—and attacked or supported any candidate you chose. All you had to do was refrain from using the “magic words” like “vote for,” “vote against,” “elect,” “defeat,” etc. in reference to a particular candidate. You could mention the candidates by name. You could show their unflattering visage against a backdrop of belching smokestacks. And then you could disappear from the face of the earth.

That unique combination—unlimited funds with total anonymity—was the beautiful thing about the 527s, if you were a clever political fundraiser, or a billionaire with a private agenda.

But that is changing now. The Campaign for America, a group of well-respected business leaders founded by Jerome Kohlberg, recently stated, “Tax-exempt status is a subsidy, not an entitlement. Accordingly, organizations obtaining this subsidy have obligations and responsibilities to the public that provides this benefit. Every other nonprofit involved in electioneering such as parties, PACs and campaign committees discloses to the Federal Election Commission. There is no justification for making an exception for these 527 organizations. In return for the public's largesse, these organizations should at least be required to disclose their existence, substantial contributors and substantial expenditures.”

The legislation we passed requires “527” groups to disclose who they are, where they get their money, and how they spend it. It does not adequately cover political activities during this election cycle, but it is a good start.

By closing this loophole, we are beginning to repair the damage that our current campaign system has done to public trust in government. This could be the first meaningful campaign finance reform passed in Congress in many years. Let's lift this curtain of secrecy that has shrouded elections for too long.

TRIBUTE TO AARON HALPERN

HON. BILL PASCRELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2000

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call to your attention to the deeds of a person I was proud to call my friend, Aaron Halpern of Clifton, New Jersey, who was remembered on Thursday, June 1, 2000 because of his many years of service and leadership. He is deserving of this memorial, for he had a long history of caring, generosity and commitment to others.