

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

TRIBUTE TO CONGRESSMAN SONNY CALLAHAN

HON. TERRY EVERETT

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2002

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Speaker, after nine terms and 18 years in this chamber, Congressman SONNY CALLAHAN of Alabama's First District is saying goodbye to this institution and will retire to life along the Dog River on the beautiful Alabama Gulf Coast.

SONNY certainly deserves a chance to enjoy life with his family, but I don't mind telling you that I will miss him. When I came to Washington ten years ago, I looked to SONNY for guidance as I sought to run my office and seek committee assignments. I leaned on him pretty heavy in my early days up here and I will be forever grateful for his sound advice.

SONNY's reputation of fairness to all is respected and admired on both sides of the aisle and his garnered him plenty of friends of all political stripes. A good example of this was the close friendship he had with the late Rep. Joe Moakley. Politically, they were a world apart, but you could not find two better friends and I personally enjoyed their company at dinner on many an evening after we concluded legislative business.

For those of us in the Alabama delegation, SONNY has been an invaluable ally in obtaining vital federal project funding for our districts. His chairmanship of the House Appropriations Energy and Water Subcommittee has been beneficial to our state.

I personally owe him a debt of gratitude for his help in securing Army Corps funds to rebuild a life-saving levee residents in the flood-prone town Elba in my congressional district. SONNY was always there for us, no matter our personal politics and he never failed to put the needs of Alabama first.

SONNY's impact was not only felt in Alabama, but also in the Oval Office, where he was continually leaned upon for support of foreign operations funding. As past chairman of House Appropriations Foreign Operations subcommittee, SONNY helped to shape America's foreign aid budget and to some degree our foreign policy. For that reason, it was not uncommon to find as many dignitaries in his office as constituents from Mobile.

For many up here, such power and responsibility would go to their heads. But not SONNY's. He was a cardinal, but foremost he was and is a gentleman, a statesman, and a very good friend.

I want to thank SONNY for his exemplary service to this House, to Alabama and to America. We're going to miss him.

THANKING MY STAFF

HON. GEORGE W. GEKAS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2002

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, as I leave the Congress for the last time, I want to especially thank the many staff who have worked so hard for me over these last 20 years that I have been privileged to serve the people of the 17th District of Pennsylvania.

But I want to especially thank my chief of staff, Allan Cagnoli. Allan has worked his entire career for the people of central Pennsylvania. Low pay, long hours, incredible stress and responsibilities are the hallmark burdens of all legislative staff. But Allan Cagnoli was and is one of the best of the best. He kept my Washington, DC, and district staff and offices running smoothly and efficiently, even under the most difficult of times. Whether it was serving in the minority party in the 1980s, dealing with the Clinton Impeachment in which I was a House Manager, or spending the last 5 years working for passage of my bankruptcy reform legislation or any of the several hundred other measures I introduced or projects I undertook, Allan was there. He was there through thick and thin. And we all know how thin it can get around here.

For the past 25 years I and the people of central Pennsylvania and the Nation have been lucky to have a trusted, competent, and intelligent aide like Allan Cagnoli. Regardless of what he does in the future, be it to remain here in Washington, DC, to further the cause of good government and a better America, or return to his home in Hershey, PA, to help where it is needed, I will always treasure and thank him and all my staff, both current and past, for their service to me and to our great country.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT MICHAEL HERNANDEZ

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2002

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is a great honor to pay tribute today to a man who has embodied the spirit of the state of Colorado through his life-long dedication to serving his state. A member of the Colorado State Legislature, the hard work and dedication of Robert Michael Hernandez, known as Rob, is a testament to the Western pride and character of my state and its citizens. Rob is now leaving the Colorado State Legislature after selflessly serving since 1991, and I can think of no better way to celebrate Rob's retirement than to honor his many achievements before this body of Congress and this nation.

Born in Pueblo, Colorado, and educated in Denver, Rob not only experienced the best the

state has to offer but also has been inspired to give back to the state and its people. He has served in both the House and the Senate as both an appointee and an elected official. During his time in the State legislature he served on countless committees and dedicated countless hours to improving the lives of Coloradans. Most notably he has served as chair of the Health Committee, a member of the Appropriations, Judiciary, and the Children and Family and Environmental Committees. He has passionately approached the issues of juvenile crime prevention and intervention, senior citizens issues, housing, and education.

Rob's dedication and hard work is appreciated by his colleagues and he will surely be missed in his absence. Robert Michael Hernandez has given his time and his energy to bettering the State of Colorado and it is this dedication and hard work that I wish to bring to the attention of this body of Congress. His service as a civil servant serves as a true example for the people of Colorado and indeed the entire nation. Thank you Rob for all that you have done and good luck in your future endeavors.

HONORING THE LIFE OF JAMES (JIM) C. BENFIELD

HON. JIM KOLBE

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2002

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, it is with great sorrow that I rise today to offer my condolences to the family and friends of James (Jim) C. Benfield, who passed away on November 2, 2002. I would ask for unanimous consent that his obituary appearing in the Washington Post on November 3 be included in the RECORD.

For over 12 years, I have worked closely with Jim on an issue that I have spearheaded, and I have been consistently impressed with his selfless and tireless advocacy. His ability to organize diverse grassroots coalitions and deal honestly with me and my colleagues impressed me beyond words. His efforts and ethics will be remembered and we will long recognize the trails he blazed on behalf of his clients, his community, and the underprivileged that he served in his spare time.

I have had a picture that Jim took hanging in my office for many years. It is a photo of the Statute of Freedom being lifted from the Capitol dome as that she could be refurbished. What an appropriate subject. Jim loved and appreciated the institution she oversees. He strived to see issues and seek solutions from an elevated viewpoint like she does. Moreover, he embraced everyone like she symbolically does.

I will miss my friend Jim. Please join me in expressing the condolences of the House to his family.

[From the Washington Post, Nov. 3, 2002]

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

JAMES C. BENFIELD, 59; ORGANIZER, ACTIVIST
(By Richard Pearson)

James C. Benfield, 59, a lobbyist since about 1980 who was chief financial officer and a partner at Bracy Tucker Brown, the Washington government and public affairs consulting concern, died of a brain tumor Nov. 2 at his home in Takoma Park.

Mr. Benfield, an authority on grass-roots organizing and advocacy, had corporate clients and was often involved in consumer issues, as well as causes including coinage, daylight savings time reform and help for the poor.

He had done work for such clients as the Continental Group, the Clorox Co. and McDonald's. But he made headlines locally for his advocacy efforts, often as a volunteer, managing the Daylight Savings Time Coalition, which he founded, and directing the Coin Coalition and the Campaign for Home Energy Assistance.

Mr. Benfield, who joined what became Bracy Tucker in 1980, was a master at organizing coalitions. In his successful efforts to extend daylight savings time in April, he trumpeted the belief that daylight savings, with its longer hours of afternoon daylight, extended hours of outdoor activity. This helped him secure the support of associations representing amateur softball, barbecue makers, convenience stores, service station dealers, chain restaurants and sporting goods.

His efforts to reform coinage featured drives to replace the dollar bill with a dollar coin, which he pointed out would save the government more than \$450 million annually because coins last longer than bills. It helped lead to the Sacagawea dollar coin. Groups that came on board for that campaign included vending businesses and mass transit and amusement park associations.

Another of his great efforts was the Home Energy Assistance Campaign he started in 1993. It now helps 4.3 million households and has secured annual congressional appropriations of \$2 billion. His partners in this effort included the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

Over the years, Mr. Benfield explained his views on these issues on ABC's "Good Morning America," CNN's "Larry King Live" and on National Public Radio. He wrote for The Washington Post, Chicago Tribune and Des Moines Register. He also lectured at Harvard University and conducted workshops for the Energy Department.

Mr. Benfield, who was born in Philadelphia, was a 1965 economics graduate of Drake University in Iowa. He was an Army photographer in South Korea in 1967 and 1968. He came to the Washington area in the 1970s. Before becoming a professional lobbyist, he held a variety of jobs.

In fact, the collection of jobs he held led to a 1977 profile in The Post. The jobs included public relations director of the National Symphony Orchestra, freelance photographer, and apartment manager and part-time janitor. He also had managed a local chamber music group, had played classical guitar at restaurants and had given guitar lessons.

He assisted the homeless, both with contributions and helping to obtain government aid and secure medical care. He worked with area churches to raise corporate aid for the homeless. The Post wrote about his efforts to raise funds for a sick street musician and after the musician's death, to place a plaque on the wall where he most often performed.

His neighbors remembered him as the guy who hosted community Fourth of July picnics that included the firing of a Civil War canon and pruning trees along railroad rights of way. He also improved a muddy

shortcut that commuters took to the local Metro by laying a bed of garbage can lid-size stones. He also was known for always giving a hand, forever taking people into his home who had suffered a tragedy.

His first marriage ended in divorce. Survivors include his wife of 17 years, Susan Storing Benfield, and two children, Anna Corinne Benfield and Michael Storing Benfield, all of Takoma Park; his mother, Corinne Benfield of Lombard, Ill.; and a sister.

CONVERSION BAN IN INDIA SHOWS IT IS NOT A DEMOCRACY

HON. CYNTHIA A. MCKINNEY

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2002

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, the party that controls the national government in India, the BJP, has enacted a ban on religious conversions in Tamil Nadu, a state which it controls. The law prohibits anyone from converting to any religion except Hinduism. Anyone who converts to a religion other than Hinduism can be imprisoned and can face a heavy fine. It officially targets conversions "by force, allurement, or fraudulent means," but aren't all conversions by "allurement," that is, by persuasion presented by another person?

Effectively, the new law prevents all conversions, except conversions to Hinduism. This is part of the fundamentalist Hindu nationalists' drive for Hindutva—a totally Hindu-dominated culture. "Even if one converts of one's own free will, those involved in the conversion can be punished on the grounds that it's a forced conversion," said former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. Yet the BJP and other groups under the umbrella of its parent organization, the RSS, have been forcibly re-converting people to Hinduism after they have converted to other religions of their own free will.

According to the Washington Times of November 11, a Dalit group, the Dalit Panthers of India, is planning to have 25,000 of its members convert to Christianity. Another group of 10,000 Dalits in Chennai plan to convert to Buddhism on December 6 if this unjustified law is not repealed by then. Dalits, or "Untouchables," are the lowest caste in Hinduism and their continuing oppression is essential to the preservation of the repressive Hindu social order.

It is clear once again that there is no religious freedom in India. India's claims to be democratic are a lie if people cannot freely choose something as basic as their religion.

This is more evidence that India is not the democracy it claims to be. America must speak up for the rights of all people in South Asia by cutting off our aid and trade to India, by imposing the sanctions the law mandates for violators of religious freedom, and by declaring openly our support for self-determination. Why can't the country that proudly claims to be the world's largest democracy settle its minority issues through a free and fair vote? That is the way that democratic countries do it, and it is the way world powers do it. As long as India refuses to do it, it will not be a member of either category.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to place the article I referred to before into the RECORD at this

time for additional information about the conversion ban.

[From the Washington Times, Nov. 11, 2002]

A SAWDUST TRAIL FOR LOW-CASTE HINDUS?

(By Shaikh Azizur Rahman)

NEW DELHI.—Low-caste Hindus in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu are threatening to embrace Christianity, Buddhism, or Islam to protest a new law that outlaws religious conversion.

A bill passed into law by the state legislature last month penalizes those who convert to a religion other than Hinduism with imprisonment and a hefty fine.

While religious minorities in Tamil Nadu plan to challenge the law in court, many Hindus from so-called "untouchable castes," known as Dalits, are threatening to publicly defy the new law.

One group of Dalit Hindus in the state capital, Chennai, said that a group of 10,000 will convert to Buddhism on Dec. 6 if the law is not revoked.

Another group, known as the Dalit Panthers of India [DPI], pledged that 25,000 of its members would become Christians to protest what they called an "unjustified" decree. "The upper class has been torturing the Dalits for centuries, and now, by passing the bill, the government has decided to shackle us in a society where we are denied even our basic democratic rights," said one Dalit activist, who identified himself by the Christian name Emmanuel. On Oct. 31, Tamil Nadu became the first—but probably not the last—Indian state to outlaw religious conversions. Though the law targets conversions "by force, allurement or fraudulent means," opponents say the language offers the means to challenge all conversions to faiths other than Hinduism.

"Even if one changes one's religion of one's own free will, those involved in the conversion can be punished on the ground that it's a case of forced conversion," said M. Karunanidhi a former chief minister of Tamil Nadu. The new law was welcomed by Hindu fundamentalists, who govern the nation in a coalition led by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"The BJP is strongly of the view that this law is most necessary for the whole country. Lots of money is coming into the country from Islamic organizations to aid conversions," said BJP President M. Venkaiah Naidu. Ashok Singhal, leader of the World Hindu Council (VHP), hailed the law as a "timely and bold step" and he urged other states to pass similar laws.

The issue of religious conversion has long been a source of strife in India. While federal law allows Indians to change their faith, the ruling BJP makes no secret of its dislike of the practice, while its ruling partner—the VHP party—views conversions as betrayal.

Opponents of the new law warn it will only trigger an even larger exodus of Hindus to other faiths.

The Global Council of Indian Christians said it was "alarmed by the hurriedly promulgated ordinance," and called it "the most heinous violation of religious freedom aimed at targeting Christian missionaries engaged in poverty alleviation and spreading the light of education." The All-India Christian People's Forum said that it went against the core of the Constitution. "This ordinance is uncalled for, unwarranted and smacks of a pro-Hindu ideological bias of the government."

"The bill runs foul of Article 25 [25] of the Indian Constitution, which grants freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion to every Indian citizen," the group said.

Dominic Emmanuel, director of New Delhi Catholic Archdiocese, called the measure,