

51 Texas legislators who fought to stop U.S. House Majority Leader TOM DELAY from forcing a divisive, partisan and unnecessary congressional redistricting plan through the Texas House of Representatives. Their act of courage was heralded by editorial boards throughout our State of Texas. I salute legislators like Jim Dunnam and John Mabry from my hometown of Waco, Texas.

Without their actions on Monday morning of last week, the Texas House would have passed a plan that would have split my 100-year-old historic rural central Texas district into four different congressional districts stretching from Fort Worth to the suburbs of Houston to San Antonio, literally covering hundreds and hundreds of miles without a single bit of input from one mayor or city council member in our district, one school board member, because that plan was only put together on Mother's Day afternoon last Sunday with the intention of passing it through the Texas House starting at 10 a.m. the next day, on Monday morning. That was wrong for that plan to have been pushed and right for Texas legislators to stand up not for themselves, not for me, but for the right of central Texas citizens in my district and Texans, Republicans and Democrats alike throughout our State, to have a voice in shaping their congressional districts and the future of their communities.

While the Texas legislators are back in Austin working on State priority issues, there are some questions that will not go away and some questions to which the American people deserve an answer.

Outrageously, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the new agency with the responsibility to protect American families from terrorists here and abroad, that agency used Federal antiterrorism resources and personnel to track down Texas Representative Pete Laney of Hale Center, Texas, as he flew his private airplane from his hometown to Ardmore, Oklahoma. To borrow a phrase from former Senator Lloyd Bentsen, "I know Pete Laney, Pete Laney is a friend of mine, and I can assure you Pete Laney is no terrorist." Quite to the contrary, he is the former Speaker of the Texas House, a respected leader in our legislature, respected by members of both sides of the aisle. In fact, Pete Laney was the one individual that President George Bush who then as Governor Bush asked Mr. Laney to introduce for the first time to the public President-elect Bush in his first speech to the Nation and the world once he found out he would be President.

I have some questions for the Department of Homeland Security:

One, and most importantly, why will you not release the tapes of the conversation between the Texas Department of Public Safety and the U.S. homeland security agency, the very conversation that led to the possibly

unlawful and certainly unethical use of Federal resources, antiterrorism resources to track down the law-abiding citizen Pete Laney?

Secondly, do you have something to hide? Why is our U.S. homeland security agency afraid to let the American people and the press know what was in that conversation?

Thirdly, does the public not deserve to hear the conversation that led to what does appear to be a gross abuse of Federal resources?

Fourthly, to the homeland security agency, our U.S. agency again trying to defend us against terrorism, if the tape exonerates you and your actions, what are you afraid of? Why are you not willing to release that tape now, not weeks, not months from now, not years from now? Why are you afraid to release that tape now to Members of Congress and to the public?

Fifth, did Majority Leader TOM DELAY or House Speaker Tom Craddick or any one of their staffs or someone speaking in their behalf ask the Texas Department of Public Safety to make this request to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security?

We will not know the answer to those questions until the tape of our U.S. homeland security agency is made available to the public.

Mr. Speaker, this is no longer just a Texas issue. It is an issue for all Americans who care about defending our families and our neighborhoods and our communities from terrorists. How horrible it is that during the very week that al Qaeda was preparing the final efforts apparently to attack Morocco and American citizens in Saudi Arabia our homeland security agency was tracking down former State Speaker of the House and present State representative Pete Laney in Hale Center, Texas, a community of just over 2,000 people, not known as a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism or radicalism in little old west Texas.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CULBERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CULBERSON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TEXAS REDISTRICTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SANDLIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, there is disturbing news coming out of Wash-

ington, D.C., and Austin, Texas, today that should be of great and grave concern to all Americans. Because, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Homeland Security, a U.S. government agency, has basically now had to admit that it used a homeland security plane and government resources for political purposes and now they are covering it up. As most of the country now knows, Texas Democrats in the State House recently absented themselves from the floor to break a quorum, a legitimate parliamentary maneuver. This angered the Republican powers that be in Washington, D.C. A homeland security plane was dispatched to try to follow and harass Pete Laney, the former Democratic Speaker of the Texas House, and other members. Upon being caught and not before, the Department of Homeland Security said that they actually were under the impression that the plane was lost or crashed.

Mr. Speaker, that is just not credible. That is just not so. Period.

Now it has been learned that a tape and a transcript of the contact between Homeland Security and law enforcement has been discovered. And what has been the response of homeland security? They refused to turn over the tape. They refused to turn over the transcript.

Mr. Speaker, I have two questions. What did they know and when did they know it? The U.S. Congress calls upon Homeland Security to release the tapes, stop the cover-up, and do it now. Otherwise, they need to get a dictionary and they need to look up the word "subpoena." Otherwise, they need to get the statutes and look up in the statutes the term "freedom of information."

The use of the Federal Government for political purposes should frighten all Americans. The Fort Worth Star-Telegram said this Sunday, "To meet the threat of global terrorism, the United States is assembling enormous Federal resources focusing on activities in American cities, neighborhoods and countrysides that could endanger those citizens. If we are to have this security apparatus, it must be contained to its designated purposes. There must be every safeguard so that it does not cross the thin line between protecting innocent citizens and spying on their private lives. That these security resources were used no matter in what minor way in a Texas political dispute should be alarming to us all."

And, Mr. Speaker, alarmingly there is more. Not only has the Federal Government been spying on citizens for private purposes and then covering it up but also the authority of the state has been used to intimidate and terrorize the families of Texas legislators.

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Here are some examples: Representative Craig Eiland, his wife recently had premature twins, the twins in the neonatal unit of the hospital. Investigators were sent to the neonatal unit to

investigate and question nurses, sent to his wife's home to terrorize her.

Representative Chuck Hopson, his wife left Austin to drive 4 miles to Jacksonville. The law enforcement officer got on her bumper and went with her the entire way.

Police entered the home of Joe Pickett, a State representative. His 17-year-old daughter was there alone, and as he explained it, "They scared the holy hell out of her."

Patrick Rose had his car searched after it had been placed on the TV and everybody in the whole country knew that the Texas legislators were in Oklahoma. A senior staff member, Representative Naishtat, was told it was a felony to withhold information about his whereabouts, a total lie.

In the Corpus Christi newspaper it said this: "The wife of State Representative Jaime Capelo, Democrat, Corpus Christi, looked out her kitchen window Tuesday and noticed a blue four-door vehicle driving past. The driver looked at her home as he passed. The vehicle pulled up next to a white Chevy. 'I asked him why he was watching my house.' The man identified himself as a State trooper and told her that officials in Austin had called his office and told the troopers to follow her."

These abuses and others prompted State Representative Jim Dunnam from Waco to send a letter to Speaker Craddick and say in part: "P.S. as you know, we are at the Holiday Inn in Ardmore, Oklahoma. Please stop having our loved ones followed and staked out by law enforcement." Mr. Speaker, surely, surely Mr. Craddick's family raised him better than that.

Mr. Speaker, using the power and authority of the Federal Government to trample the U.S. Constitution and the freedoms we hold dear is outrageous. Covering it up makes it worse. Coordinating with State enforcement to terrorize innocent families is not only illegal; it is inexcusable. It is time for the Federal Government to come clean and come clean now. Release the tapes, release the transcripts, stop the cover-up. The Constitution is superior to the arrogance of power. Thanks to my State reps, Barry Telford, Mark Homer, Chuck Hopson, they know that. They have learned that lesson. I wish the Republican power brokers in Washington, D.C. do the same thing.

SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH FAIRNESS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, last September the U.S. Census Bureau released figures that showed that the number of Americans who do not have health insurance has increased to more than 41 million Americans. Of those, 60 percent are employed by small businesses. We know that a great number

of these small business owners do want to offer their employees health insurance coverage; but with health insurance costs rising 14.7 percent just in 2002 alone, they are struggling to meet this cost.

House Resolution 660, the Small Business Health Fairness Act, opens the door for small business owners, providing the chance to give their employees high-quality health insurance at an affordable price by allowing associations to form large regional or national groups that can purchase fully insured health insurance which would put growing businesses on a level playing field for larger corporations.

Those opposed to AHPs, as they are called, claim that they will allow "cherry picking" or selecting only employees that are young and/or healthy for coverage. In reality, this legislation prohibits an AHP from denying health insurance on the basis of health status. They must follow the same rules on portability, preexisting conditions, and nondiscrimination that large employers must follow.

This legislation also contains solvency provisions that protect employees against the risk of health claims. These health plans must certify through a qualified actuary that an AHP is financially sound.

To conclude, what businesses want is to offer health coverage to their workers. House Resolution 660 gives employers the ability to provide this coverage by allowing small businesses to band together as a trade association to become larger purchasers of health insurance. By saving small businesses, an estimated 15 to 30 percent, compared to the cost of purchasing coverage directly from an insurance company, associated health plans will give more Americans the health benefits they need to provide for themselves and for their families.

JOB-KILLER POLICIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I came down here to talk about taxes, but let me first talk about Texas. All Americans must unite in the war against terrorism and we did that. We passed the PATRIOT Act. We provided resources for the Department of Homeland Security. But now we discover that the war on terrorism is a war against Democrats. This will divide America, and that is good for the terrorists. How many Americans may lose their lives because we cannot empower the Department of Homeland Security because it uses that power to pervert American democracy? Only an honest release of the tapes, only an honest approach will save the Department of Homeland Security and save only the Americans that it can save.

Now let us talk about taxes. The Bush recession continues. Republicans

continue to use their political power to adopt job-killer policies which means the Bush recession will continue to continue. The most obvious job-killer policy is the dividend exclusion provision included in the Senate tax bill passed last week. Every major tax provision has both positive and negative effects on our economy, and Republican after Republican has come down here to talk about the rather modest economic benefits of excluding dividends from taxation. Democrats, though, have not used our time to respond and to point out the much larger offsetting negative effects of this provision. The reason for that is that we Democrats have been so incensed at a policy that provides 50 percent of the tax benefits to 1 percent of the population and gives 1 percent of the benefits to 50 percent of the population.

We have been so incensed that the Republicans would launch a class war attack against working families. We have been so incensed that they would come up with a policy designed to allow the richest in America to buy the new \$350,000 Mercedes Benz, the Maybach, and pass the cost on to the sons and daughters of working Americans as they build the deficit. We have been so incensed about that that we forgot to mention, oh, by the way, it is a job killer.

Let us talk about that. We could of course drop currency from helicopters, \$25 billion a year, \$50 billion a year, and that would have some positive economic effects; but it would have a much larger negative economic effect because it would raise interest rates and it would deprive us of the opportunity to help States. They will have to discharge teachers, law enforcement officers, and others; and those folks will lose their jobs. So even helicopters dropping cash has some positive effect, but a larger offsetting effect.

The offsetting and negative effect of this dividend exclusion is worse because at least the people who catch the money from the helicopter will probably go out and spend it on necessities of life, whereas the dividend exclusion is aimed at the folks most likely to buy foreign luxury imports, which does not provide jobs for Americans.

The dividend exclusion was justified on the idea that it was going to build up corporate treasuries because people would invest in stock and then the corporations would go out and buy plants and equipment. This was proven to be a phony ruse because under pressure to bring down the price tag of the dividend exclusion, the White House has now written a version that obviously will not cause any additional corporate investment. What does that provision do? It provides half-tax exclusion for dividends paid in 2003; full exclusion for 2004, 2005, 2006, and then back to a full taxation of dividends starting in 2007 and future years.

What will that mean? First, all the dividends corporations were going to pay out this month and in the next 8