

that make them special. And we should never try to force our heartsongs on others or have all the same heartsongs.

And it's sad that people are fighting over whose heartsong is better nowadays, because they're all different and beautiful.

RAPTURE

Have you witnessed the early morning, right before the sun rises and the sky glows purple lava lamp? The clouds are the dark, floating lumps, and the still, gentle earth is to look upon.

HOPE HAIKU

Gentle and peaceful. We are the children of one God yet so many faiths. True, we are different. Unique mosaics of life. Still, we are the same. United we are the festive fabric of life. Divided we fall.

RESOLUTION INVOCATION

Let this truly be the celebration of a new year. Let us remember the past, yet not dwell in it. Let us fully use the present, yet not waste it. Let us live for the future, yet not count on it. Let this truly be the celebration of a new year, as we remember and appreciate and live, rejoicing with each other.

ABOUT HEAVEN

Now I will tell you about heaven. Where is heaven? It is way over there. And it is way over there. And it is way over there, too. It is everywhere. What does it look like? It looks like a school. And it looks like a farm. And it looks like a home. It looks like everything. What does it sound like? Well, I really don't know, because I'm just a little big boy with a brother and another brother and sister and a friend who live in the everywhere and everything of heaven. But perhaps heaven sounds like forever.

I AM

I am black. I am white. I am all skins in between. I am young. I am old. I am each age that has been. I am scrawny. I am well fed. I am starving for attention. I am famous. I am cryptic. I am hardly worth the mention. I am short. I am height. I am any frame or stature. I am smart. I am challenged. I am striving for a future. I am able. I am weak. I am some strength. I am none. I am being. I am thoughts. I am all things, said and done. I am born. I am dying. I am dust of humble roots. I am grace. I am pain. I am labor of willed fruits. I am a slave. I am free. I am bonded to my life. I am rich. I am poor. I am wealth amid strife. I am shadow. I am glory. I am hiding from my shame. I am hero. I am loser. I am yearning for a name. I am empty. I am proud. I am seeking my tomorrow. I am growing. I am fading. I am hope amid the sorrow. I am certain. I am doubtful. I am desperate for solutions. I am leader. I am student. I am fate and evolutions. I am spirit. I am voice. I am memory not recalled. I am chance. I am cause. I am effort, blocks and walls. I am him. I am her. I am reasons without rhymes. I am past. I am nearing. I am present in all times. I am many. I am no one. I am seasoned by each being. I am me. I am you. I am all souls now decreeing: I am.

MATTIE STEPANEK BACKGROUND

Mattie Stepanek, the child poet whose inspirational verse made him a best-selling writer and a prominent voice for muscular dystrophy sufferers, died Tuesday of a rare form of the disease. He was 13.

Mattie died at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, the hospital said. He had been hospitalized since early March for complications related to the disease that impaired most of his body's functions.

In his short life, the tireless Stepanek wrote five volumes of poetry that sold millions of copies. Three of the volumes reached the New York Times' best-seller list.

"Mattie was something special, something very special," entertainer Jerry Lewis, who chairs the Muscular Dystrophy Association, said in a statement.

"His example made people want to reach for the best within themselves."

Mattie had dysautonomic mitochondrial myopathy, a genetic disease that impaired his heart rate, breathing, blood pressure and digestion, and caused muscle weakness.

His mother, Jeni, 44, has the adult-onset form of the disease, and his three older siblings died of it in early childhood.

Mattie began writing poetry at age 3 to cope with the death of a brother. In 2001, a small publisher issued a slim volume of his poems, called "Heartsongs." Within weeks, the book reached the top of the Times' best-seller list.

He wrote four other books: "Journey Through Heartsongs," "Hope Through Heartsongs," "Celebrate Through Heartsongs," and "Loving Through Heartsongs."

His poems brought him admirers including Oprah Winfrey and former President Carter and made him one of the best-selling poets in recent years.

Mattie was hospitalized many times over the years. He rolled around his home in a wheelchair he nicknamed "Slick," and relied on a feeding tube, a ventilator and frequent blood transfusions to stay alive.

In the summer of 2001, Mattie nearly died from uncontrollable bleeding in his throat and spent five months at Children's National. When it seemed he would not survive, the hospital got in touch with a Virginia publisher on his behalf.

Mattie and his mother had sent the book to dozens of New York publishers, all of whom rejected it, according to Peter Barnes of VSP Publishers. Barnes said he was caught off guard when he read the work.

VSP Books printed 200 copies of "Heartsongs" to be handed out to friends. But after a news conference publicizing the book, interest exploded. "Heartsongs" went on to sell more than 500,000 copies.

Despite his condition, Mattie was upbeat, saying he didn't fear death. His work was full of life, a quest for peace, hope and the inner voice he called a "heartsong."

"It's our inner beauty, our message, the songs in our hearts," he said in an interview with The Associated Press in November 2001. "My life mission is to spread peace to the world."

JUSTICES RAISE DOUBTS ON SENTENCING RULES

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. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor because of two court decisions that will have, I think, very important effects on the criminal justice system, on justice in our country, and on the lives of many Americans who have indeed not had the benefits of equal justice in our country. One comes from the Massachusetts Supreme Court

where a district judge has thrown out the Federal sentencing guidelines as unconstitutional. This is an interesting case because the guidelines were upheld in 1989 by the Supreme Court, so it will be important to look closely at this case because the judge clearly feels that there are now grounds to throw the sentencing guidelines out notwithstanding the Supreme Court decision and probably because the Supreme Court decision does not take into effect all that the Massachusetts district judge has found.

This has to go, of course, to the First Circuit Court of Appeals. It is very significant. What makes it more significant is that the Supreme Court itself has now just thrown out Washington State guidelines of a kind that are very similar to the Federal guidelines, at least in many respects, in an opinion written by Justice Scalia.

Essentially what the court found in the 5-4 decision is that the Washington State guidelines violate the sixth amendment right to a jury trial because the sentence is beyond the ordinary range for the crime and this increase in punishments was decided by a judge and not by a jury. Therefore it was in violation, according to the Supreme Court, of the sixth amendment right to a jury trial.

Essentially what the court seemed to be saying was that the Washington State sentencing guidelines allow a judge to enhance sentences beyond what has been placed before a jury and beyond what the crime usually carries. That is exactly what the Federal guidelines do and that is why everyone is scrambling to see whether or not we have something very significant and how to take charge of it.

Its significance, of course, cannot be doubted. For myself, my chief interest is not only as a constitutional lawyer but my interest as well is on the effect of the Federal sentencing guidelines on an entire generation of young black men. Only crack cocaine drug offenses have enhanced sentences. That is to say, if you have cocaine, there is no enhanced sentence. But if you have crack cocaine, there is an enhanced sentence. As you might imagine, crack cocaine, because it is cheap, is found in lower-income communities. The effect has been quite outrageous. Essentially if you look at our country today, black men are 5 percent of the population. They are almost 50 percent of those in jail. Have they been in jail for being drug kingpins? Not at all. These are mostly drug users. Any selling they have done has been to support their habit for the most part. And the Federal sentencing guidelines have so outraged the Federal judiciary that the Judicial Conference has in fact for years now been for the repeal of the guidelines. No less than two conservative justices, Justice Rehnquist and Justice Kennedy, have come forward in speeches against the Federal judicial guidelines.

These cases merit real attention. The harm that has been done has been done

by this Congress. It is the Congress who in effect has virtually instructed the sentencing commission to enhance sentences and to enhance sentences as much as possible and particularly for these drug offenses which are far from where the harm is being done.

The essential effect is to destroy the African American family. Young women, well educated, who are out in the world working in disproportionate numbers to the young men who are there; young men as boys siphoned off into the drug economy, the gun economy, the underground economy which is the economy left in the inner cities of our country; a huge disparity between marriageable young men and marriageable young women, all traces back to the criminal justice system.

These cases have a lot to teach our country. They are going to make their own changes. These cases are an instruction to us to look closely at the Federal sentencing guidelines so that we can do our part to get rid of this injustice in the criminal justice system.

INTRODUCTION OF CENTER FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT ACT OF 2005

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

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Center For Scientific and Technical Assessment Act of 2005. I have introduced the creating legislation with the gentleman from New York (Mr. HOUGHTON), the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN), the gentleman from California (Mr. HONDA), the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. GORDON), the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT), the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN), the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. OLIVER), the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GREENWOOD), the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN), the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RUPPERSBERGER), and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS). The Center For Scientific and Technical Assessment would be a bicameral and bipartisan resource providing Congress with highly respected, impartial analysis and assessment of scientific and technical issues. The center would provide Congress with early warnings on technology's impacts both here and abroad. The center would assess the issues that impact current and future legislation encompassing medicine, telecommunications, computer sciences, agriculture, materials, transportation, defense, indeed every discipline and sector important to the United States and to our work here in Congress.

It would undertake controversial subjects, examining them objectively and comprehensively for the Nation's

benefit. The center would offer much needed sound principles to reap the benefits of technological change in industry, in the Federal Government, in the workplace, in our schools and look at the estimated economic and social impacts of rapid technological change. The center would enable Congress better to oversee Federal science and technology programs which now amount to over \$130 billion. Finally, the center would help Congress better to understand complex technological issues by tailoring reports for legislative users.

Today's legislative environment involves highly complex issues of science, engineering and technology. High-wage, advanced technology workforce growth is a prerequisite to a strong economy whose future is predicated on our continuing global dominance in science and technology.

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If the United States is to maintain and continue its leading role into the 21st Century, then Congress needs to recognize that the future is being shaped by new science and technology discoveries arising from our past investments in basic and applied research and their deployment into present and new industrial sectors. A well-informed Congress with the foresight to pass the right legislation must understand the effects of that technology on all sectors of our society and must understand the scientific aspects of all the legislation under consideration.

Our Nation must exploit these new advances or prepare to be exploited ourselves by others. Given how technology underlies many aspects of our constituents' lives, concerns, and jobs, unbiased technical assessment is not a luxury but a necessity.

Today Congress is deluged with facts, figures, opinions, and arguments from thousands of interested citizens. Congress does not need more facts and data on these issues of science and technology; it needs balanced analysis and synthesis that conclude with a framing of issues and extraction of knowledge and insight, a process beyond most Members of Congress and our immediate staffs. The Congressional Science Fellows program is a help in some respects. For example, Dr. Marti Sokolowski in my own office provides some of this, and there are some Fellows scattered around other offices around Capitol Hill, but it is not enough.

For 2 decades, Congress could call upon the Office of Technology Assessment for nonpartisan scientific and technical advice. OTA published dozens of reports a year. Its work ran the gamut of subject matter. OTA brought science into the center of many congressional discussions. And at times OTA was a major factor in major pieces of legislation.

Unfortunately, OTA closed its doors in September, 1995. However, many of

its reports are still relevant and useful, but no more such reports are being produced. The loss of that technology assessment is great. Now we have no advice or sometimes haphazard review panels whose composition may tempt some to politicize science. Therefore, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HOUGHTON) and I have introduced a bill to establish the Center for Scientific and Technology Assessment.

We have done much research on the advantages and disadvantages of the former Office of Technology Assessment. We have looked at the recent successful technical assessment program prepared by the General Accounting Office. We have taken into the account the GAO's document and its recommendations. Finally, we have examined the study "Science and Technology Advice for Congress" and considered the lessons of that publication in constructing this bill.

Our country will move into the 21st Century whether we in Congress are prepared or not. Congress will have at least the possibility of charting the course for our Nation with understanding of the applications of science and technology if we enact this legislation.

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY TO THE UNITED STATES MILITARY

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, we have had a vigorous legislative week that included a resolution affirming and applauding the Iraqi transitional government. It was a vigorous debate because many of us were pained to go to the floor to acknowledge a war that we had such great concern and opposition to. I voted for that resolution, with qualifications as to some of the language, but no qualifications on the affirmation of the young men and women on the front line. To be able to recognize their service, to thank their families, and to pray for those families who have lost loved ones.

I could not leave this body this week without acknowledging, as this country celebrates its anniversary of independence, the importance of recognizing freedom and how much and how long we fought for it and the way that we should lead our foreign policy to reflect on the principles of that freedom.

I will spend time, Mr. Speaker, this week with returning veterans and their families and families of those who have lost loved ones in Iraq. But most of all, I think it is important that we take this somewhat holiday week to reflect on the freedom that we as Americans have in this country and to never stray away from the rights of freedom, protesting when we believe it is wrong, supporting when we believe it is right, but, most of all, embracing the Constitution that allows us the freedom of