

his commitment to protect the environment in the Caribbean. His remarks at the opening ceremony of the Third Conference on the Environment indicated his support for environmental sustainability and compliance with the international environment agenda in order to foster partnerships for preservation in the region.

During his speech, Ambassador King encouraged students and professionals to transition to sustainable business and support non-governmental organizations that make such business a priority. He also challenged his audience to utilize the expertise of Caribbeans abroad that have experienced success in environmental sustainability.

Ambassador King insisted on strengthening stewardship, advocacy, public education, and innovation in the absence of great financial resources in order to improve the environment. While he marked the progress made by Caribbean nations in terms of securing trained and knowledgeable staff on environment and development issues, he acknowledged the narrow scope of much of the expertise due to limited resources forcing specialization.

Ambassador King gave the example of The University of the West Indies (UWI) as a Caribbean institution of higher learning that should adopt sustainable energy and recycling programs to better the environment of the Caribbean. With a focus on such programs, graduates of UWI, and other Caribbean universities, would be more dedicated to achieving sustainability in the environment as well as building upon existing exercises aimed at biological diversity.

Article 58 of the Treaty of Chaguaramas, which established the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), details the framework wherein member nations are to operate in order to protect and manage their biological and natural resources. Ambassador King encouraged CARICOM members to develop a vision for environmental sustainability, with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States setting the precedence.

THE TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, on Friday, June 29th, 2007, the United States and the Republic of Panama signed the Trade Promotion Agreement, which is the result of the tireless negotiations between both the United States and Panama. After the agreement is signed, Congress will have an opportunity to comprehensively review it, an opportunity that I wholeheartedly welcome.

This agreement will increase much needed access to medicines for developing countries, strengthen provisions in labor, environment and national security. This agreement also sees to it that significant cuts are made to trade barrier tariffs. Additionally, this bill seeks to improve on the growing commercial relationship between both countries on the growing Panamanian market which has a strong affinity for American goods, demonstrated by the 67 percent trade deficit Panama currently holds with the U.S.

Small businesses stand to benefit from this agreement as well. The elimination of Panamanian tariffs on our goods will lower the transaction costs. This would create a mutually beneficial relationship between small business sellers in the United States and buyers in Panama.

This agreement is about more than the commercial exchange of goods and services. I would like to note that our relationship with Panama is a long standing one since its independence from Colombia in 1903. We have an uncompromising commitment to providing opportunities for the people of Panama to work towards a better future while providing American businesses the opportunity to expand their market access in another country.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the \$5.25 billion expansion of the Panama Canal which will create additional unique opportunities. Three of the four contracts for this project have already been awarded to U.S. businesses.

Madam Speaker, I submit for your further consideration the text of the proposed U.S. Panama Trade Promotion Agreement. I look forward to a productive and informative discussion about it in the weeks and months to come.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I was required to be back in my home district to assist my mother, who recently had surgery. For this reason, I was unable to attend recorded votes for yesterday, Wednesday, July 11, 2007.

COLLEGE COST REDUCTION ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2669, the College Cost Reduction Act of 2007, which will cut excess subsidies paid by the federal government to lenders in the student loan industry and reinvest those funds to allow for the single largest investment in higher education since the GI bill, at no new cost to taxpayers.

Over the last few decades, the cost of a postsecondary education in our country has more than doubled for graduates with student loans, from \$9,250 to \$19,200—a 108 percent increase (58 percent after accounting for inflation). As the richest nation in the world, we have a moral obligation to eliminate the barriers this de facto economic segregation erects. No child should be forced to forgo the dream of a college education due to fear of debt, and no child should have that potential debt dictate their future career choice.

The College Cost Reduction Act will provide us with a real chance, a \$15.1 billion chance, to roll back the spiraling cost of higher education in this country. By cutting interest rates

in half on subsidized student loans and increasing the maximum Pell Grant scholarship, this act makes College more affordable and moves more Americans into the middle class.

Passing H.R. 2669 will also provide upfront tuition assistance to students committed to teaching at public schools in high-poverty communities or high-need subject areas. Furthermore, this legislation provides loan forgiveness to encourage students who choose to pursue careers as public servants. By enacting these provisions, we will be allowing students to become a nurse, public defender, prosecutor or firefighter free from the restraints of debt.

Finally, the College Cost Reduction Act Congress will be making a landmark, \$500 million investment in Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and Tribally-Controlled, Native or Predominately Black Institutions, ensuring that students can not only enter college, but count on continued support through graduation.

In the first 50 legislative hours of the 110th Congress, the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives took up and passed H.R. 5, the College Student Relief Act, which cut the interest rates in half on certain subsidized student loans over the next five years. In passing that legislation, we kept our promise of making college more affordable and accessible. Today, with H.R. 2669, the College Cost Reduction Act, we build on this effort and once again prove that the 110th Congress is on the job and fighting for a better America.

PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS PROTECTION ACT OF 2007

HON. F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Speaker, today I am reintroducing bipartisan legislation, the Private Property Rights Protection Act of 2007, along with my friend and colleague from California.

This legislation would prevent the federal government or any authority of the federal government from using economic development as a justification for exercising its power of eminent domain.

The protection of private property rights lies at the foundation of American government. As James Madison wrote in the Federalist Papers, "[G]overnment is instituted no less for the protection of property than of the persons of individuals."

Two years ago, the Supreme Court held in *Kelo v. City of New London* that "economic development" can be a "public use" under the Fifth Amendment's Takings Clause. The 5-4 decision has substantially weakened the rights of private property owners by handing the government a raw taking power with negligible accountability to the "public use" requirement in the Fifth Amendment's Taking Clause.

The "public use" requirement imposed an important limitation on eminent domain power to ensure the government may not force individuals to forfeit their property for the benefit of another private party.

However, *Kelo* transformed established constitutional principles when it permitted the government to seize the private property of one

small homeowner and to give it to a large corporation for a private business use in the interest of creating a more lucrative tax base.

The dissenting opinion of that case made clear the far-reaching implications of the decision. Justice O'Connor wrote, "Any property may now be taken for the benefit of another private party. The government now has the license to transfer property from those with fewer resources to those with more. The Founders cannot have intended this perverse result." Houses of worship and other religious institutions that are by their very nature non-profit and almost universally tax-exempt, render their property singularly vulnerable. The NAACP and the AARP faulted Kelo's failing reasoning by stating: "The takings that result from the Court's decision will disproportionately affect and harm the economically disadvantaged and, in particular, racial and ethnic minorities and the elderly."

In response, I introduced H.R. 4128, the Private Property Rights Restoration Act of 2005 to restore to all Americans the property rights the Supreme Court took away. H.R. 4128 passed with the clear support of this House with a vote of 376–38. Since the Kelo decision, 41 States have passed laws to rein back eminent domain power. Yet, these laws exist on a varying degree, and the need to ensure that property rights are returned to all Americans is as strong now as it was 2 years ago.

Like H.R. 4128, this year's legislation also establishes a penalty for States and localities that abuse their eminent domain power by denying those States and localities that commit such abuse all Federal economic development funds for a period of 2 years. This legislation sets up a clear connection between the Federal funds that would be denied and the abuse Congress is intending to prevent while providing States and localities with an opportunity to cure any violation by either returning or replacing the improperly taken property before they lose any Federal economic development funds.

Included in this legislation is an express private right of action to ensure access to the State or Federal court and a fee-shifting provision identical to those in other civil rights laws, which allows a prevailing property owner to be awarded attorney and expert fees as part of the costs of bringing the litigation to enforce the bill's provisions. A change in this year's version of the bill includes a provision to protect not only property owners, but also tenants. Tenants who may lose their homes if the government exercises its eminent domain power deserve the same right of action as homeowners. Another improvement to this bill allows the Attorney General to file suit; this will help homeowners and tenants without the means to file a case on their own behalf.

I am very mindful of the long history of eminent domain abuses, particularly in low-income and often predominantly minority neighborhoods, and the need to stop it. I am also very mindful of the reasons we should allow the government to take land when the way in which the land is being used constitutes an immediate threat to public health and safety. I believe this bill accomplishes both goals.

Property rights are civil rights. I urge all my colleagues to join me in protecting property rights of all Americans and limiting the dangerous effects of the Kelo decision on the most vulnerable in society.

HONORING LEO A. (AL) LONG

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Leo A. Long for 50 years of dedicated service to the Office of the Architect of the Capitol.

Mr. Long, currently the administrative assistant within the Office of the Budget Officer for the Office of the Architect of the Capitol, has served at the Capitol since 1957.

Mr. Long began his congressional career as a temporary clerk-typist in the Architect's office during the administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower. In 1958, he was transferred from his temporary position to the full-time position of payroll-clerk. By 1963, Mr. Long had been relocated to the position of assistant personnel officer and was promoted to administrative assistant in the Office of the Budget Officer in 1969, which is the job he continues to hold today.

Throughout his impressive career, Mr. Long has acquired a wealth of historical knowledge of the Architect's office through his diligent tracking of relevant legislation in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Mr. Long has also supported major construction, restoration, and renovation projects throughout the Capitol Complex. Thus, he has seen the groundbreaking and completion of the new Dirksen Senate office building, the Rayburn House office building, and the Hart Senate office building.

Many things have changed over the course of Mr. Long's career. When he first began his service at the Capitol he commuted to work using a cable car and used pencil and paper. Today, despite the use of online resources, Mr. Long's historical knowledge of past projects and old paper records is of tremendous value. Whenever questions arise over matters that took place decades ago, colleagues come to "Al" in hopes of benefiting from his past experience and expertise. Mr. Long has made a lasting impact over the past fifty years and his service to Congress and the American people is commendable. I look forward to his continued work in the years to come.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Leo A. Long for 50 years of service and dedication to the United States Congress. I ask my colleagues to join me in applauding and congratulating him on this distinguished achievement.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PHIL ENGLISH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, on rollcall No. 615, on passage of H.R. 986, Eightmile Wild and Scenic River Act, I was unable to be present for the vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "no."

TRIBUTE TO MRS. SHARON
WAGNER BRAITEH

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a good friend, devoted mother and grandmother, and outstanding advocate for service work in her community and throughout the country, Mrs. Sharon Wagner Braiteh.

In 1995 she was one of the top five nominees for the Houston Mayors Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service. In 2000 she was recognized by the Legal Assistants Division of the State Bar of Texas with the Exceptional Pro Bono Award for her work with Child Advocates, the Texas Volunteer Lawyers Association, and as a speaker and educator in numerous HIV/AIDS events. In 2001 she was recognized by Catholic Charities as their volunteer of the year. She served six summers as a counselor for the Texas Children's Hospital/AIDS Foundation Houston CAMP H.U.G. She is a 2003 graduate of Project LEAP, and has served as a volunteer with the Texas Medical Center Hospice. She has also worked with the National Youth Leadership Forum on Medicine annually since 1998.

In 2004 Sharon was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. As she had done before she immediately became involved in helping cancer patients throughout the country by becoming an integral part of the Angel Flight Organization that provides free air transportation for patients seeking treatment in major medical centers throughout the country.

Despite her ongoing battle with non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, Sharon remains an integral part and member of her church, Palmer Memorial Episcopal, and as a member of the Community of Hope and Angel Flight continues to give aid and assistance to patients who come from out of town to the Texas Medical Center for treatment.

The Rotary Club of Lake Conroe will plant a Texas native Live Oak Tree in Memory Park adjacent to the new Charles B Stewart Library in Montgomery in Sharon's honor to commemorate her efforts on behalf of all the causes she has championed and as a reminder to the citizens of Montgomery County, the entire Eighth District and all the world of her tireless and devoted efforts for those in need.

Madam Speaker, please join me in honoring this outstanding woman and in applauding her work in expanding education and service to all who seek it and have benefited from it, and in inspiring many to love and serve, including her daughter who is nearing completion of her nursing degree at Lamar University.

JUDICIAL ACTIVISM: THE CONSERVATIVES' SECRET PASSION

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, in few areas of our public life is there a greater gap between what people say and