

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Mesquite Chamber of Commerce for their hard work and effort on behalf of Mesquite and the State of Texas. I wish them the best of luck as they enter into the next 50 years of service benefiting the City of Mesquite. They truly do know the meaning of Real. Texas. Business.

A TRIBUTE TO FRANCES
WILLIAMS

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 19, 2007

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise in mourning for one of Philadelphia's most well-known and loved moms. "Mom" Frances Williams, a mother of five sons and a civic leader in her own right, left us to go home on January 12, 2007 at the age of 94.

Born in Philadelphia on February 7, 1912, "Mom" was a devoted member of Mount Zion Baptist Church since the age of 12, and over the years generously contributed her time and talents to the church. As a member of the Mt. Zion family, she was the longest serving president of the Young Women's Industrial Club and initiated the first "Get Set" program for children in the church.

"Mom" was considered a surrogate mother to countless young people she mentored over the decades. Many can attest to having found their first jobs with the help of "Mom" Williams. Numerous young people entered college and joined the church because of her guidance. She often went into her pocketbook, cupboard, and closet to help someone else.

She served her community and city as a block captain, committee person and civic leader. Later in life, she directed her energy towards helping seniors in need. She was a member of many organizations and boards. "Mom" founded and served as president of Save Our Senior and Concerned Citizens. She served as a board member of the Philadelphia Corporation of Aging and commissioner on the Philadelphia Commission of Human Relations.

"Mom" ran for City Council At-Large in 1979 on a platform that pledged housing programs for seniors, crime-reduction programs, and initiatives to serve and empower at risk youth and people with disabilities. She also gave our city two generations of leaders in her son former State Sen. Hard Williams and grandson State Sen. Anthony Hardy Williams.

In March 1999, article in the Philadelphia New Observer she explains "It's all very simple. Keep yourself clean and if something makes you sick, don't eat it. Tell the truth and don't follow the crowd. Most of all have faith."

She is survived by one sister, Ruth Lacy of Philadelphia; five sons: James Williams (Gloria) of Blackwood, NJ; Hardy Williams, Fredrick A. Williams (Ernestine); Theodore; and Ali Robinson (Ramona) of Philadelphia; one niece, Vivian Whitt; one nephew, Carl Lacy, both Philadelphia; twenty one grandchildren; numerous great and great, great grandchildren; and a host of grand and great grand nieces and nephews.

I know that all my colleagues will join me in honoring her memory today.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT B.
GILBERTSON, JR.

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 19, 2007

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the work of Robert B. Gilbertson, Jr., the innovative leader of the Tampa Metropolitan Area YMCA. After more than 20 years with the Tampa YMCA, Bob is leaving Florida for Seattle in order to serve as the CEO of the YMCA of Greater Seattle.

During his tenure, Bob, led an effort to greatly expand the Tampa YMCA by the creation of 12 new branches throughout Hillsborough County. The expansion effort has resulted in the YMCA membership growing from 5,000 to 130,000 members and their yearly budget has grown from around \$1,000,000 to over \$33,000,000. More importantly, this expansion has provided the opportunity for the YMCA to expand its charitable mission of building strong kids, strong families and strong communities. No child or family is turned away from the YMCA due to their inability to pay. Today, scholarships are provided to over 30,000 children and families so they can enjoy one of the largest social service charitable organizations operating in Hillsborough County.

I met with Bob recently at the Brandon Family YMCA where he introduced me to some very special children who were involved in the foster care system. I was proud to play a role in ensuring that the U.S. Department of Labor provided the Tampa YMCA with funding to create a job training program for youth aging-out of the foster system. This extremely important program will be one of Bob's lasting legacies in Tampa.

Bob Gilbertson has certainly made his mark in Tampa and I am grateful for the leadership he has provided. I wish him great success as he moves to Seattle.

FEDERAL MINE VENTILATION ACT
OF 2007

HON. NICK J. RAHALL, II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 19, 2007

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, one year ago today tragedy struck for the second time in less than three weeks in the coalfields of West Virginia. A fire broke out along the conveyor belt in the Aracoma Mine, at Alma, Logan County, taking the lives of two good men and turning the national spotlight on a sorely risky industry practice.

The use of the belt air entry to ventilate a mine, as was the case at Aracoma, is egregiously dangerous. The belt entry—the tunnel through which the coal conveyor belt runs—has long been recognized as the dirtiest, most fire-prone entry in the mines. To use it to draw air to the working face exposes miners to higher levels of health-endangering, flammable coal dust and noxious gases. And, although saving operators the cost of adding more entries into the mine, it limits the escape routes for miners trying to evacuate in an emergency—an unacceptable tradeoff.

For at least 35 years, from the time the Mine Act was signed into law, the use of the conveyor belt entries to draw fresh air into working areas of coal mines was effectively "ruled out" as an acceptable standard practice. The use of belt air, during all that time, was considered to be the exception.

Under an initial Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) rule, issued decades ago, mines could use the method, but only after obtaining an exemption through a petition process—a process that, at least, required high-level scrutiny on a mine-by-mine basis. The idea was that, if a mine wanted to take a higher degree of risk, it had to provide a higher level of safety precautions and prove that it was doing so.

Over time, however, MSHA allowed a growing number of mines to use this suspect practice, until in 2004, when the existing, more cautious rule was replaced. The new rule superceded the prohibition Congress had written into law, and opened the door wide to belt air ventilation and all of the dangers it brings with it.

That 2004 rule was a symptom of a shifting set of priorities at MSHA that put promotion of coal production above the protection of miners. That rule should be jettisoned.

Madam Speaker, the Aracoma fire of a year ago, demonstrates how the deteriorating mine safety policies at MSHA have combined with insufficient numbers of inspectors and lax enforcement to intensify the dangers associated with the use of belt entry air.

In issuing that 2004 rule, MSHA decided that the use of modern air monitoring technologies had improved to a degree in recent years to sufficiently reduce the risk posed by belt air ventilation. But at Aracoma, the air-sensing technology failed. The agency put faith in presence of water systems to suppress the outbreak of fires. At Aracoma, the water system malfunctioned. Portions of a wall needed to separate the conveyor belt from the miners primary escapeway, although on the mine map, were missing.

At every turn, some safety measure that should have been taken to protect lives at that mine failed. Even the inspections, on both the state and federal levels, failed.

The problems in our Nation's coalfields are thickly layered and will take years to sufficiently unravel. It makes no sense for the MSHA to retain a rule that allows broad use of this dangerous ventilation method in the midst of an inspector shortage and an overhaul of the mine safety system.

I am at a loss to understand why MSHA has failed to withdraw the 2004 rule, even temporarily. The fact that it has failed to do so demonstrates to me that MSHA is still not putting its duty to protect our miners above the profits of the industry.

So today, Madam Speaker, I, along with my colleague from West Virginia, ALAN MOLLOHAN, am introducing the Federal Mine Ventilation Act of 2007. The bill simply requires the Secretary of Labor, "no later than 90 days after enactment of this Act," to revise: regulations to require, in any coal mine that belt entries "not be used to ventilate active working places." I note that it is my intention with this bill to return to the pre-2004 rulemaking procedure, where the use of belt-entry ventilation was generally prohibited, while retaining the petition process and the associated heightened safety controls.

If MSHA will not act to correct its mistakes then the Congress must.

COLLEGE STUDENT RELIEF ACT
OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 17, 2007

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I oppose H.R. 5 as it is written and support the alternative proposal by Ranking Member BUCK MCKEON. As the father of three college graduates and a college freshman, I am all too familiar with the financial burden higher education poses to families and students. That is why I am proud of Republican efforts to expand college access and increase affordability.

During the past decade, House Republicans under the leadership of John Boehner and BUCK MCKEON tripled overall Federal aid to a record \$90 billion, helping millions of Americans achieve their dream of a college education.

In addition, Republicans increased new aid for Pell students more than \$4 billion over 5 years, establishing the first ever grant program for high achieving Pell students in their first and second years of college. The program also provides grant aid to low income, high achieving students pursuing degrees in math, science, and critical foreign languages in their third and fourth years.

As lawmakers, our number one concern with regard to higher education should be to ensure that college is affordable for any student. Unfortunately, as H.R. 5 is currently written, it pits the Federal Family Education Loan Program, FFEL, against the Direct Loan program, DLP, and by doing so creates an imbalance in the student loan industry that is so lopsided only the largest FFELP lenders will survive.

While the Democrat bill was well-intentioned, its focus on interest rate reduction does not expand college access for new students which the McKeon alternative does. That is why I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of it, because it truly expands college access for young Americans.

I encourage Congress to help foster an environment that will build a student loan marketplace and not play politics with college educations.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG
PRICE NEGOTIATIONS ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. ALBERT RUSSELL WYNN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, today, the House will take up, H.R. 4, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiations Act of 2007. H.R. 4 will require the government to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies in order to obtain reduced drug prices for seniors enrolled in the Medicare Prescription Drug Program. The bill prohibits, that in conducting these negotia-

tions, the government may not restrict access to certain drugs by requiring a particular list of covered drugs, otherwise known as a formulary. Under the Republican majority, the government was prohibited from engaging in any negotiations to utilize its buying power to reduce costs to consumers.

I have been assured by my colleagues that H.R. 4 will not involve or allow restrictions on patients' access to medicines during the negotiation process. Specifically, I have been assured that H.R. 4's prohibition against government mandated formularies is intended to protect against all forms of government imposed restrictions on patients' access to needed medicines, and that no such restrictions will be allowed under the Medicare Modernization Act as amended by H.R. 4. In casting my vote for H.R. 4, I am relying on these assurances because I firmly believe that all patients must have unrestricted access to doctor prescribed medications.

Overall, I am optimistic about this bill. While the government should have the ability to negotiate on behalf of the 43 million seniors on Medicare, we must be careful that negotiations do not result in reduced access to prescriptions. We must strike a delicate balance to ensure that lower prices do not cause drug companies to withdraw vital drugs from the Medicare Prescription Drug Program. As H.R. 4 moves forward to conference, I ask that the conferees affirmatively strengthen and clarify the rules against government imposed restrictions. If implemented properly, this bill has the potential to cut the cost of health care and improve access to medicines for millions of seniors on Medicare.

According to Families USA, while providing some relief, the current Medicare Prescription drug law has failed to slow the rapid growth in drug prices. As a cosponsor of H.R. 4 and a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, I will be exploring additional legislative measures designed to reduce costs for seniors, without reducing access to life saving drugs.

INTRODUCTION OF STIMULATING
LEADERSHIP IN CUTTING EX-
PENDITURES ("SLICE") ACT

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 19, 2007

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, I disagree with President Bush on a number of things, but we agree that a constitutionally-sound version of a line-item veto could help increase fiscal responsibility and Congressional accountability.

In fact, I first introduced such legislation even before the president first proposed it, and last year I joined in helping win House passage of a line-item veto bill.

Unfortunately, the Senate did not complete action on that bill before the end of the 109th Congress.

So, I am today again introducing a similar measure—the "Stimulating Leadership in Cutting Expenditure, or "SLICE" Act of 2007, co-sponsored by Representative RYAN of Wisconsin.

Over the last 6 years we've seen a dramatic change in the Federal budget—a change for

the worse. We've gone from budget surpluses to big deficits, and from reducing the national debt to increasing the "debt tax" on our children.

There's no mystery about how this happened.

Partly, it was caused by a recession. Partly, it was caused by the increased spending needed for national defense, homeland security, and fighting terrorism. And in part it was caused by excessive and unbalanced tax cuts the president pushed for and the Republican-led Congress passed.

Some of those tax cuts—for example, eliminating the marriage penalty, fixing the 10 percent bracket and extending child care tax credits—were good. I supported them because they gave a reasonable boost for the economy and increased the fairness of the tax laws. But overall they were excessive.

Many of us warned against reducing the surplus so recklessly. We urged the administration and Congress to be more responsible, and we voted for Blue Dog budget resolutions that would have set a better course.

But our pleas for restraint were ignored, and since the attacks of 9/11—which led to increased spending on homeland security, a military response in Afghanistan, and a war in Iraq—the budget has nosedived from surplus into deep deficit. And, even in the face of national emergency, neither the president nor the Republican-led Congress has called on Americans for any sacrifice, and instead of temporarily scaling back some of the tax cuts the president has insisted on making all of them permanent even as Federal spending has skyrocketed.

So we have gone on putting the costs of war and everything else the government does on the national credit card—but the debt is owed not just to ourselves (as in the past), but to China, Japan and other foreign countries.

Why have we allowed things to get so far out of hand?

Part of the answer is that budget and tax policy in Washington has been so captive to very partisan and extreme ideological voices that it has been hard to find common ground and moderate consensus.

Even in this time of war, extremists in the Republican Party view tax cuts as almost a religious calling, while some in my party tend to reject any spending cuts. And the Vice President has dismissed complaints by saying "deficits don't matter."

But this cannot go on forever. Sooner or later, something has to give. And, if the result is a new sense of responsibility, sooner is better—because there is an urgent need to rethink and revise our budget policies, including both taxes and spending.

Last year, the House did belatedly take one step forward, by passing a bill similar to the "SLICE" bill I am introducing today.

And already this year, under our new leadership, the House has taken another good step by restoring the "PAYGO" rules that helped bring the budget into balance in the past—something the Republican leadership refused to even consider last year.

But I think we also should take the step of again passing a constitutionally-sound line-item veto—like SLICE—because it also can help to promote transparency and accountability about spending.

We have heard a lot of talk about spending "earmarks"—meaning spending based on proposals by Members of Congress instead of the