

TRIBUTE TO PRIVATE FIRST
CLASS RYAN HILL

HON. DARLENE HOOLEY

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 29, 2007

Ms. HOOLEY. Madam Speaker, I am here today in this hallowed hall with a heavy heart and troubled spirit.

Here, but a few hours ago, we assembled in keeping with an annual ritual that proclaimed our Union to be strong, our nation to be sound.

Sadly, I must contest that notion.

We are not as strong as we could be, as we should be, we are not what we would be without Private First Class Ryan Hill.

For this past week, Private Hill was killed in Baghdad, Iraq. As a member of the 1st Infantry Division, he and his unit were performing duties in keeping with our efforts to foster peace and stability.

America lost someone special when we lost Ryan. He represented the better angels of our nature, he was the kind of young American we need more, not less.

Immediately following high school, Private First Class Hill joined the military to fight for his country, his community—to fight for his family and friends.

Far too often we find ourselves standing here, recognizing the loss of heroes.

Private Hill died while on patrol. Using an improvised explosive device—a weapon without honor, without conscience—our enemies stole from us the America that would have been.

Right now, the community of Keizer, Oregon is seeking comfort in the life and noble sacrifice of Ryan Hill.

This we must do; he answered the call of service voluntarily and fulfilled his duty without hesitation, without complaint.

Private First Class Hill was a model soldier, he was the kind of young man that made everyone around him better.

In correspondence home, he recognized the dangers—he knew well the price of freedom—and yet he soldiered on despite his situation.

His enthusiasm and compassion made Ryan a beacon of hope for his comrades in arms in the shadow of the loss of several friends just a short time ago.

That shadow is now a little denser, a little darker—it reaches farther than before. And this shadow makes the future, our future, less than what it would have been.

I am here today asking us all to consider well the choices before us. We have an opportunity to ensure the life and death of Private Ryan Hill are not forgotten, that his sacrifice endures within our memory.

Let us recommit ourselves to making this Nation a place worthy of the gift Ryan Hill has given us; let us commit ourselves anew.

RECOGNIZING REVEREND DOCTOR
HERMAN M. WILLIAMSON

HON. C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 29, 2007

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Madam Speaker, I rise before you today to acknowledge the out-

standing lifelong accomplishments of Reverend Doctor Herman M. Williamson. A resident of Havre de Grace, Maryland, Reverend Dr. Williamson is a native of Evergreen, North Carolina, where he attended public schools and graduated with honors. After moving to Baltimore, Maryland, he completed studies at the Cortez Peters Business College. Reverend Dr. Williamson continued his education in engineering and administrative procedures in the Officers School while serving for five years in the United States Army. After his military service, Reverend Dr. Williamson attended Morgan State College.

After moving to Havre de Grace, Maryland, he joined and attended St. James A.M.E. Church before being called to the ministry. Reverend Dr. Williamson decided to return to his roots in the Baptist Church and joined Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church. He was licensed to preach and served as Assistant Pastor to the late Reverend Milton C. Phillips. During this time, he completed his course of study at the Maryland Bible Institute. He was called to the pastorate of Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church on October 25, 1974 and two days later accepted the pulpit of the Havre de Grace church.

Over the years, Reverend Dr. Williamson has been an advocate of faithful service and positive change to assist the members of his church and the residents of Harford County. His outreach to the communities in and surrounding Havre de Grace has been unsurpassed. He supported and was instrumental in the establishment of the Harford County Fuel Fund, the Harford County Food and Nutrition Program and the St. James Cemetery Preservation Council. He is President Emeritus of the Deacon and Deaconess Union of Baltimore, Harford and Cecil Counties and President Emeritus of the Ministerial Alliance of Baltimore, Harford and Cecil Counties. He has also served as auditor of the United Baptist Missionary Convention and Auxiliaries for the State of Maryland, Inc.

Reverend Dr. Williamson was the first black chaplain appointed to serve the Harford County Detention Center. He served on the Executive Board of the Harford Interfaith Community Service, Inc., the Neighbor to Neighbor Summit Advisory Committee for Harford County and the Hicks Advisory Board of Harford County. He was granted an Honorary Doctoral Degree from the Bread of Life Ministries in Whiteville, North Carolina, in February 2002. In early 2007, Reverend Dr. Williamson was the recipient of the Joseph Bond Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award from Harford County.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you join with me today in congratulating Reverend Dr. Herman Williamson for his lifelong and caring devotion to the people of Havre de Grace, Harford County, and the State of Maryland.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF NYS
ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN LAVELLE

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 29, 2007

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to bring to the House's attention the tremendously sad news of the passing of a dear

friend and fellow public servant. I rise today also to honor the memory, and take note of the tireless public service of, my good friend, the late New York State Assemblyman Jack Lavelle.

Jack and I were colleagues in the New York State Assembly from 2000, when he arrived as a freshman, until the end of 2004, when I left Albany after my initial election to Congress.

Madam Speaker, I do not exaggerate when I recount that it was a tremendous honor to serve with Jack, for I greatly valued his counsel, leadership, and friendship. More than that, what I will miss most about Jack is his tremendously warm and kindhearted spirit.

We always knew where Jack was from—his beloved borough of Staten Island. More importantly, Jack never forgot where he was from. Despite being from opposite ends of the state and being of different generations, Jack and I shared a commitment to our respective communities that I am proud to believe was very similar. Both of us were fortunate to learn early on that when you remember where you come from, when you follow the rules, love your family, and give back to your community anything is possible. Jack Lavelle was living proof of that.

Jack's public career was well known, and the respect Jack enjoyed from leaders throughout the state was impressive. Jack's history of community involvement is far too long to list in its entirety, but his work with countless educational committees, community boards and medical advisory councils were well known and well respected.

In November 2000, Jack's succession of revered Assemblywoman Betty Connolly allowed him to continue her legacy of commitment to Staten Island. So many of Jack's successes in Albany involved education, where he made great strides toward the improvement of New York City's public schools.

Jack always spoke with tremendous pride about his family, including his three sons, John, Christopher, and Danny and his grandchildren Jacob, Zachary and Julia. I am certain that all members of the House join with me to offer our most sincere condolences to Jack's family, lost so suddenly as he was.

When I think back about Jack, I think of how tremendously kind he was to me. Although ten years my senior in age, Jack often called me "Governor," because he always said, "Kid, you're going somewhere." When I announced my run for an open Congressional seat in 2004, Jack was among the first to call and offer encouragement. His friendship and support were as genuine as can be.

We all join with Jack's family in mourning his loss, and remain confident that the good work that he did, both in Staten Island and in Albany, has left a powerful legacy for many years to come. Rest in peace, Jack Lavelle; your work here is done, but your legacy will live on for years to come.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CÉSAR E.
CHÁVEZ POST OFFICE ACT

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 29, 2007

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a great man who stood

up for justice and fair treatment for all Americans.

During his life, César E. Chávez was committed to providing fair wages, better working conditions, decent housing, and quality education for all.

Mr. Chávez also served the United States proudly in the Navy during World War II.

His spirit and his vision are still alive today and I am determined to celebrate what he stood for and his great accomplishments.

Madam Speaker, today, I introduce legislation to rename the post office located at 2777 Logan Avenue in the Barrio Logan section of San Diego as the “César E. Chávez Post Office.” This is the least we can do to honor such a great but humble man dedicated to justice. Please join me in giving Mr. Chávez his rightful place in American history.

INTRODUCTION OF THE TAXPAYER ABUSE AND HARASSMENT PREVENTION ACT: CONGRESS SHOULD NOT ALLOW BOUNTY HUNTERS TO ABUSE TAXPAYERS

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 29, 2007

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, last week I introduced H.R. 695, the Taxpayer Abuse and Harassment Prevention Act of 2007, along with Representatives STEVE ROTHMAN, RUSS CARNAHAN and 42 other original cosponsors. If enacted into law, this legislation would repeal the provision tacked onto the 2004 corporate tax bill (H.R. 4520, the so-called American Jobs Creation Act in the 108th Congress) that hands over the tax returns of millions of American taxpayers to private contractors to collect delinquent taxes, and allows them to keep 25 percent of their take as a commission for services rendered.

Three weeks ago, on January 9th, in her annual report to Congress the National Taxpayer Advocate identified the IRS’ private debt collection initiative as one of the most serious problems facing taxpayers and called on Congress to repeal the IRS’s authority to use private collection agencies to collect federal taxes. The Advocate’s report illustrated why the IRS private tax collection program is a waste of taxpayer dollars, invites overly aggressive collection techniques and jeopardizes the financial privacy of American taxpayers:

The IRS’s Private Debt Collection initiative is not cost efficient, adds unnecessary costs and burdens to taxpayers, diminishes the improved image of the IRS, and surrenders too many valuable components of our tax administration system. Therefore, Congress should repeal IRC § 6306 and thereby terminate the Private Debt Collection initiative.

We must repeal this provision because it opens the door to taxpayer intimidation and abuse, practices that have been outlawed by Congress. This practice amounts to bounty-hunting—at taxpayer expense—by allowing collection agencies to harass those same American taxpayers, many of whom are guilty of nothing, with the incentive of collecting their commission as their primary motivation. Giving unaccountable outside bounty hunters unfettered access to Americans’ personal financial data poses a risk that we just cannot afford.

What’s more worrisome is the IRS’ inability to oversee the work of these private debt collectors. A 1996 pilot program for private collection was so unsuccessful that a similar pilot program planned for 1997 was cancelled outright. The contractors used in the pilot programs regularly broke the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, did not protect the security of personal taxpayer information, and even then failed to bring in a net increase in revenue. An audit report of the pilot program found that, “contractors blatantly circumvented IRS policies and procedures even when security personnel identified inappropriate practices.” In fact, the report found that contractors made hundreds of calls to taxpayers during times prohibited by the FDCPA, and that calls were even placed as early as 4:19 a.m.

While IRS employees are explicitly forbidden from being evaluated on the basis of revenue collected, the private collection scheme would actually link contractor pay to the amount of revenue collection. This policy encourages contractors to use aggressive collection techniques to boost their remuneration. Furthermore, the IRS is currently liable for damages to a taxpayer resulting from the misuse of confidential information by an IRS employee, but taxpayers will not be able to recover damages from the federal government where contractors are guilty of malfeasance.

The House had already expressed its will that this provision not become law when it approved by voice vote an amendment to the FY2005 Treasury Appropriations bill that prevented the expenditure of any federal funds for private collection of federal taxes. Unfortunately, the Treasury Appropriations bill never became law, and the House language was stripped out of the FY 2005 omnibus spending bill by the Republican leadership in the conference—behind closed doors, in the dead of night.

We must repeal this onerous provision. We must protect American taxpayers from intimidation and abuse. We must ensure that personal financial records are protected and remain private. Two decades ago this Congress passed the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act specifically to protect Americans from intimidation and abuse, but last year this Congress perpetrated an injustice by allowing these very abuses to go forward.

I urge my colleagues to join me in working with the IRS to find a more effective means of collecting delinquent tax debt collection and avoid this risky scheme altogether. Let’s pass the Taxpayer Abuse and Harassment Prevention Act.

TRIBUTE TO HIS EXCELLENCY
LAZAR ELENOVSKI

HON. BILL PASCRELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 29, 2007

Mr. PASCRELL. Madam Speaker, I would like to call to your attention to a man I am proud to recognize, His Excellency Lazar Elenovski, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Macedonia, on the occasion of his visit to the United States.

It is only fitting that he be honored in this, the permanent record of the greatest freely elected body on earth, for he has a long his-

tory of dedication and commitment to international relations.

Minister Elenovski was born in 1971 in Skopje, Macedonia, and went on to graduate from the Faculty of Economy at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University. A member of the New Social Democratic Party of Macedonia, a part of the coalition government, he was appointed Minister of Defense in August 2006.

Minister Elenovski has long been a great advocate for Atlanticism in Macedonia. He worked to promote and implement the Euro-Atlantic idea and values in Macedonian society in the early 1990s. This effort culminated in his founding of Young Europeans for Security (YES) in 1995.

He was also one of the founders of the Social Democratic Youth of Macedonia (SDYM), and served as its Secretary General from 1996–1999, and then as its president until 2001. He was a member of the Presidency of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia from 1997 until 2003. He is a signer of the Protocol for Cooperation between the SDYM and PASOK Youth in Athens in 2001.

Between 2001 and 2005, Minister Elenovski served as Secretary General of the Euro-Atlantic Club of Macedonia, and in late 2005, was elected President of the Euro-Atlantic Council of Macedonia, a member of the Atlantic Treaty Association. During this time he was also Deputy LEO of Public Transport in Skopje.

He has implemented many initiatives for the support of NATO and EU integration projects in his nation, for the civilization values of Atlanticism, and notably for the democratic development of Macedonia. In May of 2004, he initiated and served as a signatory of the Declaration for Euro-Atlantic Partnership and Cooperation between the Atlantic Associations of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia. He is also a founder of the Central and South Eastern European Security Forum-Balkan Mosaic.

Minister Elenovski is known as an advocate for regional cooperation and integration. Along with civil and local authorities, he has worked on many regional and international projects which strengthened regional cooperation, and improved the security and stability of the nation and region.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you join our colleagues, Minister Elenovski’s friends, and me in recognizing the outstanding achievements of a true leader, the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Macedonia, Lazar Elenovski.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NIAGARA FALLS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA ACT

HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 29, 2007

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Act, which will provide Federal resources to preserve and promote one of America’s greatest natural wonders.

Every time I make the long drive across my congressional district, I am reminded of how fortunate I am to represent a region with such a diverse geographic make-up. From the Ontario shoreline, to vast vineyards and apple orchards, to the waterfront on Lake Erie, Mother