

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3246, REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 4, 2007

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3246, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007, which will help spur economic development in my district of El Paso, Texas. I would like to thank Chairman OBERSTAR for his vision regarding the need and importance of regional authorities for development in areas of the country with huge economic need. For the past three Congresses, I have introduced my bill, the Southwest Regional Border Authority Act, in an attempt to bring some relief to the U.S.-Mexico border and my district of El Paso, Texas. This year, under the leadership of Chairman OBERSTAR, my bill has been included into his overall legislation. I would also like to thank many of my colleagues who represent districts along the U.S.-Mexico border for their support in the creation of the Southwest Regional Border Authority.

The Chairman's bill would authorize \$1.25 billion over the period of FY 2008 through FY 2012 for five regional commissions one of which will be created in the U.S.-Mexico border region. The Authorities would be Federal-State partnerships for providing assistance to economically distressed and underdeveloped areas that have experienced high levels of unemployment, poverty, or out-migration. Three of the commissions would be new and would assist areas in the Southeastern United States and areas along the Mexican and Canadian borders; two of the commissions would replace existing authorities in the Delta and Northern Great Plains regions. The bill would establish uniform administrative structures and responsibilities for the commissions, and authorize the commissions to provide financial assistance for projects and programs in their respective regions to develop transportation and infrastructure, provide job skills training and support business development.

The Southwest border region, as defined in the bill, includes all counties within 150 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border. This region contains 11 counties in New Mexico, 65 counties in Texas, 10 counties in Arizona, and 7 counties in California, with a combined population of approximately 29 million.

According to research compiled by the Interagency Task Force on the Economic Development of the Southwest Border, 20 percent of the residents in my region live below the poverty level, unemployment rates often reach as high as five times the national average, and a lack of adequate access to capital has created economic disparities making it difficult for businesses to start up in the region. Border communities have long endured a depressed economy and low-paying jobs. Our economic challenges partly stem from our position as a border community.

Economic development in border communities is difficult to stimulate without assistance from the Government, private sector, and community organizations. H.R. 3246 would

help foster planning to encourage infrastructure improvements, technology deployment, education and workforce training, and community development through entrepreneurship.

Modeled in part after the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Southwest Border Regional Authority and other Authorities would follow four guiding principles:

First, the Authorities would fund proposals designed at the local level followed by approval at the state level in order to meet regional economic development goals;

Second, projects leading to the creation of a diversified regional economy would be prioritized. Currently, states and counties often are forced to compete against each other for limited funding;

Third, the Authorities would be independent agencies. This would prevent them from having to attempt to satisfy another Federal agency's mission requirements when determining which projects to fund; and

Finally, the Authorities would be comprised of one Senate-confirmed Federal representative and the governors of the States of jurisdiction.

For too long, many areas of our country including the southwest border region have been ignored, overlooked, and underfunded. We need to recognize the challenges facing these under-served areas and help them make the most of their many assets. I believe the authorities created in the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007 would go a long way toward achieving the goal of economic prosperity in some of the poorest regions of our county.

Again, I would like to thank Chairman OBERSTAR for his leadership on this issue and look forward to the implementation of this important legislation. I ask my colleagues to support this important measure.

RECOGNIZING THE CAREER AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF RICK DIEGEL

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the tremendous service to the working man and woman of America by a true friend, Rick Diegel. Rick recently retired after working for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) in a distinguished career that spanned 38 years.

After a stint in the U.S. Air Force, Rick's IBEW career began in 1969 when he joined Corpus Christi Local 278 in his native Texas. Always active in politics, Rick also served three terms as mayor protem in the city of Ingleside in the early and mid-1970's. Rick was elected business manager for Local 278 in 1977, and he arrived upon the Washington political scene in 1983 when he was appointed IBEW's Political Director, the same year I was elected to Congress. Then, in 1998, he became director of the IBEW's combined Political/Legislative Department, the position he held until his retirement October 1st, 2007.

Upon Rick's arrival in Washington, Rick Diegel immediately made an impact on public policy on behalf of the IBEW and its members. Through the support given to IBEW-endorsed candidates in local, state, and federal elec-

tions, the IBEW has been able to influence the agenda on vital kitchen-table issues such as job security, the minimum wage, healthcare, working conditions and safety, retirement, and trade. Rick became a major figure in the modern labor movement and helped lead the transformation of the IBEW into the 21st Century.

Madam Speaker, I want to commend Rick's tireless dedication to the members of the IBEW and the labor movement as a whole over his almost four-decade career. He will be truly missed by me and the IBEW.

Rick will be returning to Texas, where he will be able to have more time with his wife Theresa, his seven children, and four grandchildren. Fortunately, Rick isn't completely leaving the political arena though—he has promised to be available to aid HILLARY CLINTON's Presidential campaign, so we won't be losing him entirely.

Madam Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in thanking Rick Diegel for all of his hard work and dedication as IBEW's lead political architect for over 20 years and in wishing him and his family the best of luck in his retirement.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, on Monday, October 1, 2007, I was detained in my district and was unable to have my votes recorded on the House floor for H. Con. Res. 185 (Roll No. 924), H.R. 2276 (Roll No. 925), and H.R. 3325 (Roll No. 926). Had I been present, I would have voted in favor of these measures.

COMMEMORATING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF GRAPEVINE OPRY

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

Mr. MARCHANT. Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize Grapevine Opry in Grapevine, Texas on the occasion of its 20th Anniversary of continuous family entertainment.

Originally built as Grapevine's Palace Theatre in November 21, 1940, this historic building was reopened in 1974 by a Grapevine dance instructor, Chisai Childs, for dance recitals. Its use evolved into a musical revue stage show and was dubbed "Grapevine Opry".

After many failed business partnerships, Grapevine Opry doors closed in 1984 and its fate seemed doomed forever. However, one year later, a new owner began renovation of the theater only to see the stage, roof and building partially destroyed by fire due to contractor negligence. But renovations began anew and on November 14, 1987, Grapevine Opry reopened with Mr. Rocky Gribble as the new producer and bandleader. In 1990, ownership sold the property to a local attorney's company, Grapevine Opry, Inc.

Bad times almost fell again on the Opry when in 1991, the Grapevine Opry, Inc. filed

for bankruptcy. The show was in danger of closing and the future of the theater was in doubt, even to the point of demolition. However, the City Council of Grapevine, along with the overwhelming support of the Grapevine Opry Association members, voted to acquire the property if the anchor tenant, the Grapevine Opry, would continue to operate in the theater. A long-term agreement was forged with the city and Yellow Rose Productions, Inc. to operate the Grapevine Opry and the Grapevine Heritage Foundation was formed to manage the property. Due to the foresight of Yellow Rose Productions, Inc., Grapevine civic leaders and residents, the future of the Palace Theatre was preserved.

In 1999, the Grapevine Opry underwent its most recent renovation and celebrated a grand reopening/homecoming show on June 2, 2001. The show continues to be a mainstay of family entertainment not only in North Texas but across the region and beyond. Many music industry performers attribute their success to experience gained on this landmark stage. Some of the best up-and-coming performers in country music can be found performing each weekend at Grapevine Opry.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of Grapevine Opry's on November 10, 2007. This beautiful and historic building, whose preservation is secure, is an important local landmark in Grapevine, Texas and surrounding areas. I sincerely wish the Grapevine Opry many more successful years of continuous family entertainment.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

Mr. PICKERING. Madam Speaker, I was unable to be present for Rollcall vote 948 to H.R. 3648. I would have voted "yes." My vote would not have changed the result, but I want this record to reflect my intention.

ENTERGY

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, on September 13, 2007 the first hurricane to make landfall in the United States since 2005 hit Southeast Texas. Hurricane Humberto took only 16 hours to form, making it the fastest growing storm on record and leaving area residents and businesses little time to prepare. Entergy Texas, our local electricity provider was ready and quickly took action

Hurricane Humberto left 118,000 without electricity as they waited for the water to recede to begin cleaning up debris left in the storms wake, Thursday morning. While local residents were busy taking care of their family and property Joe Domino, President and CEO of Entergy Texas, and his employees began "turning the lights on" across our area. The utility company, which serves parts of Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas, brought

in around 3,000 employees and additional contractors, to relieve their customers from the smoldering Texas heat that is very much a part of our Septembers. The streets of Jefferson County were bustling with Entergy trucks throughout the weekend as workers effectively traveled from project to project. Though the initial estimates warned that power would not be restored for six days, dedicated employees working into the night and through the weekend were able to restore all 118,000 consumers in just four days.

I would like to commend all Entergy Texas employees for their hard work and dedication during the aftermath of Hurricane Humberto. Companies like Entergy Texas that care about the community they serve make Southeast Texas such a special place.

And that's just the way it is.

AWARDING A CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO MICHAEL ELLIS DEBAKEY, M.D.

SPEECH OF

HON. AL GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 2, 2007

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the National Association for Biomedical Research, NABR and Foundation for Biomedical Research, FBR, are the Nation's oldest and largest organizations dedicated to improving human and veterinary health by promoting public understanding and support for humane and responsible animal research. I would like to submit their following comments for the record on the passing of legislation to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Dr. Michael E. DeBakey:

The National Association for Biomedical Research, NABR and Foundation for Biomedical Research, FBR, salute you and your colleagues in the House of Representatives for recognizing Dr. Michael Ellis DeBakey and his unparalleled contributions to cardiovascular medicine. Dr. DeBakey's work has improved the health of millions of American citizens and people around the world. His extraordinary talents as a surgeon, inventor, educator and medical statesman make him a true medical legend.

Dr. DeBakey richly deserves his reputation as one of this country's most innovative and pioneering physicians and the most famous cardiovascular surgeon in the world. A former president of the International Cardiology Foundation referred to him as ". . . the genius . . . the father of open heart surgery." Upon receiving the prestigious Lasker Award, Dr. DeBakey was cited for: "His pioneer contributions in cardiovascular surgery . . . His laboratory investigations, translated with extraordinary courage and unprecedented skill to the patient, have resulted in the correction and cure of previously incurable cardiovascular disease, replacing what would have been lingering chronic disease and disability, or sudden death, by vigorous, happy, and productive life."

Among his many inventions and innovations was the Dacron tube. Using his wife's sewing machine and fabric purchased from a local store in Houston, Dr. DeBakey created the first artificial artery. These Dacron tubes yield-

ed remarkable advancements in vascular surgery. Dr. DeBakey continued to perfect new vascular surgical techniques, which spawned the modern era of the surgical treatment for stroke. His innovative work didn't end there, as he continued to develop new pioneering surgical techniques for the treatment of aneurysms, again leading to new, effective treatments and the saving of thousands of lives.

In 1964, Dr. DeBakey triggered the most explosive era in modern cardiac surgery when he performed the first successful coronary bypass. Two years later, he made medical history again by becoming the first person to successfully use a partial artificial heart (left ventricular bypass pump) to help patients who could not be weaned from a heart-lung machine following open-heart surgery. Later in that decade, Dr. DeBakey again became part of medical history, supervising the first successful multi-organ transplant, in which a heart, both kidneys, and lung were transplanted from a single donor to 4 separate recipients. Also during that decade, Dr. DeBakey pioneered the field of telemedicine with the first demonstration of open-heart surgery to be transmitted overseas by satellite. Medical staff in Geneva, Switzerland were able to watch aortic valve replacement surgery being performed at The Methodist Hospital in Houston.

In 1942, still early in his career, Dr. DeBakey had achieved a national reputation as an authority on vascular disease. Rather than returning to his university employer and working to enhance his career, Dr. DeBakey felt morally bound to serve his country during World War II. He volunteered for military service, joining the Surgeon General's staff and rising to the rank of colonel and Chief of the Surgical Consultants Division. His work, inspecting field hospitals and actively caring for the wounded, led to his proposal for the proper staged management of war wounds. These recommendations made possible the development of mobile army surgical hospitals, or MASH units. Dr. DeBakey's experience during the war also caused him to recommend the creation of specialized medical centers in different areas of the U.S. to treat wounded military personnel returning from war. That recommendation evolved into the establishment of the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, VAMC, System.

As a scholar and man of letters, Dr. DeBakey would later initiate the concept and spearhead the movement to establish a national facility for historical medical papers and artifacts. His idea and leadership brought about the establishment of the National Library of Medicine in 1959, housed at the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. DeBakey has also made enormous contributions to the city of Houston and what is now known as the Baylor College of Medicine. In 1948, Baylor University College of Medicine was a small, virtually unknown institution recently moved from Dallas to be the cornerstone of the new Texas Medical Center. At the time, it was the only medical school in Houston and lacked most of the facilities and programs essential to a viable medical and teaching institution. Dr. DeBakey reluctantly accepted a faculty position, but once on board, he worked quickly to set the standard that would allow the College to become one of the most respected health science centers in the Nation and the world. In 1969, after working for 2 decades to build the institution into a world-