

the future of our community, it is clear that it parallels much of our state's history as it struggled through the agonies of racial equality and educational opportunity under the aegis of simple justice for all Americans. All throughout the segregation era, this young visionary gave us hope and courage through his writings, engaging our parents and their children to keep faith toward helping them achieve basic skills mastery and academic excellence.

Blessed with a lucid common sense and quick grasp of the simmering issues at hand, Mr. Smith, Jr. was also imbued with the rare wisdom of recognizing both the strength and the promise of a good education. The acumen of his intelligence and the timeliness of his vision were felt at a time when our community needed someone to put in perspectives the agony of disenfranchised Blacks and other minorities yearning to belong.

Indeed, he exemplified a calm but reasoned leadership whose courage and wisdom appealed to our noblest character as a nation. This is the magnificent legacy by which we will honor his memory.

SUPPORT FOR THE MINORITY DIABETES INITIATIVE ACT

HON. LUIS G. FORTUÑO

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

Mr. FORTUÑO. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1031, the Minority Diabetes Initiative Act. Sponsored by my esteemed colleague, Representative Maxine Waters, this important legislation will establish initiatives to provide grants to physicians, community-based organizations and other health care providers for diabetes care and treatment program in minority communities. It is of utmost importance that Congress take decisive action on this common-sense legislation that will benefit those struggling with diabetes.

It is no secret that many serious health problems plague our nation's minority communities. Faced with tough economic obstacles, issues of access to health care, health education, and affordability of health care all contribute to a rising trend of heart disease, cancer, obesity, and diabetes among minorities. Diabetes is a leading cause of kidney failure, new blindness in adults, and leg and foot amputations. Diabetes is a major cause of heart disease and stroke, which are responsible for about 65% of deaths among diabetics.

Unfortunately, diabetes is a disease that is rampant in my district, the island of Puerto Rico, and the statistics plainly prove that this is a serious problem. Official statistics put forth by the Puerto Rico Diabetes Association say that approximately 560,000 persons, including 75,000 children, are diabetic. Fifteen percent of the Island's population lives with diabetes. Compared to all of Latin America and the Caribbean, Puerto Rico has the most cases of diabetes among women ages 20 to 79, and amongst these women, diabetes is the third leading cause of death on the Island. According to CDC data published in 2000, the national diabetes death rate for Hispanics/Latinos was highest among Puerto Ricans (172 per 100,000), followed by the rates for Mexican Americans (122 per 100,000), and

Cuban Americans (47 per 100,000). Clearly this is a pervasive problem not only in Puerto Rico, but among minority communities across the nation. Congress can help by moving this critical legislation towards passage.

Among minorities, two of the major obstacles to adequate health care are lack of good information and language barriers. Many minorities, in particular new immigrants, do not understand the process of how the Federal health care system works, and have a hard time understanding new programs that are disseminated through traditional means of English-language ad campaigns or pamphlets they find at the clinic or doctors' office. Many don't have access to even general information—if they can't afford decent health care, how will they afford a laptop with Internet access, or even know where to access reliable information? And, in very rural areas, many debate the use of traditional versus conventional medicine, which presents a whole other set of challenges to health care education, disease treatment and prevention, and information dissemination. As you can see, in Puerto Rico, an approach to health care that is linguistically and culturally sensitive is absolutely critical to any patient's well-being. One of the many positive aspects of this bill is that it requires health care providers to make available culturally and linguistically appropriate services and conduct outreach activities to let eligible individuals know that services are available. This will enable providers to access and assist diabetics who are not being reached, and who need help.

This bill is a sensible and culturally appropriate solution to effectively treat minorities with the disease. I urge my colleagues to co-sponsor this legislation, and advise Congressional Leadership to move this bill towards swift passage, so we can help make better health care choices and treatment more accessible to minorities living with diabetes.

TRIBUTE TO RA JOY

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, March 5, 2007 will be both a happy and a sad day for me. On that Monday, Ra Joy, who has served as Suburban Director and Grants Coordinator in my district office for 6 of the 8 years I have served in Congress, will be leaving.

Ra will become Executive Director of the Illinois Arts Alliance, the largest and most prestigious arts advocacy organization in the state. He will follow the widely and highly respected Alene Valkanas who built the Arts Alliance over the past two decades, leading the effort that quadrupled the state's funding for the arts. Hers are very big shoes to fill, yet I have great confidence in Ra's ability to move the organization forward to meet the challenges of the new century.

Ra came to work for me as a very young man but with the promise of being a great leader. He had worked with youth at the Evanston YMCA, where he served as a role model and mentor for many African-American boys in our community. When he left the Y, he didn't leave the boys who continue to rely on his support and counsel.

Ra has a quiet self-assurance, a seriousness of purpose that inspires all those he supervises and works with. He has unfailing good judgment and an ability to understand and communicate complex issues. This makes him very effective in working with community leaders, individual constituents, the business community and not-for-profit organizations in the 9th District.

As Grants Coordinator, Ra has been a leading force in bringing tens of millions of dollars to the 9th District—federal dollars for infrastructure improvements, law enforcement, and social services, as well as private foundation support for dozens of organizations. He has shepherded these funding requests and applications through public and private bureaucracies and then monitored the management of the funds. He has held workshops to help non-profit organizations garner and manage the resources they need to flourish, including one aimed exclusively at art organizations.

Ra is an artist. His charcoal drawings demonstrate his technical skill, his passions and his politics. He comes from an artistic family—his father, Albert Joy, is a painter, and his sister Ebony Joy is a playwright. His beautiful home, shared with his wife Falona and sons, reflects his artistic sense.

Ra's connection to the arts community has had special significance for the 9th District, which, before my tenure, was represented for nearly a half century by Sidney Yates. Congressman Yates was revered as a patron of the arts and protector of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. My constituents have appreciated my continued focus on the arts, led by Ra Joy.

Ra has served as the Chairman of the annual Ethnic Arts Festival on Evanston's lake-front, a major event attracting visual and musical artists and craftspeople. He organized the Artistic Discovery competition each year, in which one high school student per Congressional District is selected to have his or her work displayed for a year in the Capitol, making it a significant juried art show. Dozens of students participate in an event at which all of their work is displayed, and all are honored.

I and the rest of my staff will miss his advocacy for the arts as part of our staff, but we rejoice that he is taking his passion to a higher level. We trust that he will now be in a position to offer his assistance as we continue to address the need to support the arts in our community.

I congratulate the Illinois Arts Alliance for its wise decision to choose Ra Joy as its new Director. I wish him great fulfillment and success.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA LEGISLATIVE AUTONOMY ACT OF 2006

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, today, I am introducing the District of Columbia Legislative Autonomy Act of 2007, to end discriminatory and unnecessary congressional review of District of Columbia legislation. Basic to the meaning of self government in the United

States is the right to enact a local budget and civil and criminal laws free from Federal interference. I have already introduced this bill's fraternal twin, the District of Columbia Budget Autonomy Act of 2007, cosponsored by Oversight and Government Reform Ranking Member TOM DAVIS.

Because the period of congressional review involves only legislative days, when Congress is in session, not ordinary calendar days, D.C. laws typically do not become law for months, not days. A required hold on all D.C. bills forces the D.C. City Council to pass most legislation using a cumbersome and complicated process in which bills are passed concurrently on an emergency, temporary, and permanent basis to ensure that the operations of the large and rapidly changing city continue uninterrupted, and because of the complications and time frames involved, some bills do not become law at all. The Legislative Autonomy Act would eliminate the need for the City Council to engage in this Byzantine process that often requires a two-thirds super majority even for ordinary legislation.

The legislative autonomy bill would eliminate the congressional review period for civil and criminal District acts of 30 days and 60 days respectively. I have repeatedly introduced today's legislative autonomy bill because it has long been obsolete, demeaning, and cumbersome, but also because Congress no longer uses the statute. Congress has eliminated the review or layover period as a way to review Council legislation, yet the Council continues to be bound by Section 602 of the Home Rule Act, absurdly continuing to abide by its awkward and debilitating rules because the law requires it. Our bill would do no more than align D.C. City Council practices.

Although control of the Congress changed in 1994 for the first time in 40 years, no resolution of disapproval has been heard in committee or used on the floor of either house. Instead of the cumbersome formal filing of bills that requires processing in the House and the Senate, the Congress has preferred to use appropriations or attachments. The District strongly opposes all methods of overturning its legitimate local legislation, but it is particularly unfair to require the City Council to engage in the tortuous process prescribed by the Home Rule Act that Congress itself has discarded. My bill would eliminate the formal review system that has died of old age and disuse. Congress has walked away from layover review and should allow the city to do the same.

Today's bill, of course, does not prevent review of District laws by Congress. Under Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, the House and the Senate could scrutinize every piece of legislation passed by the City Council, if desired, and could change or strike legislation under the plenary constitutional authority over the District. However, since the Home Rule Act became effective in 1974, of more than 2000 legislative acts that have been passed by the Council and signed into law by the Mayor, only three resolutions to disapproval of a D.C. bill have been enacted, and two of these involved a distinct federal interest. Federal law to correct for a federal interest, of course, would be appropriate for any jurisdiction, but placing a hold on 2000 bills has not only proved unnecessary, but has meant untold costs in money, staff, and wasted time to the District and the Congress. Although 32 years of Home Rule Act history shows that congressional review is unnecessary, this bill merely eliminates the automatic hold placed on local legislation and the need for the City Council to use a phantom process passed for the convenience of Congress that Congress has eliminated in all but law.

Congress continually urges the District government to pursue efficiency and savings. It is time for Congress to do its part to promote greater efficiency both here and in the District by streamlining its own redundant and discarded review processes. Eliminating the hold on D.C. legislation would not only save scarce D.C. taxpayer revenue, but would benefit the city's bond rating, which is effected by the shadow of congressional review that delays the certainty of finality to District legislation. At the same time, Congress would give up none of its plenary power because the Congress may intervene into any District matter at any time under the constitutional provisions.

The limited legislative autonomy granted in this bill would allow the District to realize the greater measure of meaningful self-government and Home Rule it deserves and has more than earned in the 32 years since the Home Rule Act became effective. This goal can be achieved without prejudice to congressional authority. I urge my colleagues to pass this important measure.

CONGRATULATING GEORGE URIBE AND MARGARET BINFORD

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate George Uribe and Margaret Binford who were engaged to be married last night at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

The special moment occurred in Lady Chapel at 7 p.m. surrounded by Margaret's parents, Douglas and Randall Binford who flew in from San Antonio, Texas for the occasion.

The couple walked in the chapel, recited the Lord's prayer with the song "On Eagles Wings" playing in the background as George dropped to his knees and asked Margaret to marry him.

George is an Executive Vice-President and General Manager for a chain of radio stations and former U.S. Army Reserve soldier with the 77th Regional Readiness Command based at Fort Totten and Margaret is an interior designer and member of the Junior League.

Madam Speaker, I, along with the whole House, congratulate George and Margaret on their engagement and wish them happiness and love all the days of their lives.

A TRIBUTE TO DICK RICE

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

Mr. SHUSTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Mr. Dick Rice of Bedford, Pennsylvania. Mr. Rice was a longtime Commissioner of Bedford County before his passing last spring. He was known for his boundless energy, his optimistic attitude, a wonderful singing voice and the many issues he championed as a leader of his community. One of those issues dear to Mr. Rice was education. He believed strongly in the importance of providing local, high quality post-secondary education at an affordable cost. But he also showed his commitment by making a real difference in the lives of students. He found joy in presenting students with scholarships, tuition assistance awards, and emergency book funding.

Mr. Rice played a critical role in the development of the Bedford County Campus of Al-

legany College. By serving on the Bedford County Regional Education Foundation he was able to help make significant accomplishments. When the Bedford County Campus was founded in 1990, Bedford County ranked 64th out of 67 Pennsylvania counties in the percentage of high school graduates pursuing post-secondary education. Today, Bedford County is ranked 34th. The presence of a local campus has encouraged many area students to begin or continue their educational journeys close to home. Since 1990, more than 6,500 people have taken classes through the Bedford County Campus. The Foundation has worked to provide more than \$190,000 to more than 700 of those students over the past 11 years. It is fitting that the Foundation has now established the Dick M. Rice Memorial Scholarship Endowment, to benefit Bedford County residents who attend Allegany College.

To cite each accomplishment and individual contribution that Dick has been a part of would take a very long time. His involvement in the educational community over the years has been immense and has touched numerous lives. We are all very grateful for his effort toward positive enrichment of Bedford County, and I offer my sincerest sympathies for the loss of such a great citizen.

TRAGEDY IN KHOJALY, AZERBAIJAN

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 15, 2007

Mr. SHUSTER. Madam Speaker, one of our greatest strengths as elected officials is the opportunity to bring to light truths that are little known and command recognition.

Today, as the Co-chairman of the House Azerbaijan Caucus, I would like to bring to the attention of this body the tragedy that took place in Khojaly, Azerbaijan, a town and townspeople that were destroyed on February 26, 1992. Fifteen years later, there is little attention or interest paid to the plight of Khojaly outside of Azerbaijan.

Sadly, Khojaly, a town in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, now under the control of Armenian forces, was the site of the largest killing of ethnic Azerbaijani civilians.

According to Human Rights Watch and other international observers, the massacre was committed by the ethnic Armenian armed forces, reportedly with the help of the Russian 366th Motor Rifle Regiment. This crime led to the death of 613 civilians; including 106 women, 63 children and 70 elderly men; 1,275 persons were taken hostage, and the fate of more than 150 remains unknown.

As part of the population tried to escape the town of Khojaly, they encountered violent ambushes and were murdered. According to the Russian organization, Memorial, 200 Azerbaijani corpses were brought from Khojaly to Agdam within four days, and it was discovered that they were subjected to abuses, torture and mutilation. Human Rights Watch stated that "we place direct responsibility for the civilian deaths with Karabakh Armenian forces."

At the time, Newsweek Magazine reported: "Azerbaijan was a charnel house again last week: a place of mourning refugees and dozens of mangled corpses dragged to a makeshift morgue behind the mosque. They were ordinary Azerbaijani men, women and children