

CALLING ON VIETNAM TO IMMEDIATELY AND UNCONDITIONALLY RELEASE POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support for H. Res. 243. The imprisonment of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience by the Republic of Vietnam is unconscionable. I join my colleagues in urging the communist regime in Hanoi to cease with these repressive actions.

Father Nguyen Van Ly and human rights attorneys Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong Nhan were arrested earlier this year for allegedly disseminating propaganda against their government. Their actions were peaceful and nonviolent, and are protected by the Vietnamese Constitution. In the 12th round of human rights talks between our government and the government of the Republic of Vietnam last week, the assistant to the Vietnamese foreign minister attempted to highlight their achievements in this arena, citing the protection and execution of basic rights and freedoms of their people.

Madam Speaker, these words are not enough. We need action. The government of Vietnam needs to show us their commitment to providing basic human rights to their citizenry by releasing these Vietnamese patriots. Their alleged crimes amount to nothing more than advocating freedom of religion, speech, movement and association; these actions should be celebrated, rather than punished by their government.

I support this resolution and call upon the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to immediately and unconditionally release these political and religious prisoners. Further, I call upon their government to embrace differing opinions, and ensure their government's vitality through the strength of its principles, rather than the strength of its police force.

A TRIBUTE TO JACK VALENTI

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, this week, the Nation lost one of its most colorful and wise counselors: Jack Valenti, who was the personification of the motion picture industry in Washington. I can't think of another industry that has had a representative so well known and so highly regarded, or one so accessible in spite of his considerable fame. Much more than "just" a lobbyist, Jack had an intense interest in public policy and a wisdom about him that made him an extremely valuable counselor to Presidents, to Congressmen and Senators and to his peers and colleagues. He was a great man with a charm and wit that won him genuine affection as well as near universal admiration.

The following op-ed article from the Washington Post of Saturday, April 28 was written

by Matt Gerson, who worked with and was mentored by Jack. It describes perfectly the loss felt by those of us who were also fortunate enough to learn from this extraordinary man.

WHAT JACK VALENTI TAUGHT US ALL

Jack Valenti lived a unique life between two of society's fascinations—politics and Hollywood. For Republicans and Democrats, for senators and young aides, for celebrities and the legions behind the cameras, interactions with him were graduate seminars in history, politics, human nature and common sense. This extraordinary communicator punctuated every conversation with a witticism linked to his beloved Texas, a quote from an obscure historical figure or a rule passed on to him by his mentor, Lyndon Johnson. In the weeks leading up to his death Thursday, all over town a simple "How's Jack?" almost always led to, "You know, I try to live by something I once heard him say."

I first noticed his reach when a lunch companion said, "I try to return every phone call the same day I receive it, and I try to treat an appointment secretary like a Cabinet secretary." That was followed by a senator who revealed: "Jack was the first one to contact me after my son died. I will never forget his concern and support. How can I reach his family?"

For those Jack mentored during the 38 years he dedicated to America's film industry, it became clear that character was defined by loyalty. In both Washington and Hollywood, people often desert "friends" at the first whiff of public disfavor. Not Jack—time and again he insisted that you never abandon a friend who was going through a rough time, and he always stood with a beleaguered colleague or public official who was receiving unwanted publicity.

He would tell his team to respect every elected official ("because you never even ran for dog catcher, and they were sent here by the people"). He admonished us that your adversary today might be your ally tomorrow. "In a political struggle, never get personal—else the dagger digs too deep."

Jack rejected the partisanship that gripped Washington and would warn that "nothing lasts—today's minority backbencher will be tomorrow's subcommittee chairman." On the day the Motion Picture Association of America headquarters was named the Jack Valenti Building, Senator TED STEVENS observed, "Jack works across the aisle because he doesn't see an aisle. It is the root of his success and what others ought to emulate."

Each of the six studio chiefs who spoke at the dedication ceremony emphasized that Jack's word was his bond—if he made a promise, he never wavered. His rock-solid commitment gave him unusual credibility with leaders on both coasts and around the world.

Jack was a gifted public speaker who put incredible effort into making it all look effortless. He would rework his text behind closed doors, reciting it until the cadence was just right. Jack was ebullient when a president complimented him once on the "extemporaneous" remarks he had made at the Gridiron Club. "The president couldn't believe I didn't have a prepared text. I neglected to mention that I didn't need notes because I spent several days getting ready," he said.

It was especially fun to watch Washington's most accomplished professionals try to decipher one of his homilies. They eventually got the point and often adopted the line as their own. When a project was in trouble, it was time to "hunker down like a mule in a hailstorm." [Modified from the original Texas vernacular for a family newspaper.]

When prospects got even worse, "The ox was in the ditch." But every problem could be addressed if you remembered "the three most important words in the English language: Wait a minute."

When someone from the MPAA left to take a new job, Jack would say, "I like to think I teach my people everything they know. But I know I didn't teach them everything I know." That line always got a laugh. I worked with Jack for 6 years and was friends with him for nearly two decades. In the past few years, frankly, I thought I had gleaned every lesson he had to offer. But then I picked up the galleys of his soon-to-be-published memoir, a book that tracks his "Greatest Generation" fable. This grandson of Sicilian immigrants, decorated combat pilot, Harvard MBA ("thanks to the greatest piece of social legislation ever devised by man—the G.I. Bill"), presidential adviser and confidant of America's business leaders has left a treatise with even more rules to live by.

One paragraph is a must-read for the BlackBerry-addicted. Jack quoted Emerson's observation that "for every gain, there is a loss. For every loss, there is a gain." While lamenting the number of nights he spent away from his family, he reminded us that attending one more reception meant missing a meal around the dinner table, and one extra night on a business trip would mean one less chance to help with homework or watch a soccer game.

I have recounted that quote many times over the past few weeks. And while this loss is devastating for many in Washington and Los Angeles, the life lessons that are his legacy are our gain.

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY
SESQUICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor San Jose State University on the occasion of its founding 150 years ago. For a century and a half, San Jose State has provided affordable, quality education. From its humble beginnings as a normal school to train teachers, San Jose State has grown into a comprehensive university, offering bachelor's and master's degrees in 134 programs.

The University reflects the ethnic diversity of California and particularly, that of Santa Clara County with no single ethnic group comprising a majority of the student population. As a graduate of San Jose State, I am particularly proud to note that the University ranks tenth among the Nation's top public universities in the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to minority students across all disciplines. Additionally, San Jose State University has conferred bachelor's degrees in business management and the health professions to more Asian American and Pacific Islanders than any other college or university in the Nation.

I would like to thank my colleagues Representative ZOE LOFGREN, Representative ANNA ESHOO, Representative SAM FARR and Representative JERRY MCNERNEY for joining

me today in recognizing San Jose State University's sesquicentennial.

INTRODUCING THE PILOTS EQUITABLE TREATMENT ACT

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, today I am proud to introduce the Pilots Equitable Treatment Act, legislation that would prevent deep, unfair cuts in pilots' retirement benefits.

Over thirty years ago, Congress established the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation to insure the pension benefits of American workers. When employers terminate their workers' traditional pension plans, the PBGC takes the plans over and makes monthly payments to plan participants who are retired.

When the PBGC takes over a company's pension plan, the plan participants do not always receive the same benefit they would have received if their plan had not terminated. For example, workers who retire before age 65—which the law considers “normal” retirement age—receive reduced benefits to reflect the longer period that these retirees likely will receive benefits.

This is bad news for pilots. Under Federal Aviation Administration rules, airline pilots are required to retire at age 60. As a result, pilots whose pension plan has been terminated—like the pilots at United Airlines and US Airways—wind up taking drastic cuts to their pension benefits because the PBGC treats age 60 as an early retirement age and cuts pilots guaranteed benefits as a result.

The federal government is responsible for trapping pilots in this double-bind. The PBGC and the FAA are both federal agencies, but because their rules don't align, pilots are forced to pay the price. Pilots earn every dime of their pension benefits and they don't choose to retire at age 60. The time to fix this problem is today.

The Pilots Equitable Treatment Act would put airline pilots on equal ground with other workers by requiring the PBGC to treat age 60 as the normal retirement age for pilots—not as an early retirement age. In other words, pilots would receive the maximum PBGC benefit for which they would be eligible if they worked until age 65. If they worked until the age of 57, it would be as if they worked until age 62 and the pilot would receive the appropriate PBGC benefit.

In a 2005 e-hearing Tom Gardiner, of Bainbridge Island, WA, facing the loss of his retirement nest egg at United Airlines, explained the conundrum facing pilots—

“My name is Tom Gardiner and I am a Captain for United Airlines with a total of 27 years of service. . . . If the PBGC takes over the pilots' defined benefit plan, I will lose at least 2/3 of my promised pension. . . .

[One factor] contributing to this huge hit is the adjustment for “early retirement” mandated by PBGC rules. Of course, I have no choice in the matter; the FAA regulations require me to retire at age 60. The PBGC considers that to be “early” and takes away 35 percent of what I would otherwise receive from them. It is a classic “Catch 22.22. . . .”

Captain Gardiner is not alone. The Pilots Equitable Treatment Act would be a first step to restoring some measure of fairness to these hardworking Americans who have seen promised and hard-earned benefits disappear overnight.

TRIBUTE ON THE RETIREMENT OF JOHN CONSTANCE

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to John Constance, who last week retired from the National Archives after 35 years of Federal Service.

For 14 years, John served as the National Archives liaison to Capitol Hill, supervising congressional relations, public affairs, communications, and the agency's web program.

A native of Baltimore, Maryland, John joined the Archives after graduating from the College of William and Mary in 1972.

He served in a number of managerial positions with the agency, including Director of Policy and Program Analysis, and the Chief of Product Acquisition and Marketing for the National Audiovisual Center.

In addition, Mr. Constance served in extended details to both the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Education during his career, managing public affairs projects for both agencies.

I am personally grateful to John for all the expertise and assistance he provided to me in the early 1990s during a time of extraordinary transformation for the National Archives, particularly when it established a second facility in College Park, Maryland to accommodate the growing volume of historical materials and improve services to researchers.

This state-of-the-art facility, which has become known as “Archives II,” is a treasure to anyone who believes that a nation cannot progress unless it first understands its past. The historically significant records it maintains literally document the history of our great nation, and will serve as primary sources for countless scholars of history, culture, politics, and science for generations to come.

All of us who embark on careers in public service hope that when the day comes to move on to other pursuits, we will be remembered for the good works we have rendered to the American people. John will be remembered for, of all things, his part in advancing our nation's sacred duty to remember its always rich, often glorious, and sometimes controversial history.

IN MEMORY OF CECIL JENNINGS

HON. J. RANDY FORBES

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Mr. FORBES. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a dear friend, a dedicated coach, and a committed educator, Mr. Cecil Jennings, for his loyal service and devotion to the youth of America.

As a public school teacher and coach, Cecil possessed an unwavering dedication to the

community, the children of the public school system, and to any young person needing his help or his guidance.

Cecil was born in 1934 and lived in the Great Bridge area of Chesapeake, Virginia. A graduate of Great Bridge High School and East Tennessee State University, he began his teaching career in 1957 at Deep Creek High School and taught there for two years. He then went on to teach at his alma mater, Great Bridge Junior High School, and worked as a physical education teacher and also coached football, track, wrestling and softball. Cecil also participated as a baseball and basketball coach in recreational leagues and umpired Little League baseball games. He retired from Great Bridge High after 36 years of service to the community. However, even after his retirement he continued to be the personification of school pride and school spirit for the “Wildcats” of Great Bridge.

In life, Cecil always carried himself with a positive attitude towards life and was well-known as an honorable individual with a big heart. He was well-respected by parents and people in the community. As a coach, Cecil had a philosophy that no one was cut from the team; he couldn't stand to cut his players because he saw in every child who had the willingness to try, an opportunity for success down the road. When he coached junior high football, usually 65 young men dressed for each game. “Coach Jennings” gave each child he coached the opportunity to be a winner, and carried that legacy throughout his career. Cecil mentored many students who, through his encouragement and devotion, found success in their education and in their lives. The stories of lives he touched and helped mold seem endless.

Towards the end of his life, Cecil battled cancer, diabetes and severe arthritis. Even as he aged and his health deteriorated, he continued to nurture, encourage and support his family, friends, and the local sports teams. In one of his last visits with a close friend, he reflected upon the happiness and joy he felt for his family and his community. Even through his pain, his selfless compassion continued to shine.

Cecil Jennings was a mentor, an honorable public servant and a dear friend to all who crossed in his path. I offer my sincerest condolences to his wife, Beth, their three children, Greg, Cecil, and Cissy, and five grandchildren, Brittany, Hailee, Alex, Christopher, and Emma. Cecil may no longer be with us, but the impact he made upon the community he loved is imprinted with the continuing legacy of thousands who made “Cecil's Teams” and whose lives were better for having done so.

RECOGNIZING RYAN JAMES CHESHER FOR ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Ryan James Cheshier, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 270, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.