

THE DAILY 45: YOUNG PERCY
ROUNDS SHOT TO DEATH IN
WEST PULLMAN

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 23, 2008

Mr. RUSH. Madam Speaker, the Department of Justice tells us that, everyday, 45 people, on average, are fatally shot in the United States. Chicago is but one of several American cities that are struggling through an escalating wave of gun-related violence this summer.

On Monday, in the West Pullman neighborhood of Chicago's Far Southside, 15-year-old Percy Rounds, a promising young man, lost his life to an unknown assailant. Like a bad scene from an all-too-familiar movie, Rounds was shot to death by a gunman who sprang out of a gangway. Sadly, for several days prior to Rounds' murder, local residents said they'd heard a steady stream of gunfire throughout their neighborhood. Think about that. A steady stream of gunfire in a residential community.

I extend my heartfelt condolences to Percy Rounds' family and friends. His grieving aunt described her nephew this way, "He was a good kid. He gave himself to the Lord. He's been going to church faithfully every Sunday. He wasn't in a gang." His aunt, a nurse, had the presence of mind to share these sentiments after trying valiantly to stop the bleeding from a fatal wound to her nephew's head.

Americans of conscience must come together to stop the senseless death of "The Daily 45." When will we say "enough is enough, stop the killing!"

MOTION TO GO TO CONFERENCE ON S. 294, PASSENGER RAIL INVESTMENT AND IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 22, 2008

Mr. HOLT. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 294, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, legislation that would authorize \$14.9 billion in funding for Amtrak over the next 5 years.

Rail service has integrated small communities with large cities across the country providing opportunity for economic expansion, increased mobility, and environmentally sound transit. Since Amtrak was founded in 1971, our country has benefited from organized, reliable and safe service to individuals commuting to and from work and individuals using rail service for extended travel. Amtrak also serves as an essential component of easing traffic congestion, reducing wear and tear on roads, protecting our environment and preserving open space across the country. With the skyrocketing costs of airline flights and gas prices at over \$4 a gallon, individuals are relying more and more on rail service.

It is no exaggeration to say that rail service is the lifeline from which New Jersey's state economy draws nourishment. Our region's employers—small, medium, and large—de-

pend upon an integrated rail operation to enable many of their employees to get to and from work. Clients, potential clients, and business partners use the train to come to New Jersey. Our local entrepreneurs use Amtrak to pitch their ideas and sell their products outside of our home state.

It is thus of critical importance that we provide Amtrak with the funding it needs to support its growing ridership, both in New Jersey and throughout the country. For the last 12 years, Amtrak has been suffering from a lack of federal support and for the last 6 years it has been operating without Congressional authorization. In order to keep from going out of business, Amtrak was forced to delay crucial repairs and security improvements, freeze the salaries of its employees, renege on employee pensions and go billions of dollars into debt. The legislation before us today would authorize the funding necessary to improve Amtrak's operations throughout the country and bring our country's rail service into the 21st Century.

S. 294 authorizes \$14.9 billion for Amtrak over the next 5 years, \$4.2 billion of which would be used for capital grants to help Amtrak afford to make necessary repairs and upgrades to the Northeast Corridor. It would also allow Amtrak to procure new rolling stock, rehabilitate existing bridges, as well as make additional capital improvements and maintenance over its entire network.

As a regular Amtrak rider, I appreciate the professionalism and service that customers enjoy every day. Amtrak's hard working employees, including the over 1,300 employed in New Jersey, have continued to provide high quality service despite Amtrak's payroll freezes and pension problems. The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act would provide Amtrak with \$3 billion in operating grants, which would help Amtrak make good on its promises to these employees. A portion of these funds would be used to pay employees salaries, health costs, and overtime pay. It would also help Amtrak pay for increasing fuel costs, facilities, maintenance and train operations.

This legislation would also create a new Capital Grant program to provide grants for States for intercity passenger rail capital projects. In New Jersey the demand for public transportation has increased dramatically, with NJ Transit providing 900,000 trips per week-day on its trains, buses and light-rail vehicles. S. 294 would authorize over \$2.5 billion in grants to states over the next 5 years to help organizations like NJ Transit pay for the capital costs of facilities and the equipment necessary to provide new or improved intercity passenger rail.

I am pleased that S. 294 includes language I wrote with Representative MURPHY that would require Amtrak to study the feasibility of increasing passenger rail service between Princeton Junction, NJ, and Philadelphia, PA. The Princeton Junction station has seen a 90 percent decrease in Amtrak ridership since 2004 due to reductions in Amtrak service at the Princeton Junction Station. While NJ Transit was able to step in to fill the service void to New York City, commuters to Philadelphia no longer have access to direct. The demand for public transportation will continue to increase, and it is essential that we ensure that we are using existing transportation resources efficiently to meet this demand. This study would require Amtrak to ensure that they are using this station effectively.

The Passenger Rail Investment Reauthorization Act would also provide \$1.7 billion over the next 5 years to help Amtrak pay off the debt it incurred when Congress drastically cut its funding in 2000 and 2001. Amtrak has aggressively targeted this debt, paying down \$600 million from 2002 through 2007. This bill would help Amtrak take further steps to reduce its debt, and allow Amtrak to focus its resources on improving existing services and making additional capital and operational improvements.

S. 294 would bring American passenger rail into the 21st century, authorizing \$1.7 billion for the construction of eleven high-speed rail networks spanning the entire Nation, the first of which would be a high-speed rail corridor between Washington, D.C. and New York City. Countries like France, England and Japan have greatly improved the experience of commuters through the utilization of high speed corridors. This would lead to more efficient public transportation and help the more than 1.5 million New Jerseyans who use Amtrak spend less time commuting and more time at home with their families.

Supporting public transportation especially passenger rail, should be a crucial element of our national effort to slow the rate of global climate change and reduce our dependence on foreign fuels. Passenger rail consumes 21 percent less energy per passenger mile than automobiles and 17 percent less than airplanes. It releases half the amount of greenhouse gases per passenger mile as either air or car travel. The continued operation of Amtrak is an essential component of easing traffic congestion, reducing wear and tear on roads, protecting our environment and preserving open space in New Jersey and across the country.

Rail service is a fundamental component of our Nation's continually growing transportation system, and Amtrak has demonstrated the capacity of integrated rail service to expand economic opportunity, commuter options, and make vital contributions to the fabric of our communities. I urge my colleagues to support S. 294.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. AL GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 23, 2008

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, I was unavailable to vote on July 16th and had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcalls 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 501, 504, 505, 507, and 508. I would have voted "nay" on rollcalls 500, 502, 503, and 506.

HONORING OFFICER JACOB CHESTNUT AND DETECTIVE JOHN GIBSON

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 23, 2008

Mr. CAPUANO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to United States Capitol Police Officer Jacob Joseph Chestnut and Detective John Michael Gibson, who were both

shot and killed in the line of duty 10 years ago on July 24, 1998.

Officer Chestnut and Detective Gibson represented the very best of the U.S. Capitol Police in their dedication and service to Congress. Each man served the force honorably for 18 years before his untimely death. They assumed great personal risk to safeguard the lives of visitors to the Capitol, Members of Congress, and Congressional staff every day. Their brave actions on that tragic day 10 years ago undoubtedly helped to protect hundreds of innocent lives and illustrated the commitment demonstrated by every sworn member of the U.S. Capitol Police.

While I never personally met Officer Chestnut or Detective Gibson, I have witnessed first-hand their legacy at the Capitol. Their example continues to inspire police officers, Members, and staff alike. The men and women who protect the Capitol complex and community are top-notch professionals who dedicate their time, energy, and prodigious skill to their work. I thank them all from the bottom of my heart.

The tragic loss of Officer Chestnut and Detective Gibson is not one that we will ever forget. I know that Congress and the Capitol Police will continue to honor their memory and their ultimate sacrifice as we seek to ensure the safety of one of the most recognizable symbols of freedom and democracy today—our Capitol.

INTRODUCTION OF THE TRIBAL LAW AND ORDER ACT OF 2008

HON. STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN

OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 23, 2008

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Madam Speaker, today, I am pleased to introduce the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2008. I want to thank Senator DORGAN and his colleagues and staff on the Senate Indian Affairs Committee for their tireless dedication to addressing the needs of law enforcement and justice services in Indian Country. I am proud to sponsor the companion legislation in the House of Representatives.

In June 2007, the House Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing on the Lower Brule Reservation in south central South Dakota. Entitled, The Needs and Challenges of Tribal Law Enforcement in Indian Reservations, tribal leaders and law enforcement officials from eight tribes testified for the need to improve government-to-government consultations between tribes and the federal agencies charged with supporting their law enforcement goals. Witnesses explained the need for more resources for officers, equipment, jails, and tribal courts. One witness, Chairman Joseph Brings Plenty of the Cheyenne River Reservation, explained that on his reservation, there are an average of only three officers per shift to cover nineteen communities with 15,000 people and an area approximately the size of Connecticut. On this large, land-based reservation, each officer covers an average of 450 miles of road in one 8 hour shift. In 2006 alone, the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe's police department responded to 11,488 calls for service and made 11,791 arrests. From my work with tribal communities in South Dakota

and as a Member of the Committee on Natural Resources, I know that Cheyenne River is not an extreme case. The experiences and frustrations articulated by Chairman Brings Plenty resonate with tribal leaders across the United States.

The Tribal Law and Order Act is an important step to addressing the complex and broken system of law and order in Indian Country. This bill would clarify the responsibilities of Federal, State, tribal, and local governments with respect to crimes committed in tribal communities; increase coordination and communication among Federal, State, tribal, and local law enforcement agencies; empower tribal governments with the authority, resources, and information necessary to safely and effectively provide for the public's safety in tribal communities; reduce the prevalence of violent crime in tribal communities and to combat violence against Indian and Alaska Native women; address and prevent drug trafficking and reduce rates of alcohol and drug addiction in Indian country; and increase and standardize the collection of criminal data and the sharing of criminal history information among Federal, State, and tribal officials responsible for responding to and investigating crimes in tribal communities.

The Senate Indian Affairs Committee has held numerous hearings and has reached out to tribes across the United States while crafting this bill, and I appreciate their efforts to address the concerns raised by tribal members and leaders. I recognize that this bill alone will not solve the problems raised by tribes in these consultations and hearings. As such, I will continue to work for increased funding for law enforcement personnel, detention facilities, equipment and training, tribal courts, and other components required for a successful justice system. I will continue to hold Bureau of Indian Affairs accountable for upholding the trust responsibility within the realm of law enforcement. Ultimately, I believe that this bill offers important and necessary tools in our shared goal of making Indian Country a safer place to be.

CONGRATULATING MIKE MCROBERTS

HON. BRUCE L. BRALEY

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 23, 2008

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mike McRoberts on his retirement after 36 years of working for John Deere and 8 years serving as Shop Chairman. Mike McRoberts served as a Union Steward from 1979 until 1990 when he became a Committee Man. After ten years in that position he became Shop Chairman and has been serving in that position up to the present day.

Mike has been a strong advocate for the 3,000 members of Local 838, the largest local within John Deere. Mike has been at the table for all bargaining meetings between John Deere and UAW since 1991, and has overseen all contracts since that time. Mike was also very instrumental in the UAW/John Deere apprenticeship programs and skilled tradesman programs. Most importantly, Mike was a great friend and mentor to all of the workers

at John Deere and taught young people how to be good officers for the local and good committeemen. I know that Mike will be greatly missed by his colleagues at John Deere and the union. I wish him the best in his retirement and future endeavors, and thank him for his many years of service.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 23, 2008

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, during rollcall vote No. 512 on H.R. 6493, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

AVIATION SAFETY ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 22, 2008

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6493, the Aviation Safety Enhancement Act.

Over the last few years we have heard a number of disturbing reports that the Federal Aviation Administration, FAA, is failing in its mandate to ensure the safety of airline passengers. Last year we discovered that the FAA had allowed Southwest Airlines to fly 117 planes that had not received their mandatory inspections. We learned of two near midair collisions at Newark Airport in my home state of New Jersey. In meetings with Air Traffic Controllers I have been told that these near misses were caused by pilot confusion over last minute and unpublished route changes by the FAA. Rather than address serious concerns about the safety of our nation's air travelers, the FAA has attempted to hide these complaints and issues. In some of these cases, the FAA has retaliated against whistleblowers who disclosed these issues and the number of whistleblower protection claims filed by FAA employees has tripled over the last year.

It is difficult to overstate how important whistleblowers are in the policy process. They are often the human face that confirms the existence of a tangible, even life-threatening problem in a federal agency. Bush Administration officials threatened Jack Spadaro, the former head of the National Mine Health and Safety Academy, MSHA, with the loss of his job when he tried to investigate a mining accident that occurred in 2000. In 2005, the Forest Service fired Douglas Parker, a 40 year employee of the service, after he filed a whistleblower complaint about the improper use of pesticides across several forests in New Mexico and Arizona. Fredrick Whitehurst, a longtime FBI bomb residue expert, filed whistleblower complaints after he pointed out major problems in the FBI's crime lab. I could go on at length about these kinds of cases, but I think you get my point. Outside of the national security community, protecting whistleblowers is perhaps more important in the transportation sector than anywhere else. If the FAA is