

first political memory was in 1984 as a 9-year-old going to a Helms-Reagan rally. That is my first political memory. Beyond that when I was a high school student, I stopped into Jesse Helms' office and he took a few minutes to sit and talk with me, take a picture with me at his desk, and showed me around his office. And I realized once I became a lawmaker how very short time is here on Capitol Hill, and for him to give me that moment is a special memory that I will always cherish.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Helms family, and his wife, Dot.

At this time I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES).

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of attending Senator Helms' funeral along with Congressman MCHENRY, Congressman JONES, Senator BIDEN, Senator DODD, Senator BYRD, Senator DOLE, and others. And there were two takeaways from that funeral that I particularly remember. One was directly from Senator Helms. He said, "You can always change your priorities, but never change your principle." That was a hallmark.

The other thing that the pastor said, "The Lord always examines the heart of the giver before he examines the gift." Senator Helms' heart was with his constituents. His constituent service, regardless of party, was absolutely remarkable, and it was a tribute to him, his relationship with his wife, Dot, his family and his children.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Senator MCCONNELL and Jimmy Broughton and the Helms family for the wonderful testimonial of his service to his country.

EDUCATING IRAQ'S FUTURE LEADERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, most of our Nation's students are on summer vacation right now. They are enjoying camp, swimming, playing, or just hanging out and relaxing. Some are even earning a few dollars at a summer job.

For their counterparts in Iraq, the school break is just now beginning. Iraqi students have just wrapped up their final exams. This year we learned was very different from last year's exam period. According to reports from relief organizations and a recent article in the Christian Science Monitor, last year's tests were marred by unprecedented incidents of mass cheating, bribe-taking, and sheer lawlessness. In many places, Mr. Speaker, last year we heard that militiamen and insurgents strolled casually into exam centers and forced officials, often at gun point, to allow cheating.

Parents feared sending their children to exams. The challenges of just getting to school, making it past militia roadblocks and suicide attackers was

one thing; making it through a day full of cheating, intimidation and violence was quite another. One test proctor overseeing a geography high school exam at Baghdad University told the Christian Science Monitor, "Last year the outlaws took advantage of the brittle security situation and caused unprecedented chaos during the final exams. It was truly a mark of utter shame on our education system as a whole."

Another Iraqi reported that militiamen stormed into an exam hall to force proctors to let students cheat. When one headmaster objected, he was briefly kidnapped and threatened by the militiamen until he relented.

Students were woefully underprepared for their exams, Mr. Speaker. One observer told the media that anguished-looking girls came out of the exam room complaining not only about how difficult the questions were, but also about their preparation. They said it is not fair, we didn't even have a chemistry teacher all year, and we are being tested on chemistry.

This year, thankfully, it appears that the neighborhoods are much more secure. An overwhelming presence of military and law enforcement appears to have kept interfering forces at bay during the testing. The situation is still not ideal, however, because many students have to travel great distances daily. But generally, the situation is somewhat, if not a great deal, better.

Iraq has a rich educational history, Mr. Speaker. Until the years of the first Gulf War, Iraq led the region in academics and produced internationally recognized leaders in the fields of law, medicine and theology. But the challenges are still great.

The Ministry of Human Rights reported at the end of June that 340 academics were killed in and around Iraq from 2005 to 2007. And according to the Ministry of Education, 28 percent of Iraq's 17 year olds in the center and southern part of the country took their final exams in the year 2007, but only 40 percent passed. That was a decrease from 2006 when the figure was 60 percent passing.

We already know that this administration gets a failing grade on its Iraq policy. However, we don't need to condemn a generation of Iraq's future leaders. We should be investing in schools, not in tanks and guns. We must redeploy our troops and military contractors from Iraq, and we must work peacefully to help with their reconciliation. Mr. Speaker, let's send the children to school, not to war.

EARMARK LIMITATION AMENDMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, every year now we hear a lot of high-minded rhetoric about earmarks and how earmarks

represent Congress' Article I authority, that we earmark in Congress because we have the power of the purse and we are simply exercising that power.

But the reality belies that claim. Let me talk about one earmark tonight that will give just an example of how this high-minded rhetoric that we often hear is so wrong.

We may not even get appropriation bills on the floor this year. We may not have any. It may be that we simply do a continuing resolution to fund appropriations for the next fiscal year; and then in January have a big omnibus bill and all of the earmarks, the thousands that have been put as part of the bill that we haven't even seen on the House floor, will be dumped into the bill.

So all we can do, I guess, is come to the floor in a forum like this when we are not even officially challenging the earmarks, but to highlight what a waste some of these earmarks are.

This earmark that I want to talk about tonight is \$200,000 in funding for the Advantage West Economic Development Group's Certified Entrepreneurial Community Program in North Carolina. There are a number of earmarks similar to this in the Labor-HHS bill which we won't see later this year. These are funds set aside for economic development, business incubators and workforce programs.

I would never argue, nor would any of us in our campaign literature, that this is a proper role and function of government. Yet we see time and again earmark after earmark to fund these kinds of programs.

This is not the first time I have challenged an earmark for this specific group. In fact, last year I came to the floor and argued that this group need not have Federal funds to carry out its objective. I say this because Advantage West Economic Development Group's Website has a long list of corporate sponsors, including BB&T, BellSouth, Qualcomm, Sprint, UBS, Verizon and Wachovia. In addition to more than 80 corporate sponsors listed, the group also counts the National Park Service, National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Commerce as "funding partners."

On top of that, the group received a \$282,000 earmark in last year's appropriation bill.

So why in the world, Mr. Speaker, with so much financial support coming here should this group receive an additional subsidy? It simply makes no sense at all.

I think that we ought to mention here, as was mentioned in the July 9 issue of Roll Call, that we often hear that earmarks are given out because Members know their districts much better than faceless bureaucrats in some department.

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But why is it, then, if there is such a noble purpose for earmarks, and the Members are simply knowing their district and getting these districts, why is

there such a disproportionate allocation of earmarks? Why are so many going to leadership or so-called vulnerable Members on one side.

Why are earmarks given out to Members who are at risk of losing their election? According to a Roll Call article just a few days ago, it said that "Sixteen Democrats in the 'Frontline' program, aimed at protecting the 29 most vulnerable House Democrats, secured \$810,000 worth of earmarks each" in the Labor-HHS bill. This is not a one-sided effort. It's not just the Democrats, it's my party as well.

The article went on to say, "Among the 23 Republican incumbents participating in the 'Regain Our Majority Program' this cycle, 14 secured \$900,000 or more in the Labor-HHS bill.

"Twelve of those—the Republicans pulled down \$1 million or more in the CJS bill, with 8 of them securing \$1.5 million each."

Again, why is it, after we hear all this lofty rhetoric about earmarks, because we know our constituents best, why is it that the only ones that really know their constituents best are those who are at risk of not being re-elected back to this body? It simply doesn't make sense. It cheapens this institution. We are a better institution than that, and we should, we should respect this institution more than that and respect taxpayers' money more than that.

Also, another reason that's often given for earmarks is that we need to provide oversight. Earmarking is a way to provide oversight, because, after all, we know better than those bureaucrats on how to spend money.

I asked the Congressional Research Service to do a little research to see where the actual oversight in Congress has gone since the contemporary practice of earmarking has really started in the mid-1990s. If you look at the 104th Congress, we just had—not very many earmarks. By the time we got to the 109th Congress, we were up around, I think, the final numbers were about 15,000 earmarks. Yet the oversight hearings actually go down. That's not a legitimate reason for earmarking.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURGESS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING HOWARD COBLE FOR BEING THE LONGEST-SERVING NORTH CAROLINA REPUBLICAN IN U.S. HOUSE HISTORY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, today is a special day in the history of North Carolina, this Congress, and especially in the life of public service led by Congressman HOWARD COBLE from North Carolina's Sixth Congressional District.

Today, Congressman COBLE becomes the longest-serving Republican from North Carolina in the history of the House of Representatives. His nearly 24 years of congressional service eclipses the record of service previously held by Jim Broyhill, who served from 1963 to 1986.

HOWARD has a sterling reputation as a man of integrity and principle, a representative who stands for what is right and who fights on behalf of what makes America a great Nation. He is a truly independent voice for North Carolina and Washington. I consider it a profound honor to call HOWARD a dear friend, and I always look forward to working with him in Congress on behalf of the people of North Carolina.

In addition to his unimpeachable character, HOWARD COBLE is a champion for his constituents, whether he is working in Washington or back in North Carolina. He is passionate about constituent service, and he never backs down from a challenge to do what makes sense for those he represents in North Carolina's Sixth District.

His North Carolina values of hard work, common sense and sacrifice, on behalf of those he serves, have made HOWARD not just the longest-serving Republican from North Carolina but also a tremendously effective legislator.

The dean of the North Carolina delegation is also in possession of one of the sharpest wits in Congress. He is renowned for his deadpan humor and loves a good joke, even if it's at his own expense. As I am sure his constituents are aware, HOWARD is always ready with a cheerful greeting and a welcoming smile for whoever crosses his path.

In fact, many of those who meet HOWARD for the first time will quickly realize his affection for his constituents in his district. He can hardly meet a constituent without inquiring about their high school alma mater and then rattling off their high school's mascot.

It's not just that HOWARD knows the high school mascot of every high school in his district, it's that he cares about the little details that mean so much to average North Carolinians. Perhaps the most fitting summary of HOWARD's personality is that he is the essence of what it means to be a southern gentleman, someone who simply exudes kindness, charm and compassion.

Of course, HOWARD's sharp wit can be a two-edged sword. Last month his sense of humor almost killed someone. At the North Carolina GOP convention, he cracked a joke to Senator Robert Pittenger, who is campaigning to become North Carolina's lieutenant governor. Pittenger nearly expired after choking on his meal in mid-chuckle. Reliable sources have hinted that the joke might have been a variation of HOWARD's feisty mountain woman one-liner that he routinely uses to describe me. Fortunately, former presidential candidate Mike Huckabee was there to rescue Pittenger from HOWARD's humor with a well-placed Heimlich maneuver.

All kidding aside, one thing I admire most about Congressman COBLE is the fact he has served so long and so admirably while still retaining the North Carolina values that helped bring him to Congress 24 years ago. He has no doubt seen much during his tenure from the last days of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall, to the heady days of the implementation of the GOP's Contract with America in 1995, and then the dark days after September 11. Throughout it all, Congressman COBLE has been a consistent, caring legislator who represents the very best of our great State of North Carolina.

Today, I salute HOWARD COBLE, my friend, for his many years of service. On this historic day, I wish him many more years of faithfully serving his constituents and his country.

HOWARD is truly one of a kind.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CAMPBELL of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WOLF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)