

ready to serve our country, they could not continue. So we put this protection in of 36 percent.

If that is good enough to protect our military, why is it not good enough to protect every American? I think 36 percent is reasonable. But I learned something as soon as I introduced that bill. It is amazing that this industry, like the title loan business, and the pay-day loan business, it is amazing what they will come in, sit down in your office and say to you with a straight face. I said to this group in Chicago: Well, how much do you charge in interest at these pay-day loans and title loans?

The fellow said: Senator, you know it is the circumstance.

I said: How much do you charge?

Well, you know, on an annual basis somewhere between 58 and 358 percent. What—58 and 358 percent?

Yes, but those are circumstances.

It gets down to the bottom line. Those people should not be in business. These poor people who think they are borrowing money are never going to get out of that hole. And we make it legal in this country. If you did it as part of some gangland activity, it would be extortion, and it might lead to criminal prosecution. But if you do it with a certain sign in front of your business, it is considered the free market at work. Well, I think it is the free market run amok. That is why I think it needs to be changed.

So we are going to face this vote this coming week. It is a very important one. It is one I hope will change the landscape. I hope that more homes will be spared from foreclosure. And I hope we can start stabilizing the real estate market.

I think when we do, we are going to find our way out of this recession. Until we do, we are going to keep looking for the bottom. How many homes will go in foreclosure? How many will sit vacant? And how low can the value of our homes go for those of us paying our mortgages every month?

That is what we are up against. We have not found that bottom yet, because the banks are not prepared to step forward and support any legislation that gives those people a fighting chance. They will have their opportunity this week in the Senate to speak.

Members of the Senate, tomorrow, I will go through State by State and show you what some of these States are facing. Mortgage foreclosures are bad in Illinois. Some parts of Chicago are horrible. But in some States it is devastating.

I think Nevada is a classic example of a State where mortgage foreclosures are out of hand at this point. We have got to do something. We have got to step forward. The President supports this proposal I am bringing to the floor. I hope we can find some Members on both sides of the aisle, particularly on the Republican side of the aisle, who will join us.

I yield the floor.

STATUTORY TIME-PERIODS TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2009

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I am pleased that yesterday the Senate passed the Statutory Time-Periods Technical Amendments Act of 2009, H.R. 1626. This good-government bill creates a more consistent and standard method for lawyers and judges to calculate court deadlines. It is a small but important bipartisan bill that will improve the effectiveness of our judicial system.

Last week, the House of Representatives passed this bill on their suspension calendar. The Senate has given its unanimous support to this legislation, and I look forward to the President signing this bill.

Last month, I introduced an identical measure in the Senate with Senators SPECTER, WHITEHOUSE, and SESSIONS. In the last few weeks, I have worked with many others in the House and Senate to ensure that this legislation proceeded quickly through both Chambers of Congress. Representative HANK JOHNSON has worked especially hard to move this bill through the House. We have a strong bipartisan bill that will result in significant improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of our judicial system.

This legislation incorporates the full recommendations of the Judicial Conference of the United States to alter deadlines in certain statutes affecting court proceedings to account for recent amendments to the Federal time-computation rules. It provides judges and practitioners with commonsense deadlines that are less confusing and less complex than current deadlines and also ensures that existing time periods are not shortened.

After much study and significant public comment, the Judicial Conference's Standing Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure and the Advisory Committees on Appellate, Bankruptcy, Civil, and Criminal Rules arrived at proposed new rules intended to provide predictability and uniformity to the current process of calculating court deadlines. The proposed rules respond, in part, to findings from the Judicial Conference that the current time-computation process is confusing and can lead to missed deadlines and litigants' loss of important rights. Under the current time-calculation rules, weekends and holidays are not counted when calculating court deadlines of less than 30 days but are counted for calculating court deadlines longer than 30 days. The proposed new rules simplify this process by counting holidays and weekends regardless of a court deadline's time period. According to the Judicial Conference, these proposed changes would respond to practitioners' complaints and concerns from judges.

This legislation amends a number of Federal civil and criminal statutes affecting court proceedings and harmonizes them with the proposed rules. First, this remedial bill alters certain

statutory court deadlines to counterbalance any shortening of the time period resulting from the "days are days" approach. For example, the bill changes 5 days to 7 days, and 10 days to 14 days, to prevent time periods from becoming shorter when a practitioner counts all days, including weekends. This change would, in effect, maintain the same time periods in the statutes. In addition, if a time period ends on a holiday or a weekend, the time period would be extended to the next business day. The bill also changes some statutory deadlines that would otherwise be inconsistent with the amended rules deadlines and lead to confusion.

Both the Department of Justice and the Judicial Conference urge swift consideration of this proposal on or before December 1 of this year, the date the Judicial Conference's amendments to the rules take effect. I am pleased that we are able to accommodate their request.

Passing this bill is the right thing to do. I know that the legal community will benefit from the uniform court deadlines that this legislation provides. American citizens will have their rights more fully protected by court deadlines that are clear and unambiguous. Even more, public confidence in our justice system can only be strengthened when court procedures operate in a manner that is free of any unnecessary confusion.

I thank the Department of Justice and the wide array of legal and bar organizations that have supported the Judicial Conference's recommendations incorporated in this bill, including of the American College of Trial Lawyers, the Council of Appellate Lawyers, and the American Bar Association's Section of Litigation and Criminal Justice Section. I am especially grateful to the Administrative Office of the Courts which, on behalf of the Judicial Conference, sent us those policy recommendations from the Federal judiciary. Those recommendations are included in this bill, and I commend them for their hard work and attention to this issue.

Only a few months into a new administration and a new Congress, it is incumbent upon us to continue to focus on the requirements of the Federal judiciary that our citizens and our Republic need and deserve. The measure we passed yesterday is a positive step in the right direction.

I look forward to President Obama promptly signing it into law.

TRIBUTE TO SHAP SMITH

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the remarkable leadership of Mr. Shap Smith who represents the towns of Elmore, Morristown, Woodbury, and Worcester, and who is now the current speaker of the Vermont House of Representatives.

Having recently assumed the role of speaker at the beginning of this legislative session in January, Mr. Smith

has already made his mark as a fair-minded and seasoned leader. He has driven the successful passage of several pieces of legislation, addressing Vermont's sexual abuse response system and legalizing same-sex marriage, among other important issues. Marcelle and I recently had dinner with Shap and his wife Dr. Melissa Volansky. We are both impressed with his commitment to Vermont.

I am looking forward to watching Shap Smith continue to lead the Vermont Legislature and build a record of fiscal and social responsibility. I wish him luck as he undertakes this challenging job during these difficult times.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of an April 20, 2009, Rutland Herald article about Mr. Smith be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Rutland Herald, Apr. 20, 2009]

SMITH LEADS WITH GRINNING STYLE

(By Susan Allen)

MONTPELIER.—Each speaker of the Vermont House has his or her own leadership style.

Ralph Wright growled.

Michael Obuchowski boomed.

Walt Freed ruled.

Gaye Symington analyzed.

And Shap Smith . . . well, he grins.

"I'm a friendly guy," said House Speaker Smith, new to the post this session, when asked last week about his style. Smith, himself a Democrat, reaches across the political aisle to work with Republicans, Progressives and Democrats alike.

But don't think he's a pushover.

"People know I take the issues pretty seriously," added Smith, a University of Vermont and Indiana University School of Law graduate who handles intellectual property, insurance coverage and civil litigation with the firm Dinse/Knapp/McAndrew during the off-session. "I can go toe-to-toe in debating issues."

Looking at the speaker, opponents might be tempted to underestimate his political skills. With a wiry frame from running, cross-country skiing and other athletic activities, and his wire-rimmed glasses, Smith looks about 25. He is, in fact, 43.

And anyone who thought he might be too young to lead need look no further than the recent House vote to override the governor's veto of the same-sex marriage bill. Smith needed 100 members to support the override, and going into the vote, the outcome was far from certain.

As he announced the final tally to the House floor—to the surprise of many, the needed 100 voted with the speaker and same-sex marriage would become law in Vermont—Smith stepped away from the podium briefly and appeared emotional.

"I have friends and colleagues to whom and for whom this bill meant a great deal," he said during a conversation last week in his window-lined Statehouse office. "I am very pleased we were able to do it. It was a great achievement."

Shap is actually Shapleigh Jr., a name that came from his grandmother, who was adopted into the Shapleigh family from the town of Shapleigh, Maine. His grandmother grew up in West Lebanon, N.H., where "there were all these Shapleighs," he added.

"I went to high school in Morrisville. I always wanted a different name," Smith said.

"Dave or Tim would have been just fine. Shapleigh is not a usual Vermont name."

Smith had an eye on public service since serving in student government in school. He followed politics closely in the 1990s while living in New York City and working for a law firm there, and started becoming more serious about a run after moving to Morrisville in 1999.

In 2002, with 2-month-old son Eli at home but an open legislative seat calling, he took the plunge, becoming what he described as the "Stealth" candidate knocking on doors, re-acquainting himself with friends from childhood and their families, and quietly winning the seat under the radar.

As all legislative leaders discover, juggling the pressing Statehouse agenda and a home life is challenging (he has two young children, and wife Melissa is a general practitioner).

"I go home almost every night," he said, adding that he tries to arrive in time to read to his children or at least put them to bed. "I'm the one that gets them up in the morning, which is a real reality check."

Things are less clear at the Statehouse, where Smith is focusing on his legislative agenda:

(1) Repairing and maintaining Vermont's transportation system—the roads and bridges;

(2) Expanding and improving telecommunications (computer broadband) in rural areas;

(3) Strengthening Vermont's public education system; and

(4) Trying to close the gap in educational performance between students on the lower economic scale and their wealthier peers—a disparity consistently documented in national and state school test scores.

Hanging over those priorities is the staggering challenge of trying to balance the state budget in dire economic times, with the state hemorrhaging red ink. It is, he said, a task that "keeps me up at night."

"How do you balance being fiscally responsible with meeting the needs of the state?" he asked rhetorically. And while not completely unexpected, the economic challenge has been "worse than some of us thought it would be."

Returning to the place he was raised, meeting and re-meeting neighbors, old friends and classmates, and watching his children grow up in the same area he did seems to drive Smith's political vision.

"I want to make sure we put in place policies that allow the next generation to have the opportunities that I did," he said.

REMEMBERING AL MYERS

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I am both proud and saddened today to salute Mr. Al Myers, a beloved teacher at Williston Central School in Vermont who recently passed away after being injured while working on the set of a school play. Mr. Myers was best known as a popular educator who was remembered by former school principal Lynn Murray as being "brilliant with children." As a U.S. Senator, I remember Mr. Myers bringing students to Washington, DC every year. He truly wanted them to understand the importance of living in the world's greatest democracy.

In memory of Mr. Myers, I ask unanimous consent that the following memorial article, by Matt Ryan of the Burlington Free Press, be printed into the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Apr. 27, 2009]

MYERS' DEATH MOURNED

(By Matt Ryan)

WILLISTON.—Parents, students and teachers at Williston Central School are mourning the death of a popular educator who fell from a ladder and suffered a severe head injury while working on the set of the school's production of "The Wizard of Oz."

Al Myers was found in the auditorium Friday morning and transported to Fletcher Allen Hospital where he underwent surgery. He died Saturday morning, according to the school.

Julie Longchamp, the producer of the school play, worked with Myers for 20 years.

"He was an extraordinary man with a lot of passion," Longchamp said. "Everyone has come together and we're going to be putting Al's show on."

Longchamp prepared for the play near Myers' desk, in their office at the school Sunday evening. In the auditorium, parents and students quietly worked on the play's set and costumes, the Emerald City and Glinda's pink dress. Tickets for the show, which is scheduled for this weekend, sold out April 1.

"The play the Wizard of Oz will go on as scheduled under the direction of Julie Longchamp," principal Walter Nardelli wrote in an e-mail to parents. "Al and his family would have wanted it that way."

Counselors will be available today for students, and staff will attempt to keep the day as normal as possible, Nardelli said. He encouraged children to go to school. Students were on break last week.

The school was coordinating with Champlain Valley Union High School to support former students who worked with Myers, Nardelli said.

Myers had directed many theater productions over the years. Former students and parents of students posted thoughts about the teacher on several Facebook pages dedicated to his memory. They wrote about working with Myers on plays like, "Annie Get Your Gun," "Fiddler on the Roof" and "Macbeth," and catching his infectious love for music and theater.

"Mr. Myers was a wonderful teacher who took me under his wing as he did to so many others," David Stephens of Burlington wrote. "I remember the sing-a-longs that he had in class where he would pull out his guitar and would have 100 percent participation because it was so much fun. I can still remember a bunch of the songs we would sing, 'Feeling Groovy,' 'Blowin' in the Wind.'"

Former Williston Central School principal Lynn Murray remembered Myers being "brilliant with children."

"In my entire career, I have never met anyone with so much heart, so much talent and so giving a nature," Murray wrote.

According to one Facebook page, a celebration of his life will be held at noon, May 16 at the Williston Central School. As of 9 p.m. Sunday, more than 450 people joined the "In Memory of Al Myers" Facebook page.

"He's going to be a very, very missed man," Longchamp said.

AMERICAN CITY QUALITY MONTH

Ms. SNOWE. Madam President, I rise today to recognize that the month of April is designated as American City Quality Month. Through the continued efforts of the American City Planning