PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 16, 2010

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, on Wednesday, December 15, 2010, I was unavoidably detained and unable to cast my vote on H. Res. 1761, a resolution congratulating Auburn University quarterback Cameron Newton on winning the 2010 Heisman Trophy as the most outstanding college football player in the United States.

As an original cosponsor of this legislation, had I been present, I would have voted ''aye'' on H. Res. 1761.

SENATOR PAUL SIMON WATER FOR THE WORLD ACT OF 2009

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 16, 2010

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight, as I have the previous two nights, in order to prod this body to act to save lives before it is too late. It is simply unconscionable that 4,100 children die every day from diarrheal diseases spread through poor sanitation and hygiene. The mortality rate for children killed by waterborne diseases is six times as large as the number of children killed by HIV/AIDS and four times as many as killed by malaria.

Melanie Nakagawa of the National Resources Defense Council has called the international water and sanitation crisis ''the most poorly addressed environmental problem of our day.'' Indeed, nearly one billion people lack safe drinking water. According to the World Health Organization, two and a half billion people lack sufficient water sanitation facilities.

Many of us have seen the impacts of this ongoing tragedy first-hand—from the United States, to Africa, to Haiti, where people are dying every day from cholera because of a lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities.

The gap between access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation is widening between those living in poverty and the wealthy. The former South African president, Nelson Mandela, challenged global leaders to make access to clean water a basic human right and to put water and sanitation much higher up on the political, economic and social agendas. ''The absence of access to clean water'' he stated ''is most stark in the widespread impoverishment of the natural environment.''

The U.N. agreed with Mandela at the Earth Summit, noting that water is the greatest obstacle to sustainable development and the most visible symbol of the growing gap between the rich and the poor. As the Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, ''No issue has ever been more neglected than water and sanitation. And it is neglected because it is of concern mainly to the poor and powerless.''

Kofi Annan, former United Nations Secretary General, stated that ''access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a fundamental human need and therefore, a basic human right.''

We have legislation before Congress that will address these inequities and demonstrate our government's commitment to the fundamental human right of safe and clean water. H.R. 2030, the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2009, would give the U.S. government the tools to provide 100 million people with first-time access to clean water and sanitation.

The Senate, which has been repeatedly criticized for not addressing the hundreds of bills passed by this body during the 111th Congress, has already approved the companion to H.R. 2030. And the Senate passed that legislation on September 20, 2010 by unanimous consent.

Despite the occasional partisan differences here in Washington DC, this critical issue has support on both sides of the aisle. There are ten Republican cosponsors of the House bill and eight Republican cosponsors of the Senate bill.

Water for the World is also supported by a broad spectrum of advocates, including Water Advocates, the Natural Resources Defense Council, ONE, Mercy Corps, International Housing Coalition, CARE, and Population Services International, Millennium Water Alliance, Living Water International and Religious Water Working Group.

We are down to the wire and the time to act is now. If the 111th Congress expires without a vote on the House floor, millions of people will have to unnecessarily wait for clean water. And many lives will be unnecessarily lost. While many Americans take water for granted, one-sixth of the world's population, almost a billion people, do not have access to safe drinking water. The Water for the World Act is an important start to addressing this problem. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation before it is too late.