

HONORING MACK STRONG AND
ZOE HIGHEAGLE-STRONG

HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of a husband-and-wife team filled with love, faith, and determination. I'm proud to call them constituents and friends and I'm honored to be able to recognize their efforts on this floor today.

Mack Strong and Zoe Higheagle-Strong will be honored on Saturday evening, September 17 by the Association of Washington Generals as the Washingtonians of the Year. Mack and Zoe earned the honor by founding and leading the TEAM-WORKS Academy, a program that "develops strong minds, strong bodies, and strong character in underserved youth." Founded in 2002 by Mack and Zoe, TEAM-WORKS Academy grew out of many years of dedicated community service and a strong belief in the validity of their vision for the future. I am thankful that Mack, a graduate of the University of Georgia and a longtime fullback of the Seattle Seahawks, put down roots in the community. His selfless and tireless work on behalf of at-risk youth in my District and beyond is an inspiration. And his wonderful wife Zoe, a member of the Nez Perce tribe and the Executive Director of TEAM-WORKS, is an inspiration to us all. The tandem of Mack and Zoe in the Puget Sound region represent an unstoppable force in the betterment of our communities, schools, and families.

It is clear that TEAM-WORKS is having a positive effect on the young people it directly serves. Over and over again, I hear stories and see the results of improved performance in the classroom and on the field of play. Mack, an accomplished athlete, believes that the link between consistent physical activity and school performance in our young people is a strong one. I couldn't agree more. I think the tactics of TEAM-WORKS should be replicated across this Nation. Mack and Zoe are doing remarkable things. Reading and math scores are up. Relationships at home have never been better. TEAM-WORKS is a god-send and Mack and Zoe show no signs of slowing down.

Again, Mr. Speaker, please join me in thanking Mack and Zoe for their efforts and congratulate them on their well deserved honor. They truly represent the best of the State of Washington. In addition, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Association of Washington Generals for recognizing their efforts and providing Mack and Zoe with the kind of official recognition too many of our best community leaders go without.

IN SUPPORT OF THE WORKERS OF
THE UNITED STATES POSTAL
SERVICE

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the 685,000 workers of the United States Postal Service (USPS), who face a

devastating future which may close thousands of post offices, eliminate hundreds of mail processing facilities, lay off 120,000 of their colleagues, cut their pay, and end their collective bargaining rights.

Each day, the USPS processes an average of 584 million pieces of mail and delivers to 146 million addresses. In my home State of California alone, there are a total of 38,000 active and retired letter carriers.

These employees are fixtures within their communities and are some of the most dedicated, hardworking people out there. That is why I have been a strong advocate for letter carriers throughout my career in public service.

The United States Postal Service offers the most affordable postage in the industrialized world, while being able to sustain efficient delivery schedules at no expense to the taxpayer.

Established in 1775, the Postal Service and the thousands of families who depend on it now face an unprecedented crisis.

Since 2006, an unsustainable retiree healthcare system has saddled the USPS with a \$5.5 billion overcharge to be paid in full at the beginning of every year. Based on longterm projections which are routinely called into question, this fund has established an enormous, unused surplus, estimated by the Postal Regulatory Commission and the Inspector General of the Postal Service to be between \$55–75 billion.

No other Federal agency or private business is forced to pre-fund retiree health benefits in this manner. Since it is not funded by taxpayers, this requirement puts the USPS at a distinct competitive disadvantage. Fixing this problem would allow the Postal Service to compete more effectively with the private sector and return to profitability.

Without this mandate, the USPS would have actually been profitable to the tune of \$611 million over the last 4 years, saving its \$15 billion line of credit from the U.S. Treasury to ride out the bad economy. Instead, the entire agency, which has not taken taxpayer funds for 30 years, is facing default. Its line of credit is nearly exhausted.

Mr. Speaker, the real financial struggles at USPS do not stem from the cost of labor, but from the 2006 congressional mandate requiring the USPS to pre-fund future retiree benefits.

Unfortunately, House Republicans are bent on destroying the Postal Service as we know it and using this crisis as an opportunity to weaken collective bargaining rights.

The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee conducted a hearing in April entitled: "Are Postal Workforce Costs Sustainable?" Led by Committee Chairman DARRELL ISSA, this hearing was held to investigate a recent agreement between the USPS and the American Postal Workers Union.

Chairman ISSA's decision to hold a hearing to scrutinize and interfere with the collective bargaining process represents a dangerous precedent that could lead to more GOP interference in labor-management agreements.

In June, Chairman ISSA proposed H.R. 2309, the Postal Reform Act of 2011, which would establish a "solvency authority" with the power to unilaterally cut wages, abolish benefits, and end protection against unfair layoffs. It orders \$1 billion worth of post office closures in the first year and another \$1 billion worth of

facility closures in the second year. It also ends Saturday deliveries.

Mr. Speaker, 6-day delivery is an important service that the USPS provides to the American people and is vital to its long-term sustainability. Ending Saturday deliveries reduces incentive for the American people to send mail through USPS and would lead to more jobs lost and larger reductions in service.

If Saturday delivery ends, it is possible that 80,000 full- and part-time jobs could be eliminated. At a time when we are still recovering from the worst economic recession since the Great Depression, now is not the time to put thousands of jobs in jeopardy.

The USPS estimates that cutting deliveries on Saturday will cut costs by 5 percent, but will slash mail delivery by 17 percent. Clearly the money saved by eliminating Saturday delivery is negligible and does not justify the lapse in efficiency and the loss of jobs that would certainly follow.

Reducing mail delivery service to 5 days a week would cause delays in the delivery of mail and would inevitably lead to increased costs due to the overtime Postal Service workers will be forced to endure in order to handle the backlog of mail. It is also vital for seniors who depend on mail-order prescription drugs and small businesses that need Saturday delivery to meet payroll.

Most importantly, ending Saturday service will remove the Postal Service's key strategic advantage over its competitors and result in a massive loss of revenue for the program.

We can't allow House Republicans to pursue an agenda that threatens the wellbeing of thousands of working families in California and across the Nation. They want to turn back the clock on the progress that has been made over the last century to ensure that American workers have the right to organize and demand fair wages and benefits.

We cannot stand by while thousands of American workers lose their jobs, and House Democrats are putting forth solutions that will take immediate steps to end this crisis without cutting jobs or resorting to taxpayer funded bailouts.

Take for instance H.R. 1351, the United States Postal Service Obligation Recalculation and Restoration Act of 2011, which would realign the Postal Service's retiree health prefunding schedule to a larger time period consistent with what the Postal Service can afford. It would do this by first establishing the exact size of the surplus and then transferring it to the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund where it belongs.

Furthermore, when the Post Office Department became the Postal Service in 1971, employees who belonged to the Federal pension fund started contributing to the new Postal Service. For employees who worked for both the Post Office Department and the Postal Service, the Federal and the postal pension funds shared responsibility. However, the Federal fund paid for retirements based on 1971 salaries, not final salaries. In essence, the Federal fund collected full contributions, but paid only partial benefits. The USPS was shortchanged \$75 billion as a result of this error.

H.R. 1351 takes necessary steps to correct this by altering the methodology used to determine the allocation of costs for retirement benefits between the Federal government and the USPS. By making these changes, Congress

has the ability to significantly help the USPS cover its expected \$238 billion shortfall for the next decade.

Now more than ever we must fight to preserve the legacy of the letter carrier and promote the value of the services that the workers of the United States Postal Service provide to millions of Americans every day.

H.R. 1351 is supported by the National Association of Letter Carriers, the National Association of Postal Supervisors, the American Postal Workers Union, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union. Advocating for working people is very personal and important to me. You see, you are looking at a Member of Congress who had the opportunity to have a mother who was part of a bargaining unit, who was a member of a union.

She had an opportunity to have someone advocate on behalf of not only herself, but her two daughters as well. And because my mother had that support, she was able to send her daughters to good schools, she was able to put braces on our teeth, and she was able to ensure that, yes, that little girl back in Los Angeles, California, would have an opportunity to one day become a Member of Congress.

Now more than ever, postal workers, teachers, firefighters, police officers and all other public employees must stand together to protect their jobs and their families, in California and across America.

Mr. Speaker, the alternative to H.R. 1351 is a violent downgrade of Postal Service operations which would cost tens of thousands of jobs immediately. Between their recent willingness to hold the nation's economy hostage for spending cuts and their attacks on worker's rights in Wisconsin, it appears that House Republicans would risk a total shutdown of the Postal Service if it meant further weakening the rights of public sector unions.

That is why I stand with 192 of my colleagues in our support for the thousands who play an essential role in connecting our people and building our communities. We cannot afford to lose so many jobs and hard-won benefits by failing to act on a common sense fix to an immediate crisis.

TRIBUTE TO MR. MELVIN E.
PIERCE

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of a truly wonderful man, Mr. Melvin E. Pierce, a longtime resident of Semmes, Alabama, who passed away August 19, 2011, at the age of 73.

Mr. Pierce was a husband, father, friend, an entrepreneur and community leader. He wore many hats over his professional career, and is perhaps best known for his successful painting business. He began a career in painting as an apprentice and used his knowledge to later found and develop the Melvin Pierce Painting Company. He subsequently established Melvin Pierce Marine Coatings, Melvin Pierce Sandblasting, Highway Maintenance, Inc., and Dothan, Inc. of Semmes.

His community involvement ranged from president and founding member of "Friends of

Semmes," which pioneered the incorporation of Semmes, to recipient of the 2005 Woodman of the World Outstanding Citizen Award. He was one of the founding members of the Dixie Youth Baseball Program in Semmes. And, in 2003, he was honored with the Award of Gratitude from the Semmes Community Park.

Professionally, he was an active member of the Associated General Contractors (AGC) and the Associated Builders & Contractors. He was a board member of the Mobile Water and Sewer Board, the Abba Shrine Temple, Trade Builder's Association and Woodman of the World. His considerable involvement with contracting gave him the opportunity to play a major role in numerous construction and renovation projects like the Mobile Convention Center and Mobile Government Plaza, the restoration of the historic Alabama Capitol in Montgomery, and the Beau Rivage Resort and Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Melvin Pierce was the epitome of a community-minded businessman and volunteer and his involvement in so many different aspects of South Alabama will be hard to replace. In addition to possessing a charitable heart and an unequalled love of community, he helped found the Christmas parade, Azalea Festival, Easter Egg Hunt and a food pantry in Semmes.

On behalf of the people of South Alabama, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to his wife of 50 years, Evelyn, as well as his surviving children, George, David, Deborah, Jay, Regina and Rebecca, as well as his grandchildren, and his family and friends. You are all in our thoughts and prayers.

HONORING REVEREND CARL
GILLIARD FOR TWENTY-EIGHT
YEARS OF SERVICE

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Reverend Carl Scott Gilliard for twenty-eight years of service to the Savannah, Georgia community. Reverend Gilliard, a native of Savannah, has been diligently working to make Georgia a better place through his leadership, community service and passion. Reverend Gilliard has dedicated his life to helping others and serving his community.

A graduate of Alfred Ely Beach High School and Morris Brown College, he first became active in civic affairs in 1984 when he served as the youth coordinator for the presidential campaign of Reverend Jesse Jackson. After working with Reverend Jackson, Pastor Gilliard began his public affairs talk show, "Tell It Like It Is," which became the number-one rated radio program for ten consecutive years. In 1995, Reverend Gilliard was ordained and served as pastor of the Miracle Christian Life Center for six years until he was appointed President of the Georgia Coastal Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Throughout Reverend Gilliard's years as a community activist, he has led a variety of successful efforts to improve the lives of his fellow citizens, including founding the Chat-ham County Youth Commission, chairing Unity in Our Community, starting the Savannah Out

Marching Against Drugs movement, and organizing prayer vigils throughout Savannah.

Currently, Reverend Gilliard is the Host of "The Urban Journal." In addition, Reverend Gilliard is the CEO of Savannah Feed the Hungry where twice a week he offers a short message of encouragement and prayers to the hundreds who come seeking food at the newly opened Life Center.

I congratulate Reverend Gilliard on his many years of service. He has devoted his life and time to helping others and continues to make invaluable contributions to the city of Savannah and the state of Georgia, and I wish him many more years to come.

CONGRESS NEEDS A FRESH,
BIPARTISAN START

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I submit for the RECORD, a thoughtful, clear and eloquent opinion piece written for The Washington Post by my friend Congressman JOHN DINGELL. As the Dean of the House and one of the hardest working members of this body, Congressman DINGELL has seen many Congresses come and go and has witnessed countless successes and failures. His wisdom and experience is unmatched. Every member of Congress, and those who aspire to be, will benefit from reading this and historians will find this article valuable in understanding the changes that have taken place in Congress throughout the 20th century. It certainly is an important document that will continue to be a source of information about Congress for years to come.

[From the Washington Post, Sept. 9, 2011]

CONGRESS NEEDS A FRESH, BIPARTISAN START
(By John D. Dingell)

I am saddened by what I heard when I was home for the August congressional recess. The American people are fed up with finger-pointing, blame games and infighting by all of us in Washington—the president, Congress and the media.

They are angry and frustrated, and they want Congress to do its constitutional duty. Only 12 percent think we are doing a proper job. It is easy to see why the public is losing confidence in the federal government.

In our debates over the fiscal 2011 spending bill and the debt limit, Congress put off its duties until the eleventh hour in favor of partisan squabbling and stubborn political games. I am ashamed of our performance—of us all, on both sides of the aisle. As a member of Congress who takes pride in this institution and holds its history and procedures in high regard, I am deeply disappointed by the unwillingness of members of all parties to come together for the common good.

Our Founding Fathers intended no parties when they created this institution. And until recently, members took the time to stay in Washington and learn the substance of issues, as well as the rules laid out by our forefathers in the Constitution and by previous generations in Congress. We learned how to draft good, bipartisan bills. Most members of Congress wouldn't remember, and for many Americans this may seem hard to believe, but there was a time not so very long ago when Republicans and Democrats worked well together. We worked long hours, typically five days a week or more for