

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF HARLEM'S TUSKEGEE AIRMAN JOSEPH HERMAN SPOONER

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 2, 2014

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of Tuskegee Airman Joseph Herman Spooner, a life-long resident of the Village of Harlem. As noted by the family: On September 11th, 2014, America surrendered a living legend to the annals of Black American history. Inextricably intertwined to the importance of this day "September 11th" in American history, a Tuskegee Airman at 94 years old, has passed over.

September 11 reminds all of us every year that 'freedom is not free' and the strength of our nation depends on men and women, such as Joe Spooner, a decorated World War II original member of the 99th Fighter Squadron/332 Fighter Group stationed out of Tuskegee, Alabama.

Joseph Spooner was born on October 30th, 1919 to Joseph and Georgianna Spooner. Joseph was hilarious and loved to play jokes on people. He was high spirited and the life of the party. He had 6 children and three generations of grandchildren. He attended PS 179 Elementary School, PS 165 Robert E. Simon, and graduated from Dewitt Clinton High School in which he excelled in academics and athletics. He loved to play and watch sports. In his early years, he played Semi-Pro Basketball on a team called the Columbians.

At the time he was drafted Joseph Spooner was a freshman at The City College of New York. Having played with the likes of Negro Basketball League legend John Issacs and "Pop" Gates of the original Harlem Globetrotters he made his family proud qualifying to pursue a college education during such a racially charged and segregated time period. America in the 1940's, was unforgiving for people of color, it was an impossible dream come true, yet a dream deferred. Joseph Spooner left college, abandoning a basketball scholarship to serve his country.

Joe enlisted into service in 1942, and in 1943 this Black American hero was commissioned for duty with the Tuskegee Airmen. On April 1943, the 99th Fighter Squadron in their P-47 Thunderbolt fighters went into combat bound for North Africa, where it would join the 33rd Fighter Group and its commander, Colonel William W. Momyer. Given little guidance from battle-experienced pilots, the 99th's first combat mission was to attack the small strategic volcanic island of Pantelleria in the Mediterranean Sea to clear the sea lanes for the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943. The air assault on the island began on 30 May 1943. The 99th flew its first combat mission on June 2, 1943. The surrender of the garrison of 11,121 Italians and 78 Germans due to air attack was the first of its kind.

The 99th moved on to Sicily and received a Distinguished Unit Citation for its performance in combat led by Col. Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., Commander of the Tuskegee Airmen 332nd Fighter Group. Though subject to racial discrimination, both at home and abroad, the 996 pilots and more than 15,000 ground personnel who served with the all-black units would be credited with some 15,500 combat sorties and

earn over 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses for their achievements. With over 200 combat missions the Tuskegee Airmen did not lose a single bomber. They did everything in their power to protect and shield the bombers.

As American history has now recognized the heroism and amazing exploits and air battles that took place in the skies over Europe by the 99th Fighter Squadron/332 Fighter Group, Joe as Armorer may have had the most important role by which he was responsible for loading the fighter planes with ammunition. In 2006, I introduced legislation to honor the Tuskegee Airmen with the Congressional Gold Medal. In March of 2007, Tuskegee Airman Joseph Herman Spooner received the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor from President George W. Bush

Great men, like our beloved Tuskegee Airman Joseph Herman Spooner are temporary gifts we have in this world, but their accomplishments and achievements are far remembered and forever lasting. Mr. Speaker, I ask my distinguished colleagues to join me in celebrating the life of Tuskegee Airman Joseph Herman Spooner.

HISTORICAL RECORD OF SENATE AND HOUSE HEARINGS ON FALEOMAVAEGA'S BILL TO PROTECT VOTING RIGHTS OF AMERICAN SAMOA'S ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS AND OVERSEAS VOTERS

HON. ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA

OF AMERICAN SAMOA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 2, 2014

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to include, for historical purposes, information on Senate and House hearings on a bill to protect the voting rights of American Samoa's active duty service members and overseas voters.

[Press Release, July 14, 2004]

SENATE HOLDS HEARING ON FALEOMAVAEGA BILL TO PROTECT VOTING RIGHTS OF ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS AND OVERSEAS VOTERS

Congressman Faleomavaega announced today that the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests held a hearing on H.R. 2010, a bill he introduced to protect the voting rights of active duty service members and overseas voters whose home of residence is American Samoa.

At this time, I want to thank Chairman Larry Craig and Ranking Member Ron Wyden for holding this hearing and for entering the full text of my statement into the record, Congressman Faleomavaega said. I also want to thank Senator Daniel Akaka who is a senior member of both the Energy Committee and the Subcommittee on Public Lands. Senator Akaka was instrumental in getting this hearing held and I thank him for his support and kind words.

At today's hearing, Senator Akaka said, "H.R. 2010 was introduced by my good friend, Eni Faleomavaega, a senior member of the House who couldn't testify himself because of the centennial celebration for the islands of Manua. On this occasion, I'd like to send the people of American Samoa our best wishes as they celebrate the 100th anniversary since the stars and stripes were first raised by their traditional chiefs."

Senator Akaka continued by saying, "I do not have a question, Mr. Chairman, but a comment as someone who is very familiar with the challenges of transportation and communications out in the Pacific. This bill would resolve a long-standing problem in electing the Delegate from American Samoa: How to conduct a run-off election in just 14 days in a territory with a very large number of absentee voters and only two regular flights from the U.S. each week? This bill would provide for election of the Delegate by a plurality vote. Or, if the local government wants, by a majority vote following a primary election. It would resolve a long-standing problem."

Chairman Craig thanked Senator Akaka for his opening comments and I also thank Senator Akaka for being at today's hearing. Although I was invited to testify before the Senate Subcommittee, I thought it was equally important to attend Flag Day celebrations being held in American Samoa to recognize Manua's 100 year relationship with the United States. Congressman Faleomavaega said. This celebration is an historic event and I am pleased to be with the people on this important occasion and, again, I am pleased that Chairman Craig recognized the importance of Flag Day and included my written testimony in the Committee records.

I am also pleased to welcome the MV Sili to Manua. It is most fitting for our new vessel to arrive from Louisiana just in time to commemorate Manua's history and to honor our traditional leaders and chiefs, past and present. The arrival of this vessel has been more than a year in the making and I am grateful to our friends in the House and Senate who supported our efforts to set aside funding for this vessel.

When Republicans in the Senate wanted to cut funding for the Territories from the Tax Act of 2003, Democratic Senator Benjamin Nelson from Nebraska fought hard to help us keep our funding in place. Later, Republican Chairman Bill Thomas of the House Ways and Means Committee sent me a letter saying that he was pleased he could assist me in this effort.

Because we were successful in including the Territories, American Samoa received more than \$10 million from the Tax Act of 2003 and I am grateful that Senator John Breaux of Louisiana and Ranking Member Charles Rangel of the House Committee on Ways and Means stood with me in establishing Congressional intent on how these funds should be spent, Congressman Faleomavaega said.

I am also pleased that Governor Togiola stood with me and agreed that \$5 million should be set aside for the purchase of a new vessel for Manua. I am also thankful that Senator Breaux put us in touch with one of the best shipyards in the world located in Louisiana and then personally made sure that American Samoa was receiving one of the best vessels Louisiana had to offer at a cost of \$4 million. I consider Senator Breaux a good friend and I can say with certainty that he is also a friend of American Samoa.

This year, we have much to be thankful for including this historic legislation which is moving through Congress to protect the voting rights of our active duty service members and our college students and other overseas voters. H.R. 2010 is a bipartisan bill which is supported by Republican Chairman Richard Pombo and Ranking Democratic Member Nick Rahall of the House Committee on Resources, Faleomavaega said.

On May 5, 2004, the House Committee on Resources passed this bill by unanimous consent. On June 14, 2004, a Republican controlled House passed H.R. 2010 without objection. I am pleased that the Senate is now

considering H.R. 2010 and I would like to note for the record that on October 29, 2003 the House Committee on Resources also held a hearing on this bill. On behalf of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Mr. David Cohen, the Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs, was invited to testify but declined citing that this was a local issue.

Locally, H.R. 2010 is supported by the Governor of American Samoa, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, and 85% of those surveyed in American Samoa agree that overseas voters and active duty service members should have the right to vote in federal elections held in the Territory, Faleomavaega said.

Given that Assistant Secretary Cohen accepted today's invitation to testify before the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests, I am pleased that his testimony was supportive. Two weeks ago, when the Senate first informed me that H.R. 2010 would be considered today, I called Mr. Cohen to discuss the bill and determine where the Department of Interior stood on the issue. Assistant Secretary Cohen and I came to an understanding prior to the hearing and I thank him for his support.

While the Assistant Secretary focused his comments on the will of the people, when asked by Chairman Craig how he believed the will of the people should be determined, Mr. Cohen said he believed the Committee should rely on the statements which I included in the Record. As I have said on many occasions, this matter has been before the people and the local leaders of American Samoa for the past six years.

Since 1998, I have written to our Governors, past and present. I have written and testified before our local Legislature and I have also included copies of my testimony, my letters, and local responses in the House and Senate Committee records. These enclosures now on file with the Committees are more than 70 pages in length. Included in the record is Governor Togiola's support of H.R. 2010.

Once more, I want to commend Governor Togiola for supporting this bill as we have always agreed that our military men and women should have the right to vote especially when they contribute almost a million dollars per year in taxes to our local government. I also thank the President of the American Samoa Senate, the Honorable Lutu Tenari S. Fuimaono, and Speaker Matagi Ray McMoore for their support, Faleomavaega said.

H.R. 2010 is an historic bill. It is a bill that immediately restores the voting rights of our overseas voters and active duty military members. It is also a bill that makes clear in no uncertain terms that the American Samoa Legislature is vested with the authority it needs to establish primary elections for the office of the Delegate, if it so chooses.

H.R. 2010 also protects American Samoa's future in the U.S. Congress. Without H.R. 2010, future Delegates could miss out on key committee assignments as a result of delayed outcomes and run-off elections. Like Governor Togiola, I do not believe American Samoa's future should be weakened or disadvantaged and this is one more reason I appreciate his support of H.R. 2010.

Given the importance and urgency of this bill, I thank the members of the House Resources Committee, both Democrats and Republicans, who unanimously voted in favor of this bill. H.R. 2010 is the right thing to do and, as a Vietnam veteran, I will not rest until we fully guarantee that our active duty service members have the right to vote in federal elections held in American Samoa.

To alleviate any concerns that I will personally benefit from this legislation, I offered an amendment in the nature of a sub-

stitute for purposes of changing the effective date of this bill from January 2004 to January 2006. This amendment was unanimously supported at mark-up by the House Resources Committee and, as such, any change in law will not go into effect until the 2006 election cycle, Faleomavaega said.

As I have repeatedly stated, H.R. 2010 in no way affects how the American Samoa Government chooses to elect its local leaders and, having made every change requested of me by our local leaders and after years of good-faith efforts on my part, I believe the time has come to do right by our overseas voters and men and women in the military. Our sons and daughters have fought and died to preserve our freedoms and I will do everything I can to protect their right to vote.

Again, I thank the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests for holding this historic hearing on H.R. 2010 and I am hopeful that they will support its successful passage. In a dramatic moment before the hearing came to a close, Senator Akaka said, "As a person from the Pacific, I want to make a final comment about H.R. 2010."

Chairman Craig granted the Senators request and Senator Akaka said, "As you know, Mr. Cohen, H.R. 2010 will resolve a long standing problem made worse by the current conflict in the Middle East where many American Samoans are now serving. Those Americans are fighting for democracy and I speak out in support of this bill. Mr. Chairman, I believe we should act quickly to pass this bill so that those men and women will have the opportunity to vote to help select their representative to the U.S. House of Representatives."

Like Senator Akaka, I also believe the Senate should act on this bill and I thank my dear friend Senator Akaka for standing with the people of American Samoa on this important issue. I also thank our men and women from American Samoa who are serving on active duty at a time when our nation is at war. I wish them the very best and I pray for their safe return, the Congressman concluded.

[Press Release, Oct. 31, 2003]

RESOURCES COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON ELECTION BILL, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR TESTIFIES

Congressman Faleomavaega announced today that on Wednesday October 29, 2003 the House Committee on Resources held a hearing on H.R. 2010, a bill he introduced to protect the voting rights of military men and women whose home of record is American Samoa.

Governor Togiola asked the Lieutenant Governor to testify in support of the bill and I am pleased by the outcome, Congressman Faleomavaega. At this time, we are in full agreement that H.R. 2010 is the right thing to do. Like 85% of those surveyed in American Samoa, we believe that our active duty service members should be afforded the same rights and privileges as every other man and woman serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. Our service members and college students deserve the right to vote and we believe it is our duty to protect their rights.

I am also pleased that Senator Fuimaono, President of the Senate, has also agreed to support our efforts. On October 27, 2003, he sent me a letter stating his full support for H.R. 2010 and wishing Chairman Pombo the best of luck in moving the bill forward.

In a statement submitted to the Committee, Governor Togiola stated that although I had previously expressed misgivings about the bill, after further review, I have come to support the measure for the following reasons: 1) The bill in its current

form provides that when American Samoa devises a system for primary elections for election of our Congressman, the U.S. Congress will amend the section to restore the election of the Congressman by majority vote. 2) Currently there is no other way to maximize the participation of American Samoan residents serving in the U.S. Armed Forces and those attending college, as well as their families, to fully participate in the election of our Congressional Delegate.

As I have said before, H.R. 2010 is a good compromise and includes the suggestions of our local leaders. H.R. 2010 provides for both plurality and majority voting. It also clearly authorizes the Fono to establish primary elections, if it so chooses, Congressman Faleomavaega said.

I am pleased that the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and the President of the Senate are now fully supportive of this bill. I thank them for their support and I also thank Chairman Pombo and Ranking Member Nick Rahall of the House Resources Committee for holding a hearing on this bill.

Finally, I want to thank our college students and our men and women serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. We are living in difficult times and we must work together to make a difference for generations to come, the Congressman concluded.

HONORING MRS. DEBORAH MOORE

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 2, 2014

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable Unsung Hero in Cleveland, Mississippi.

Deborah Moore is the Associate Vice President of Community Relations at Delta Health Alliance. Mrs. Moore is assigned to the Indianola Promise Community where she provides administrative oversight and technical assistance to the community and organizations. Mrs. Moore worked one year as Project Manager IV at Delta Health Alliance before being promoted to Assistant Vice President and then to Associate Vice President.

Mrs. Moore is a retiree from the state of Mississippi where she served 27 years in community and economic development. She spent the last 12 years of her career before coming to Delta Health Alliance at Delta State University's Center for Community and Economic Development in Cleveland, MS where she served as AmeriCorps director for two programs and then as director of the Center for Community and Economic Development the last five years. In her role as director of the Center for Community and Economic Development she assisted grass-root communities by empowering individuals, strengthening relationships and developing projects and programs to strengthen communities. Moore has extensive work with proposal writing having secured grants in excess of \$15,000,000.00.

Mrs. Moore is a member of several nonprofit boards, the Mississippi Center for Nonprofits, Cleveland Youth Council and Friends of the Environment. She currently serves as chair of the board for the Delta Fresh Foods Initiative. Moore serves in an advisory capacity for the Breast Education-Early Detection Project and the School-based Asthma Management Project at Delta State University. She also