

We in this Congress need to follow our constitutional responsibility and never send our young men and women to war unless we debate it and we declare war on the floor of the House.

HONORING THE LIFE OF ARTIST THORNTON DIAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor one of America's most prolific and self-taught artists, Mr. Thornton Dial of Bessemer, Alabama.

Today at the age of 86, Thornton Dial has lived, worked, and created art in Alabama for his entire life. From childhood, Dial was creating symbolically dense pieces of art by using castaway objects, anything he could find in his environment: pieces of wire, scrap metal, bones, tree roots. He used his environment to define his environment.

Dial's work provides a forceful and compelling narrative of the most insidious challenges and remarkable triumphs of African American history in the Deep South. His work contains layers of rich history and reflects on race and class struggles that he witnessed in the Deep South.

Dial rose to prominence in the 1990s while in his sixties through his large-scale assemblages, paintings that were made of scrap metal, pipes, very interesting visual interpretation of the history and politics that he saw around him.

Dial is described as having been one of the most amazing art biographies in art history. He is described as being a very quiet man, a listener who dressed impeccably. What he lacked in terms of formal education he more than made up for in his highly visual and historic vocabulary.

Dial's created brilliance is truly illuminating and inspiring. Dial has stayed in Alabama in the heart of the Seventh Congressional District to live and work his entire life. He was born in 1928 in Sumter County, Alabama. He was one of 12 children. And in childhood, he built his own toys because, as he said: We didn't have much.

Thornton began full-time farming at the age of 5. In his early teens, he was sent to live with his aunt in Bessemer, Alabama, where he attended Sloss Mining Camp. His peers made fun of him for his large size and for being "country." His teachers told him that he would never amount to much.

I want you to know that we in the Seventh Congressional District are extremely proud of Thornton Dial because we know that he really interpreted what he saw around him in the Deep South. He interpreted it in a very creative way, and only now is he gaining such preeminence for that form of art.

Dial never really made a living as an artist. He worked for over 30 years at

the Pullman Standard factory. Yes, he made boxcars for a living.

"People have fought for freedom all over the world," he said. "I try to show that struggle. It is a war to be fought. We are trying to win it."

In his time off from the Pullman factory, Dial would escape to his garage or backyard and create masterpieces out of whatever he could find. Out of fear that people would laugh at his art, he would bury his work. Later, he would dig it up and deconstruct it and reuse materials for new masterpieces.

Dial began to dedicate himself to his artwork in 1981. He founded Dial Metal Patterns, a garden furniture business, with his sons in 1983, after the Pullman Factory closed.

Dial's handmade designs were discovered by Lonnie Holley, a neighboring Black artist, in 1987. Holley brought Bill Arnett, an artist himself and a collector of African American art, from Atlanta to see Dial's work. Arnett helped him to get national attention about his art. The two finally, working together, agreed on a price for his first sculpture.

Initially, Dial offered Arnett the piece for \$20, and Arnett refused the low price. He said to Mr. Dial that this piece deserves more than \$20. They agreed on \$200. This was the first transaction that Mr. Dial had as an artist.

Dial's work has been the subject of exhibitions across this country. At the New Museum of contemporary art and the American Folk Art Museum in New York. His work can be found in more than 15 public collections, including those of, among others, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Many, many people now collect his art. An art form that was considered outside art now is considered world-class art. With no formal training and education, Dial's powerful artwork stands out in the world of highly degreed artists.

Dial continues to create art today, and this weekend he will be honored by his hometown of Bessemer, Alabama. He will be honored as a great American hero and a great American artist.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this great, wonderful Alabama treasure, Thornton Dial.

VA SCANDAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring awareness to the outrageous, the almost unimaginable findings from the ongoing VA inspector general's review of the Phoenix Health Care System and now some two dozen other facilities.

The stated VHA goal is a 14-day wait for a first-time primary care appointment—14 days, 2 weeks. It is a little much for some, but it seems appropriate, reasonable for many. That is their goal. Whether I agree with it or not, that is their goal.

However, I am going to read from the executive summary of the inspector general's allegations:

"Allegations at the Phoenix HCS include gross mismanagement of VA resources and criminal misconduct by VA senior hospital leadership, creating systemic patient safety issues and possible wrongful deaths. While our work is not complete, we have substantiated that significant delays in access to care negatively impacted the quality of care at this medical facility."

Mr. Speaker, that is breathtaking. That is breathtaking. This is our Federal Government.

Falsified data reported last year by Phoenix HCS showed veterans waited, on average, 24 days for their first primary care appointment. Falsified data said that they waited an average of 24 days; however, the recent IG report found that veterans actually waited, on average, 115 days for their first primary care appointment, with approximately 84 percent of those waiting more than 14 days, which was the stated goal.

Mr. Speaker, 115 days for their first appointment. That is the appointment where you go talk to the doctor and you tell him what is wrong or what you think is wrong and he starts making an assessment. That is not treatment. That is just an appointment with the doctor. Mr. Speaker, 115 days.

To put it another way, VA management at Phoenix HCS met 16 percent of its wait time goal, and those folks still received bonuses for that action. The folks that do the work got a bonus for meeting 16 percent of their goal.

When people say to you, as a Representative, there are things wrong with the Federal Government, Mr. Speaker, this is what is wrong with the Federal Government. Even after cooking the books, the stated goal of an average 14-day wait time was not met. Even after that.

Now, I was proud to vote for Chairman MILLER's VA Accountability Act last week, but it is a shame—I don't know what it is—that it takes an act of Congress to fire somebody in the Federal Government. If you are the Secretary and you find somebody that has done something wrong—and in these cases, potentially criminal—and you can't fire them, what is going on here?

Now, this is not a new circumstance. We have actually known about it for years. Republicans—and I have been here a year and a half—and, I imagine, Democrats have been complaining for years about this because they see it in their districts. But nothing has been done. And some will say, well, Congress hasn't appropriated the right money. Three times the amount of money since 2001 has gone to the VA for care—for care. Three times it has been increased.

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Mr. Speaker, where the President says he has got a pen and a phone, I beseech you—I beseech him to call up a

veteran in this circumstance. Use the phone. Use your pen for an executive order and fix this. It is not the words, Mr. President—we are all frustrated, and we are all infuriated by this—but it is actions. These are members of the military, men and women who have served, men and women of action. Words are cheap, Mr. Speaker. It is actions that we require.

JFK said in one of his speeches that a nation is revealed by whom it honors. What is revealed by what is happening now, what has been happening, and what hasn't been happening?

Now, just to kind of show where our priorities are, let's talk about what you can get with an access card. This gentleman I am reading about bought a swordfish steak at \$18.99 a pound or went to the gourmet coffee section and ground up some roasted fresh beans. I guess it is okay to buy your Halloween candy with an access card. We can provide an access card for that, but we can't find a way to provide for the veterans who took an oath?

Mr. Speaker, they said:

I will defend this country, I will lay my life down, and I won't question. Mine is not to ask why, mine is to do or die.

Our side of the deal is that we pay, we equip you, and prepare you to fight and win, and after you come home all busted up and changed, we will take care of you.

Oh, that is what we say, but apparently that is not what we do. We can find a way to pay for these things, but not for that obligation.

Mr. Speaker, resignation is fine. But that is not going to fix it. We request the administration to take action and fix it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

CONSTITUENTS FACING DEPORTATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIÉRREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, like a lot of Americans, I spent time traveling this past holiday weekend, but I never made it to the beach. Instead, I did what I do on a lot of weekends, which is travel the country building support for comprehensive immigration reform.

I attended immigration events in Orange County and Riverside County in California, and, yesterday, I was in Richmond, Virginia, in the majority leader's backyard, listening to his constituents plead for congressional action.

One young lady told her story perfectly in two languages. She came to the United States when she was 6. Now she has deferred action and temporary protection from deportation but wants a permanent solution for herself and her U.S. citizen sister. Another woman, a mom of two U.S. citizen children, wore a GPS anklet bracelet to the

event and asked me how I could help her keep her family together. She has an order of deportation for June 6.

They were pleading with the majority leader—who holds the key to the schedule and the calendar in the House—to please schedule a vote, just a simple vote on immigration reform. So far, he has refused to allow a vote.

The stories from his constituents were heartbreaking: moms whose only wish is to remain here and raise their U.S. children and not fear a deportation date or a knock on the door at dawn. Children want their moms and dads to be here to see them achieve the American Dream.

But I have to say that I had a heavy heart even before I arrived at the State capitol building in Richmond, Virginia, yesterday. The night before, I received a call letting me know that the White House intended to announce yesterday that it wasn't going to take action on Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson's review of deportation policies.

Therefore, for the next several months, the deportations will continue at a rate of 1,100 a day. Moms with U.S. citizen children, women with 25 years in this country and who have committed no crimes will get no relief in the short run.

I have talked extensively with Secretary Johnson and had no illusions that a major policy announcement was in the works. Rather there are, I think, some enforcement adjustments that can be made now that would spare thousands from counterproductive deportations that are doing more harm than good to our Nation.

I am deeply disappointed that the President chose to delay any action, and I know that many of us who have been fighting against the deportations that needlessly break up families and leave communities living in fear are also disappointed.

And as I heard the stories of the constituents of the majority leader who are facing their own deportation or deportation of a loved one, I realized that it would be harder to save them in the coming weeks and months without some kind of policy adjustments revealed by the Secretary's review.

While the Republican majority decides whether or not they will act on immigration reform and solve an important American problem, thousands more will be deported.

But I also understand what the President is trying to do. He is saying that he still has hope that the Republicans are not just playing games with immigration policy. He believes, as I do, that Republicans still could use the last 14 legislative days before July 4 to make a real difference in the lives of moms and kids that I met yesterday in Richmond, Virginia.

The excuse that House Republicans can't trust President Obama to enforce the law and therefore they will not pass immigration reform, that excuse no longer holds water, if it ever did.

Yesterday, President Obama expended a great deal of political capital to give House Republicans time and space to come up with an immigration solution. It was a grand gesture on the part of the President. I know that I and a lot of my Democratic colleagues are not happy, and many in organized labor and in the pro-immigrant movement that have fought hard for policies to dial back the deportations are very, very saddened. It is not easy for a President to so fully and boldly stand up against his base, against those of us who have voted for him, loved him, and protected him, but he did it so that House Republicans could use the following weeks to take action on immigration reforms, House Republicans who have shown him nothing but disdain.

In reality, for those families facing deportation and losing their children who live in the majority leader's district, they know that both the majority leader and the President have the power to help keep them in the United States and protected with their children.

The majority leader can schedule a vote, and the President can use his pen and his phone to spare these families from what amounts to a life sentence. And of one thing I am confident: if the majority leader fails to act, the President will, and he will do so boldly.

To my House Republican colleagues, I say, please act. The country will thank you. The children and the moms that live in your districts and fear deportations will thank you, and your voters will thank you. You have 14 days to work this out.

RECOGNIZING RODNEY A. ERICKSON, PRESIDENT OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Rodney A. Erickson, retiring president of the Pennsylvania State University.

After 37 years at Penn State as an academic and administrator, Rodney Erickson selflessly took the role of president of the university during a troubled time. We thank him for his service, his dedication, and, most of all, his tremendous vision and leadership.

Rodney Erickson became a faculty member at Penn State in the last 1980s, and over the years, he held roles from assistant professor to dean to vice president for research, to provost and president.

At each level of service to the university, he sought new ways of teaching, better forums for learning, and innovative approaches to streamline bureaucracy and keep the university and its individual departments on the cutting edge. At every stage, he has been an inspirational leader to those around him.