

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JIMMY PANETTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Speaker, I regret that I could not be present for the vote on H.R. 3012—North Korean Human Rights Reauthorization Act of 2023. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 474.

GERRYMANDERING

HON. ALMA S. ADAMS

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Ms. ADAMS. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Census seeks to count every American, every ten years. They do this so that every American may be equally represented and heard in this chamber by one of us. Friends, colleagues, Democrats, and Republicans, I submit this statement tonight, because nearly 250 years after our founding, the people of North Carolina are still not being fairly heard on this floor.

Before the first US Census count was conducted in 1790, North Carolina lawmakers, who looked nothing like me to say the least, joined with other representatives from southern states in advocating that African-American slaves be counted as “three-fifths” of a resident. More residents meant more congressional power. So they wanted our ancestors to count—but they denied them the vote. They wanted our bodies, but not our voices.

The echoes of that anti-democratic sentiment live today through gerrymandering. The effects of it are felt by all North Carolina voters and indeed, most voters around the country. The people of Alabama, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, Texas, and Florida are not being fairly heard on this floor.

To this day, the practice of gerrymandering drags the feet of our democracy, back to the early days of our nation when most of our citizens did not have a voice. The New Majority is built on it, but both parties are complicit in it. I am standing on this tonight, because I won't stand for it anymore.

Gerrymandering does more than sand the gears of our democracy. It harms our ability to govern. We can count people a lot faster than we could in 1790, but there's a reason the Census is only done every ten years. The long stability period gives us time to get to know our constituents, their needs, and the needs of the land, businesses, and organizations therein. It's why it's important that these districts represent cohesive communities. But that stability in governance has not been the case for my constituents, or for most in North Carolina.

The Republican Majority in the North Carolina General Assembly engaged in political pornography to stack congressional districts in their favor, locking 10 of our 14 congressional districts into Republican control in a state that voted 50–50 for the US House.

Over the past ten years of my service, this district has undergone changes in 2016, 2020, 2022, and now here in 2024. My first district looked something like a potted plant, growing along I-85 from Charlotte to Greensboro. If I knew then my district would evolve four more

times, I might have traded my house for an RV. Starting in January I'll have served the fifth configuration of my district in ten years. Most of you in this chamber who've served as long as I have, have served just two in that same time period.

Think about what serving five different districts does to our efforts at governance. Every year I give a State of the District speech, and I'm either saying goodbye or introducing myself to half my constituents. Many are surprised to hear from me.

Frequently redrawn districts mean weakened and less effective governance. Constituents need a representative in Congress often for basic help with federal services, like their Social Security checks, unemployment insurance, Veterans benefits, passport services, etc. Constantly scrambling relationships between offices and constituents hurts this process, and hurts our constituents. Worse, it undermines the basic faith Americans have in democracy.

The problem is especially bad in Charlotte, one of the Nation's fastest-growing cities, where many inhabitants relocated from elsewhere and feel especially disengaged with local politics. As hospitable southerners, our state leaders should take responsibility for changing this. Unfortunately, perpetuating it is more in line with our history.

State-level lawmakers are egged on by their counterparts and former colleagues here in Washington. They think they are here to deliver for a party agenda, but let me tell you, we are not here to govern for ourselves or for a party. We're here to govern for the people. America has never been about those in power, but about the work to make a more perfect union.

And there are answers.

While it took nearly 200 years, the sons and daughters of former slaves did eventually realize their right to help choose the representatives who walk these halls tonight. As the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

Legal standards for fairly drawn districts are not rocket science. The process worked—in Michigan, in Pennsylvania, and even, for a brief time, in North Carolina. National standards would be imperfect, but far greater than the status quo. They would ensure that the 330 million Americans we counted in 2020 are divided into 435 equally numbered, fairly and transparently drawn, more competitive districts that are representative of real communities. They would give us as representatives time to get to know our constituents, and maybe even solve a few more of their problems, too.

While North Carolina Republicans have chosen party power over the cultivation of democracy, cynicism over faith in the people, and their newfound fears over whatever once inspired them to public service, the people will win in the end.

Democracy will always have the last word.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I was absent from votes on November 20 and 21, 2024.

Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 474; YEA on Roll Call No. 475; YEA on Roll Call No. 476; NAY on Roll Call No. 477; and YEA on Roll Call No. 478.

CONGRATULATING OFFICER
CHUONG VO OF THE CITY OF
TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA FOR HIS
RETIREMENT AND YEARS OF
SERVICE**HON. MICHELLE STEEL**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mrs. STEEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my sincerest congratulations to retiring police Officer Chuong Vo.

Officer Vo has served as a law enforcement officer for 28 years, proudly defending his community and uplifting his neighbors.

Officer Vo's career has been defined by a legacy of honor, hard work, and love of his community. I'm sure he will be greatly missed by the department.

In addition to his time in law enforcement, Officer Vo has also served on the Cerritos City Council, the Cerritos Community Safety Committee, as well as Mayor Pro Tem and the Mayor of Cerritos.

I congratulate Officer Vo and I sincerely hope he enjoys the next chapter in his retirement.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RICHARD McCORMICK

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mr. McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, after giving prior notice to House leadership, I was not present for floor votes on November 20, 2024 while attending to a personal matter.

Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 474; YEA on Roll Call No. 475; and YEA on Roll Call No. 476.

HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF
MS. MILLISA GARY**HON. ABIGAIL DAVIS SPANBERGER**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Ms. SPANBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ms. Millisa Gary for her leadership and countless contributions over the course of her career in service of the American people.

Ms. Gary started her career in public service in 1973 when, as a junior in high school, she accepted a position at the U.S. Department of Defense as an accounting assistant. She later earned a Bachelor of Science from George Mason University and a Master of Business Administration from Averett University. Throughout the last 50 years, Ms. Gary has been a true asset within the federal workforce—providing leadership, guidance, and friendship to all who had the privilege of working with her.

Since Ms. Gary began her distinguished career in federal service more than five decades ago, she has served at numerous agencies including the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Congress through her role on the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship. She currently serves as the U.S. General Services Administration's AbilityOne Program Executive where she provides valuable oversight and expertise.

Ms. Gary has demonstrated expectational leadership. In her current role, she helped expand employment opportunities for Americans who are blind or disabled. By partnering with more than 600 nonprofit agencies, she created pathways to meaningful employment, thereby transforming lives and reinforcing the federal government's commitment to inclusivity.

Today, I congratulate Ms. Gary on her contributions, which will have a lasting impact on the federal workforce. Her exceptional career set a standard of excellence and innovation that will help inspire her colleagues and future leaders.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and our colleagues join me in honoring the retirement of Ms. Gary. I wish her the best as she retires after more than 50 years of public service.

CELEBRATING GENESIS OF ANN
ARBOR ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THEIR FOUNDING

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding

of Genesis of Ann Arbor in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Housing both a Jewish and a Episcopal congregation, Genesis of Ann Arbor exemplifies interfaith understanding, cooperation, and friendship. For the past five decades, Genesis has been a beacon of hope, tolerance, and community in southeast Michigan.

In 1969, Temple Beth Emeth moved into the building housing St. Clare's Episcopal Church. While their relationship was always harmonious, by 1974, the members of Temple Beth Emeth felt that their congregation had grown large enough to warrant its own synagogue. St. Clare's Reverend, Doug Evett, offered to Temple Beth Emeth's Rabbi, Bruce Warshal, that the two congregations become one legal entity. The offer was accepted, and Genesis of Ann Arbor was founded in 1975.

From the time that the two congregations began their relationship, Genesis of Ann Arbor was a ray of light during the tumultuous 1960's and 1970's. The congregations continued to grow, and Temple Beth Emeth is now the largest Jewish congregation in Washtenaw County, Michigan. These congregations were, and still are, a reminder that whatever their differences may be, two communities can come together around an understanding of shared principles. This includes an annual pulpit exchange between the two congregations' clergy as well as a joint Thanksgiving service. Every year over Thanksgiving, they jointly host the Rotating Shelter, which provides a weeklong overnight shelter for men experiencing homelessness. A local non-profit food bank, Food Gatherers, has hosted its Back Door Food Pantry there for several years, where members of both the church and the synagogue donate to and volunteer at the food pantry.

Since its founding, Genesis of Ann Arbor has shown that the joining of two congrega-

tions can reinforce common values while maintaining distinct religious traditions. Over the decades, the members of Genesis have fought for a wide range of goals rooted in those values, from advancing racial justice to combating the climate crisis. Their commitment to the environment is proven by only using renewable energy to power the building by the large solar panel array they had installed on their roof as well as switching from gas heat to geothermal heating and cooling. Two years ago, the congregations organized their first annual Ann Arbor Climate Teach-In at Genesis. The event served as an opportunity to draw environmental advocates together to discuss important climate issues, and I have sincerely enjoyed participating both years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of Genesis of Ann Arbor. Its members represent the spirit of America, serving their community and promoting peace, and understanding, all while worshipping in their own way. We wish them the best in the years to come.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KATIE PORTER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to be present to cast my vote on Roll Call No. 465 on November 15, 2024. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA.