

NEW YORK ACADEMY OF
SCIENCES AWARD CEREMONY**HON. DONALD M. PAYNE**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, in August 2006, I visited Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam in Kaliti prison in Ethiopia. Though it was sad- dening to see him in that kind of a situation, I was nevertheless thrilled to have had the opportunity to pay my respect to a man I have known for over a decade. Professor Mesfin is one of the most dedicated and true champions of human rights. He chose to dedicate his life to studying famine and food security, writing about and promoting human rights and bringing to light issues often ignored and forgotten by many.

I first met Professor Mesfin in the early 1990s, shortly after he founded the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), the most effective human rights organization in Ethiopia. I was with several Members of Congress on an official visit to Ethiopia. We decided to go to EHRCO's office and hold our meeting with Professor Mesfin in order to show our support for EHRCO and to underscore the significance of their valuable work. It was a memorable meeting and the opportunity to learn of their monumental undertaking was very valuable.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time Mesfin is in prison. He has paid dearly over the decades for standing up for what he believes in and for exposing systematic abuses and sometimes neglect as the case may be over a period of several decades. What is amazing about this incredible human being is his sharpness and focus even in prison. This is a dedicated human being who chose to stay in his native Ethiopia to stand up for, and educate the helpless and the neglected, even though he had plenty of opportunity and offers to live comfortably elsewhere.

In April 2006, his three children wrote about their father stating: "Many months have passed since Mesfin Wolde Mariam, the father of all three of us, and grandfather of Semra Kristos, Kokeb, Tinsae and Oscar has been incarcerated. We miss him terribly and would love to see him home. No less important is our utmost respect, concern and commitment for the principles he has so staunchly promoted for longer than anyone of us has been around."

I was thrilled to learn that the New York Academy of Sciences decided to recognize Professor Mesfin for "his leadership in advocating for the disadvantage and in promoting human rights, civil society, and a peaceful transition to democracy." Professor Mesfin deserves this recognition and I thank the New York Academy of Science for its leadership and efforts.

INTRODUCTION OF THE
CONTRACTOR ACCOUNTABILITY
ACT OF 2006**HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce legislation that will fortify the current Fed-

eral debarment system. The United States is the largest consumer in the world and invests over \$215 billion in goods and services annually.

Yet the Federal government's watchdogs, the Federal suspension and debarment officials, currently lack the information they need to protect our business interests. We have no central way of accounting for the performance of our purchases. Beyond a listing of currently debarred or suspended persons, officials are limited to their individual agency's knowledge of an entity's track record, press reports and personal contacts with other agencies. The American public's knowledge is limited even further. Often times this allows Federal contractors and assistance recipients to repeatedly violate Federal law yet still receive millions of dollars from the Federal government. In a time when corporate accounting scandals are being revealed at an unprecedented pace, isn't it wise to have a full accounting of the Federal government's investments?

The Contractors Accountability Act of 2006 establishes a centralized database on actions taken against federal contractors and assistance participants, requiring a description of each of these actions. This will provide debar- ring officials with the information they need to protect the business interests of the United States. It places the burden of proving responsibility and subsequent eligibility for contracts or assistance on the person seeking contracts or assistance should they have been previously convicted of two exact or similar viola- tions that constitutes a charge for debarment. Additionally, it improves/clarifies the role of the Interagency Committee on Debarments and Suspension and provides for retention by the prosecuting Federal agency of fines paid by offender for reimbursement of costs associ- ated with suspension and debarment activities.

IN TRIBUTE TO DOROTHY ANN
WILLIS RICHARDS, CIVIC LEADER**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the life of Dorothy Ann Willis Richards, known to us all as Ann Richards, and her lifelong commitment to equal rights, education and full participation of all people in the political process. Ann Richards lost her battle to esophageal cancer, at the age of 73, on September 13, 2006 at her home in Austin, Texas—she was only diagnosed with cancer in March of this year. Following her diagnosis she underwent chemotherapy treatments and was poised to fight her illness with vigor and tenacity just as she fought her personal demons and political opponents.

Ann Richards had a zest for life that was evident and infectious. She made those of us fortunate enough to have known her, smile just at the mention of her name. She was a wonderful public speaker and found ways to intimately connect with real people by tackling difficult issues that affected their everyday lives such as the relegation of women to the home and the exclusion of minorities in the political process.

Ann was tremendously tenacious but pos- sessed a quick wit. She was well known for

her zingy one liners and warm sense of humor. She once said, "I learned early on that people liked you if you made them laugh," and throughout her lifetime she kept the jokes coming.

Born in Lakeview (now Lacy Lakeview) Texas in 1933, Ann was first introduced to poli- tics after joining the debate team and partici- pating in Girls State—a program where high school students are invited to the capitol to participate in a mock government. However, before entering politics in 1976, she earned her teaching certificate and taught social stud- ies and history at Fulmore Junior High School. This was her life's passion. She once said that teaching was the hardest work she ever did and her commitment to educating youth did not dissipate with age.

Committed to issues of equity and inclusion, Ann spent much of her life championing causes related to the marginalization of women and minorities in particular. She dedi- cated herself to increasing the role of women in politics. Ann organized training sessions throughout Texas designed to empower women in politics and succeeded in improving the visibility of women in the National Demo- cratic Party. Leading by example, she em- barked upon her own political career in 1976 when she ran against and unseated a three term incumbent to become Travis County Commissioner. She would serve in this capac- ity for four years before being elected State Treasurer in 1982, becoming the first woman to hold an office at the State level since Mir- iam "Ma" Ferguson in the 1920s. Ann became the Governor of Texas in 1991 and continued to champion the inclusion of all people in the political process.

While in office, Ann oversaw a program of economic revitalization that grew the state's economy. As governor, Ann appointed Zan W. Holmes Jr., the first African American ap- pointed to the University of Texas Board of Regents; she redirected revenue from the state lottery to a school fund to support public education; and launched the Robin Hood plan, an attempt to equalize funding across school districts. Through these measures, Ann was successful in changing the ways that both Texas and our country thought about and treated women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and members of the Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, and Bisexual communities. Ann once remarked that she entered politics to help those who were often ignored by the Texas' male dominated establishment.

After losing the gubernatorial race to George W. Bush in 1995, Ann served in var- ious capacities. She worked as a political strategist and labored on many democratic campaigns, often campaigning on behalf of candidates like Howard Dean. She continued to teach, introducing courses such as Women and Leadership at the University of Texas; worked diligently to establish the Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders, which will open its doors next year; and lived as an ex- ample for all those battling substance abuse. These are but a few pieces of Ann's selfless contributions and they will never be forgotten.

We all mourn the loss of Dorothy Ann Willis Richards. Her words and her deeds, much like her striking silver hair, will long be remem- bered. Although she was a wonderful cook, she held that title contrary to the prevailing image of the quintessential woman, at the time, she did not want to be known for having