

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

kept a clean home rather she wanted to be remembered for having helped others.

My friend, your wish has been granted. Through your words and deeds you have left an indelible mark on both the great state of Texas and on our Nation.

[From the New York Times,
September 14, 2006]

FORMER TEXAS GOV. ANN RICHARDS DIES
(By The Associated Press)

AUSTIN, TEXAS (AP)—Former Gov. Ann Richards, the witty and flamboyant Democrat who went from homemaker to national political celebrity, died Wednesday night after a battle with cancer, a family spokeswoman said. She was 73.

She died at home surrounded by her family, the spokeswoman said. Richards was found to have esophageal cancer in March and underwent chemotherapy treatments.

The silver-haired, silver-tongued Richards said she entered politics to help others—especially women and minorities who were often ignored by Texas' male-dominated establishment.

"I did not want my tombstone to read, 'She kept a really clean house.' I think I'd like them to remember me by saying, 'She opened government to everyone,'" Richards said shortly before leaving office in January 1995.

Whether or not she succeeded at that, there was no question she cracked open the door.

Her single term as governor had ended in a 1994 defeat to George W. Bush, who went from besting his father's silver-haired critic to the governor's office to the presidency.

"Texas has lost one of its great daughters," President Bush said in a statement after learning of Richards' death.

Two years before she was elected governor of Texas, Ann Richards electrified the 1988 Democratic National Convention with a keynote speech in which she joked that the Republican presidential nominee, George H.W. Bush, had been "born with a silver foot in his mouth."

A longtime champion of women and minorities in government who was serving at the time as Texas state treasurer, she won cheers when she reminded delegates that Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did, "only backwards and in high heels."

As governor, Richards appointed the first black University of Texas regent, the first crime victim on the state Criminal Justice Board, the first disabled person on the human services board and the first teacher to lead the State Board of Education. Under Richards, the fabled Texas Rangers pinned stars on their first black and female officers.

Ron Kirk, the black former mayor of Dallas, said Richards helped him get his first political internship during a state constitutional convention in 1974 and later, as governor, made him secretary of state.

"She set the table so somebody like me could become mayor of Dallas," Kirk said.

She also polished Texas' image, courted movie producers, campaigned for the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico, oversaw a doubling of the state prison system and presided over rising student achievement scores and plunging dropout rates.

Throughout her years in office, her popularity remained high. One poll put it at over 60 percent the year she lost her re-election bid to Bush.

Republican Texas Gov. Rick Perry described Richards as "the epitome of Texas politics: a figure larger than life who had a gift for captivating the public with her great wit."

"Ann loved Texas, and Texans loved her," President Bush said. "As a public servant,

she earned respect and admiration. Ann became a national role model, and her charm, wit and candor brought a refreshing vitality to public life."

U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, said Richards never lost her zest for life.

"I wrote her a note when I heard about her cancer and she wrote me back a wonderful letter. She was upbeat and positive and I think she was going to go out with guns blazing," Hutchison said Wednesday night.

Richards was diagnosed with cancer in March and underwent chemotherapy treatments.

Her four adult children spent the day with her before she died Wednesday night at her home in Austin, said Cathy Bonner, a longtime family friend and family spokeswoman.

Born in Lakeview, Texas, in 1933, Richards grew up near Waco, married civil rights lawyer David Richards and spent her early adulthood volunteering in campaigns and raising four children. She often said the hardest job she ever had was as a public school teacher at Fulmore Junior High School in Austin.

In the early 1960s, she helped form the North Dallas Democratic Women, "basically to allow us to have something substantive to do; the regular Democratic Party and its organization was run by men who looked on women as little more than machine parts."

Richards served on the Travis County Commissioners Court in Austin for six years before jumping to a bigger arena in 1982 when her election as state treasurer made her the first woman elected statewide in nearly 50 years.

But politics took a toll. It cost her a marriage and forced her in 1980 to seek treatment for alcoholism.

"I had seen the very bottom of life," she once recalled. "I was so afraid I wouldn't be funny anymore. I just knew that I would lose my zany and my sense of humor. But I didn't. Recovery turned out to be a wonderful thing."

After her re-election defeat, Richards went on to give speeches, work as a commentator for Cable News Network and serve as a senior adviser in the New York office of Public Strategies.

In her last 10 years, Richards worked for many social causes and helped develop the Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders, scheduled to open in Austin in 2007.

Richards said she never missed being in public office. She grinned when asked what she might have done differently had she known she would be a one-term governor.

"Oh," she said, "I would probably have raised more hell."

HONORING OCTOBER AS NATIONAL
SPINA BIFIDA AWARENESS MONTH

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate October as National Spina Bifida Awareness Month. There are an estimated 70,000 people in the United States who are affected by Spina Bifida, the most common, permanently disabling birth defect. Of particular concern is that members of the Hispanic community are disproportionately at risk of a Spina Bifida pregnancy. The rate of Spina Bifida in the Hispanic population is almost seven in 10,000 births, nearly 40 percent higher than the non-Hispanic rate. However, fortunately there are steps that can be taken to reduce that risk.

An important goal of National Spina Bifida Awareness Month is increasing awareness and consumption of—a simple vitamin that can help reduce the risk of Spina Bifida. Recent studies have shown that if all women of childbearing age were to consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily prior to becoming pregnant and throughout the first trimester of pregnancy, the incidence of Spina Bifida could be reduced by up to 70 percent. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Spina Bifida Association (SBA), all women of child-bearing age should consume a vitamin every day which provides them with 400 micrograms of folic acid. Multi-vitamins with folic acid or folic acid supplements can be found in the local grocery, pharmacy, or discount store.

Unfortunately at the current time, imported corn flours—unlike most wheat flour and cereal products—are not enriched with folic acid. Which means a majority of the corn-based products sold in the United States and consumed by the Hispanic community does not contain this important vitamin. To address this disparity and ensure that the foods consumed by the Hispanic community in the United States are enriched with folic acid, in July of this year, CDC, SBA, the National Council of La Raza, Wal-Mart, and Gruma announced an important initiative that has the potential to reduce the incidence of Spina Bifida among all babies by 70 percent by helping increase the intake of this nutrient among women.

With proper health care and support, people affected by Spina Bifida can live productive and fulfilling lives. In addition to supporting efforts to prevent Spina Bifida, I also urge additional federal attention to—and funding of—efforts, like the National Spina Bifida Program, to improve the quality-of-life for all who are affected by this birth defect. I would like to thank the SBA and its Florida chapters for their work on Spina Bifida Awareness Month and for being steadfast in their commitment to helping prevent and reduce Spina Bifida, particularly among the Hispanic community in the United States.

HONORING CHUCK GESCHKE AND
JOHN WARNOCK FOR THEIR IN-
NOVATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS IN
THE TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Mr. Chuck Geschke and Mr. John Warnock, founders of Adobe Systems, Inc. Although each man is most definitely worthy of his own separate congressional accolade, it is their teamwork and their shared passion that created a company that invented new forms of communication that assists thousands if not millions of people on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Geschke and Mr. Warnock are industry pioneers in the true spirit of Silicon Valley. Prior to co-founding Adobe, Geschke and Warnock worked at Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center, PARC. Unable to convince