

they did not. They have been boarded up. And people's lives have been in limbo living in these other cities, without the opportunity to come home and without the support that they needed.

In my committee, the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, we worked and we put together a bill, H.R. 1227. That bill passed out of that committee and off the floor in March, and we sent it over to the Senate, where it has languished.

But basically, that bill laid out not only the fact that we would do a survey, because HUD was saying, well, many of the people had left, they did not want to come back. In that bill, we asked for a survey to be taken. We also placed in that bill that 3,000 units would be rehabbed right away, people would be given an opportunity to come back who wanted to come back, then the residents would be involved, working with HUD and HANO, that is the local housing authority, and the City of New Orleans to talk about the future of public housing development, what they would like to see.

We are not against redevelopment. We think that there should be planned development. We think that, first of all, they should look at these units and see which of them should remain. They should work with the residents and the local elected officials to talk about what would be redeveloped. And we were very surprised. We were very surprised when just a few days ago they started to dismantle the "Big Four" public housing units.

Well, because they started, two different entities went ahead and got restraining orders. They have been working with a non-profit group, the Advancement Project, and Ms. Tracy Washington and Mr. Bill Quigley, two lawyers that got involved and got a restraining order to stop the bulldozers. And then the AFL-CIO that had been working on one of the big developments known in New Orleans to stop that development. So now a lot of people have gotten involved.

The conservancy got involved because some of these are historic properties. And now the city council, it has been thrown into their laps because when they started to look at what HUD was doing in dismantling, they found that they were breaking any number of laws. They had not gotten the permits, and perhaps they don't even have the legal authority by which to do it because they had taken over these public housing projects. They were in receivership. But the time frame for the receivership had run out. And so we don't even know if they have the authority.

So now we have at least one restraining order that remains and the city council that is going to take a vote about each of those. AFL-CIO was involved in the one called St. Bernard, one of the biggest ones.

I have drafted a letter to the members of the city council explaining to them what we thought was an arrangement that we had worked out with the

HUD Secretary, Mr. JACKSON, that would do the rehab of a limited number of units and involve the tenants and the plan for the redevelopment of all these units. We are surprised they want to bulldoze them. We are very surprised because homelessness has doubled in New Orleans. There are no rental units. Many of those units were destroyed. People are still living in FEMA's trailers. And to think that they would dismantle 4,500 units of public housing is unconscionable when people are looking for places to live.

So I have developed a letter that is going to the members of the city council and will try to engage them as much as I can to explain what we have done here. We also asked Speaker PELOSI, along with Senator REID, to put together a letter asking the President not to dismantle these units. That letter has gone out. My letter is going out. The telephone calls are going forth. But it is important for the people of this country to understand what is going on.

There were rumors following Rita and Katrina that perhaps some people wanted to change the make-up of New Orleans. Some people wanted to get rid of the poor people and thought that all of that city should really become the tourist attraction with all of the hotels and the gambling and all of the other things, and workers should live outside and not inside New Orleans. And some people think that they are carrying out that kind of a mission and that kind of program. I would just ask the Secretary to not demolish these public housing units. It is Christmastime. To give to the people of New Orleans a Christmas present of tearing down these units is unconscionable.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUELLAR addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING THE MEMORY OF SPEAKER TOM MURPHY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GINGREY. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight with a heavy heart, saddened by the loss of not only a constituent, but also one of the most important figures in Georgia government in the modern history of our State. Thomas Bailey Murphy of Bremen, Georgia, Speaker Tom Murphy, was called home to be with the Lord last night at 10 p.m.

A native of Haralson County, Speaker Murphy was born on March 10, 1924, to Leta Jones and William Harvey Murphy. A graduate of Bremen High School and North Georgia College, a young Tom Murphy heard the call of

his country and he enlisted in the Navy during World War II. He served in the Pacific theater from 1943 to 1946.

Upon his return home from World War II, Tom Murphy married the love of his life, Agnes Bennett, with whom he shared his life until her death in 1982. Soon after their marriage, Tom Murphy graduated from the University of Georgia School of Law.

And then, Madam Speaker, in 1960, he followed in his brother's footsteps, winning election to the Georgia House of Representatives. In his first seven terms in the legislature, he had the opportunity to serve as the Governor's floor leader and as speaker pro tem until being elected as Speaker of the House in 1973. As Speaker of the Georgia House from 1974 to 2002, he served not only with distinction but also as the longest-serving State House Speaker throughout this entire century.

While Speaker Murphy never forgot his rural roots or his constituency, he also recognized the importance of strengthening our entire State and fostering growth and economic opportunity in the capital city of Atlanta.

During his tenure, Speaker Murphy fought for funding and sponsored the construction of the Georgia World Congress Center as well as the Georgia Dome, the largest cable-supported dome stadium in the entire world. Speaker Murphy also pushed for improved and increased funding for urban transit and suburban roads and freeways. He had the foresight to realize the need to invest not only in destination infrastructure but also in the roads, the buses and trains to get people there.

While Speaker Murphy was a great advocate of his State and of all Georgians, to say he was partisan would be an understatement, Madam Speaker. He believed firmly in the principles of the old-guard Georgia Democratic Party, and he was vehemently loyal to those principles, his party and his members, even to his own personal and political detriment. In 2000, after over 40 years of service to his district, Speaker Murphy won by a narrow margin of about 500 votes in his Republican-trending west Georgia district. And yet later that year, during the decennial redistricting process, Speaker Murphy refused to make his district more Democratic and thus safer, refusing to risk the majorities of his fellow party members that served in contiguous districts and counties.

So in the following election, Madam Speaker, he narrowly lost his seat, but he did so with his conscience intact because he remained loyal to his principles to the end.

During my time in the Georgia senate, I had many opportunities to see Speaker Murphy in action. Though I certainly did not always agree with him, I always respected him, recognizing that above all, he exemplified the scriptural exhortation to "let your yea be yea and your nay, nay."

Though his final years were made very difficult by incapacitating stroke,