

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING JOE W. STRICKLAND ON HIS RETIREMENT AS CHIEF REPORTER OF DEBATES

HON. JOHN A. BOEHNER

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 2, 2015

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Joe W. Strickland, the Chief Reporter of Debates, for his contributions to the House of Representatives during almost 22 years of service.

The House has employed Official Reporters of Debates since 1873, when the Speaker of the House took control of the privately-run Congressional Globe and the verbatim proceedings of events were published as the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—as they still are today.

It was a five-man operation back then, and the Reporters were praised in the New York Tribune for their “intimate knowledge of the precedents and practice of the House, and of the national events, great and small, which have passed in close review before their eyes.”

Joe follows in that long tradition, noted in the Tribune, of “superior ability” and “efficiency,” though the office is now under the supervision of the Clerk of the House and has grown to 43 people. Joe has worked diligently to achieve the daunting task of maintaining an accurate record not only of House Floor proceedings but of House Committee work, as well. In addition to his managerial responsibilities, he has been front and center, reporting seven State of the Union speeches and several Joint Meetings to receive messages from foreign heads of state, such as Afghan President Hamid Karzai and French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Joe was born in central Texas and graduated from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene with a degree in music. A tenor, he regularly toured with an all-male quartet and performed at conventions and competitions from Moscow to Washington, DC, including engagements at the White House.

After college, Joe co-owned a travel and tour company and pursued several other passions before turning his sights on court reporting. Joe attended court reporting school outside of Dallas, and he quickly earned a position as a real-time captionist for a television station. A mere three years later, his skills won him a place as an Official Reporter of Debates for the U.S. House of Representatives, reporting both Committee and Floor debates. The Clerk of the House promoted Joe to Deputy Chief of the office in 2000, and he became Chief Reporter of Debates in 2005.

Joe is recognized by the National Court Reporters Association as a Registered Professional Reporter, a Certified Realtime Reporter, and a Certified Communication Access Realtime Translation provider—qualifications that place him among the elite in court reporting.

Mr. Speaker, the work of the Official Reporters of Debates has been an essential part of House operations for more than 140 years, and while the technology has changed, the dedication of the Reporters, like Joe, has not. We are sad to lose such a valuable member of the House Clerk’s team, but we wish him and his family the very best during a long and happy retirement.

THE SAVANNAH HARBOR EXPANSION PROJECT

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 2, 2015

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the rule today. The underlying bill holds the line on spending, reducing it below the level of the past two years. Furthermore, this bill provides short term funding for the Department of Homeland Security and sets up an opportunity for the new Congress and Senate to repeal President Obama’s unconstitutional executive order on immigration. It also holds the line on Obamacare and prohibits taxpayer bailouts of insurance companies. In addition to these things, there are a number of conservative measures I support and I want to focus on one in particular of local importance.

This bill clarifies that the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project is an ongoing construction, not a new start. Therefore, the Office of Management and Budget can and should fully support the project in the President’s Budget. We can almost immediately begin dredging.

In 1997, through the Energy and Water Appropriations Committee, we allocated funds to support a study by the Georgia Ports Authority. That same year, the Georgia Ports Authority began a feasibility study of the project.

In 1998, the Harbor Expansion Feasibility Study Report was released, underscoring the importance of the project. Senator Cleland, Senator Coverdell and I worked with House and Senate Members and Conferees to be sure SHEP was included in WRDA. The bill became known as the WRDA bill of 1999 after it was signed into law by President Clinton. WRDA of 1999 included authorization for SHEP allowing the United States Army Corps of Engineers to release the record of decision, formally beginning the project.

The victory in WRDA never assured smooth sailing. Amidst growing competition from neighboring Charleston, Representative Floyd Spence, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said he would “sink” the project [AP, March 2000]. This began an ongoing battle with our neighbors from South Carolina about the port. Meanwhile, many environmentalists and other groups began to raise objections. In addition, the Fish and Wildlife Service threatened to step away from negotiations. As objections came up, meetings required by WRDA with stakeholders including local Judy Jennings, economic development

interests and federal agencies became an important forum to defuse concerns among all parties and resolve problems. Even with continued discussions, Congress worked with the Clinton Administration to secure additional funding for the project.

In 2001, the Georgia Ports Authority and the United States Army Corps of Engineers issued a Memorandum of Understanding and announced that the Port of Savannah was a top ranked port and one of the fastest growing U.S. container ports. Funding was again increased that year, with additional funding secured over the President’s budget request.

In 2002, the SHEP Project Management Plan was released and the United States Army Corps of Engineers expressed their intent to draft another Environmental Impact Study.

In 2004, the major commitment by Georgia, both financially and politically, unified our message in Washington and was instrumental in moving the project up the priority list.

Further advancing the importance of this project was the approval of the Panama Canal expansion referendum in 2006. For example, in 2007, the Georgia House of Representatives passed H.R. 56 urging the Corps and the U.S. Congress to begin a study of the costs and effects of adding to the storage capacities of all Corps reservoirs in Georgia. Additionally, business groups, led by the Savannah Chamber of Commerce, ran efforts to push the project forward.

In 2008, as new WRDA legislation was debated in Congress, we again kept the project in WRDA and made sure that no amendments were allowed to adversely impact the project.

In 2009, we worked through the appropriations process to ensure funding for the Savannah Harbor Expansion Study in fiscal year 2010. Unfortunately, because so much time had lapsed and costs had increased, the project had to be reauthorized and adjusted each year.

In 2010, President Obama came to Savannah. Congressman BARROW and I had the opportunity to fly in Air Force One with him to discuss the project and followed up with a letter. He acted favorably but did not include it in the budget.

In 2011, even though the President’s 2012 budget did not include an allotted budget for SHEP, the Director of the Executive Office of the President’s Office of Management and Budget expressed the President’s willingness to consider the project. That same year, the U.S. Transportation Secretary noted the economic importance of the port and the need to provide funding. SHEP faced a hurdle when the Corps’ Water Qualification Certification was denied by South Carolina’s Department of Health and Environmental Control. However, by the end of the year, construction funds were secured for the project.

In 2012, Senator ISAKSON, Senator CHAMBLISS and I met with Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Darcy and presented a letter asking for supportive language. This led to President Obama listing the Port of Savannah as a “We Can’t Wait” port and a legislative fix

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