

Nation, or WIIN Act, which was signed into law in December of 2016 and increased pumping flexibility to move water throughout the state and provided over \$355 million dollars for water infrastructure projects, including matching federal funds for new surface storage in California.

In all of my time working to improve the lives of the people of the Valley, rarely have I been presented with a project with such obvious potential as raising the spillway gates at New Exchequer Dam.

Water impounded behind New Exchequer Dam provides irrigation water for agriculture in Merced County, groundwater replenishment for several nearby communities, and environmental benefits for fisheries and wildlife refuges downstream of the dam.

Recently, Merced Irrigation District performed a detailed analysis of the hydrology of the watershed upstream of New Exchequer Dam and found that by raising the spillway gates 8 feet, Lake McClure could hold an additional 57,000 acre-feet without impeding the Merced River's Wild and Scenic River designation.

However, in order to move forward with raising the spillway gates, the flood control and operations manual for New Exchequer Dam must be updated, a responsibility of the Army Corps of Engineers.

Unfortunately, this manual is based on data that dates back to 1959, when New Exchequer Dam was being constructed.

Army Corps of Engineers policy requires that flood control manuals be updated to reflect new data and changes to a project.

In 2017, Merced Irrigation District wrote to the Army Corps requesting a revision of the flood control manual, which was last updated in 1981.

The Army Corps indicated that it could not update the manual at this time, citing budgetary constraints.

Merced Irrigation District proposed to pay for the public process to update the flood control manual to incorporate the new hydrologic data.

The Army Corps responded by saying that it didn't have the legal authority to accept funds for this purpose for a non-federal Section 7 project like New Exchequer, despite being able to do so for Corps facilities.

The Non-Federal Reservoir Operations Improvement Act would resolve this disparity by allowing the owners of non-federal reservoirs that are regulated by the Army Corps to contribute funds to update their flood control manuals.

It's a very commonsense, targeted change to law that will improve the water supply reliability in Merced County.

JUSTIN ONWENU: PLAN B IS NOT
AN OPTION

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Rice University Student Body President Justin Onwenu was born in Detroit, grew up in Alabama and moved around a lot as a kid. He lived in rural, suburban, and urban Alabama with his mom. His moving around didn't bother him; in fact it

was quite the opposite. He says it was instrumental in learning a sense of how to coexist and feel others' perspectives. He was a very successful high school student active in debate, basketball, and student government.

When he graduated, he knew exactly what he wanted: a small school in a big city. Rice University was the perfect fit. Justin had never been to Houston before his college visit to Rice, but once he saw the vibrant, diverse city, he knew it was the place for him—so much so, it was the only school to which he applied. Mr. Speaker, Justin just knew it was what he must do, he had no Plan B.

Justin chose Rice, in part, because of its research and extracurricular activities. Upon arrival, he knew he wanted to study medicine, policy, and international health. There was only one problem: Rice University didn't have that degree. Justin decided to create his own degree plan. He formulated the curriculum and the class requirements, submitted it to Rice, and created the Bachelor of Arts Degree in International Health and Policy at Rice University. Once again, Mr. Speaker, Justin knew it was the right thing for him to do, no Plan B. Justin told me, "I think about what opportunity is out there that I want, then I go after it!"

In his sophomore year, Justin became involved in student government and was instrumental in the university's first-ever student survey to gauge sexual conduct on campus. Justin felt strongly that a dialogue was necessary for students to discuss their expectations with their peers, not just be pushed to know right from wrong. As a result of Justin's work, Rice University led the nation with the first Critical Thinking and Sexuality course required of entering freshmen. Other college campuses are now following Rice's lead and engaging in real talk about campus sexual conduct. Mr. Speaker, Justin recently shared his work with Congress when he testified at my "Breaking the Silence: Responding to Sexual Assault on Campus" Field Hearing. He says he knew from the beginning this was such an important topic, he just had to give a voice to it. He had no choice.

Then Hurricane Harvey hit. Mr. Speaker, every Houstonian struggled to know how to respond to this devastating crisis. Justin knew he had to be involved with the school's Crisis Management Team, so he said he invited himself to their meeting. It was the first time the student body president was involved in such a high level tactical plan. Justin told me that throughout the meetings his thoughts were on the future. "How can we prepare for post-Harvey? We need to think about volunteering, not just making sure Rice is safe." Justin said he went "full in" with this idea and decided to "launch it first, then figure out the details later." With this in mind, the student government partnered with the Doerr Institute and the Center for Civic Leadership to create the Rice Harvey Action Team. The R-HAT, made up of 1,700 students and faculty, worked with synagogues, churches, and local shelters on demolition and volunteer projects. "There was no other option," Justin told me. "We had to make it happen." There was no Plan B.

With finals and term papers now due, Justin has taken on a new civic engagement project: scholarship reform. Mr. Speaker, you may have seen Justin's op-ed piece in the New York Times late last year on this very subject. Financial aid recipients who receive private scholarships are required to report the amount

to their college or university. The school may then evaluate the scholarship and decrease the recipient's financial aid by the same amount. Since his op-ed, students and student governments from across the nation have reached out to him asking advice and thanking him for giving this issue a voice. Justin visited Capitol Hill this year to tell lawmakers about scholarship displacement and to propose policy changes. Justin is committed to educating lawmakers on this issue; there is no other choice for him. Again, no Plan B.

Justin graduates this month. He looks back on his career at Rice and says he's proud that people who don't normally speak up, speak with him. He says people have told him he's their "voice" on issues they care about, but have never felt comfortable coming forward on. He says this has inspired him to continue to speak up and speak out for people and policy changes. He plans to attend law school in the fall.

When considering how to tackle a project or a problem, Justin told me, "You have a moment of 'freak out' trying to decide if you should do something. I've learned how to tell myself to 'just go for it!' It's easier to get involved and speak out than people think. I tell people to get passionate about an issue and work for change."

Mr. Speaker, Justin Onwenu works on his "Plan As." And, he finds a way to make them work every time. Justin has never thought about a Plan B, in fact, in his 21 years it's never entered his mind that one should exist. And that's just the way it is.

IN CELEBRATION OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE YPSILANTI CAMPAIGN FOR EQUALITY'S LANDMARK VICTORY

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Ypsilanti Campaign for Equality (YCFE) for twenty years of striving for a more equal society. Their efforts enrich the lives of Michigan residents through their grassroots activism.

The Ypsilanti Campaign for Equality was formed in 1998 to protect the rights of all Ypsilanti residents. Later that year, the city passed a human rights ordinance that protected against discrimination based on 'race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or disability.' The ordinance protected from a wide range of discrimination including in jobs, labor unions, and access to houses, goods and services. Despite passing handily in 1998, opposition groups set out to overturn it, and YCFE stood strong against these efforts. Their grassroots organizing garnered a victory and the anti-discrimination initiative was upheld.

Although the fight against the 1998 overturn proposal took place 20 years ago, members of the original Ypsilanti Campaign for Equality continue to live in southeast Michigan today and promote ideals of equality and equal opportunity for all. As we gather tonight to celebrate their continued dedication to standing up against divisiveness, we honor the bravery and courage of our friends and neighbors.