

not just to discuss textbook readings, but to truly think about how these timeless lessons relate to our community today.

Under his dynamic leadership and enthusiasm, the Young Israel House has become a place of renewed energy. His hard work and diligence have brought about many positive programs that benefit so many. His unselfish dedication to others has made him a leader, not only in the Jewish community, but in the larger community.

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Rabbi Michael Whitman on his 10th anniversary and this well deserved recognition.

#### CONGRESS AND THE FEDERAL COURTS

### HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 28, 1998*

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, January 21, 1998 into the Congressional Record:

#### CONGRESS AND THE FEDERAL COURTS

I am impressed by how much Congress' view of the Supreme Court and the rest of our federal court system has changed since I first came to Congress in 1965. Back then, the actions of the federal courts particularly the Supreme Court, were watched with great interest. The courts, for better or worse, helped change the country, enforcing civil rights laws, expanding civil liberties, and opening up the democratic process. Their decisions spurred sharp congressional debate and reaction.

Congress, today, may spar with the President over court appointments or disagree with certain lower court decisions, but it seems more detached from the actual work of the federal judiciary, particularly as it relates to the exercise of congressional power. There are several possible explanations for this change. First, the Supreme Court, reflecting the conservatism of its majority, has taken a lower profile, and fewer cases, than did the Warren and Burger courts. Second, the congressional agenda has shifted from civil rights and anti-poverty efforts—areas of the law where the Court was traditionally active—to budgetary matters—where it was far less so. Third, Congress itself has become more conservative, and many members are comfortable with most of the Court's rulings.

The 1996-1997 term of the Supreme Court further underscores the changed relationship between Congress and the courts. The term was perhaps the most significant in a decade, as the Court invalidated three federal laws and struck several blows for states' rights at the expense of Congress. The Court sent a powerful message to congress about the Court's role in redesigning the institutions of our government and in allocating power among them. I was surprised by the relative indifference of Congress to these decisions.

Constitutional scheme: The federal judiciary is an important part of our system of checks and balances. The federal courts not only decide cases, but also enforce important constitutional values. They can act as a bulwark against government power, particularly in the defense of individual liberties. They can protect state interest from encroachment by the federal government. They can also check overreaching by the executive and legislative branches.

The Framers viewed the judiciary as the weakest of three branches of the federal government, but still included constitutional limits on the exercise of judicial power. The Constitution requires the creation of a Supreme Court, but gives Congress the discretion to establish lower federal courts. Likewise, the Constitution, subject to certain exceptions, gives Congress the authority to regulate the jurisdiction of the federal courts—that is, regulate the types of cases the courts may hear. Congress has over the years generally expanded the jurisdiction of the courts, but has also acted in certain areas to curtail or even eliminate jurisdiction. Finally, Congress controls the pay of federal judges, and the Senate has the responsibility of confirming Presidential nominees to the courts.

Current problems: Friction between Congress and the federal courts has focused in recent years on two primary areas: pay and workload. First, many federal judges complain their salaries have not kept pace with inflation over the last four years, although Congress did approve a cost-of-living increase for the federal bench for 1998. Congress, in general, has linked the pay of federal judges to that of other senior government officials, including Representatives and Senators, so that all salaries of senior officials stay in the same range. The problem, judges say, is that Congress rarely gives itself a raise, so judicial salaries, which range from \$125,700 for bankruptcy judges to \$175,400 for the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, lose value over time. This, in turn, hurts morale and makes it harder to attract top-flight candidates to the federal bench. The answer, judges say, and I agree, is to fund congressional and judicial salaries separately.

Second, federal judges are concerned about the increasing caseload for the federal judiciary. As Chief Justice Rehnquist noted in a year-end report, caseload has increased in part because Congress has expanded federal court jurisdiction over crimes involving drugs and firearms—so federal courts now hear more cases in these areas—and in part because the Senate has not confirmed nominees for the federal courts. Currently, 82 of the 846 judicial offices are vacant, and 26 of the vacancies have been in existence for 18 months or longer. The President has been slow to make nominations, but the real problem has been the Senate's failure to act on nominees in a timely manner. Some Senators complain that the President nominates "activist" judges who expand the law beyond the intent of Congress. My impression is that the President's judicial nominees are notably moderate. Each Senator is entitled to his opinion, but the proper response by an objecting Senator is to vote against the nominee, not to slow or block the nomination process. These vacancies over time erode the quality of justice.

Congress has several possible options for easing the workload of the federal courts. First, I agree with the Chief Justice that the Senate should act within a reasonable time to confirm or reject the President's court nominees. Second, Congress could consider measures to limit the jurisdiction of the federal courts in certain areas. Congress has acted in recent years to limit access to federal courts in habeas corpus petitions by state and federal prisoners. Justice Rehnquist has proposed curtailing federal jurisdiction in so-called "diversity of citizenship" cases as well to further limit caseload; diversity cases, which constitute 20% of federal civil cases, are essentially state law claims tried in federal court because the opposing parties are from different states. Third, some federal judges have urged Congress to draft laws with more precision to

avoid years of litigating the meaning of certain statutes. Congress does need to do a better job of eliminating such uncertainties, but that is easier said than done. The difficulty of gaining majorities in support of bills often means that ambiguous language is necessary to get a bill passed.

Conclusion: The federal judiciary is the least understood branch of our government, perhaps reflecting the subtle way in which the courts exercise power. The judicial branch has neither the sword of the executive branch nor the purse of the legislative branch, but rather must exercise power as the authoritative expounder of the Constitution. It is a testament to the strength of our democracy that the judgments of our courts, particularly the Supreme Court, are observed and that the judiciary has and will continue to play an instrumental role in defining our institutions of government and the scope of our rights as individual citizens.

#### TRIBUTE TO RONALD CLARY

### HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, January 28, 1998*

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Ronald Ben Clary, who has served as the President of the Canoga Park/West Hills Chamber of Commerce for the past two years.

President Kennedy said, "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future." Ron has worked hard to bring positive changes to our community during his tenure as president.

Under his leadership, Canoga Park and West Hills have grown and prospered, improving the standard of living for everyone in our community. The Chamber has added many new members, sponsored the annual Memorial Day Parade and initiated the new International Fall Fest. These activities have provided an opportunity for neighbors to come together to celebrate and appreciate our town. In addition, Ron is responsible for the creation of the Business Development Committee of the Chamber. This purpose of this committee was to focus civic attention on the need for beautification in downtown Canoga Park.

Ron has not only played an important role in the Chamber of Commerce, he is active in several other civic organizations as well. He has been a member and President of the Board of Directors of the Leadwell Homeowners' Association since 1984. The board manages the maintenance, operation and amenities of the West Side, which encompasses 195 homes, and is in the process of completing an \$8 million earthquake renovation.

Many organizations have recognized Ron's leadership abilities. Kiwanis International awarded him a lifetime membership in 1991, one of the highest honors presented by this organization. His extensive community service efforts have been recognized by the March of Dimes, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, Pierce College, the Valley Cultural Foundation, Pacific Lodge Boys' Home and many other civic groups.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, please join me in honoring Ronald Clary for his service as President of the Canoga Park/West Hills Chamber of Commerce. He is a role model for the citizens of our community.