

In 1961, Henry Gonzalez again broke new ground by being elected the first Hispanic Representative from Texas. Ultimately, he served 19 terms, longer than any other Hispanic Member of Congress. More importantly, he never lost touch with his constituents and his community during his tenure in Congress. He demanded that issues affecting the people of San Antonio receive his personal attention.

Throughout his time in Congress, Henry Gonzalez served on the Committee of Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs. There, he focused his legislative efforts on making credit more accessible to ordinary people, improving public housing, and helping many Americans to become homeowners. Early in his congressional career, he worked for the passage of the landmark Housing Act of 1964. Later, when he became Chairman of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development in 1981, he was instrumental in getting approval for a program to assist families who faced foreclosure on their homes. He also strongly defended public housing programs when the Reagan Administration proposed to cut them sharply.

In 1989, he became Chairman of the full Banking Committee. His first urgent order of business was to deal with the collapse of the savings and loan industry, a crisis he had predicted throughout the 1980's. As he began working to craft a solution, it became apparent to him that any bailout, although necessary for the nation's banking system, would be extremely unfair to low and moderate income Americans. He realized that they would derive little or no benefit from the bailout even though they had to share in the burden of fashioning a remedy for the excesses and poor decisions of savings and loan managers in the previous decade. The need to make credit more available to low income Americans and to depressed communities laid the groundwork for later legislative efforts and culminated in the enactment of the Community Reinvestment Act.

Overall, the Banking Committee under Henry's leadership held more than 500 hearings and obtained enactment of 71 bills. Among the other major bills that the Committee produced included restructuring the federal deposit insurance system to provide depositors a greater guarantee for their savings, making more credit available to small business, reauthorizing federal housing laws, and strengthening the laws pertaining to financial crimes.

I want to especially thank Representative MARTIN FROST for leading a special order in honor of Henry Gonzalez. Henry Gonzalez was a giant and true champion of Texas, and it is fitting for a Texas Member who currently serves in the House leadership to lead this tribute. Henry was not just a giant in Texas politics but also a mentor to all of us in the Texas delegation. I am certainly proud to have had an opportunity to serve with him and learn from his example. The people of Texas and his constituents in San Antonio will miss him, and his colleagues here in the Congress will fondly remember his kindness, friendship, and devotion to public service.

FOR CLINTON'S LAST ACT

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 15, 2000

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend Robert S. McNamara, who served as defense secretary under President John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson for his editorial that was published in the December 12, 2000 edition of the New York Times. Mr. McNamara is calling on President Clinton to sign a treaty, finalized in Rome in 1998, that would create a permanent International Criminal Court. Senator JESSE HELMS has promised to block any attempt to ratify the pact. As Mr. McNamara correctly points out, Senator HELMS' justification for not ratifying the treaty are unfounded. The tribunal of 18 world jurists would only have jurisdiction to charge those who commit specific crimes that outrage the international community as a whole, and each nation would retain the right to try its own nationals in a fair trial under its own laws. More than 25 nations have ratified the agreement, but we must have 60 nations to ratify before the court can begin trying cases. Given there is an urgent need to deter future atrocities, I urge President Clinton to sign the International Criminal Court agreement with all deliberate speed, and call on Senator JESSE HELMS, in the spirit of justice, freedom, and humanity, not to block the agreement. To do so would be a travesty of justice.

[From the New York Times, Dec. 12, 2000]

FOR CLINTON'S LAST ACT

(By Robert S. McNamara and Benjamin B. Ferencz)

With the stroke of a pen, President Bill Clinton has a last chance to safeguard humankind from genocide, crimes against humanity and the ravages of war itself. He must simply sign a treaty, finalized in Rome in 1998, to create a permanent International Criminal Court.

If he signs the treaty before Dec. 31, the government does not have to ratify the treaty at this time. After that date, any country has to both ratify and sign the treaty to become a member. This is no small consideration, since Senator Jesse Helms, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, has promised to block any attempt to ratify the pact.

Why does Mr. Helms object to a permanent international criminal court? He and others are worried that an unchecked international court could infringe on basic American constitutional rights for fair trials. For instance, they want ironclad guarantees that the court would never try American soldiers. Pentagon officials fear that Americans might be falsely accused of crimes, thus inhibiting our humanitarian military missions.

These worries are unfounded. The tribunal of 18 world jurists only have jurisdiction to charge those who commit specific crimes that outrage the international community as a whole. Under the treaty, no one can be convicted without clear proof of intent to commit the illegal act. The prosecutor is subject to judicial and budgetary controls that promise both competence and objectivity.

And most important, each nation retains the primary right to try its own nationals in a fair trial under its own laws. There are some crimes, like sexual slavery and forced pregnancy, that the treaty covers, which are

not specifically enunciated in our own country's military laws and manuals. Robinson O. Everette, a former chief judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, has recommended incorporating these crimes into our federal laws, assuring that any American military personnel charged with a crime could be tried by American courts.

Genocide is universally condemned but there is no universal court competent to try all perpetrators. The Nuremberg war crimes trials, inspired by the United States and affirmed by the United Nations, implied that "never again" would crimes against humanity be allowed to go unpunished.

Today, we have special courts created by the United Nations Security Council that have very limited and retroactive jurisdiction. For instance, war crimes tribunals are now coping with past atrocities in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. But these tribunals are hardly adequate to deter international crimes wherever they occur.

The president must help deter future atrocities. At the United Nations and elsewhere, he and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright have repeatedly called for an international court to carry forward the lessons of Nuremberg. Now, he has a chance to take action. More than 100 nations, including all our NATO allies, have already signed. Some 25 nations have ratified; others are well on the way. The court cannot begin trying cases until at least 60 nations have ratified.

If President Clinton fails to sign the treaty, he will weaken our credibility and moral standing in the world. We will look like a bully who wants to be above the law. If he signs, however, he will reaffirm America's inspiring role as leader of the free world in its search for peace and justice.

IMPROVING AMERICA'S VOTING SYSTEMS

HON. STEVEN R. ROTHMAN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 15, 2000

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to join my colleague and friend, the gentleman from Virginia, TOM DAVIS, and the gentleman from Rhode Island, PATRICK KENNEDY, in introducing legislation to improve our Nation's voting systems.

Our message today is simple: While we will never have a perfect system for electing our leaders, we must always seek improvements to that system so the will of the American people always prevails. Improving our voting systems will not be a simple task. But we will achieve our goal in our nation's best traditions of open debate and bipartisan consensus. One encouraging development from this year's Presidential election, is that it has prompted an important debate, about the problems with our various voting systems across the country and how we must work together to improve them. We believe one way to improve the system is by creating a strong, bipartisan council, to be known as the "Commission on Electoral Administration." The Commission would be charged with reviewing how we conduct our elections across the country, and issuing recommendations to make sure that the difficulties experienced by the voters of Florida do not occur again.

The Commission would be funded with \$100 million. The money would be dispersed as voluntary matching grants, to states and local