

26 years. A graduate of the University of Kansas and of KU's School of Law, he was a senior partner in the law firm of Meeks, Sutherland and McIntosh when he was appointed by Governor John Carlin in 1980 to fill a vacancy on the bench created by the death of his father, Cordell D. Meeks, Sr., the first African-American district court judge in Kansas.

Described as a "firm but fair" judge who maintained strict courtroom decorum, Judge Meeks also served on the boards of numerous community groups and civic organizations, including Children's Mercy Hospital, Rockhurst University, and the Liberty Memorial Association. He also served as a colonel and senior military judge in the Kansas Army National Guard. In 1999, he became the first African-American to serve on the board of the Truman Museum, a position he considered an honor because his father had been a friend of President Truman. In 2001 he was elected president of the American Lung Association.

Additionally, Judge Meeks was an active alumnus of the University of Kansas, where he served on the advisory board for minority development for KU's graduate school and for KU's Edwards Campus in Overland Park. In 2002, he received the alumni association's Fred Ellsworth Medallion, the organization's highest award for service to the University. As KU Chancellor Robert Hemenway said upon learning of Judge Meeks' death, "I know of no one who better understood than Cordell the importance of higher education and the door to opportunities that it opens. Cordell was an inspirational leader for racial equality in our region. He motivated us all to do better. We will miss him dearly."

Mr. Speaker, I was privileged to have known Cordell Meeks personally for many years. We first met during my junior year at the University of Kansas, where we both served as counselors in Joseph R. Pearson Residence Hall, and we remained close friends since that time, as we both progressed through careers in law. Judge Cordell Meeks truly was a well-respected member of our community whose life and work were centered around the basic ideals he held dear: justice, hope, strength, community and family. He was a valued friend and I know that all members of the Kansas City community join with me in sharing our thoughts and prayers with his widow, Mary Anne, and their son, Cordell, III, during their time of loss.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 10, 2006

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, June 29, 2006, I was absent for a vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall 357.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ELVIRA "VERA" DURAZO

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 10, 2006

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Elvira "Vera" M. Durazo of El Monte, California, a dedicated and compassionate woman known as the "Grandmother" of Mexican cuisine in the greater El Monte area, who passed away on June 24, 2006.

Vera opened the first Mexican food restaurant and tortilla factory in El Monte known as "Durazo's", bringing a taste of Mexico to the San Gabriel Valley. After many successful years at Durazo's, Vera turned her focus to contributing to the community as a volunteer. For more than three decades, Vera assisted the sight impaired and homebound elderly. She also organized the Convalescent Patient Project, which now gives more than 150 patients birthday and Christmas gifts in the El Monte area per year, and volunteered at health fairs and clinics, the monthly mini-mart at the Hack Crippen Senior Center, and Meals on Wheels.

Vera was particularly committed to the elderly in the local Latino community and founded the Club Hispano Americano. Club Hispano Americano is the largest Hispanic philanthropic organization for the elderly in the San Gabriel Valley.

Vera is survived by one son Edward Durazo, two daughters Rebecca Ramirez and Evelyn Prudhomme, eight grandchildren, thirteen great-grandchildren and four step-great-grandchildren. She will be dearly missed by her family, friends, and the community.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5638, PERMANENT ESTATE TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2006

SPEECH OF

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 22, 2006

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill.

I believe that estate taxes at 2001 levels were inherently unfair. And I voted to reform those levels by increasing the exemption and lowering the tax rate through 2010. Today, I would vote for all estate tax reform that permanently raised the exemption to \$3.5 million for individuals and \$7 million for couples, while lowering the rate to 45 percent.

Unfortunately, the majority has refused to even entertain a compromise. In fact, they won't even allow us to vote on a compromise, even though they could vote against it. They insist that we either take or leave their bill: a \$700 billion cost, added to an existing \$8 trillion debt.

Why do we need compromise? Why can't I support the legislation before us today? For three reasons.

First, at a time of war that has been described as "generational", when we experienced shortages on the battlefield, funding cuts in Pentagon weapons systems, and cuts

in homeland security funding to my constituents in New York because of budget strains, adding an additional \$700 billion in estate tax relief is irresponsible. How is it that we have \$700 billion for estate tax relief, but just cut funds for a critical Air Force advanced energy program? Why is it that we slashed college loan programs because we had to save \$12 billion, but we have \$700 billion for estate tax repeal? How is it possible to defend cutting Homeland Security funds to NY by \$80 million because we can't afford it, and then pass a bill that spends \$700 billion to repeal the estate tax?

Second, I have been fighting for meaningful and permanent relief of the Alternative Minimum Tax, which has become the largest middle class tax increase in history. The Administration and Republican leadership of Congress has not agreed to real alternative minimum tax relief. All we can afford they say, is a temporary bandage every year. The cost of the permanent AMT reform that Representative LOWEY and I have introduced is about \$400 billion. The cost of permanent repeal of the estate tax is \$700 billion. Why is it that we can't afford tax relief for millions of middle class families, but we can afford twice the cost for tax relief to several thousand estates?

Third, a \$700 billion liability to the Federal Treasury represents a staggering unfunded liability for our children. Let me prove my point in specific and non-partisan terms.

Recently I attended a meeting with the Comptroller General of the United States. He was chosen to this position by President Bush, the Republican Speaker of the House, and the Republican Leader of the Senate.

The Comptroller described the long term fiscal position of the Federal Treasury. Over the next 30 years, Federal revenues will remain fairly constant as a percentage of the federal budget. On the spending side—even if we do what we have never been able to do, and keep spending at the level of inflation—our total costs will skyrocket, particularly with the rapid growth of our aging population. The resulting gap between revenues and expenses will be so huge that in 2040, the entire Federal budget will be adequate to pay for only two things: interest on debt, and a small piece of social security. Everything else—the military, veterans benefits, the FBI; the CIA, education, health, homeland security—will require either a catastrophic tax increase on our children, or abolition by our children. And today, we add \$700 billion to their problem.

Mr. Speaker, we can provide estate tax relief that is affordable and fair, by allowing a vote on Mr. POMEROY'S substitute. But denied that opportunity by the leadership, I cannot support a "take it leave it" bill. Not when, by taking this, I leave the real bill to our children.

A TRIBUTE TO ALAN SENITT

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 10, 2006

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. ENGEL and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I'd like to express our shock and horror at the death of Alan Senitt in Washington, DC, early yesterday morning.

Each of us came to know Alan as a staffer for Lord Greville Janner of Braunstone, United Kingdom. Lord Janner is a leader in European efforts to fight anti-Semitism and racism, and is the founding chairman of the International Council of Jewish Parliamentarians, an organization of which we are all members. Alan played a critical role in helping to bring this organization into existence.

Alan was a kind, dedicated and good person, a young man with enormous potential and great hopes for trying to build a better world. Alan devoted himself to a life in politics and intercommunal dialogue because he understood that it is only by effort and commitment that the wounds of our world can be knit up.

In a life of only 27 years, Alan was a dynamic student leader, an energetic voice for British Jewry and pro-Israel advocacy, a talented leader in the campaign against racism and bigotry, and a candidate for public office. The future he was so brutally denied would surely have been no less full of struggle, achievement and success.

His death is a tragic loss for each of us, the Jewish community in the United Kingdom, his wide circle of friends and, most of all, his family.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Senitt family: his parents, Karen and Jack, and his siblings, James and Emma, who have been so cruelly robbed of their son and brother. Alan leaves behind a legacy of compassion, vitality, good works and a vast potential tragically curtailed. He will be deeply missed.

IN RECOGNITION OF FIRST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH OF PACE'S
NEW SANCTUARY

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 10, 2006

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is a great honor for me to rise today to extend my congratulations to First United Methodist Church of Pace on the opening of their new sanctuary.

First United Methodist Church of Pace was founded in 1955 and has since grown to be a vital part of the Santa Rosa County community. The congregation began meeting in a single room of a cement block shop. The church has grown in many ways, most recently with the addition of their new sanctuary. In 1992 a building committee was formed to look into the possibility of expanding First United Methodist Church of Pace's facilities. With the financial and spiritual support of the congregation this vision has now become a reality.

From their humble beginning over 50 years ago, First United Methodist Church of Pace has blossomed into a thriving place of worship.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to First United Methodist Church of Pace on the opening of their new sanctuary. The dedication of the congregation to their church should be commended, and I am pleased to have First United Methodist Church of Pace in my district.

RECOGNIZING CENTENARIAN
MARY MAYNARD OF CITRUS
COUNTY, FL

HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 10, 2006

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mary Maynard of Citrus County, Florida. Mary will soon do something that all of us strive for, but that very few of us will ever accomplish, celebrate her 100th birthday.

Born August 5, 1906 on a farm near Rushville, Indiana, Mary attended Webb High School in Rushville and later graduated from business college.

A farmer's wife until 1948, Mary eventually embarked on a career as a bookkeeper, real estate and mobile home salesperson and working for a prominent builder in Indianapolis selling new homes. In 1960, Mary and her daughter moved to Ft. Lauderdale where she continued her real estate and sales work.

Eventually settling in the Gulf Coast in 1975, Mary and her daughter moved first to Brooksville, and then in 1984 to Citrus County. Following several small strokes over the years, Mary has lived in Arbor Trails Nursing Home in Inverness, Florida for the past 3 years.

Her August 5th birthday celebration will be attended by family and friends from Minnesota, North Carolina, Indiana, Ohio and Florida. In fact, Mary has a long lineage spread across the country, including a son and a daughter, six grandchildren, twelve great grandchildren and ten great great grandchildren!

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me in honoring Mary Maynard for reaching her 100th birthday this coming August. I hope we all have the good fortune to live as long as she has.

HONORING JEFFREY D. THOMAS

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 10, 2006

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Jeffrey D. Thomas of Oakland, California for his extraordinary service to California's 9th U.S. Congressional District. Following his work in the areas of politics, finance, and community development, Jeffrey served as the District Director in my Oakland District Office from January 2004 until June 2006. During that time, Jeffrey played an integral role as a leading member of my staff, and his enthusiasm for public service has brought a heightened sense of purpose to my office.

Jeffrey was born in Mississippi in 1963, in the midst of the social and political upheaval that marked life in the American South during the Civil Rights Movement. The son of a minister and a teacher, at an early age Jeffrey developed a keen awareness of the social conditions affecting his family and his community, and of the struggles faced by African Americans in the fight for civil rights. He recounts as a formative moment in his childhood the occasion when he saw one of my personal and

professional mentors, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, on television for the first time, a moment that was so significant for him not only because of how inspired he was by her speech, but because of his amazement at the sight of another African American on television, which was a rare occurrence at the time.

Another part of his background that would shape his life in the years ahead was his involvement in the Head Start Program, a comprehensive childcare and development initiative for children in low-income families, funded by federal grants and matching money from local entities in communities across the country. Not only was Jeffrey a Head Start child himself, but his parents both worked with the program for a number of years while he was growing up. Furthermore, this program has remained a part of his life until the present, as he has gone on to represent my office on the local Head Start advisory board in Oakland.

After growing up in Mississippi, Nebraska, and Alabama, Jeffrey moved to Massachusetts, where he attended Brandeis University. Following his graduation, he began working in real estate, but was soon drawn to government and public service, accepting a job in the office of Senator EDWARD KENNEDY of Massachusetts, a position in which he worked on international finance, economic development and constituent services. Following his time there, he continued his work in the financial sector, serving as part of the Mortgage Bankers' Association, William Morris, and as a bank Vice President. After relocating to California to work with a startup software company, Jeffrey became increasingly involved in community development initiatives in the San Francisco Bay Area, serving on entities such as the Alameda Point Collaborative and the boards of local non-profit organizations.

Jeffrey became the District Director in my Oakland District Office in January 2004, and did an excellent job of bringing his experience in Senator KENNEDY's office as well as in the areas of finance, media, project management and staff management to bear on his service to the 9th Congressional District. Under his leadership an exceptional staff has been developed, and numerous initiatives in the areas of crime prevention, economic development, affordable housing, environmental protection, and poverty eradication have been introduced and successfully executed by my office. Of particular note has been his leadership on the Criminal Records Remedies program in my district, through which more than 2,000 non-violent criminal records have been dismissed in only 12 months, allowing thousands of formerly incarcerated individuals the opportunity to obtain employment, housing, and the chance to successfully complete their reentry into society.

Jeffrey's service has been distinguished not only by his exceptional work ethic, but also his commitment to the people of California's 9th U.S. Congressional District. Today, Jeffrey's colleagues, friends, and wife Rachel will come together to celebrate his innumerable contributions to our community. On this very special day, I join all of them in thanking and saluting Jeffrey Thomas for his invaluable service to California's 9th U.S. Congressional District, and to wish him the very best as he begins the next chapter of his "spirit filled" life.