

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Mesquite Chamber of Commerce for their hard work and effort on behalf of Mesquite and the State of Texas. I wish them the best of luck as they enter into the next 50 years of service benefiting the City of Mesquite. They truly do know the meaning of Real. Texas. Business.

A TRIBUTE TO FRANCES
WILLIAMS

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 19, 2007

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise in mourning for one of Philadelphia's most well-known and loved moms. "Mom" Frances Williams, a mother of five sons and a civic leader in her own right, left us to go home on January 12, 2007 at the age of 94.

Born in Philadelphia on February 7, 1912, "Mom" was a devoted member of Mount Zion Baptist Church since the age of 12, and over the years generously contributed her time and talents to the church. As a member of the Mt. Zion family, she was the longest serving president of the Young Women's Industrial Club and initiated the first "Get Set" program for children in the church.

"Mom" was considered a surrogate mother to countless young people she mentored over the decades. Many can attest to having found their first jobs with the help of "Mom" Williams. Numerous young people entered college and joined the church because of her guidance. She often went into her pocketbook, cupboard, and closet to help someone else.

She served her community and city as a block captain, committee person and civic leader. Later in life, she directed her energy towards helping seniors in need. She was a member of many organizations and boards. "Mom" founded and served as president of Save Our Senior and Concerned Citizens. She served as a board member of the Philadelphia Corporation of Aging and commissioner on the Philadelphia Commission of Human Relations.

"Mom" ran for City Council At-Large in 1979 on a platform that pledged housing programs for seniors, crime-reduction programs, and initiatives to serve and empower at risk youth and people with disabilities. She also gave our city two generations of leaders in her son former State Sen. Hard Williams and grandson State Sen. Anthony Hardy Williams.

In March 1999, article in the Philadelphia New Observer she explains "It's all very simple. Keep yourself clean and if something makes you sick, don't eat it. Tell the truth and don't follow the crowd. Most of all have faith."

She is survived by one sister, Ruth Lacy of Philadelphia; five sons: James Williams (Gloria) of Blackwood, NJ; Hardy Williams, Fredrick A. Williams (Ernestine); Theodore; and Ali Robinson (Ramona) of Philadelphia; one niece, Vivian Whitt; one nephew, Carl Lacy, both Philadelphia; twenty one grandchildren; numerous great and great, great grandchildren; and a host of grand and great grand nieces and nephews.

I know that all my colleagues will join me in honoring her memory today.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT B.
GILBERTSON, JR.

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 19, 2007

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the work of Robert B. Gilbertson, Jr., the innovative leader of the Tampa Metropolitan Area YMCA. After more than 20 years with the Tampa YMCA, Bob is leaving Florida for Seattle in order to serve as the CEO of the YMCA of Greater Seattle.

During his tenure, Bob, led an effort to greatly expand the Tampa YMCA by the creation of 12 new branches throughout Hillsborough County. The expansion effort has resulted in the YMCA membership growing from 5,000 to 130,000 members and their yearly budget has grown from around \$1,000,000 to over \$33,000,000. More importantly, this expansion has provided the opportunity for the YMCA to expand its charitable mission of building strong kids, strong families and strong communities. No child or family is turned away from the YMCA due to their inability to pay. Today, scholarships are provided to over 30,000 children and families so they can enjoy one of the largest social service charitable organizations operating in Hillsborough County.

I met with Bob recently at the Brandon Family YMCA where he introduced me to some very special children who were involved in the foster care system. I was proud to play a role in ensuring that the U.S. Department of Labor provided the Tampa YMCA with funding to create a job training program for youth aging-out of the foster system. This extremely important program will be one of Bob's lasting legacies in Tampa.

Bob Gilbertson has certainly made his mark in Tampa and I am grateful for the leadership he has provided. I wish him great success as he moves to Seattle.

FEDERAL MINE VENTILATION ACT
OF 2007

HON. NICK J. RAHALL, II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 19, 2007

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, one year ago today tragedy struck for the second time in less than three weeks in the coalfields of West Virginia. A fire broke out along the conveyor belt in the Aracoma Mine, at Alma, Logan County, taking the lives of two good men and turning the national spotlight on a sorely risky industry practice.

The use of the belt air entry to ventilate a mine, as was the case at Aracoma, is egregiously dangerous. The belt entry—the tunnel through which the coal conveyor belt runs—has long been recognized as the dirtiest, most fire-prone entry in the mines. To use it to draw air to the working face exposes miners to higher levels of health-endangering, flammable coal dust and noxious gases. And, although saving operators the cost of adding more entries into the mine, it limits the escape routes for miners trying to evacuate in an emergency—an unacceptable tradeoff.

For at least 35 years, from the time the Mine Act was signed into law, the use of the conveyor belt entries to draw fresh air into working areas of coal mines was effectively "ruled out" as an acceptable standard practice. The use of belt air, during all that time, was considered to be the exception.

Under an initial Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) rule, issued decades ago, mines could use the method, but only after obtaining an exemption through a petition process—a process that, at least, required high-level scrutiny on a mine-by-mine basis. The idea was that, if a mine wanted to take a higher degree of risk, it had to provide a higher level of safety precautions and prove that it was doing so.

Over time, however, MSHA allowed a growing number of mines to use this suspect practice, until in 2004, when the existing, more cautious rule was replaced. The new rule superceded the prohibition Congress had written into law, and opened the door wide to belt air ventilation and all of the dangers it brings with it.

That 2004 rule was a symptom of a shifting set of priorities at MSHA that put promotion of coal production above the protection of miners. That rule should be jettisoned.

Madam Speaker, the Aracoma fire of a year ago, demonstrates how the deteriorating mine safety policies at MSHA have combined with insufficient numbers of inspectors and lax enforcement to intensify the dangers associated with the use of belt entry air.

In issuing that 2004 rule, MSHA decided that the use of modern air monitoring technologies had improved to a degree in recent years to sufficiently reduce the risk posed by belt air ventilation. But at Aracoma, the air-sensing technology failed. The agency put faith in presence of water systems to suppress the outbreak of fires. At Aracoma, the water system malfunctioned. Portions of a wall needed to separate the conveyor belt from the miners primary escapeway, although on the mine map, were missing.

At every turn, some safety measure that should have been taken to protect lives at that mine failed. Even the inspections, on both the state and federal levels, failed.

The problems in our Nation's coalfields are thickly layered and will take years to sufficiently unravel. It makes no sense for the MSHA to retain a rule that allows broad use of this dangerous ventilation method in the midst of an inspector shortage and an overhaul of the mine safety system.

I am at a loss to understand why MSHA has failed to withdraw the 2004 rule, even temporarily. The fact that it has failed to do so demonstrates to me that MSHA is still not putting its duty to protect our miners above the profits of the industry.

So today, Madam Speaker, I, along with my colleague from West Virginia, ALAN MOLLOHAN, am introducing the Federal Mine Ventilation Act of 2007. The bill simply requires the Secretary of Labor, "no later than 90 days after enactment of this Act," to revise: regulations to require, in any coal mine that belt entries "not be used to ventilate active working places." I note that it is my intention with this bill to return to the pre-2004 rulemaking procedure, where the use of belt-entry ventilation was generally prohibited, while retaining the petition process and the associated heightened safety controls.