

States is the right to enact a local budget and civil and criminal laws free from Federal interference. I have already introduced this bill's fraternal twin, the District of Columbia Budget Autonomy Act of 2007, cosponsored by Oversight and Government Reform Ranking Member TOM DAVIS.

Because the period of congressional review involves only legislative days, when Congress is in session, not ordinary calendar days, D.C. laws typically do not become law for months, not days. A required hold on all D.C. bills forces the D.C. City Council to pass most legislation using a cumbersome and complicated process in which bills are passed concurrently on an emergency, temporary, and permanent basis to ensure that the operations of the large and rapidly changing city continue uninterrupted, and because of the complications and time frames involved, some bills do not become law at all. The Legislative Autonomy Act would eliminate the need for the City Council to engage in this Byzantine process that often requires a two-thirds super majority even for ordinary legislation.

The legislative autonomy bill would eliminate the congressional review period for civil and criminal District acts of 30 days and 60 days respectively. I have repeatedly introduced today's legislative autonomy bill because it has long been obsolete, demeaning, and cumbersome, but also because Congress no longer uses the statute. Congress has eliminated the review or layover period as a way to review Council legislation, yet the Council continues to be bound by Section 602 of the Home Rule Act, absurdly continuing to abide by its awkward and debilitating rules because the law requires it. Our bill would do no more than align D.C. City Council practices.

Although control of the Congress changed in 1994 for the first time in 40 years, no resolution of disapproval has been heard in committee or used on the floor of either house. Instead of the cumbersome formal filing of bills that requires processing in the House and the Senate, the Congress has preferred to use appropriations or attachments. The District strongly opposes all methods of overturning its legitimate local legislation, but it is particularly unfair to require the City Council to engage in the tortuous process prescribed by the Home Rule Act that Congress itself has discarded. My bill would eliminate the formal review system that has died of old age and disuse. Congress has walked away from layover review and should allow the city to do the same.

Today's bill, of course, does not prevent review of District laws by Congress. Under Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, the House and the Senate could scrutinize every piece of legislation passed by the City Council, if desired, and could change or strike legislation under the plenary constitutional authority over the District. However, since the Home Rule Act became effective in 1974, of more than 2000 legislative acts that have been passed by the Council and signed into law by the Mayor, only three resolutions to disapproval of a D.C. bill have been enacted, and two of these involved a distinct federal interest. Federal law to correct for a federal interest, of course, would be appropriate for any jurisdiction, but placing a hold on 2000 bills has not only proved unnecessary, but has meant untold costs in money, staff, and wasted time to the District and the Congress. Although 32 years of Home Rule Act history shows that congressional review is unnecessary, this bill merely eliminates the automatic hold placed on local legislation and the need for the City Council to use a phantom process passed for the convenience of Congress that Congress has eliminated in all but law.

Congress continually urges the District government to pursue efficiency and savings. It is time for Congress to do its part to promote greater efficiency both here and in the District by streamlining its own redundant and discarded review processes. Eliminating the hold on D.C. legislation would not only save scarce D.C. taxpayer revenue, but would benefit the city's bond rating, which is effected by the shadow of congressional review that delays the certainty of finality to District legislation. At the same time, Congress would give up none of its plenary power because the Congress may intervene into any District matter at any time under the constitutional provisions.

The limited legislative autonomy granted in this bill would allow the District to realize the greater measure of meaningful self-government and Home Rule it deserves and has more than earned in the 32 years since the Home Rule Act became effective. This goal can be achieved without prejudice to congressional authority. I urge my colleagues to pass this important measure.

CONGRATULATING GEORGE URIBE  
AND MARGARET BINFORD

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 14, 2007*

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate George Uribe and Margaret Binford who were engaged to be married last night at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

The special moment occurred in Lady Chapel at 7 p.m. surrounded by Margaret's parents, Douglas and Randall Binford who flew in from San Antonio, Texas for the occasion.

The couple walked in the chapel, recited the Lord's prayer with the song "On Eagles Wings" playing in the background as George dropped to his knees and asked Margaret to marry him.

George is an Executive Vice-President and General Manager for a chain of radio stations and former U.S. Army Reserve soldier with the 77th Regional Readiness Command based at Fort Totten and Margaret is an interior designer and member of the Junior League.

Madam Speaker, I, along with the whole House, congratulate George and Margaret on their engagement and wish them happiness and love all the days of their lives.

A TRIBUTE TO DICK RICE

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 14, 2007*

Mr. SHUSTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Mr. Dick Rice of Bedford, Pennsylvania. Mr. Rice was a longtime Commissioner of Bedford County before his passing last spring. He was known for his boundless energy, his optimistic attitude, a wonderful singing voice and the many issues he championed as a leader of his community. One of those issues dear to Mr. Rice was education. He believed strongly in the importance of providing local, high quality post-secondary education at an affordable cost. But he also showed his commitment by making a real difference in the lives of students. He found joy in presenting students with scholarships, tuition assistance awards, and emergency book funding.

Mr. Rice played a critical role in the development of the Bedford County Campus of Al-

legany College. By serving on the Bedford County Regional Education Foundation he was able to help make significant accomplishments. When the Bedford County Campus was founded in 1990, Bedford County ranked 64th out of 67 Pennsylvania counties in the percentage of high school graduates pursuing post-secondary education. Today, Bedford County is ranked 34th. The presence of a local campus has encouraged many area students to begin or continue their educational journeys close to home. Since 1990, more than 6,500 people have taken classes through the Bedford County Campus. The Foundation has worked to provide more than \$190,000 to more than 700 of those students over the past 11 years. It is fitting that the Foundation has now established the Dick M. Rice Memorial Scholarship Endowment, to benefit Bedford County residents who attend Allegany College.

To cite each accomplishment and individual contribution that Dick has been a part of would take a very long time. His involvement in the educational community over the years has been immense and has touched numerous lives. We are all very grateful for his effort toward positive enrichment of Bedford County, and I offer my sincerest sympathies for the loss of such a great citizen.

TRAGEDY IN KHOJALY,  
AZERBAIJAN

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, February 15, 2007*

Mr. SHUSTER. Madam Speaker, one of our greatest strengths as elected officials is the opportunity to bring to light truths that are little known and command recognition.

Today, as the Co-chairman of the House Azerbaijan Caucus, I would like to bring to the attention of this body the tragedy that took place in Khojaly, Azerbaijan, a town and townspeople that were destroyed on February 26, 1992. Fifteen years later, there is little attention or interest paid to the plight of Khojaly outside of Azerbaijan.

Sadly, Khojaly, a town in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, now under the control of Armenian forces, was the site of the largest killing of ethnic Azerbaijani civilians.

According to Human Rights Watch and other international observers, the massacre was committed by the ethnic Armenian armed forces, reportedly with the help of the Russian 366th Motor Rifle Regiment. This crime led to the death of 613 civilians; including 106 women, 63 children and 70 elderly men; 1,275 persons were taken hostage, and the fate of more than 150 remains unknown.

As part of the population tried to escape the town of Khojaly, they encountered violent ambushes and were murdered. According to the Russian organization, Memorial, 200 Azerbaijani corpses were brought from Khojaly to Agdam within four days, and it was discovered that they were subjected to abuses, torture and mutilation. Human Rights Watch stated that "we place direct responsibility for the civilian deaths with Karabakh Armenian forces."

At the time, Newsweek Magazine reported: "Azerbaijan was a charnel house again last week: a place of mourning refugees and dozens of mangled corpses dragged to a makeshift morgue behind the mosque. They were ordinary Azerbaijani men, women and children