

573, Recognizing and commending the efforts of the United States public and advocacy groups to raise awareness about and help end the worsening humanitarian crisis and genocide in Darfur, Sudan, and for other purposes, I would have voted "yea."

Had I been present for rollcall No. 1012 on suspending the rules and passing H. Res. 747, Recognizing the religious and historical significance of the festival of Diwali, I would have voted "yea."

HONORING THE PORTLAND
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 30, 2007

Mr. GORDON of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor the members of the Portland Volunteer Fire Department for their selfless dedication and bravery in protecting our families, day and night.

The Portland Volunteer Fire Department serves 64 square miles of Sumner County outside the city limits. The department has received three U.S. Homeland Department of Security grants.

Without volunteer fire halls, like Portland, many places in the Sixth District would lack effective fire protection. In the state of Tennessee, over 70 percent of fire service is provided by volunteers. Among these volunteers, almost 75 percent work other daily jobs.

Ensuring our families' safety is not without risk. Sadly, an average of two firefighters die each year in Tennessee in the line of duty. In 2005, the Tennessee Fire Services and Code Academy dedicated a memorial on their main campus in Bell Buckle to honor those Tennessee firefighters who have died in the line of duty.

For their willingness to serve, the following members of the Portland Volunteer Fire Department deserve recognition: Chief Kenny Crowson, Asst. Chief George Knuckols, Captain Richard Lanius, Lt. Jessica Knuckols, Lt. Bobby Wilson, Tony Green, Brent Dyer, Josh Covington, Tav Matthews, Arthur Benjamin, Samantha Roberson, Scott Meece, Lindi Costner, Williams Keen, Russ Caudill, David Roberson, and Jim Youngblood.

IN MEMORY OF JOE CRAPA

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 30, 2007

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, we were saddened with the news last week that an outstanding public servant had lost his battle with cancer. Joseph R. Crapa was serving as the executive director of the bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) at the time of his passing on October 25. It was my privilege to know Joe and to work with him and his fellow commissioners and the staff at USCIRF in their dedicated efforts to protecting religious freedom throughout the world.

I would like to share the touching remarks our colleague Rep. DAVID OBEY gave at Joe's

funeral on October 29 at St. Peters Catholic Church on Capitol Hill. Joe had served as Congressman OBEY's chief of staff from 1987 to 1997, the last three years as Democratic counsel to the House Appropriations Committee. I also insert for the RECORD a news release from the USCIRF mourning the passing of its executive director.

We express our deepest condolences to Joe's wife of 40 years, Barbara Vaskis Crapa of Alexandria, Virginia; his son Judd, daughter-in-law Gretchen, and grandsons Sebastian and Baird.

REMARKS BY CONGRESSMAN DAVID OBEY—
FUNERAL FOR JOSEPH R. CRAPA

Joe Crapa could do just about everything! He taught high school.

He represented 1,000 teachers in budget negotiations.

He taught college courses in literature, writing, and government.

He was a fundraiser, and outreach director for the congressional Democratic leadership.

He was a key figure in a government relations firm.

He represented three separate government departments in dealing with Congress—Commerce, USAID, and EPA.

Building on his experience growing up in "rural" Brooklyn, he served as staff director for a House Agriculture Subcommittee.

He was staff director for two of the "easiest" people in Congress to work for—Chuck Schumer and me.

He worked at my side for 10 years.

Finally, he served as Executive Director of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

He did all of those jobs well.

He had a superb professional career! But WHAT he accomplished professionally in his life is not nearly as impressive as HOW he did it.

This is a tough and often indifferent town. If you are not alert, it can wear you down. Temptations always abound to cut corners and settle for boilerplate mediocrity. But not Joe!!

Joe was a tough, street smart pol in the best sense of that term, but what epitomized him most of all was his deep understanding of human nature and his unflagging honesty. I cannot tell you how many times he said to me, "Dave, that's the dumbest idea I've ever heard of." And sometimes his language wasn't that sweet. Joe was determined to strip away the irrelevant, the secondary, the trivial, in order to reach the fundamental.

Where did that come from? I think it came from a character and intellect that was expanded and burnished by his exposure to the questions that count by the Jesuits and then as a PhD student in literature, being exposed to the core realities of human experience.

As a practical, operational public man, he—with no guilt—accepted the compromises that are the stock in trade in politics. He understood what Will Rogers meant when he said, "When two people agree on everything, one of them is unnecessary." He understood, as my great Irish friend John Hume once told me, that "in a democracy politics is a substitute for violence."

But Joe also had rock hard convictions on a few essentials:

He fiercely believed that the widening gap between the most privileged and the poor is obscene.

He believed, as Bill Moyers has said, that politics "must be more than who gets what; that it should rise above the merely transactional and become transformational; that it must even the starting gate so that people equal in humanity but not in resources have a reasonable opportunity to pursue a full and decent life."

He passionately believed that every world citizen had a right to pursue their religious beliefs free from persecution or dictation and he was immensely proud of his relationship at the Commission with those of every philosophical bent, including Frank Wolf, who was similarly passionate.

He believed in a religion of tolerance and respect.

He worried that politicians could trivialize and cheapen religion. He did not believe it was legitimate for politicians to claim God as their own celestial party chairman, as a fellow New Yorker once warned against.

As Barbara pointed out Saturday, he believed that a respectful but separate relationship between church and state was essential to preserve and protect both religion and democracy.

Joe loved his last job, but I will always see him as a superb example of so many on Capitol Hill who never serve in public office, whose name is never on the door, who day in and day out love their country and try to make this a better world.

Because I believe so many of you see Joe the way I see him, I would like to share with you part of a letter I wrote to Joe when he went into the hospital for the last time:

"Joe—Judd was in my office yesterday and told me the latest on your health situation. I wish to God you had received better news. I'm about to leave to catch a plane for Wisconsin, but before I did I wanted to put a few thoughts down on paper so that you know how I feel about you.

When I was first interviewing you to run my office, my first impression in the first 10 minutes we talked was that there was no way in God's green earth that I could ever develop chemistry with this fast talking refugee from Brooklyn. I have been forever grateful that you proved me wrong.

I hope you know how grateful I am for everything you did with and for me. . . . I was blessed to have your energy, know how, insight, judgment, and wisdom. I hate to think how little I would have accomplished without having you beside me during these years.

But even more than that, I appreciate the personal support and friendship you gave me in those years, even down to today. Politics is a tough life and those of us who live it know how exposed and vulnerable we all are.

During these years, you were able to give me sound advice on every front, but the most valuable aspect of your counsel was the fact that underneath it all was a moral core that was true to both you and me. That is a special link between "brothers" that I hope we both treasure.

You are a great public servant, a great friend, and a great human being. Thank you for understanding and accepting my weakness and shortcomings and for enhancing my strengths. Please know that there are many, many, many people in this town who feel the same way about you. . . ."

And as we say in the House of Representatives, I ask unanimous consent that these sentiments be considered the views of all of you here who knew, respected, and loved him.

USCIRF MOURNS PASSING OF EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR JOSEPH CRAPA

WASHINGTON.—Joseph R. Crapa, the Executive Director of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, died Thursday after a struggle with cancer. Mr. Crapa, 63, had led the Commission since 2002.

"Joe had sharp political instincts but a soft personal touch," said Michael Cromartie, current Chair of the Commission. "He had an unwavering, principled commitment to advancing the work of this bipartisan Commission in protecting religious