

DTV DELAY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 27, 2009

Mr. MARKEY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend you for quickly putting this Senate legislation (S. 328) before the House for immediate consideration. This is a bill that is responsive to the slate of digital television issues confronting consumers and the television industry.

In several weeks, without immediate action, millions of Americans may remain unprepared for the digital television transition. Mr. Speaker, as you know, I have had a long interest in the digital television transition. I held the very first hearing on "High Definition TV" in October of 1987—more than 20 years ago. In 1990, I battled hard and successfully as then-Chairman of the House Telecommunications and Finance Subcommittee to get the Federal Communications Commission to switch from pursuing an "analog" HDTV standard to a "digital" standard. Moreover, I fought to build into the Telecomm Act in 1996 the appropriate way in which broadcasters could utilize "spectrum flexibility" to multiplex the digital signal into several video programming channels or offer wireless interactive television or information services. And I pushed unsuccessfully in the context of the 1997 budget battles to prohibit the sale of "analog-only" televisions by the year 2000—an amendment that was opposed by every Republican in our Committee markup in 1997. The result was over a hundred million analog-only sets were sold into the marketplace even as the government was stipulating it intended to turn off the analog TV signal. The failure to mandate "dual tuner" TVs sooner has compounded the difficulty of this transition immeasurably by increasing the base of TV receivers that need converter boxes to receive digital TV signals.

Most recently, for the last two years as the Telecommunications and Internet Subcommittee Chairman, I convened six DTV hearings, requested and received three Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports, and wrote numerous oversight letters to the FCC, to NTIA, and to industry and consumer representatives in headlong pursuit of ensuring a successful digital television transition on February 17th.

At the last DTV hearing that we held the second week of September—just after the Wilmington, North Carolina switch-over test—the GAO testified:

"NTIA is effectively implementing the converter box subsidy program, but its plans to address the likely increase in coupon demand as the transition nears remain unclear. . . . With a spike in demand likely as the transition date nears, NTIA has no specific plans to address an increase in demand; therefore, consumers might incur significant wait time before they receive coupons as the transition nears and might lose television service during the time they are waiting for the coupons."

In response, I asked the Acting NTIA Administrator to give the Subcommittee a contingency plan for dealing with the expected surge in coupons within 30 days. Now, that contingency plan did not arrive in 30 days. Instead, it arrived to us on November 6th—just after

Election Day. The NTIA's "Final Phase" plan did not echo the GAO's alarm bells, but rather stated the following:

"This Plan demonstrates that the Coupon Program has both sufficient funds and system processing capabilities to achieve this goal . . . and to do so without the creation a large backlog. Also, NTIA has built flexibility into the Program to respond to various or unexpected events. Moreover, based on actual, cumulative redemption data, NTIA would not exhaust the authorized \$1.34 billion in coupon funding despite increased demand leading up to the analog shut-down on February 17th, and, in fact, may return as much as \$340 million to the U.S. Treasury."

That's from the NTIA just over two months ago. "No problem," the agency is saying. In essence the agency is telling Congress, "We have a plan to deal with the surge and we don't need any more money. No large backlog. And we'll have hundreds of millions of dollars left over."

Now, why is this important? It is important because we were actually in session in November. We could have acted during the "lame duck" session if the Bush Administration had said, "yes, we will likely have a short-fall", or "please, Congress, let's err on the side of caution and budget a couple hundred million more just in case . . .". Yet NTIA told us all just the opposite. The agency said everything was fine and they didn't need additional money for coupons.

In late December, I asked for an urgent status update on the program. That's when NTIA wrote back to me—on December 24th—stating that a waiting list was going to begin in January of this year because the coupon program was hitting its funding ceiling. The agency indicated that to solve this issue and spend up to the \$1.34 Billion in the underlying statute for coupons that another 250 million dollars at a minimum might be needed. And that amount would not necessarily reflect the actual demand for coupons the agency was newly projecting. The waiting list now represents approximately 3 million coupons.

In an attempt to respond quickly, I reached out the first week we returned here in January to Ranking Member JOE BARTON (R-TX) and said if we work together on an accounting fix we could start to address the waiting list issue and get the coupons flowing to consumers again and buy some time. I want to thank Rep. BARTON for his willingness to proceed on such a bill.

But that effort has simply become overtaken by events. If we passed it and also gave NTIA a couple hundred million dollars for additional coupons in a measure that passed through the House and through the Senate today, and arrived to the President's desk this evening, we simply wouldn't be able to address the backlog and get coupons out to people who have requested them by February 17th.

Not every media market will be as unprepared as others on February 17th. I know that in the Boston market, our local commercial and noncommercial broadcasters, as well as our local cable operators, have worked diligently to be ready on February 17th and I commend them for their model efforts. Yet even in Boston, it is important to note that a recent test brought a flood of calls to consumer call centers from citizens confused about or unprepared for the switchover. Many other media markets, in part due to the demographic makeup of such markets, will have an

even greater risk of significant dislocation without immediate action. The Bush Administration has simply left us with so little time to make the needed adjustments on a national basis absent a short, one-time delay.

So, although this is the last place we all wanted to be, and in spite of the fact that we toiled mightily to make this effort work, it is my judgment that a short delay is in the public interest in order to protect consumers. I urge passage of this emergency DTV legislation.

LAW ENFORCEMENT STATUS FOR
LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I recently reintroduced, along with my colleague JOHN MCHUGH, The Law Enforcement Officers Equity Act (H.R. 673). The purpose of this bill is simply to give law enforcement status to all federal law enforcement officers!

Many federal officials—for example, the Border Patrol—are classified as "law enforcement officers," for the purposes of determining salary and retirement benefits. But many other officers—such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Inspectors, Veterans' Affairs Police Officers, U.S. Mint Police Officers, Internal Revenue Officers, Customs and Border Protection Seized Property Specialists, and police officers in about two dozen other agencies—do not have equal pay and benefits status.

The tragic irony, Madam Speaker, is that the only time these officers are classified as law enforcement officers is when they are killed in the line of duty. Then their names are inscribed on the wall of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial right here in Washington.

Let me say that again. It is only when they are killed that they are called law enforcement officers, and that is a tragic irony.

My district encompasses the entire California-Mexico border and is home to two of the busiest border crossings in the entire world, so I am very familiar with the work of our nation's border inspectors. They wear bulletproof vests, they carry firearms, and, unfortunately, have to use them. Most importantly, these inspectors are subject to the same risks as other officers with whom they serve side-by-side. However, they are not eligible for early retirement and other benefits, which are designed to maintain a young and vigorous law enforcement workforce that we need to combat those who pose life-threatening risks to our society.

The Law Enforcement Officers Equity Act will provide well-deserved pay and retirement benefits to the officers protecting our borders, our ports of entry, our military and veterans' installations and other sensitive government buildings. The costs of these benefits would likely be off-set by savings in training costs and increased revenue collection. The bill will also reduce turnover, increase yield, decrease recruitment and development costs and enhance the retention of a well-trained and experienced workforce.

Madam Speaker, the simple fact is that these officers have dangerous jobs and deserve to be recognized as law enforcement officers, just like others with whom they serve,

side by side, and who share the same level of risk. I encourage my colleagues to join me and Mr. McHUGH in co-sponsoring, the Law Enforcement Officers Equity Act. The valiant officers who protect us deserve no less.

IN TRIBUTE TO JEWEL PEDI

HON. ELTON GALLEGLY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Mr. GALLEGLY. Madam Speaker, I rise in tribute to my longtime friend Jewel PEDI, a person of enormous intelligence and drive, who is retiring at the tender age of 83 to spend well-earned time with her family.

More than 30 years ago, Jewel founded FOOD Share with a small group of like-minded members of the Ventura County, CA, community. The structure she built should ensure its survival for many years to come.

Jewel's dedication comes from a compassion rooted in her faith. That faith led her to work 3 years with state lawmakers on farm bills; to build coalitions with some 200 other non-profit agencies; and to step up to help those in need during the Northridge earthquake, southern California's numerous wildfires, the La Conchita landslide, and hurricanes across the Nation.

Along the way she has been honored with the American Red Cross 4th Annual Clara Barton Award; the city of Ventura Humanitarian of the Year Award; the P.W. Gillibrand Company, Inc., Humanitarian of the Year Award, among others.

Jewel is moving to Bullhead City, AZ, to be closer to her children. While retiring from her current calling, her faith is leading her to another. A pastor, Jewel will perform weddings; and, she said, she will see if another calling awaits her.

Madam Speaker, I know my colleagues will join my wife, Janice, and me in thanking Jewel for making Ventura County a stronger and more compassionate community and in wishing her Godspeed in her retirement.

NATIONAL BLOOD DONOR MONTH
HONORS FLORIDA BLOOD SERVICES
VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

HON. C. W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, The foundation of our nation is built upon one person helping another in their time of greatest need. This month we honor those volunteers who "Give the Gift of Life" during National Blood Donor Month.

Florida Blood Services, which I have the privilege to represent in St. Petersburg, Florida, provides life-saving blood products for the 14 counties of the Tampa Bay, Northwest Florida and Southern Alabama areas, supplying 61 hospitals and ambulatory care centers. This fine organization also tests and screens blood for 30 East Coast blood centers

and medical facilities from Maine to the north all the way to Puerto Rico to the south.

The heart of Florida Blood Service's operations is its volunteers. Last year, 100,000 blood and platelet donors rolled up their sleeves to donate one pint at a time to save the life of complete strangers near and far away. This includes some remarkable individuals who have made blood donation their passion. Frank Knight, III has donated 96 gallons of blood, Bobbie Bernstein 86 gallons, and my former District Director and now the Vice Mayor of Clearwater, George Cretokos, has donated 36 gallons of blood.

Florida Blood Services has an outstanding staff and Board of Directors that manages donor recruitment, collection, distribution and quality control programs. Don Doddridge is the Chief Executive Officer and this year also serves as President of America's Blood Centers. He has devoted his entire working career to promoting the need for blood donation and to ensure the safety of the procedure and the quality of the products. It has been a pleasure to work with Don and his staff over the years on a number of federal issues related to blood collection. This includes Don's work to focus national attention on ensuring that blood collection is a key part of our nation's disaster contingency planning and that plans are in place to be able to distribute blood products to areas in crisis. He has also seen that Florida Blood Services and other national blood banks are available to provide critical blood products to those serving in uniform here and abroad.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I want to commend Florida Blood Services for instilling in our nation's youth the need to serve others, in this case as blood donors. Through its unique high school leadership program, Florida Blood Services recruits high school students to organize and sponsor blood drives in high schools throughout the four-county Tampa Bay area. It was a real honor for me last April to be asked to speak to its High School Leadership Conference where they brought together more than 400 students who had led efforts in their schools. Together, students at these school-based drives donated 27,000 units of blood.

Madam Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Florida Blood services and their volunteer donors of all ages. Like blood donors all across America, they "Give the Gift of Life" every day to complete strangers out of a sense of service and compassion. We honor all these heroes during this National Blood Donor Month.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS
OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

SPEECH OF

HON. MARK E. SOUDER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Mr. SOUDER. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 39, and specifically in support of the work being done at St. Charles Borromeo in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

According to the 1972 statement by National Conference of Catholic Bishops: "The educational efforts of the Church, therefore, must

be directed to forming persons-in-community; for the education of the individual Christian is important not only to his solitary destiny, but also the destinies of the many communities in which he lives."

Madam Speaker, since its founding the St. Charles Borromeo school has been enriching the lives of individuals across Northeastern Indiana. With its emphasis on the traditions and principles of the Catholic faith, the school seeks to infuse in its students a sense of obligation to their community.

Elementary and Middle School are the early steps many individuals take on their way to academic achievement and lifelong learning. With its focus on math, computer training and science, St. Charles Borromeo equips students with the skills needed to thrive in a 21st century economy. Furthermore, by requiring all seventh and eighth grade students to study a foreign language, the school helps prepare students for the globalized marketplace.

As the mission of St. Charles Borromeo states, "all children deserve a safe, loving, and respectful environment where children and faculty can grow spiritually and academically." Madam Speaker, I second these thoughts and am grateful for the contributions the faculty and staff at St. Borromeo make in the lives of young people. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this resolution and the efforts of Catholic schools across the country.

HONORING REVEREND CLAUDE
BLACK JUNIOR

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Mr. GONZALEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today just days after the historic inauguration of our country's 44th President to honor a similarly honorable and trailblazing individual, Reverend Claude Black Jr. of San Antonio. On Sunday, January 18th, 2009, Rev. Black will be honored at Realizing the Dream's second annual Holiday Commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with the organization's Testament of Hope Award. I join the organization in offering my congratulations for all his achievements and contributions to our country.

Born in a segregated San Antonio in 1916, Rev. Black's lifelong commitment to civil rights, justice, and equality is well-deserving of this recognition and honor. From leading marches for civil rights to attending the White House's Conference on Civil Rights in 1966 with President Lyndon Johnson, he has always been at the forefront of the fight for equality. And as the first African American Mayor Pro Tem of San Antonio in 1974, he paved the way for future African Americans to seek elected office and rightfully participate in our democracy.

Rev. Black is a hero and inspiration to all Americans. His efforts to better our society are not only worthy of this recognition but also our sincere gratitude. I am honored to call him a constituent, congratulate him for this recognition, and thank him for all he has done on behalf our community and our country.