

BUSH BUDGET BASHES PILT

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 12, 2002

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, as February 14th approaches it seems appropriate to examine the budget proposed by President Bush to see who gets Valentines and who does not. The lucky ones include the very wealthy who stand to receive huge windfalls as part of the President's massive tax cut. Those who stand to lose include average taxpayers. Take, for example, the President's unwise cuts to the PILT Program.

The federal government owns or manages about 30 percent of the land in this country. Unlike private land owners, however, Uncle Sam is not required to pay property taxes to counties or local governments. Given that such property taxes are the lifeblood of many county budgets, Congress created the Payments in Lieu of Taxes, or PILT, Program. PILT is a formula grant program which reimburses local governments for these lost property tax revenues. Created in 1976, the program accounts for a substantial share of many county budgets, particularly in Western states where the percentage of federal ownership is highest.

Now, there are obviously advantages to having the federal government as a neighbor. Many local communities thrive thanks to tourism dollars attracted by National Parks or federally managed recreation areas. And we all benefit when federal land managers work to protect and preserve our natural resources for future generations to enjoy. But the revenue loss experienced by some local communities is very real and by proposing to slash the amount available to reimburse these communities, the Bush Administration is not being a good neighbor at all.

Such a cut is really just a tax increase on local taxpayers. PILT funds replace lost county revenue and if the Federal Government no longer pays its share, those governments have no choice but to raise local property taxes. Apparently, the President feels that while wealthy Americans' income taxes are too high, local property taxes are not high enough.

This is particularly surprising given that the President claims to be a champion of local government. PILT funding flows directly to local communities and is available for any government purpose, no strings attached. In my home state, the President's plan means that the counties in West Virginia which receive PILT would have \$287,000 less to spend on schools, public safety and other local needs.

Perhaps the President is counting on Congress to come to the rescue. The Bush Administration proposed cutting PILT last year and Members of Congress, who care about their counties, stepped in and restored the funding. If that is the plan, next time you hear that the President wants to save money and Congress wants to spend it, remember that PILT is part of the President's "savings."

In my view, the Federal Government should continue striving to be a good neighbor and maintain PILT payments at their current levels. Unfortunately, the Bush Budget plan hits the wealthy with Cupid's arrow but gives local taxpayers the shaft.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM R. MILLS, JR.

HON. GARY G. MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 12, 2002

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to and honor the accomplishments of William R. Mills, Jr., of Yorba Linda, California.

Bill graduated from the Colorado School of Mines with a degree in engineering in 1959, and earned his masters degree in civil engineering from Loyola University in Los Angeles in 1976.

Bill spent seventeen years with the engineering firm, Planning Research, before breaking off to become an independent water consultant. For the past fourteen years he has presided over the Orange County Water District as its General Manager. Bill is a Diplomate for the American Academy of Environmental Engineers, and Fellow for the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Bill is world renowned for the "Water Factory 21" water filtration system used to purify water used in irrigation in Southern California. This groundwater renovation reservoir provides about 75 percent of the water for the area's 2 million citizens. He has helped promote this technology as far away as Saudi Arabia and has effectively demonstrated this technology to be main stream in the water industry.

Bill's accolades include being named Water Leader of the Year in 1992, Outstanding Member of the WaterReuse Association of California in 1994, and the Orange County Engineer of the Year in 1996. He earned the Outstanding Member of the American Desalting Association in 1994 and was later awarded their Presidential Award for Distinguished Service in 1996. Bill's work also earned him the Leadership in Engineering award for Water Resources from the Institute for the Advancement of Engineering in 1999.

Perhaps Bill's greatest accomplishment, though, is his family. Bill and his wife have reared three fine sons who have rewarded him with his greatest pleasure. Bill looks forward to retirement most so that he can begin to enjoy time with his three grandchildren.

I would like to thank Bill for his dedicated service to Southern California and his progressive leadership in addressing the area's tremendous water concerns. I wish him the best in his retirement.

TRIBUTE TO NEA CHAIRMAN,
MICHAEL P. HAMMOND**HON. STEPHEN HORN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 12, 2002

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, with the passing of Michael P. Hammond, the arts community has lost a true gentleman and first-rate leader. After only one week at his post as chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, Chairman Hammond left us before he had the chance to apply his wide-ranging knowledge, leadership and vision to the betterment of the arts community.

Just last month, I had the pleasure of meeting with Michael Hammond. He shared with me some of his goals for his new role as NEA chairman. He helped to attract more children to the arts community at an earlier age. And he wanted to generate broader interest in the arts among the general public. I have no doubt that he would have accomplished those goals. He just had that rare gift that you just knew would make a difference. His unique accomplishments as a musician, educator, and advocate for the arts will be very difficult to replace.

Michael Hammond dedicated his life to his love of music and the arts. He was a renowned conductor, composer, and educator and had a keen interest in the relationship between neuroscience and music. He was the former dean of Rice University's Shepherd School of Music and was the founding Dean of Music for the new arts campus of the State University of New York at Purchase, New York, where he later served as president of the University.

A Rhodes scholar at Oxford, and educated at Lawrence University and Delhi University in India, Michael Hammond also taught neuroanatomy and physiology at the University of Wisconsin. As a composer and conductor, he wrote numerous scores for theatre here and abroad. He founded the Prague Mozart Academy in the Czech Republic and served on the Board of the Houston Symphony.

Mr. Speaker, we struggle to express feelings of grief, sorrow and appreciation for his extraordinary man who gave so much to the arts community and was taken from us far too early in life. It would be a fitting tribute to Michael Hammond for those of us who share his passion for the arts to do all we can to carry on his vision to build a greater appreciation for the arts in this country.

TRIBUTE TO HILDA GIBBS

HON. KAREN MCCARTHY

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 12, 2002

Ms. MCCARTHY of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Hilda Gibbs on her 87th birthday. Hilda has been a pillar of the Plaza Westport community of Kansas City since moving there in 1962. She is currently President of the Plaza Westport Neighborhood Association and has held this post for over 10 years. Her genuine concern and caring for her neighbors have made her tenure as a president a gift that her fellow residents will treasure for a long time.

Hilda Gibbs was born Hilda Lutz in Freiburg, Germany in 1915. After growing up in Germany, she emigrated to France where she trained as a secretary for two years. Upon leaving France, Hilda emigrated to England and served as a nanny. In 1939, she came to New York to join her sister, Ida. She underwent training to become a hostess because at this time you could not waitress in a restaurant without formal training. While in New York, Hilda met and fell in love with her late husband, Bob Gibbs. They were married for 42 years. He was the love of her life, and she was of his.

In 1962, Hilda moved with Bob to Kansas City where she has lived ever since. Since becoming the President of the Plaza Westport