

26 years. A graduate of the University of Kansas and of KU's School of Law, he was a senior partner in the law firm of Meeks, Sutherland and McIntosh when he was appointed by Governor John Carlin in 1980 to fill a vacancy on the bench created by the death of his father, Cordell D. Meeks, Sr., the first African-American district court judge in Kansas.

Described as a "firm but fair" judge who maintained strict courtroom decorum, Judge Meeks also served on the boards of numerous community groups and civic organizations, including Children's Mercy Hospital, Rockhurst University, and the Liberty Memorial Association. He also served as a colonel and senior military judge in the Kansas Army National Guard. In 1999, he became the first African-American to serve on the board of the Truman Museum, a position he considered an honor because his father had been a friend of President Truman. In 2001 he was elected president of the American Lung Association.

Additionally, Judge Meeks was an active alumnus of the University of Kansas, where he served on the advisory board for minority development for KU's graduate school and for KU's Edwards Campus in Overland Park. In 2002, he received the alumni association's Fred Ellsworth Medallion, the organization's highest award for service to the University. As KU Chancellor Robert Hemenway said upon learning of Judge Meeks' death, "I know of no one who better understood than Cordell the importance of higher education and the door to opportunities that it opens. Cordell was an inspirational leader for racial equality in our region. He motivated us all to do better. We will miss him dearly."

Mr. Speaker, I was privileged to have known Cordell Meeks personally for many years. We first met during my junior year at the University of Kansas, where we both served as counselors in Joseph R. Pearson Residence Hall, and we remained close friends since that time, as we both progressed through careers in law. Judge Cordell Meeks truly was a well-respected member of our community whose life and work were centered around the basic ideals he held dear: justice, hope, strength, community and family. He was a valued friend and I know that all members of the Kansas City community join with me in sharing our thoughts and prayers with his widow, Mary Anne, and their son, Cordell, III, during their time of loss.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 10, 2006

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, June 29, 2006, I was absent for a vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall 357.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ELVIRA "VERA" DURAZO

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 10, 2006

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Elvira "Vera" M. Durazo of El Monte, California, a dedicated and compassionate woman known as the "Grandmother" of Mexican cuisine in the greater El Monte area, who passed away on June 24, 2006.

Vera opened the first Mexican food restaurant and tortilla factory in El Monte known as "Durazo's", bringing a taste of Mexico to the San Gabriel Valley. After many successful years at Durazo's, Vera turned her focus to contributing to the community as a volunteer. For more than three decades, Vera assisted the sight impaired and homebound elderly. She also organized the Convalescent Patient Project, which now gives more than 150 patients birthday and Christmas gifts in the El Monte area per year, and volunteered at health fairs and clinics, the monthly mini-mart at the Hack Crippen Senior Center, and Meals on Wheels.

Vera was particularly committed to the elderly in the local Latino community and founded the Club Hispano Americano. Club Hispano Americano is the largest Hispanic philanthropic organization for the elderly in the San Gabriel Valley.

Vera is survived by one son Edward Durazo, two daughters Rebecca Ramirez and Evelyn Prudhomme, eight grandchildren, thirteen great-grandchildren and four step-great-grandchildren. She will be dearly missed by her family, friends, and the community.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5638, PERMANENT ESTATE TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2006

SPEECH OF

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 22, 2006

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill.

I believe that estate taxes at 2001 levels were inherently unfair. And I voted to reform those levels by increasing the exemption and lowering the tax rate through 2010. Today, I would vote for all estate tax reform that permanently raised the exemption to \$3.5 million for individuals and \$7 million for couples, while lowering the rate to 45 percent.

Unfortunately, the majority has refused to even entertain a compromise. In fact, they won't even allow us to vote on a compromise, even though they could vote against it. They insist that we either take or leave their bill: a \$700 billion cost, added to an existing \$8 trillion debt.

Why do we need compromise? Why can't I support the legislation before us today? For three reasons.

First, at a time of war that has been described as "generational", when we experienced shortages on the battlefield, funding cuts in Pentagon weapons systems, and cuts

in homeland security funding to my constituents in New York because of budget strains, adding an additional \$700 billion in estate tax relief is irresponsible. How is it that we have \$700 billion for estate tax relief, but just cut funds for a critical Air Force advanced energy program? Why is it that we slashed college loan programs because we had to save \$12 billion, but we have \$700 billion for estate tax repeal? How is it possible to defend cutting Homeland Security funds to NY by \$80 million because we can't afford it, and then pass a bill that spends \$700 billion to repeal the estate tax?

Second, I have been fighting for meaningful and permanent relief of the Alternative Minimum Tax, which has become the largest middle class tax increase in history. The Administration and Republican leadership of Congress has not agreed to real alternative minimum tax relief. All we can afford they say, is a temporary bandage every year. The cost of the permanent AMT reform that Representative LOWEY and I have introduced is about \$400 billion. The cost of permanent repeal of the estate tax is \$700 billion. Why is it that we can't afford tax relief for millions of middle class families, but we can afford twice the cost for tax relief to several thousand estates?

Third, a \$700 billion liability to the Federal Treasury represents a staggering unfunded liability for our children. Let me prove my point in specific and non-partisan terms.

Recently I attended a meeting with the Comptroller General of the United States. He was chosen to this position by President Bush, the Republican Speaker of the House, and the Republican Leader of the Senate.

The Comptroller described the long term fiscal position of the Federal Treasury. Over the next 30 years, Federal revenues will remain fairly constant as a percentage of the federal budget. On the spending side—even if we do what we have never been able to do, and keep spending at the level of inflation—our total costs will skyrocket, particularly with the rapid growth of our aging population. The resulting gap between revenues and expenses will be so huge that in 2040, the entire Federal budget will be adequate to pay for only two things: interest on debt, and a small piece of social security. Everything else—the military, veterans benefits, the FBI; the CIA, education, health, homeland security—will require either a catastrophic tax increase on our children, or abolition by our children. And today, we add \$700 billion to their problem.

Mr. Speaker, we can provide estate tax relief that is affordable and fair, by allowing a vote on Mr. POMEROY'S substitute. But denied that opportunity by the leadership, I cannot support a "take it leave it" bill. Not when, by taking this, I leave the real bill to our children.

A TRIBUTE TO ALAN SENITT

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 10, 2006

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. ENGEL and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I'd like to express our shock and horror at the death of Alan Senitt in Washington, DC, early yesterday morning.