

SUPPORT OF A RESOLUTION TO PERMIT DELEGATES AND THE RESIDENT COMMISSIONER TO THE CONGRESS TO CAST VOTES IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE ON THE STATE OF THE UNION

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 6, 2011

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the resolution introduced by my good friend and colleague, Minority Whip STENY HOYER of Maryland that would restore the voting rights for the Delegates and Resident Commissioner during Committee of the Whole proceedings during the 112th Congress.

As I stated yesterday, the rules for the 112th Congress leave this body less transparent and less responsive to our constituents. Eliminating the right for Delegates and the Resident Commissioner to vote in the Committee of the Whole deprives our constituents with the understanding of how we stand on important issues. The fact that our vote in the Committee of the Whole is symbolic is further evidence of why such a right does not diminish the role of other Members of the House of Representatives; in fact, allowing us the right to a symbolic vote enhances long-cherished values of this body.

Moreover, affording us the right to vote in the Committee of the Whole ensures that equities of our constituents are covered in legislation that is pending or being debated by this body. In June 2009 the House of Representatives debated and voted on H.R. 2346, the Supplemental Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2009. The bill contained language that allowed the transfer of detainees from Guantanamo Bay to any of the territories and it did not provide the Governor of each respective territory with the right to be notified of any such transfer. Our right to vote in the Committee of the Whole afforded us the opportunity to raise this matter before the entire body and subsequent legislation that contained such transfer prohibition language did expressly include the territories. Our right to vote in the Committee of the Whole afforded us all the ability to represent the interests of our respective territories. Our voice was heard and changes were made.

Many men and women in uniform come from the territories and the District of Columbia. Many have sacrificed for our country, and, in fact, the per capita rate of deaths for servicemembers from the territories is higher than most states. Yet despite the patriotism and service that men and women from the territories show, the new leadership of the House of Representatives saw it fit to take away one of our most basic rights—the right to vote and effectively represent the needs of our constituents.

I also enter into the RECORD letters the Delegates and the Resident Commissioner sent to the leaders requesting an opportunity to address this rules change prior to the convening of the 112th Congress. Regrettably, the opportunity to address this matter prior to yesterday's convening was not presented. Therefore, and based on the action taken yesterday,

I stand in support of the resolution introduced today by Mr. HOYER and hope that it will be brought to the floor for a vote in the near future.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, December 22, 2010.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
*Speaker-designate, House of Representatives,
The Capitol, Washington, DC.*

DEAR SPEAKER-DESIGNATE BOEHNER: Now that a summary of proposed Rules for the 112th Congress is circulating and we find that the rule enabling the Delegates and Resident Commissioner to vote in the Committee of the Whole is slated for elimination, we write to express our concern and renew our request for a meeting with you to discuss this matter prior to January 5, 2011.

You will no doubt recall that we wrote last month to urge retention of this rule. We reiterate that this symbolic exercise of our country's democratic principles has great meaning to our more than four million constituents, who fight and die alongside their fellow Americans residing in the 50 States to secure the right to vote for people residing in such distant lands as Iraq and Afghanistan.

While this issue has been viewed through a partisan lens in the past, largely because none of us is a member of the Republican Conference, we respectfully submit that this fact should not be used to preclude us from exercising this most fundamental function of representative democracies, especially through a procedure which by its design can never be determinative of any vote.

Therefore, we ask that you retain this existing rule in the Rules package your Conference is preparing for adoption on opening day of the 112th Congress. Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. We look forward to continuing to work with you on behalf of our constituents, your fellow Americans residing in the U.S. territories.

Sincerely,

PEDRO R. PIERLUISI,
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO,
ENI F.H. FALDOMAVAEGA,
DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN,
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO
SABLAN.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, November 19, 2010.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
*Speaker-designate, House of Representatives,
The Capitol, Washington, DC.*

DEAR SPEAKER-DESIGNATE BOEHNER: As the Republican Conference prepares its package of proposed House Rules for consideration on the opening day of the 112th Congress, we respectfully urge you to retain the rule that enables the Delegates and the Resident Commissioner to vote when the House resolves into the Committee of the Whole, and that provides for an automatic revote in the full House when the votes of the Delegates or the Resident Commissioner are decisive.

This rule has been found to pass constitutional muster by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. See *Michel v. Anderson*, 14 F.3d 623 (D.C. Cir. 1994). It has not impeded the work of the House during the three Congresses in which it has been in place: the 103rd Congress (1993–1994), the 110th Congress (2007–2008), and the current 111th Congress (2010–2011). The rule has been carefully crafted to allow the Majority to decide when it is appropriate for legislation to be considered in the Committee of the Whole and, more specifically, to be subject to delegate voting. Therefore, if the Majority determines that a particular bill is better considered without delegate voting, the Rules Committee can report a rule that provides for

voting to be structured accordingly—as occurred in several instances during the 110th and 111th Congresses. We deeply appreciate that your Conference did not seek to repeal or otherwise alter this rule when the Ranking Republican Member of the Rules Committee offered his Motion to Commit with instructions at the start of the 111th Congress. We hope that your proposed Rules package for the 112th Congress will be consistent with that prior position.

There are compelling reasons to retain the rule. First, we know that your Conference, like our Caucus, values and seeks to promote open and transparent government. Our constituents can more effectively hold us accountable if there is a record of how we vote on legislation considered by the House. Although we recognize that the vote conferred upon us by this rule is essentially symbolic, it has genuine meaning for those we represent. The rule obligates us to take public positions on issues of national importance that will affect the lives of our constituents. This enables our constituents to better evaluate the quality of our representation.

In addition, we believe this is an issue of fundamental fairness with profound moral implications. Our constituents are part of the American family. They pledge allegiance to the same flag and serve alongside their fellow countrymen in our nation's armed forces. To deprive their duly elected representatives of this small privilege, which does no harm to this institution, would send a message of exclusion to Americans living in the territories and in the District of Columbia. We implore you not to send that message.

Sincerely,

PEDRO R. PIERLUISI,
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO,
ENI F.H. FALDOMAVAEGA,
DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN,
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO
SABLAN.

REMEMBERING EDWARD
STRINGER

HON. MIKE QUIGLEY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 6, 2011

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember the courage and honor the life of firefighter Edward Stringer. Edward was killed in the line of duty on Dec. 23, when the roof of a burning South Shore building collapsed. He was 47 years old.

Edward often joked that he was the guy running into burning buildings when everyone else was running out. That was the case on the afternoon of the tragedy that took his life. Worried there might be a homeless man or woman seeking shelter from the cold in the abandoned building, his commitment to the Chicagoans he swore to protect was far stronger than any sense of self-preservation.

A 12-year veteran of the Chicago Fire Department, Edward worked out of the firehouse at 63rd and Dorchester. He was a lifetime South Sider, a proud Chicagoan and an American hero. His bravery will never be forgotten by the city he gave his life to protect.

May Mr. Stringer rest in peace.