COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF
HON. DENNIS MOORE
OF KANSAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 19, 2001

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my grave concerns with the bill before us today. I have seen firsthand and know well the vital role that churches, mosques, synagogues and other religious institutions play in our communities. I believe, however, that both H.R. 7 and the Democratic substitute offer us a false choice and fail to protect our constitutional rights.

For more than 200 years, the U.S. Constitution has protected religious freedom by upholding each American’s right to free exercise of religion. However, a linkage exists between church and state. H.R. 7 would break down that historic wall.

Although the bill specifically states that government funds should not be used for worship or proselytization, meaningful safeguards to prevent such activity are not included in the provisions. Indeed, as this bill is written, safeguards would be impossible. For example, if the purpose of a program is to end addiction by the adoption of a specific faith, it is impossible to separate the government service (drug and alcohol counseling) from the message of faith (proselytization). Even an “opt-out,” which provides for a secular alternative to the services, does not change the fact that this bill provides government funding for religious activities.

Furthermore, both H.R. 7 and the Democratic substitute would provide direct funding to houses of worship. H.R. 7 gives federal agencies, at the discretion of the Secretary, the ability to take all the funding for a program and convert it into vouchers to religious organizations. This alarming provision takes $47 billion in federal funds away from the oversight of elected representatives in Congress. Furthermore, the bill expressly permits federal funding of worship and proselytization with these “indirect funds.” The Democratic substitute, although it attempts to close the voucher loophole, does not alleviate my concerns with direct government funding of religion.

I am also deeply concerned that efforts to make religious organizations dependent on federal funds will cause them to lose their independence, autonomy and unique voice in our society. With public funding comes public scrutiny and accountability. Also, the provisions of H.R. 7 will inevitably put the federal government in the position of choosing one religion over another in awarding federal grants and contracts. Despite the fact that the bill assures us that the awarding of charitable choice funds would not constitute an “endorsement” of a certain religion, it takes little to imagine what will happen when a federal agency is forced to choose between two equally meritorious grants from different religious groups. Even worse will be the consequences when a cabinet secretary, by fiat, turns the program into a “voucher.” A more egregious violation of the Establishment Clause can hardly be imagined.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

I cannot state strongly enough my belief that religious organizations are an important part of our social fabric and provide absolutely vital services to people in need. Those services already can be provided by religious organizations in a way that is constitutionally sound. I encourage my colleagues to take this bill back to the drawing board and build on that record of service.

HONORING OTELLO AND CAROLYN MASSONI ON THEIR 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO
OF CONNECTICUT
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2001

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to extend my sincere congratulations to two outstanding community members and my good friends, Otello and Carolyn Massoni, as they celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Married for a half a century, they are a wonderful couple who have both served for their community in Wallingford, Connecticut.

Perhaps best known for their incredible working relationship, Otello and Carolyn are a true inspiration for any couple. They have worked on a variety of projects—always together—though their most popular are their beautiful reproductions of Faberge Eggs and fabulous dollhouses.

Their dollhouse hobby began when Otello was recuperating from a surgical procedure. Working from a kit, Otello has built a number of breathtaking buildings in a wide variety of architectural styles. Carolyn took on the responsibility of decorating the houses. From hand-made curtains trimmed with lace to the smallest details on a miniature reproduction of a Sears catalog, no detail has been overlooked. Victorian, Gothic, Colonial and Tudor styles, as well as some cottages, a gazebo, and even a brick outhouse, Otello and Carolyn’s collection is truly impressive.

Intricate detail, unparalleled patience, love and care—characteristics similar to the traditional ingredients thought to be included in marriage—have gone into each of the delicate reproductions of Faberge Eggs that decorate the Massoni’s home. This remarkable hobby has drawn much attention to Otello and Carolyn’s creative talents. With each taking on a different task, they are not only creating beautiful ornaments, but cherished memories. Featured in local newspapers on a variety of occasions, Otello and Carolyn’s work has sparked the imaginations of many in area communities.

In addition to their creative hobbies, Otello and Carolyn have always been active in the Wallingford political arena. Their outstanding work with the Democratic Town Committee has benefitted many local elected officials, including myself. Their tireless efforts have gone a long way in bringing a strong voice to local residents and their interests.

Enjoying their retirement years together, Otello and Carolyn have found what may be the key to a successful marriage—teamwork. Whether with their hobbies or in the community, it is a rare moment not to see these two working together. It is with great pride that I rise today to join family and friends in congratulating my dear friends Otello and Carolyn Massoni as they celebrate their 50th Anniversary. My very best wishes to them for many more years of health and happiness.

TRIBUTE TO STATE SENATOR REGIS GROFF

HON. MARK UDALL
OF COLORADO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2001

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a man considered, after twenty years of service to be the “Conscience of the Colorado Senate.” As a State Senator Regis Groff was a man who never backed down from a fight and always stood up for what he believed in. Although he often stood alone, he never hesitated to do what he believed was right.

An African-American political leader from West, Regis was often pitted against the forces of discrimination, a battle in which he was consistently outnumbered. He pushed for Colorado to divest itself from business relationships with the apartheid regime of South Africa, and was a strong voice for enforcing voter registration. When it wasn’t popular, he was also a voice for rational gun control. He was responsible for carrying Senate legislation in Colorado designating the birthday of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. as a state holiday.

Regis Groff’s convictions earned him respect from both sides of the aisle. One former colleague remarked, “there would be a hush when Regis went to the microphone.” The former Colorado Senate President, a member of the opposing party, said, “Regis was the most fun and challenging person to debate at the microphone of anyone I served with in the legislature.”

I would ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to a great and dedicated public servant. I am including an excerpt of the recent edition of the Denver Post that recognizes the significant contributions of Regis Groff to the people of Colorado.

WHATSOEVER HAPPENED TO … REGIS GROFF?: FORMER “CONSCIENCE OF COLORADO” SPEAKS FROM SIDELINES

(By James E. Meadow)

The former “Conscience of the Colorado Senate,” the man who spent 20 years fighting—and mostly losing—the good fight is staring out the window of the clubhouse of the Park Hill Golf Course sympathetically watching grown men flail at a little white ball.

Most retirees assume their golf game will be much better, but it doesn’t happen that way,” says Regis Groff. He flashes his trademark megawatt smile as he adds, “At least it didn’t happen to me. But then I only play one-third as much golf as I want to.”

Not that he’s complaining, because these days life is better than just OK for Groff. For one, he looks a decade younger than his 66 years, almost too youthful to be the grandfather of four. For another, he takes a winter hiatus in Las Vegas every year.
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Skeeter and her family that allowed them to have a dramatic impact on the Yampa Valley that will last forever. She fell in love with and, in 1969, married Doak Walker, the 1948 Heisman Trophy winner. Together, Doak and Skeeter helped to shape Steamboat and the skiing community. Doak passed away in 1998 following a skiing injury several months earlier.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, Skeeter was a person who lived an accomplished life. Although friends and family are profoundly saddened by her passing on Friday, July 20, each can take solace in the wonderful life that she led. At the age of 67, Skeeter was an outstanding member of the community and a heroic role model for others. I know I speak for everyone who knew Skeeter well when I say she will be greatly missed.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JERRY MORAN
OF KANSAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2001

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge an error I made earlier today in voting for the previous question motion on the Treasury, Postal Appropriations bill. As is customary on such procedural motions I voted "aye." Had I been aware of the implications of the vote, I would have voted "no."

I have been and continue to be an opponent of Congressional pay raises. Fiscal discipline must start with our elected officials. My constituents don't get a cost of living increase every year and neither should we. Had I known the previous question vote would be construed as having anything to do with a congressional COLA, I would have opposed it. Not only do I oppose the pay raise itself, but I strongly oppose the manner in which this issue is handled. We ought to have a clear "yes" or "no" vote on the pay raise and let the chips fall where they may. When given the opportunity to vote on the pay raise directly, I have always voted "no." If others feel differently, let them cast their vote in the light of day and explain it to their constituents. To disguise an issue as important, as a congressional pay raise inside a procedural motion is less than honest. Such gimmicks further erode this institution's credibility and member integrity.

It is my responsibility to know all the implications of the motions and bills that I vote on. My constituents deserve my attention on each and every vote. One the issue of a congressional pay raise, the American people deserve better from all of us.

VETERANS HAVING HEALTH-CARE

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN
OF NEW JERSEY
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 25, 2001

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation to ensure that all veterans, regardless of where they live, have