

business. Increasingly, hospitals and other employers in the health care field are requiring their employees to work overtime. Our legislation—the Registered Nurses and Patients Protection Act—would stop that unsafe and exploitative practice.

The Fair Labor Standards Act grants nurses the right to receive overtime compensation even though they are licensed professionals, but it does not limit the amount of overtime that nurses can work, nor does it permit them to refuse mandatory overtime. Our legislation would change that inequity. Under our bill, mandatory overtime for licensed health care employees (excluding physicians) would be prohibited. The bill amends the Fair Labor Standards Act to prohibit mandatory overtime beyond 8 hours in a single work day or 80 hours in any 14 day work period. The legislation provides an exception in cases of a natural disaster or a declaration of emergency by federal, state or local government officials. Voluntary overtime is also exempted.

Mr. Speaker, no employer should be allowed to force an employee to work overtime or face termination, unless there is a situation that requires immediate emergency action. In other cases, employees should have the right to refuse overtime. If workers are physically and psychologically able to work additional hours, that should be their choice; it should not be the decision of a supervisor or hospital administrator.

In the health care field, the issue is not just employees' rights. More importantly, it is an issue of patient safety. When nurses are forced to put in long overtime hours on a regular basis against their own better judgment, it puts patients at risk. A nurse should not be on the job after the 15th or 16th consecutive hour, especially after he or she has told a supervisor "I can't do this, I've been on the job too many hours today."

Mr. Speaker, nursing is a physically and mentally demanding occupation. By the end of a regular shift a nurse is exhausted. Health care experts and common sense tell us that long hours take a toll on mental alertness, and mandatory overtime under such conditions can result in inadvertent and unintentional medical mistakes—medication errors, transcription errors, and judgment errors. When a nurse is tired, it is much more difficult to deliver quality, professional care to patients. Increasingly, however, nurses are being forced to work 16, 18, or even 20 consecutive hours in hospitals all across our nation.

Studies have shown that when a worker (especially a health care worker) exceeds 12 hours of work, and is fatigued, the likelihood that he or she will make an error increases. A report of the Institute of Medicine on medication errors substantiates these common sense assumptions. The report states that safe staffing and limits on mandatory overtime are essential components to prevent medication errors.

An investigative report by The Chicago Tribune found that patient safety was sacrificed when reductions in hospital staff resulted in registered nurses working long hours of overtime because they were more likely to make serious medical errors. The report found that nursing services were deliberately cut in order to preserve historic profit levels.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to report that this legislation has broad support from the individuals most involved in this matter and the associations and organizations that represent them. These include the American Nurses Association (ANA), the California Nurses Association (CNA), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Black Nurses Association and others. It is also supported by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), which represents nurses and health care workers at our nation's veterans' hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, we need to give nurses more power to decide when overtime hours hurt their job performance. A nurse knows better than anyone—better than his or her supervisor and certainly better than a profit-driven hospital administrator—when he or she is so exhausted that continuing to work could jeopardize the safety of patients. You don't have to be a brain surgeon to know that forcing nurses to work 12 or 16 hours at a time is a prescription for bad health care.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot continue to allow hospitals to force nurses to work so many hours that the health and safety of patients are put at risk. I urge my colleagues to join me as a cosponsor and support the Registered Nurses' and Patient's Protection Act.

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE BRUCE F.
VENTO

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2001

Ms. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I submit to the RECORD my tribute to a wonderful man; an outstanding Member of this body for 24 years; my Congressman, my teacher, my mentor, and my dear friend—the late Bruce F. Vento.

Because of his leadership the working families of Minnesota—of America—are stronger. Our land and our lakes, our rivers and our streams are cleaner; our air is better. He gave us, our children, and future generations the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, and the Minnesota National Wildlife Refuge—thousands and thousands of acres of pristine environment that will fill our lives with weekends where the only sounds we hear will be "the sounds of the canoe paddle dipping, the winds wafting, and the birds singing . . ."

Bruce Vento gave a voice to those without one; a shelter for those without a home, at a time when it was not the popular thing to do so—homeless people, after all, rarely vote. But because of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, families down on their luck, are given a second chance.

Bruce welcomed and worked tenaciously to bring our newest neighbors fully into our community—the Lao-Hmong. Because he did so, St. Paul and our State is a richer, more tolerant, and more prosperous community.

Bruce Vento was the very embodiment of public service; a civics lesson personified. Each day he rose without fanfare, "to make people's lives better, to provide opportunity—to give them hope."

When I first met Bruce, he was my Congressman. He quickly became a friend and a mentor to a young Mom who sought to make a difference in her community. Bruce taught by example, and his example was always to do the right thing. We shared a belief that strong communities begin with our families. The essence of Bruce Vento began with his family. His parents, Frank and Anne, to this day speak to their children, grandchildren, and the great grandchildren with the boundless love, caring, and compassion—of their Minnesota family values. Values that helped them raise their eight children to work hard and care deeply.

Bruce always put our families, children, and seniors first. Those of us he represented weren't his constituents—we were his friends and neighbors. A weekend couldn't pass that you didn't run into him having morning coffee at Serlin's, or getting his hair cut at Falzone's—or maybe join him for lunch at Yarusso's. He always had time to listen, and—if you had the time—he would offer some friendly advice, or give some historical perspective. He was, always first, the teacher.

As our career paths crossed, Bruce continued to teach and to mentor all he came in contact with. Even as his days grew shorter, he still chose to teach. He taught all of us what it means to be a truly good and decent man. It would have been so easy, and so understandable, for Bruce to turn inward and treasure his remaining time with his family. Bruce would have none of it. Instead, he recognized his challenge was but another lesson to be taught—this time in the lessons in living his final days with dignity and grace.

As the accolades poured in for a life committed to public service, you could see the pride his son's, Michael, Peter, and John took in the adulation an appreciative community and country had for their father. The renaming of his boyhood Eastside school to the Bruce F. Vento Elementary School teaches our newest Eastsiders the value of public service. The Vento Trail, which meanders through the natural creekbed of a St. Paul gone by, affords all of us from the city and the suburbs a respite from our everyday lives. A scholarship fund established by Bruce, himself, will enable our young aspiring science teachers to realize their dreams—and share their knowledge with our future: our children.

Perhaps the most meaningful tribute to this "great man," who "being a true Eastsider never told us he was," were the phone calls to the radio call-in shows that brought wishes of good health from his former students of thirty years ago. Each began, "Mr. Vento, you may not remember me—but I was a student of yours, and I just want to tell you what a difference you made in my life . . ." Those touched his heart, and told him to teach one more time the joys, the value, the necessity of giving of one's self—the essence of Bruce Vento, the public servant.

I am deeply honored and humbled to stand here today as Bruce's successor. I am committed to represent as ably as this great man did the constituents of Minnesota's Fourth Congressional District. As I cast my votes here in this august Chamber, I do so with a clear and present knowledge that I do indeed have a guardian angel always and forever

guiding me with his compassion, his wisdom and his strength. Forever teaching. Thank you, Bruce.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, four items that capture the essence of Congressman Bruce F. Vento; a man who represented all of us from the Eastside of life who believe that hard work, family values, educational opportunity, and a commitment to a greater community are the keys to a happy and successful life.

[From the Saint Paul Pioneer Press, June 30, 2000]

BRUCE VENTO JUST ANOTHER GUY FROM THE EAST SIDE WHO WENT ON TO DO GREAT THINGS

(By Garrison Kellor)

There was a dinner in Washington, D.C., Tuesday night to honor a guy from St. Paul's East Side.

The president dropped by and dozens of U.S. representatives, Republicans and Democrats. And at the end, when the guy from the East Side stood up to say his piece, he got a long, long standing ovation. You could have gone around the room and stolen everyone's dessert, they were so busy applauding him.

U.S. Rep. Bruce Vento, a modest man and a hard worker, is stepping down after 24 years representing the 4th Congressional District, and I must admit I voted for him all these years because I'm a yellow-dog Democrat and he's a Democrat. So now I'm a little taken aback to see what a good man he is who I unthinkingly supported all these years.

This isn't how our civics teachers taught us to exercise the franchise, but a person doesn't have oceans of time to study up on candidates. I sure don't. I heard Mr. Vento speak once years ago, speak very movingly about the problem of homelessness and about the importance of wilderness, and that was good enough for me. But if he had stood on his hind legs and barked, I still would have voted for him.

Wilderness preservation and the plight of the homeless are not issues that pay a big political bonus. You become a wilderness advocate and you're going to be hung in effigy and yelled at by large men in plaid shirts. Homeless people tend not to turn out in numbers at the polls.

But Mr. Vento applied himself to the issues he cared about, did his homework, made the round of his colleagues, carried the water, dug the ditches, fought the good fights, made the compromises, and wrote landmark legislation that became law and that made a real difference in the world. And I'm not sure how many of us in St. Paul are aware of this.

There have been only three congressmen from St. Paul in my memory, and that covers 50 years. Gene McCarthy, Joe Karth, Bruce Vento—all DFLers, all good men and all of them got to Congress on the strength of yellow-dog Democrats like me. They got re-elected simply by doing their job, representing working people, speaking the conscience of the Democratic Party, and applying themselves to the nuts and bolts of Congress.

A political party serves a big function that TV or newspapers can't. It pulls in idealistic young people, puts them to work in the cause, trains them, seasons them, and gives the talented and the diligent a chance to rise. If it can produce a Bruce Vento, then a party has reason to exist, and if it can't, then it doesn't. Simple as that. Then it fades, as the DFL has.

People say it's inevitable for political parties to fade, part of the loss of the sense of

community, blah blah blah, that people are cynical about politics and more interested in lifestyle and media and so forth, but we are poorer for the loss of parties and the devaluation of endorsement.

Bruce Vento never could've gotten elected in a media-driven campaign, the sort in which high-priced consultants and media buyers spend 15 million bucks to make the candidate into a beautiful illusion.

Mr. Vento is the wrong man for that kind of politics. His eyebrows are too big; he isn't cool enough. He is a modest and principled and hard-working guy, but you couldn't put this over in a 30-second commercial. He managed to get to Congress because there was a strong DFL Party that endorsed him, and so voters like me pulled the lever and gave Mr. Vento the wherewithal to be a great congressman. Which he, being a true East Sider, never told us he was. But which I now think he was.

Unknowingly, we did something great in sending him there. And our partisan loyalty gave him the freedom to take on thankless tasks, like protecting wilderness and dealing with the homeless.

I sat in the back at Mr. Vento's dinner and thought what a shock it is when you realize that the country is in the hands of people your own age. You go along for years thinking it's being run by jowly old guys in baggy suits and then you see that the jowly old guys are people you went to school with.

Mr. Vento is about my age, and I feel for him. He is fighting lung cancer and it has taken its toll on him. He looks haggard but game. His three boys were at the dinner in Washington, and their wives, and the event felt like a real valedictory. If Mr. Vento had wanted to make us all cry into our pudding, it wouldn't have taken much.

But he was upbeat and talking about the future and about national parks and the decoding of the human genome and saying, "All we need to do is take this new knowledge and apply it to public policy," and thanking everybody and grinning, and you had to admire him for his command of the occasion.

A man who is desperately ill and on his way out of public life stages a dinner that raises money for a scholarship fund for teachers. Bruce Vento is a man of great bravery and devotion and foresight who represented us nobly in Congress, whether we knew it or not.

[From the Saint Paul Pioneer Press, Oct. 11, 2000]

HE WORE A BLUE COLLAR AND A WHITE HAT

Rep. Bruce F. Vento's last Christmas card pictures a smiling, healthy appearing grandfather at a baseball outing with the little folks. There's no hint of his lofty position as a member of Congress from Minnesota's 4th District. The card is an ordinary photo holiday greeting hand-signed simply with "Bruce." The image is a wonderful one for remembering Vento, who died Tuesday at age 60 of lung cancer.

Vento was a straightforward man, rooted in St. Paul from first to last. He was a talker and a fighter, a partisan and a patriot, a union man and sophisticated scientist. Vento was the only congressman a generation of 4th District residents has ever known. He was first elected in 1976 and served 12 terms.

In the majority and as a powerful chair of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands for more than 10 years, Vento reached the peak of his national influence on the future of the

country's wild places. His work there resulted in protection of hundreds of thousands of acres of public land—ranging from the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness to the Minnesota National Wildlife Refuge—and the enactment of more than 300 laws preserving the environment.

He served as chair of the House Task Force during the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s. Vento was a champion for programs to shelter the homeless, for human stewardship in the natural world. Vento's last major legislative accomplishment was the special Among citizenship law signed by President Clinton this year.

When Vento announced in February that he was ill with mesothelioma, the bread he had cast on the waters started coming back. The cards and prayers, the honors and affection, Vento said, were at first surprising and overwhelming. From personal cards, much like his simple Christmas greetings, to the renaming of East Consolidated as Bruce F. Vento Elementary School, the community Vento served hoped to express respect and gratitude. That respect will live on through a scholarship fund established in Vento's honor for college students who intend to become science teachers. It also will live on in a trail named for him in recognition of his enthusiasm for bicycling.

He accepted the affection with grace and dignity, while never losing the trace of whimsy that accompanied Vento the Substantial Man. He was given to dark business suits lightened by ties that said not all of life is serious. During the height of the Snoopy on Parade frenzy in St. Paul this summer, for instance, the congressman appeared at the Minnesota AFL-CIO Convention wearing a Snoopy tie.

Vento's public career began as a teacher, extended into service in the Minnesota Legislature and then nearly 24 years in Congress.

Although Vento was a technical master of the art of lawmaking in such arcane specialties as banking reform, he remained deeply committed to the kind of public service where working for ordinary families' dreams and hopes was more than a biennial campaign slogan. It was a high calling, well-answered by Bruce Vento.

[From the Saint Paul Pioneer Press, Feb. 3, 2000]

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE—BRUCE VENTO'S LEGACY ETCHED BY SERVICE

As U.S. Rep. Bruce Vento of St. Paul takes on the challenges of treatment for lung cancer caused by asbestos, the affection of the people he has served in the East Metro area is sure to be returned. Ours included.

May the best of medical care and the best of wishes from the many people he has supported in tough times help Vento prevail in this campaign to regain his health.

Vento, who has been commuting to work in Washington since 1977, announced Wednesday he will retire at year's end and is undergoing cancer treatment.

Vento has served the Fourth Congressional District of Minnesota, the natural world, the hard-pressed communities of the homeless, the young and the needy with a personal passion to improve the quality of life. He has gone about his work always with great heart and mastery of the arcane art of legislating.

Vento is an Old Democrat in a New Democrat era. His reliable fidelity to ideals and to people who get their hands dirty at work will be missed. To this day, his resume always notes that he worked as a laborer, a mail-

room clerk for this newspaper, a shop steward and a teacher before getting a job that put him in charge of more vast stewardships. Those include oversight of all America's public lands and helping to rescue the financial system from the ruin of the savings and loan debacles.

Vento's career in Congress, and before that in the Minnesota Legislature, represent an old-fashioned sense of public service in a new-fashioned and too-slick political era. He knew what private-public partnerships were before the concept became a sound bite for the ambitious. And he has never been afraid of a fight when the issue and the people matter deeply.

The Reagan and Bush administrations were the source of frustration for the man from the Fourth. When the Democrats were thrown into the congressional minority in 1994, Vento found new rules but always kept his eye on the prize of Democrats retaking the reins. He noted with each election how much the Republican majority had narrowed. This year, Vento will not be in the equation for a Democratic House. Larger things have taken over. But his mark will stand fast.

An afternoon with only the sounds of the paddle dipping, the wind wafting and the birds singing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area is the melody Bruce Vento makes in the woods of a public policy. So is the animated, personal Vento chatting with all comers at the Labor Day picnic.

Godspeed, Congressman Vento.

[From the Hill, Feb. 8, 2000]

GODSPEED, CONGRESSMAN VENTO

The premature departure from Congress of Rep. Bruce Vento (D-Minn.) because he has been diagnosed with lung cancer will deprive the House of Representatives of one of its most dedicated, effective and popular members.

Vento, who is retiring in December after 24 years in Congress, stunned and saddened his colleagues and his St. Paul district when he disclosed last week that he has a type of cancer caused by exposure to asbestos. His doctors at Minnesota's famed Mayo Clinic have recommended an aggressive course of treatment that will make it impossible for him to run for a 13th term.

The 59-year-old St. Paul lawmaker's announcement that he will end a 30-year public service career, which began when he was elected to the Minnesota Legislature in 1971, triggered an outpouring of tributes and prayerful concern from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. President Clinton and Vice President Gore, who came to Congress the same year as Vento, also issued statements of praise and concern.

None was more poignant than that from his fellow Minnesota Democrat, Jim Oberstar, who noted, "I lost my wife, Jo, to breast cancer, so Bruce's disclosure that he too is fighting cancer hits close to home. Bruce has spent the past 24 years in Congress fighting for working people, and now he is in a fight for his life."

Even though they often clashed over the issue of federal control of northern Minnesota's pristine Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Oberstar called Vento "a dear friend of mine" and "an exceptional public servant."

Rep. Jim Leach (R-Iowa), chairman of the Banking and Financial Services Committee on which Vento serves, praised him for his leadership on federal banking policy. He called the former high school science teacher

and union shop steward "a citizen/legislator: an educator who came to Capitol Hill and gave Congress a civics lesson."

But Vento's greatest legislative achievements have been those he made as chairman and later ranking member of the Resources Committee's Parks and Public Lands Subcommittee. "I cannot think of another person who has done more to protect America's national parks," said the Sierra Club's executive director, Carl Pope. "Protecting our nation's natural heritage is a passionate love for him."

Vento's hometown newspaper, the St. Paul Pioneer Press-Dispatch—where he once worked as a mailroom clerk—called him "an Old Democrat in a New Democrat era" who exemplified "an old-fashioned sense of public service in a new-fashioned and too-slick political era."

Noting that Vento will not be part of the Democrats' fight to regain the House, the newspaper added a poetic tribute: "Larger things have taken over. But his mark will stand fast. An afternoon with only the sounds of the paddle dipping, the wind wafting, and the birds singing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area is the melody Bruce Vento makes in the woods of public policy. . . . Godspeed, Congressman Vento."

CORRUPTION SCANDAL ENGULFS INDIAN GOVERNMENT

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2001

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, the world has been shocked by the recent news stories about a corruption scandal that has engulfed the Indian government. Already, the president of the ruling BJP and the Defense Minister have been forced to resign after they were caught taking bribes from two internet news reporters posing as arms dealers in regard to a fake defense contract. The opposition is calling for the government to resign.

The resignation of Defense Minister George Fernandes is no loss for friends of democracy. Mr. Fernandes is the man who led a meeting in 1999 with the Ambassadors from China, Cuba, Russia, Libya, Serbia, and Iraq aimed at putting together a security alliance "to stop the U.S." This meeting was reported in the May 18, 1999 issue of the Indian Express.

Those of us who have been following Indian and South Asian issues are not surprised. The Indian Government has demonstrated many times before how deeply it is infected with corruption. In India, people have come up with a new word for bribery. They call it "fee for service." It has become necessary to pay a fee to get government workers of any kind to deliver the services that they are mandated to provide. In November 1994, the newspaper Hitavada reported that the Indian government paid Surendra Nath, the late governor of Punjab, \$1.5 billion to generate terrorist activity in Punjab, Khalistan, and in Kashmir as well. This is in a country where half the population lives below the international poverty line. Forty-two percent of the people live on less than a dollar a day and another forty-two percent live on less than \$2 per day.

In India, corruption is endemic as is tyranny against minorities. Christians, Muslims, Sikhs,

and others have been subjected to violence, tyranny, and massive human-rights violations for many years. Christian churches have been burned. Priests have been killed, nuns have been raped, and many other atrocities have been committed with impunity. Muslims have been killed in massive numbers and the ruling party has destroyed mosques. The Indian government has killed Sikhs. Religious pilgrims have been attacked with lathis and tear gas. This is just a recent sample of the atrocities against minorities in India.

Mr. Speaker, India is a significant recipient of American aid. Why should the taxpayers of this country pay taxes to support the corruption and tyranny of the Indian Government? There is, however, something that America, as the world's only superpower, can do about it. America can stop sending aid to India and support self-determination for the people of Khalistan, Kashmir, and Nagalim. Let us take these steps to free the people of the subcontinent from corruption and brutality.

Mr. Speaker, I insert into the RECORD an article from the current issue of The Economist about the latest Indian Government bribery scandal. I commend it to all my congressional colleagues who care about spending our foreign aid dollars wisely.

[From The Economist, Mar. 24, 2001]

INDIA'S CORRUPTION BLUES

THOUGH IT MAY WELL SURVIVE THE LATEST CORRUPTION SCANDAL, THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEADING PARTY IN THE GOVERNMENT IS BADLY DENTED

Fatalism is ever present in India, and the government in Delhi seems to be hoping that a popular belief in the inevitability of corruption will help it survive the biggest scandal of recent times. That hope seems well founded. But whether the government will regain the authority it needs to pursue its two main initiatives—economic reform and peace in Kashmir—is much more doubtful.

The uproar over the release of videotapes last week showing top politicians and officials taking bribes from two Internet news reporters posing as arms dealers has reached a noisy impasse. The defence minister, George Fernandes, has resigned, though he remains "covener" of the 18-party ruling National Democratic Alliance. The NDA has lost one member, the Trinamul Congress party of West Bengal, but remains sure enough of its majority to dare the opposition to bring a no-confidence vote in Parliament. The opposition, equally sure of its minority, has declined. Instead, it has blocked parliamentary proceedings for a week, relenting long enough only to allow money to be voted for the state to continue functioning.

Both sides have converted an occasion for shame into one for self-righteousness. Sonia Gandhi, leader of a suddenly alert Congress party, vowed at its plenary meeting in Bangalore to "wage every war" to "ensure that this country is liberated from the shackles of this corrupt, shameful and communal government". But she herself was wounded when her own personal assistant came under investigation in a separate scandal. The prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has blended penitence with defensiveness. He has promised a judicial probe into the allegations, and a clean-up. But, in a television address on March 16th, Mr. Vajpayee reserved the word "criminal" to describe the hurling of allegations, not the behaviour alleged.

It is true that tehelka.com, the enterprising website that armed its reporters with