

calling on our government to join our NATO allies—and all of the 158 nations that have joined this treaty—and eliminate the use of landmines once and for all.”

[From the Washington Post, May 8, 2010]

SENATE PUSHES OBAMA ADMINISTRATION TO
SIGN TREATY BANNING LAND MINES

(By Craig Whitlock and Glenn Kessler)

More than two-thirds of the Senate is urging the Obama administration to consider signing an international treaty that bans land mines, reviving a dormant campaign from the 1990s that left the United States divided from its closest allies.

Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) said in an interview Friday that 68 senators had signed a letter to President Obama to support a “comprehensive review” of U.S. policy on land mines. The letter is an indication that there are enough votes in the Senate to ratify the treaty—at least 67 would be required—if Obama signs the measure, which has languished in Washington for a decade.

“We want to show we have enough people to ratify a treaty,” Leahy said. “I think there’s an excellent opportunity that we’ll finally do it.”

The pressure from Congress leaves the White House in an awkward position as it tries to navigate between Obama’s desire to work closely with allies on security issues such as nuclear disarmament, while at the same time listening to advisers at the Pentagon, many of whom are leery of such campaigns.

The mine ban treaty was the result of a grass-roots movement championed by celebrities, including Princess Diana, and ordinary citizens such as Jody Williams, a Vermont native who won the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for her role as founding coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines. About 5,000 people a year—the majority of them civilians—are killed or maimed by mines scattered across 70 countries.

Neither President Bill Clinton nor President George W. Bush signed the treaty, which was negotiated in 1997 and took effect in 1999. Their rejections left the United States at odds with more than 150 countries that embraced the accord, including every member of NATO.

The treaty prohibits the manufacture, trade and stockpiling of land mines. The United States has not used antipersonnel mines since the Persian Gulf War in 1991 and stopped producing them in 1997, but the military keeps about 10 million of them in reserve.

In November, State Department spokesman Ian Kelly announced that the Obama administration had decided against signing the treaty, saying, “We would not be able to meet our national defense needs nor our security commitments to our friends and allies.” But after Leahy and human-rights groups condemned the decision, the State Department said it would revisit the issue and conduct a broader policy review.

White House and State Department spokesmen emphasized Friday that the administration is in the midst of a comprehensive review, cutting across all affected agencies, that will not be completed for some months. But two senior U.S. officials speaking on the condition of anonymity indicated that the administration is actively looking for ways to come into compliance with the treaty without endangering national security needs.

“We are asking that if you come into compliance, what would be the costs and the ben-

efits—and if there are costs, how can they be addressed in other ways,” one senior official said.

The official described the administration’s review as “a herculean effort” intended to “cut through reflexive reactions” to the issue of eliminating land mines from the Pentagon’s arsenal.

Officials also said they welcomed the indication of bipartisan support represented by the Leahy letter.

Another senior U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said the administration is looking at what new technologies could be used to bring the United States into compliance with the treaty while also allowing it to respond to threats such as North Korea. Some military officials want to maintain the U.S. stockpile in case it is needed to slow an invasion of South Korea by the North. About 30,000 U.S. forces are stationed in the South.

The Pentagon declined to say whether it would support the treaty, citing the Obama administration’s review. “It would be premature at this time to provide any statement until the review is complete,” said Geoff Morrell, the Pentagon press secretary.

Leahy, who has fought for a land-mine ban for many years, said there was bipartisan support in Congress for ratifying the treaty. Ten Republicans have signed the letter to Obama, which Leahy said will be delivered to the White House next week. The lead Republican co-sponsor is Sen. George V. Voinovich (Ohio), Leahy aides said.

In November, Leahy criticized the Obama administration’s initial decision to reject the treaty as “a default of U.S. leadership.” Since then, he said, White House and State Department officials have left him with the impression that they are seriously considering adopting the treaty, especially if he can help deliver the votes in a Senate that is usually sharply divided along partisan lines.

“It’s been a much more positive response than I’ve seen in a long, long time,” Leahy said of his talks with administration officials.

Leahy noted that Obama has pushed for a global reduction in nuclear arms; ignoring land mines, he added, could undercut U.S. diplomacy on that front. “If we want to keep the high moral ground, then we have to do it,” he said.

Although Clinton did not sign the international mine ban, he ordered the Pentagon in 1998 to develop alternatives to antipersonnel mines, with the goal of giving them up completely by 2006.

In 2004, in response to objections from the Pentagon, Bush adopted a different policy that permits the U.S. military to use sophisticated mines that are designed to self-destruct within a fixed number of days. The idea was to reduce civilian casualties from unexploded mines left on the battlefield.

At the same time, Bush set a deadline of 2010 for the U.S. military to end the use of antipersonnel or anti-vehicle mines that lack timers. Obama administration officials have said that they are on track to meet that deadline this year.

Neither China nor Russia has ratified the international mine ban treaty. Human rights groups say there is little pressure for them to do so as long as the United States doesn’t sign.

HONORING THE LIFE OF EL HADJ
AMADOU THIOUF

HON. ED PASTOR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 18, 2010

Mr. PASTOR of Arizona. Madam Speaker, I rise before you today to honor the life of a great educator, El Hadj Amadou Thiouf. Born in Bargny, Senegal, he devoted his entire life to the cause of education. Studying for 4 years at école normal William Ponty, an elite school in Thies, Senegal, he was first assigned to Lamingue, Kaolack, where he served for 2 years and met his wife Adj Fatou Ndoye. They were married on August 11, 1957.

From 1957 to 1971, he lived in Rufisque where he taught at three different institutions: Diokoul, Fass and Matar Seck. In 1971, he was sent to Matam, a city in northwest Senegal, and then moving again, serving in Bargny, the city of his birth, from 1972 to 1975.

In 1978, he returned to his hometown of Rufisque and became the principal of Thiokho Elementary School, the school close to his home and where his children attended. There, he remained as principal until 1985, when he became the head of El Hadj Ousseynou Diagne, the largest elementary school in Rufisque.

After a long and distinguished career as an educator, Mr. Thiouf retired on September 9, 1992. He is a recipient of the Ordre National du Lion, Senegal’s highest national honor and the Chevalier des Palmes Académiques for his lifelong dedication and commitment to education.

In 1998, Mr. Thiouf and his wife became permanent residents of the United States and spent half their time in the United States and the other half in Senegal.

He is survived by his widow Fatou Ndoye and their 10 children: Mame, Diaraf, Abdou, Seynabou, Pape, Adj, Sokhna, Awa and Mahomet. Mr. Thiouf also had 13 grandchildren. Their oldest son Alassane, a graduate of the University of Arizona, died in a tragic car accident in September 1990 in Senegal.

Madam Speaker, it is an honor to come before you today and share the life of this great man.

TRIBUTE TO SONNY CALLAHAN,
2009 MOBILIAN OF THE YEAR

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 18, 2010

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to former Alabama Congressman Sonny Callahan, who was honored on April 8 with the Mobilian of the Year Award, presented by the Cottage Hill Civitan Club. Former Congressman Callahan received the Bienville Plaque and a proclamation from Mayor Sam Jones.

I was honored to deliver a tribute to Sonny Callahan’s life and career during the award

celebration on April 8 and below is an excerpt of my remarks.

The Sonny Callahan story is much like that of many other young men his age—and from that time in Mobile's past. But Sonny, according to those who have known him the longest, was always someone special. He had the good looks, the charm and personality that made other people feel good about themselves when they were with him.

He had a natural charisma and intellect, often masked with that Reagan-esque self-deprecating humor, that made Sonny, even to his peers and colleagues, a natural-born leader that people gravitated to for his counsel and advice, for his often unique perspective on life . . . or simply for a little humor and levity to lighten the moment.

As the story goes, we know he used those talents early on in the world of business and it was a success story that made for a natural campaign brochure.

I'll never forget what our wonderful friend, mentor and advisor, the late Bill Yeager, told me when I was first interviewing to be Sonny's campaign press secretary back in 1982 . . . Bill said, "Jo, Sonny's story of a self-made man who grew up with all the reasons not to succeed, but overcoming one obstacle after another, always finding a way to be successful, is not just biographical hype.

"Even if he is sometimes hard to pin-down," Bill told me, Sonny is truly one of the most decent human beings I have ever known."

And as Bill Yeager often was in his judgment of others, he was right on the money as it related to Sonny.

Sonny's early success on the campaign trail . . . he was elected to the Alabama House in 1970 and only once—in the 14 times his name appeared on the ballot—did he not finish first—was an omen of even bigger opportunities that would come.

But Sonny wasn't just someone who loved politics . . . he loved helping people.

And that, my friends, is a distinction that sadly, too few of us make when it comes to lumping everyone in politics in the same vat.

There were the light-hearted moments . . . like the time when Sonny was driving to Montgomery when the legislature was in session and his friend, Tommy Sandusky, had finally gotten one of those Motorola car phones almost a year after Sonny had gotten his first car telephone.

The story goes that Tommy was so proud of the fact that he had finally caught up to Sonny, that he pulled up to Sonny in his car at a stoplight in Montgomery, picked up the phone and called him to say, "hey Sonny, I just wanted you to know that I'm calling you on my car phone."

. . . to which Sonny—with that quick Callahan wit replied without missing a beat—"Tommy that's great . . . unfortunately, I can't talk right now because my other phone is ringing."

Sonny was always one step ahead of most of us. But the light-hearted memories take a back seat to the stories that were never written in the press but were the headlines of Sonny Callahan's amazing life.

I got a call the other day from a lady who said when she heard that Congressman Callahan had been named Mobilian of the Year, she simply wanted me to be sure and mention that had it not been for Sonny, her son . . . who at age two had meningitis which left him deaf and blind . . . would have been institutionalized. When her father arranged for her to go see Sonny to tell him her plight, Sonny promised her that he would help.

And help he did. Sonny found the money to start the area school for Deaf and Blind here in Mobile, patterned after the one in Talledega, and today, some 44 years later, her son was able to graduate from high school, go on to college and is now a successful young businessman. With tears of gratitude, this lady wanted me to say "thank you" to the man who helped give her son a new lease on life.

But that is just one of the many rich sub-chapters of the Sonny Callahan legacy. In truth, they all have a similar storyline.

Also from his days in the Legislature, there was Callahan Tuition tax credit that help Alabama's private colleges, like Spring Hill, Birmingham Southern and Huntington, assist young Alabamians with their dream of a college diploma.

Perhaps most lasting, there was also the Heritage Trust Fund that Sonny's leadership helped establish for the oil and gas leases that were being let in the mid-1970s. This fund mandated that the State invest the principal and instead live off the tens of millions of dollars that would accrue in interest every year, assisting dozens of worthwhile state programs over the past 30 years.

When Jack Edwards retired from Congress in 1984 after an impressive 20 years of service, Sonny got in the race to succeed him—with Jack's full blessings and support, no less—and shortly thereafter he began what would become an equally-impressive 18-year-run.

The kind of commitment to helping others that Sonny had become known for in the legislature soon became the hallmark of his Congressional service as well.

About six months after Sonny had taken office, we had the long-awaited dedication of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. It was every politician's dream . . . a beautiful, festive day, thousands of people in attendance, and everyone was in an upbeat mood.

Jack, naturally, was invited to sit on the speaker's platform with the governor, both senators, the mayor and all of the other dignitaries of the day. After all, Jack Edwards had spent practically his entire 20-year-tenure in Congress trying to keep the funding going for what was the biggest public works project in American history.

But true to form, when it came Sonny's turn to speak, the newly-minted freshman congressman took the microphone, thanked everyone for coming out and said, "you know, Jack, you certainly accomplished a lot for our area during your 20 years in Congress. But let the record show that it was during my first six months in Congress that we were finally able to finish the Tenn-Tom!"

Jack likes to tell people that he knew then that he had backed the right man to follow in his footsteps.

While others in Congress have spent their time building monuments to themselves, Sonny quietly went about doing the work that a true member of the "People's House" takes pride in doing for it was always about the "people" that Sonny worked for . . . the young mother who had that blind and deaf son . . . the veteran whose government had forgotten him long after his service had ended . . . or the worker who toiled in the hot, un-air conditioned plant and never knew what the inside of a college classroom looked like, but who, when he became injured on the job, turned to Congressman Callahan for the help he needed.

As he gained seniority and certainly after his party had taken the majority in Congress with the historic 1994 election, Sonny never

let the additional titles and responsibilities that came with those leadership positions change what was important to him.

Sure, when he became the Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations—the committee that funds all of America's foreign aid—Sonny would come to the office often to find a line of Kings, Presidents and Prime Ministers waiting for just a few minutes of his time.

But Sonny would remind his staff . . . don't get too impressed, these folks are here to see "the chairman." If it were not me, they'd be standing outside someone else's office.

And never once, when Sonny had control of a budget that was greater than the budgets of two or three states combined . . . did he ever think talking to a head of state was more important than talking to Mayor Shell in Atmore, Judge Biggs in Monroe County or some person who didn't have a title, but who just needed to talk to "my congressman about a personal matter."

If our friend, Mayer Mitchell, were still alive, he would be the first to tell you that when Sonny flew to Israel to meet late one night with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to discuss a new plan that Sonny had conceived to decrease the economic aid to Israel while, at the same time, increase the military assistance to our best ally in the Middle East, neither Mayer nor even President Bill Clinton, who had told Sonny just hours before the trip that this couldn't be done, gave him any chance for success.

But succeed he did. And that's why when President Clinton needed a Republican to step up and provide the crucial support for his administration's plan for Bosnia—back when most Republicans and a lot of Democrats weren't eager to go along—the president turned to Sonny to provide that leadership.

Soon thereafter, others on both sides of the political aisle followed his leadership and this humble, self-described, "back-bencher" in Congress, was fast becoming a major player on the international stage.

From the pages of the Washington Post to the Wall Street Journal, conservative and liberal pundits alike called Chairman Callahan "an unlikely champion."

But once again, the folks in his hometown were always more comfortable calling him Sonny, not even congressman, and to him, that was his reassurance that he had not lost touch with those for whom he worked.

The list of his signature accomplishments throughout southwest Alabama is literally endless. I honestly don't know of a complete assessment.

But here's just a quick stab at some of the highlights . . . Sonny secured the initial funding for what is today the Mitchell Cancer Center at the University of South Alabama . . . he helped make the initial down-payment on the new library at Spring Hill College . . . he found the funding to restore the historic GM&O Building in downtown Mobile . . . he secured the first installment for a new bridge to replace congested tunnels along Interstate 10 . . .

The money to replace the 14 mile rail road bridge, funding for towns like Fairhope, Bayou La Batre, Jackson and Thomasville . . . Sonny got the money to help refurbish the historic old Monroe County Courthouse, just as he secured the funding for the Foley Beach Express.

When they start construction on the new VA cemetery in Baldwin County, it will be because of Sonny Callahan's determination—and leadership—several years ago, that this dream will one day soon become a reality.

But as I have said before, Sonny never did any of this for personal gratification or recognition. He did it because it was what the people of his district needed and wanted.

After he retired from Congress, grateful communities and groups alike began the naming process . . . a tiny little bridge near Foley, the airport in Fairhope, a building at Mercy Medical, a Boys and Girls Club in West Mobile.

No one did more to help make sure Mobile Bay was included in the National Estuary Program, or build on the work started by his predecessor to help expand and protect Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge and Weeks Bay Estuary.

A few years ago, The University of Alabama was able to complete work on the finest child development center in the nation, thanks solely to Sonny Callahan's leadership.

At about the same time, the University of Alabama Birmingham established an endowed student scholars program in his honor because, as they said, his creation of the Child Survival and Diseases program—back when he was in Congress—guaranteed that children and adults—“from the Black Belt of Alabama all the way to Bangladesh—today enjoy cleaner water, safer food and a lower incidence of disease because of Sonny's labors.”

In 2004, our local veterans made him the “Patriot of the Year,” Governor Riley appointed him to serve on the board of the Alabama Port Authority . . .

And I'm telling you . . . I literally could go on and on.

There were also the gaffes . . . we've all made them and most of us, when we do, it eats us to the core. Not Sonny. He always kept things like that in perspective . . . like the time he admitted to being in the desert when Operation Desert Storm commenced. Sonny was in the desert . . . at a luxury hotel in Palm Springs playing golf . . . but that wasn't the sand most people were thinking about at the time.

Or the time that he told both President and Mrs. Clinton that they needed to slow down the money spigot going to other countries . . . you can imagine how much fun the press secretary had at the time trying to ex-

plain his comment “it's Halloween in Washington and if you want to get some treats, just put a turbain on your head and go knock on the White House door.”

The Washington press corps loved that line, Sonny got the President's attention but I got a migraine dealing with that one.

And of course, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was in Mobile, he meant it as a compliment when he said, “Madeleine, you are like a flamingo in the barnyard of politics.”

She has actually told others that she couldn't have had a more supportive chairman to work with than Sonny Callahan so, congressman, I think she knew you were paying her a compliment.

But I'm going to close by saying this to tonight's honoree . . . and I want to say this as all of your friends and family are listening on . . .

As I've been reflecting back over our almost 3 decades together, your story really isn't like most everyone else's . . . for when you were given the opportunity . . . an opportunity that few people in life are really ever afforded . . . to do great things and to make your mark, you did—and I truly mean this—you always did it with humility and with humor . . . without the malice and nasty partisanship that is so prevalent in Washington today . . . you did it because of the greater good that would accrue to the benefit of untold numbers of people that you might not ever meet or know . . . but you did “it” . . . whatever “it” was . . . because “it” was the right thing to do at the right time to do it. Thank you, Sonny, for always being our champion.

Before I turn the microphone over to Mayor Jones, I would be extremely remiss if I did not thank two other groups of people who deserve special recognition . . . first of all, to Sonny's family . . . certainly his brothers and sisters and countless cousins, but most especially, his beloved Karen . . . wife, partner, soul-mate and mother to their six children.

Sonny used to say that Karen must have been the inspiration for the song, “Wind Beneath My Wings,” because she was always there for him, standing off in his shadow, never having the sunlight on her face . . .

but he could fly higher than an eagle, because she was the wind beneath his wings.

I must admit that until I was elected to Congress, myself, in 2002—thanks in no small part to Sonny and the incredible reputation he had earned—you know, when Sonny retired he had the highest approval rating of any sitting member in the entire U.S. Congress at 92 percent—contrast that today with an approval rating for Congress, as a whole, at an embarrassing 13 percent nationally—and I don't know that even I fully appreciated the demanding, difficult—and yet absolutely critical roles—that the spouse and family of a public figure play.

But Karen, for all sacrifices that you, Scott, Patrick, Shawn, Chris, Kelly and the always close-to-our-heart, Cameron, have made . . . for the nights, the days, the weeks and the years that y'all have shared your wonderful husband—and daddy, and now granddaddy—with everyone else . . . thank you.

Mobile—and indeed the entire state of Alabama—is a better place to live because of the man you love and tonight, the man we honor.

Finally, and I know Sonny would be the first to agree with this, but I must also thank the tremendously dedicated, loyal and extremely talented staff that Sonny brought together during his many years in the public arena.

No one person can answer all the mail, return all the phone calls, make all the contacts that are required to be made and do everything else that is expected of a person who has 635,000 constituents—as well as a national responsibility—and while Sonny was the best I have ever seen in this often-misunderstood job, he was able to do what he did because he surrounded himself with a team that was second-to-none.

Together, his family and his staff can take great pride in knowing that the lives Sonny has touched . . . and the legacy Sonny has built . . . is a living testament to your unselfish love, loyalty and admiration of a man known by kings and presidents . . . movie stars and musicians . . . truck drivers and ditch-diggers . . . simply as our friend, Sonny Callahan.