

activity in Dutchess, Orange, and Sullivan Counties in New York State, as well as steady increases in caseload from the Mid-Hudson Valley Region. In fact, current statistics suggests that the need is even greater now than previously ascertained by Congress in 1996. The number of cases in 1999 that could have gone to an Orange County Courthouse, based on the location of the litigants or the attorney's residence, increased to 312, up from 290 in 1996. Moreover, the population for the region has increased to 671,767, up from 656,740 in 1996 and the total labor force has risen to 309,100, up from 301,800 in 1996.

Furthermore, it should be noted that while Congress may have acquiesced in the closure of some courthouses which have become redundant, based on considerations of economy and efficiency, I know of no situation where a court has refused to provide judicial services at a location designated by statute, where both the need exists and there is strong local support for the service. Such was and still is clearly the case with regard to the Orange County courthouse project.

Accordingly, while it is now current practice, as denoted by title 28 of the U.S. Code, for the U.S. Administrative Office of the Courts and the GSA to develop a rolling five year plan denoting the need for courthouse construction, I believe it is important for Congress to have a say in this important matter.

The legislation which I am introducing today will require the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts to submit for approval to the Congress a report setting forth the court's plans for proposed construction. Thereafter, Congress will have 30 legislative days to disapprove of the proposed construction.

It has become apparent to me after the experience I have had with both the Board of Judges of the Southern District and the Judicial Council of the Second Circuit that an imperialistic attitude among many of our Federal judges prevail.

The decision as to whether or not to move forward with construction of a court facility is no longer being based upon existing evidence and data attesting to need, but instead on the personal thoughts of the judges involved.

This legislation will end that practice by enabling Congress to properly assert its role in the construction of needed new courts.

Mr. Speaker, I submit a full copy of the text of H.R. 254 to be included at this point in the RECORD:

H.R. 254

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW OF NEW CONSTRUCTION FOR FEDERAL COURTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 462 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(g)(1) Facilities for holding court may not be constructed unless—

“(A) the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts submits to the Congress a report setting forth the plans for the proposed construction; and

“(B) 30 days have elapsed and the Congress has not, before the end of that 30-day period, enacted a provision of law stating in substance that the Congress disapproved the proposed construction.

“(2) For purposes of paragraph (1), construction of facilities includes the alter-

ation, improvement, remodeling, reconstruction, or enlargement of any building for purposes of holding court.

“(3) The 30-day period referred to in paragraph (1) shall be computed by excluding—

“(A) the days on which either House is not in session because of an adjournment of more than 3 days to a day certain or an adjournment of the Congress sine die; and

“(B) any Saturday and Sunday, not excluded under subparagraph (A), when either House is not in session.”

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 462 of title 28, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by inserting before the period at the end the following: “, and subject to subsection (g)”;

(2) in subsection (c), by inserting before the period at the end the following: “, and subject to subsection (g)”;

(3) in subsection (f), by inserting “subject to subsection (g),” after “Director requests.”

SUPPORT FOR FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

HON. TONY P. HALL

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2001

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today I praise President George W. Bush's proposal to assist faith-based and community organizations as a promising way of encouraging them to help battle hunger, poverty, and other social ills. I was pleased to meet with the President today at the Fishing School as he announced the legislative initiative of his proposal.

Faith has been a defining characteristic of our communities' life throughout our nation's history, and people who serve God by serving those in need remain one of America's greatest strengths. This initiative will draw on these traditions and bring them to bear on some of our most difficult social problems. It also will leverage private funds and give a wider circle of donors a stake in the success of these projects.

I am particularly encouraged that this initiative will give some well-deserved support to the legions of people trying to end poverty in our prosperous nation, and I hope it will extend to those working in faith-based organizations that fight hunger. In recent years, growing numbers of hungry people have been turning to food pantries and soup kitchens for help each month. Nationwide, requests for help were up 18 percent nationwide, and three in five came from families with children. More than 70 percent of these pantries and kitchens are operated by faith-based organizations that work hard to collect donations—but have not been able to keep their shelves stocked. These are creative and resourceful projects whose dedicated employees and volunteers deserve support.

To those who worry that we are in uncharted territory, I would point out the work American charities do overseas, coping with this month's terrible earthquakes in India and El Salvador, easing famine in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and promoting development around the world. Many of these organizations are closely affiliated with religious groups; many of their projects grew from missionary roots. This work leverages private funds and achieves results that often last generations.

To those who charge this initiative will open the door to taxpayer-funded religion, I would say that every faith tradition emphasizes helping the poor. The Bible, for example, contains some 2,500 verses about caring for those in need. The 'Golden Rule' is echoed in all religions' teachings, and is something virtually all can agree upon. This initiative's focus on results will ensure that Constitutional safeguards—both of religious freedom and for taxpayers—remain in place.

This is a common-sense approach that deals with the challenges many Americans face head on. It deserves a chance, and I commend President Bush for giving it one.

I also submit for the RECORD a piece that my good friend Jim Wallis recently wrote for the Washington Post. As editor of Sojourners magazine and convener of the Call to Renewal, he has been actively involved in having the faith community address problems like poverty and racism for decades.

[From the Washington Post, January 8, 2001]
A CHURCH-STATE PRIORITY

When the phone call came from Austin, I was surprised. Just two days after his election was secured, President-elect Bush wanted a meeting with religious leaders to discuss faith-based initiatives in solving poverty. He was reaching well beyond his base of conservative evangelicals; would I come and suggest others who should be invited?

The subject was already on my mind. The U.S. Conference of Mayors just had released its annual survey on hunger and homelessness in U.S. cities. In the past year, it showed, requests for emergency food increased by 17 percent. Two-thirds of the people requesting assistance were members of families, and 32 percent of the adults requesting food were employed.

Demand for emergency shelter increased 15 percent, and of those 36 percent were families with children. Thirteen percent of the requests for food and nearly one-quarter of the requests for housing went unmet because of lack of resources.

The leading causes of these increases? Low-paying jobs, lack of affordable housing, unemployment or other employment-related issues, and poverty or lack of income. Just before the holidays, Catholic Charities also released its annual report showing a “startling” 22 percent increase in the use of its emergency services of shelter, clothing, food and medicine.

The latest U.S. Census poverty statistics report that despite this time of record prosperity, one in every six American children is poor; one in three children of color. No other developed country has anything approaching U.S. child poverty rates.

So it seemed appropriate, just a few days before Christmas, to be in a Sunday school classroom in Austin's First Baptist Church with a diverse group of religious leaders, having a conversation with George W. Bush. The president-elect listened and asked questions for more than an hour, then stayed to mingle and talk to us individually. He believes in faith-based organizations and the important role they can play in solving social problems, and he wants to make support for such efforts an important part of his administration.

He asked us how to speak to the nation's soul. We suggested starting with our children, who embody our best hopes and reveal our worst failures as a society. I thanked him for being willing to include people in the meeting who hadn't supported his election and pledged to work with him if he chose to do something significant to reduce child poverty. We suggested that Bush use his inaugural address to call the nation to cut the

child poverty rate by half in five years; a task that would require both political will and creativity.

We said that ideological warfare had allowed too many children to fall between the cracks of our faulty political discourse; liberal and conservative false choices about whether family values or living family incomes are more central to the causes and cures for poverty. I noted that churches across a broad spectrum are finding remarkable unity on these issues, and maybe it was time to try it on a political level. Evangelical and liberal, Catholic and Protestant, black and white church leaders have been motivated by prosperity's contradictions and united by the biblical imperatives of compassion and justice. Around the country, faith-based initiatives to overcome poverty show remarkable progress. But the president-elect needs to send an early signal about poor children and families being high on his agenda.

Bush asked theological questions such as, "What is justice?" That is a key question, especially amid fears that an emphasis on faith-based initiatives will be used to substitute for governmental responsibilities. We told him that in forging new partnerships to reduce poverty, the religious community will not only be service providers but prophetic interrogators. Our vocation is to ask why people are poor, and not just to care for the forgotten. Shelters and food banks aren't enough. We need solutions to the many problems of poverty, a pragmatic approach that produces results.

Could our divided political leaders rally around the moral cause of using our prosperity to finally address this nation's shamefully high poverty levels, especially among children? Could this divided nation find common ground if politicians would collaborate across old barriers, as religious leaders have begun to do?

Since neither party has succeeded in breaking the grip of persistent poverty, isn't a bipartisan effort called for? Republicans preaching compassionate conservatism and family values, Democrats fighting for poor working families and a religious community ready to lead by example; these forces could do something significant about poverty.

It is an encouraging sign that the president-elect is reaching out to begin discussions with leaders of faith-based initiatives. "I hope you surprise us," I told him afterward. We'll see; for now, the ball is in both our courts.

INTRODUCTION OF A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROVIDING FOR THE DIRECT ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2001

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I am today introducing legislation to abolish the electoral college and provide for the direct popular election of the President and Vice President of the United States.

Until our recent national crash course in the federal election process, most Americans saw the Electoral College as a harmless anachronism. But 10 days ago, for the first time in over a century, the nation watched as the oath of office was administered to an elected president who failed to secure a plurality of the

votes cast. The Constitution is clear, and I do not question the lawfulness or legitimacy of electing a president under these circumstances. Indeed, I join all patriotic citizens in wishing our new president well. But we must also ask—as many of my constituents have—whether an electoral system that negates the votes of half a million citizens is compatible with democratic values. This is not a partisan question. Indeed, I first raised it on the eve of the election, when it looked as though the shoe might be on the other foot—when many were predicting that the candidate of my own party might prevail with a minority of the popular vote. And the answer to that question is far more important than the political fortunes of any one candidate or party.

The Electoral College presents a troubling contradiction for our democracy in at least two respects. First, and most obviously, it cannot be squared with the principle of majority rule. To award the presidency to the loser of the popular vote undermines respect for the system and compromises the new president's mandate to govern.

Second, the Electoral College is inconsistent with the principle of "one person, one vote". This is because the system by which electors are assigned gives disproportionate weight to less populous states. Massachusetts has one electoral vote for every 500,000 people, while Wyoming has one for every 160,000. In other words, a vote cast in Wyoming counts three times as much as a vote cast in Massachusetts.

Some defend the Electoral College because it carries the weight of constitutional authority. I agree that the Constitution should be amended only rarely and with great care. But the system designed by the framers for electing the president has already been amended, by the 12th and 22nd Amendments. And until ratification of the 17th Amendment in 1913, the U.S. Senate was elected not by the people, but by state legislatures. Few would argue that the original purpose of the Electoral College retains any relevance today. It reflected a mistrust of the electorate which we no longer endorse—the same mistrust that denied the people the right to elect their senators, and withheld the vote altogether from women, African-Americans and persons who did not own property.

Far from embodying some essential constitutional principle, the Electoral College was a political compromise, born of an era in which the states were 13 separate sovereignties determined to defend their interests. While regional differences have not disappeared, they have been greatly diluted by the growth of a common national identity. After 200 years of migration of people and ideas, the states themselves are far more heterogeneous, and far more similar, than when the compromise was struck.

While admitting that the original justification for the Electoral College no longer exists, its defenders claim that it serves some other, modern purpose. They argue, for example, that without the Electoral College, candidates will campaign only in major population centers, ignoring more sparsely populated regions. Yet even the residents of rural states tend to live within close proximity to a major metropolitan area. And even if their fears were to materialize, it is hard to see how this would be worse than the targeted campaigning in which the candidates recently engaged, writing off

whole sections of the country and concentrating only on the so-called "battleground states." With every vote in play, candidates would no longer have an incentive to take anyone for granted. Others contend that abolishing the Electoral College would further undermine the stability and finality of the electoral process. They point out that Florida's was not the only state race to be decided by a very small margin, and argue that if every vote were to count equally, recounts and court challenges would proliferate. Yet wouldn't this be likelier to happen if the Electoral College is retained? Without it, state wins and losses would no longer have electoral significance. All that would matter is the nationwide count.

Let's not forget that what happened in Florida was only a glimpse of the problems the Electoral College can cause. Had neither candidate received the required 270 electoral votes, the election would have been thrown into the House of Representatives—where the controversy could have taken weeks or months longer to resolve. I am under no illusion about the difficulty of enacting a constitutional amendment. But now is the time to act—while the memory of our recent experience is fresh. Congress has considered Electoral College reform before—but only when spurred on by electoral crises. The Senate held hearings in 1992, when it seemed that the Perot candidacy might deadlock the Electoral College. After George Wallace ran as a third-party candidate in 1968, the House actually approved a constitutional amendment, but it fell victim to a Senate filibuster.

We shouldn't wait for the next crisis before confronting the problem. There have been several thoughtful proposals to reform the Electoral College without a constitutional amendment, and they deserve a hearing. My own view, however, is that halfway measures cannot address the fundamental contradiction which the Electoral College represents in a mature democracy. That's why the bill I am introducing today would abolish it outright. Public officials, from selectmen to senators, are chosen by majority vote. That's the way it's supposed to work in a democracy. And that's how we should elect the president of the greatest democracy on earth.

CHRISTIANS THANKS SIKH IN INDIA: DR. GURMIT SINGH AULAKH COMMENDED

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2001

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, on January 17 a group of Christians in India known as the Persecuted Church of India issued a statement commending the protection that Sikhs have provided to Christians in India from Indian government persecution.

Father Dominic Immanuel appeared on Star News to thank the Sikhs community for protecting Christians from Indian government persecution. As you know, the Christians in India have undergone a wave of violence and terror by militant Hindu nationalists associated with the pro-Fascist RSS, the parent organization of the ruling BJP. This violence has taken the form of church burnings, rape of nuns, murders of priests, and attacks on Christian