

Starkville, Mississippi's great citizens, in fact, an outstanding businessman recognized across the entire state and a family man of great reputation. Lewis F. Mallory, Jr., is chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the National Bank of Commerce, now known in Mississippi as Cadence Bank. He was inducted this year into the Mississippi Business Hall of Fame.

Lewis has been a leader in Mississippi banking circles for decades, and has been very successful in leading his bank through a period of tremendous growth. When Lewis began his career, his bank had about \$8 million in assets, two locations and 20 employees. Today, he has \$1.4 billion in assets in 32 offices in 12 communities throughout Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee. The company provides jobs for more than 475 people with earnings to exceed \$14 million.

Lewis grew up on the campus of Mississippi State University where his father served as Vice President for Business Affairs. He graduated from MSU with special honors in 1965 with a degree in Banking and Finance and a minor in Economics. While in college, Lewis was a member of Phi Eta Sigma, Beta Gamma Sigma, Phi Kappa Phi, and Omicron Delta Kappa.

Currently, Lewis is a member of the Board of Directors, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Mississippi Economic Council, Mississippi State University Foundation, Mississippi Catholic Foundation, Greater Starkville Development Partnership and is on the Senior Executive Advisory Council for the College of Business and Industry at Mississippi State University.

Lewis is a member of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Starkville and he and his wife Pie are the parents of two sons, Marcus and Lewis F. III.

Mr. Speaker, Lewis Mallory is a highly respected businessman and community leader and he thrives on promoting Starkville and Oktibbeha County. I commend him on his selection of the Mississippi Business Hall of Fame and I am proud that he is one of my constituents.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF THE HOUSE THAT SYMBOLS AND TRADITIONS OF CHRISTMAS SHOULD BE PROTECTED

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

Mr. HOLT. Madam. Speaker, I am troubled and disappointed that this resolution concerning Christmas is before the House today. It is a solution in search of a problem, it is divisive, and it comes at the cost of substantive issues that should be addressed.

There is a sad irony in this resolution. Christmas is supposed to be a season of goodwill, bringing people together, a holiday that brings out the best in us, and encourages us to reach out to our fellow man. Instead, this resolution was created simply so the Majority could pat itself on the back. It is a straw man, and should not have been considered by the House because it is needlessly divisive and inappropriate.

It comes as a surprise to no one, I'm sure, that as a Christian, I support and look forward to celebrating Christmas with my friends and family. But this is beside the point. More importantly, I support and respect the right of my fellow citizens to celebrate religion as they chose.

The House floor should not be manipulated so one group or members can revel in their own sanctimony. What makes America a great and free society is our system of government and our Constitution, which provides each citizen with broad, basic rights and freedoms. One of these is freedom of religion. This right treats all religions, and the lack of religion, equally. Yet today in this resolution, the House singles out one religion over the others, and defends one religious holiday at the expense of others. I wish this resolution had not come to the floor.

Just over a month ago, the House of Representatives unanimously supported a resolution that I sponsored which stressed the need for continuing interreligious dialogue and respect. Rather than "protecting" one specific religious holiday, we should protect and defend all of them. And we should honor the right of every citizen to celebrate or not celebrate these religious holidays as they chose. We should support and protect Hanukkah, Kwanza, Diwali, and all other religious holidays. It is my experience that the American people are much more respectful of each other's differences than the House may believe. They do not need to be told to respect the symbols of Christmas. They already do, just as they respect other religions.

Rather than creating a false argument over Christmas, the House should honor the spirit of Christmas through its own actions. Christmas is not about trees and candy canes, it is about a spirit of giving and helping those who need help. If the House wants to do something about Christmas, it should protect the various federal programs the Majority is trying to cut, such as food stamps, Medicaid, and money to help low income families pay their home heating bills. Ending the cuts on these essential programs for the poor and disadvantaged in our society would truly honor Christmas.

I will vote present on this resolution because it does not belong on the House floor.

PENSION PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 15, 2005

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, the House today passed the Pension Protection Act. I voted in favor of this legislation, though with great reservation.

The Pension Protection Act is a comprehensive attempt to reform our Nation's pension laws. Congress is taking up this issue in the wake of several major corporations defaulting on their pension plans. American workers are crying out for assistance as their nest eggs, for which they've worked their entire lives, are shrinking before their very eyes. I don't think anyone can argue the fact that something must be done.

But H.R. 2830 is a far cry from what is needed to place our pension system on a

strong foundation. I am concerned that the workers in many of our Nation's oldest industries are going to lose out when this legislative process shakes out. I am concerned that the future of the defined benefit—and the future of the worker's nest egg built through a defined benefit plan—is in jeopardy. And I am concerned that companies will continue to be able to dump their negotiated pension plans through bankruptcy proceedings.

Today's bill does not go far enough in alleviating my concerns.

However, I can tolerate this legislation for the simple reason that it gives us an opportunity to go to conference and improve this bill. And improve it we must—or I will be unable to support final passage on a conference agreement.

Today's debate was a needed and necessary exercise. But as we look to conference, we must remain focused on protecting the retirement dreams, and indeed the American dream, to which so many of our workers look forward.

If the conference report doesn't include the silver lining of pension protection our workers will depend upon in their golden years, I will be unable to support this bill on final passage.

IN RECOGNITION OF CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT RALPH J. CELENTO III SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 16, 2005

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the contributions of a great American, Chief Master Sergeant Ralph J. Celento III. I honor him today for his 30 years of service in the United States Air Force.

Chief Celento's most recent assignment was flight chief, vehicle operations for the 99th Logistics Readiness Squadron, 99th Mission Support Group, 99th Air Base Wing, Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. In this position Chief Celento was responsible for all enlisted matters and he assisted the flight commander in daily missions. In addition, Chief Celento directed over 150 personnel, ten sections, and ensured that vehicle management services to Nellis AFB were complete.

Chief Celento was born in Rochester, New York and entered the Air Force in 1976. His Air Force career has included assignments in various transportation and logistical programs on bases in North Carolina, California, Washington, Maryland, and Mississippi. Chief Celento also served overseas in Japan, Germany and the Republic of Korea.

Chief Celento has been awarded over 19 major awards and decorations during his distinguished service in the Air Force including the Bronze Star, Air Force Meritorious Service Medal with five Oak Leaf Clusters, National Defense Service Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and more.

Chief Celento's accomplishments also include the White House Communication Agency Award, Best Vehicle Operations Flight in Air Education and Training Command, Verne