1989, over forty states and cities have passed legislation in support of the Commission bill. In 2002, lawsuits were filed against U.S. corporations for their role in perpetuating slavery. The following year, in 2003, Brown University created the Committee on Slavery and Justice to assess the University's role in slavery and determine a response. And in 2004, a federal appeals court ruled that statute of limitations prevented redress in the case of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot, but opened the door for legislative recourse.

Most recently, on December 13, 2006, a federal appeals court ruled that U.S. corporations can be found guilty of consumer fraud for failing to disclose their roles in slavery. Just a few weeks earlier, on November 27th, Prime Minister Tony Blair condemned the African slave trade and Britain's participation. As Brown University prepares to act on Committee recommendations in February, and on the eve of the 200th anniversary of Britain's prohibition of slavery in March, productive discussions on both the national and global levels seem promised.

However, as this dialogue continues to grow, one entity is noticeably absent—the federal government. The Commission would ensure proper participation in this conversation, in addition to taking us giant steps towards closure on this matter. The truth is that the institution of slavery will continue to tarnish the American national story until we confront this part of our history. While a Commission will not erase the past, it can bring us closer to racial reconciliation and advancement.

A Commission would not only examine the institution of slavery, but the legacy of slavery that weighs heavily on this country. Just last Congress, a bipartisan collective reauthorized the Voting Rights Act because racial inequities and injustices are a reality. This reality is the result of the social, economic, and political disenfranchisement African Americans have endured throughout our experience in this country. For a majority of this nation's history, this disenfranchisement was mandated by law. Disparities in education, housing, healthcare and other critical aspects of society have resulted.

After examining the issues, the Commission would recommend appropriate remedies to Congress. There is this common misperception that "remedies" means monetary compensation. Let me be clear, the Commission bill does not mandate financial payments of any kind. Recommendations would be at the sole discretion of the Commission. It is unfair to dismiss the idea of a Commission based on a fear that monetary reparations will be warranted. We need to understand that a reparations discussion goes beyond money.

We must also recognize that understanding slavery and its modern day implications is in the best interest of our society. This nation should serve as an example for corporations, universities, and other countries. In the 110th Congress, I look forward to open and constructive discourse about the Commission bill.

TRIBUTE TO HARVEY CHRISTIE

HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor the life of Harvey Christie, better known to people across West Virginia as Chef Harv. Chef Harv was tragically killed at age 42 in a car accident near Romney, West Virginia on December 1, 2006. He is survived by his wife Christy and two children.

Chef Harv traveled across West Virginia, as a caterer, as the host of "West Virginia Cooks", a Public Broadcasting cooking show, and as a champion for local agriculture products in our state.

Chef Harv never stopped promoting West Virginia's small farmers and food products. Whether it was catering a community dinner or visiting 4–H camp, he inspired a love for our state's agriculture goods to countless people.

Each year Chef Harv made the trip to Washington to remind members of Congress of the importance of supporting our local farmers. On each trip he cooked for "A Taste of the Virginias" held in a House office building—providing a meal made entirely from items grown in West Virginia or Virginia.

The amazing food Chef Harv prepared, like his award winning "Harv's Hot Pepper Jelly" was matched only by his outgoing, engaging personality that was an inspiration to those around him. West Virginia's agriculture community has suffered a tremendous loss with his passing, and he will be missed by countless friends across our state.

On January 13, Chef Harv's family and friends will gather to remember a life that ended much too soon. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife, children, and all of his friends and family during this difficult time.

NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM

HON. TRENT FRANKS

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Madam Speaker, on December 8, 2006, the House considered H.R. 6406, which, among other things, authorized the permanent extension of nondiscriminatory treatment (normal trade relations) to the products of Vietnam. While I am a strong proponent of free trade and I am committed to helping broaden the United States' relationship with Vietnam, I could not, in good conscience, vote for this legislation.

I continue to hold serious concerns about Vietnam's human rights record, as well as their handling of cases regarding U.S. Armed Forces personnel missing and killed in action during the Vietnam War.

Madam Speaker, I truly believe that the overall benefits of free trade are numerous for our country and that of our trading partners. These positive aspects include a higher economic standard of living, a wider range of higher quality products at lower costs, and a migration of workers from less competitive markets to more competitive and productive markets. As a former small business owner, I am and will remain a strong advocate for free trade.

However I also believe that religious liberty and respect for human rights should be requirements for achieving the broadest possible economic success.

INTRODUCTION OF FEDERAL JUDGESHIP FOR U.S. DISTRICT COURT, DISTRICT OF NEBRASKA

HON. LEE TERRY

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mr. TERRY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to call attention to a looming judicial crisis in my state of Nebraska. Today, with my Nebraska colleagues Congressman JEFF FORTENBERRY and Congressman ADRIAN SMITH, I am introducing legislation to create an additional federal judgeship for the United States District Court, District of Nebraska.

Nebraska has three permanent judgeships and three senior judges. An additional temporary judgeship was created in 1990 and lapsed in May 2004 when a judge took senior status, despite recommendations by the Judicial Conference of the United States to convert the temporary status to a permanent position. After the lapse, the Judicial Conference has continued to recommend an additional permanent judgeship. To further burden the district, two of the court's three senior judges are in their early eighties and do not take full caseloads. The third senior judge also cannot handle a full caseload due to health reasons, and as a result, the senior judges provided the equivalent of less than one active judge in 2005.

Our delegation has introduced this important legislation on the very first day of the 110th Congress because the need for immediate Congressional action has never been greater. Nebraska's federal district courts handle a heavy caseload, not unlike many federal district courts nationwide. However, the number of Nebraska federal district court judges' criminal felony filings ranks them 5th nationwide and is more than twice the national average. Furthermore, the Nebraska judges have increased their overall number of completed trials by 41 percent since 2001 and now rank 2nd nationwide on a per-judgeship basis.

Weighted filings currently total 590 per judgeship, the 7th highest total in the Nation. Based on the current total of three authorized judgeships, the court's weighted filings are well above the standards of 500 per judgeship for small courts.

These numbers mean nothing unless they are put into a real life context. Nebraska is a rural state and the judges must travel long distances in order to try cases. For example, judges in Omaha must travel almost 600 miles four times per year to conduct two-week jury sessions. Additionally, magistrates are sent out one month prior to the judge's arrival to conduct pretrial conferences on all cases pending trial. All this travel takes its toll on these judges and forces them at times to use the services of judges from other districts.

The strain on assistance from senior judges, the high number of felony criminal cases and the heavy weighted caseload demonstrate clearly that the district of Nebraska requires four permanent judgeships. I call on all of my colleagues to recognize the pressing need for immediate Congressional action to create an additional federal judgeship in Nebraska.