

a composed, calm, and patient manner; which is to be admired in a position so demanding.

Brian grew up in the Nashville, Tennessee area and then moved to Mississippi where he attended Northwest Rankin High School. Once in Mississippi, he settled there and graduated from Belhaven College in 1997 with a bachelor of arts in philosophy and then obtained a masters in communication from Mississippi College. Before starting in my office, Brian was a reporter for the Madison County Journal, creator and editor of the Magnolia Report, and campaign director for Judge Keith Starrett's successful run for election. His personal experience as a journalist helped make him a very effective communications director for me.

In addition to serving as my communications director, Brian also focused on education, human rights, and religious freedom issues. In 2006, Brian moved back to Mississippi to work in my district office in Pearl. We have missed having Brian in the DC office.

Since moving back to Mississippi, Brian has been extremely involved in neighborhood and community activities. He is a loyal alumnus of Belhaven, living just one block from the school. Canoeing, fishing, and camping are among his favorite outdoor activities. He also enjoys listening to bluegrass, grilling with friends, and attending the Neshoba County Fair. Over the past 2 years, the district office has come to really know Brian and will remember him as an ardent 1st amendment defender, Christian advocate, political junkie, and the world's fastest eater. But most significantly, he will be remembered as a dedicated and conscientious member of my staff, a good listener, and a loyal friend to his fellow co-workers.

As a tribute to Brian for his exemplary work, I would like to share some words from people he has worked closely with throughout his career.

"Brian Perry's five year tenure in Congressman Pickering's office is noteworthy, as his record of public service is marked by a strong commitment to excellence and professionalism. Personally, I am grateful for Brian's willingness to serve as the spokesman for my 2007 re-election campaign; his vision, maturity, and experience were nothing short of exceptional. I commend Brian for his outstanding career and look forward to his continued contributions to government and politics."—Governor Haley Barbour

"Brian Perry has served Congressman Pickering and the Third District with distinction. He is a man of unwavering conviction and his integrity is above reproach. That's why it is my distinct privilege to count Brian among my closest and most trusted friends, a relationship that has developed as I have worked with him professionally. He's always been willing and able to meet the request of our newspapers—and then some. He has always proven to be of the strongest character when dealing with members of the press."—James E. Prince III, president, Prince Newspapers

"Brian Perry has been one of my closest and most trusted friends for well over a decade. We both met as activists in the Mississippi Republican Party. He has served as a loyal member of Congressman Chip Pickering's staff where he facilitated and communicated the various initiatives Congressman Pickering spearheaded in the interest of Mississippi's Third Congressional District. While serving as Republican Chairman of the Third District, and now as MRP Executive Director, Brian has proven himself

over and over again to be a man of character whose integrity and professionalism are above reproach. Brian's mark of service to the Republican Party, Congressman Pickering, and Mississippi and even the nation will be long lasting."—Brad White, executive director, Mississippi Republican Party

"Brian Perry worked very hard ensuring that the needs of rural areas were addressed along with the many other demands placed on Congress. He took a personal interest in the progress of Noxubee County and assisted us whenever possible. Brian's attention to detail and pride in his work was evident whether at his desk in the Cannon Building or during a much-deserved weekend break to fish the Shenandoah River. Brian Perry's presence on the Hill will be greatly missed by many Mississippians."—Brian Wilson, executive director, Noxubee Economic and Community Development Alliance

"It has truly been a pleasure to get to know Brian Perry during his tenure with Chip. He and I have developed a special friendship. I appreciate his intellect and character. He is an excellent writer and conscientious in his work. His public service has made a difference to our nation, our great state, and to Chip and our family. I will always be grateful."—Judge Charles W. Pickering, Sr.

Madam Speaker, Brian has provided wise counsel, effective communication and a passion for service to Mississippi. He served with poise throughout the aftermath of Katrina and in congressional and confirmation battles. I treasure his faith, reason and friendship. He has my deep respect and appreciation for all the contributions he has made and the work he has done. I wish him the very best and know he has a bright future communicating and fighting for good causes.

CONGRATULATING ISRAEL ON ITS 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

HON. JOHN M. MCHUGH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mr. MCHUGH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and commend the State of Israel on the 60th anniversary of its independence. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared its independence. Within 11 minutes, the United States became the first nation to give de facto recognition to the State of Israel. America's friendship with Israel continues to this day. Having visited Israel several times, I know well that Israelis and Americans share the common values of peace, freedom and democracy.

The modern state of Israel is a safe haven for Jews from all corners of the world. Since its founding, Israel has been a home to Holocaust survivors and their descendants, as well as Jews fleeing oppression. While strides have been made to combat global anti-Semitism, I am disappointed that recent reports indicate a rise in anti-Semitism worldwide.

A strong and secure Israel is vital to America's national interest. Israelis know all too well the terror of indiscriminate homicide attacks by radical terrorists. The enemies of Israel have also targeted their attacks against Americans. The terrorist group Hamas is responsible for the deaths of at least 26 Americans, including teenagers and young children. In 1983 Hezbollah bombed the U.S. embassy in Bei-

rut. Hezbollah was also involved in the bombing of the United States Marine barracks, in an attack that claimed the lives of 241 American servicemen. These groups operate with support and funding from Iran, a country whose president has called for Israel to be "wiped off the map." Hamas continues to launch rockets into Israel, terrorizing innocent civilians living near the Gaza border. However, Israelis have shown tremendous courage in the face of these hostilities. Despite the constant threat of annihilation, Israelis have made the desert bloom. They have created a flourishing culture and society. Israel has also developed a thriving economy and is the world's leader in the development of many cutting edge industries. Israeli technology has even been used to help keep our troops safe in battle in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Madam Speaker, I join my colleagues in congratulating the State of Israel on its 60th anniversary, and express my sincere hope that the next 60 years come with peace and security for our close friend and ally.

CALLING ON CONGRESS TO REPEAL THE GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET AND WINDFALL ELIMINATION PROVISION

HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mr. DELAHUNT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about an extremely important issue facing many retirees in Massachusetts. Throughout my career in the Congress, I have heard from thousands of my constituents who have been penalized by the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

Both of these laws currently require that a modified formula be used to calculate the amount of Social Security benefits a retired or disabled worker and/or the worker's family will receive if the worker also receives a pension from local, State or Federal employment not covered by Social Security. This has resulted in some unintended and unfair consequences.

Millions of public service workers in 15 States are allowed to opt out of the Social Security system and my home State of Massachusetts is one of them. Most of these workers are teachers, town and State employees, nurses, police officers and firefighters who are not required or allowed to pay into the Social Security program. Therefore, they do not collect Social Security benefits upon retirement.

However, the GPO and WEP also prevent public servants from receiving Social Security benefits that they earned through other, non-public service employment. Under these provisions, a widow or widower is denied a spousal benefit because their husband or wife was a public service employee. This is unfair and unacceptable.

Every year those who unselfishly give of themselves by serving others in their communities, find their retirement savings slashed by the GPO and WEP, simply because they left the private sector to serve the public. In Massachusetts alone, nearly 18,700 retirees are affected by the GPO, with more than a third of them being widows or widowers. As many as 32,000 individuals are affected by the WEP.