

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JIM JORDAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I was absent from the House Floor Thursday afternoon.

Had I been present, I would have voted "no" on rollcall numbers 87, 88, 89, and 90, and "aye" on rollcall number 91.

HONORING BROTHER JOE ADAMS

HON. GEOFF DAVIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Brother Joe Adams for his outstanding service as chaplain to the Kentucky State government. On March 16, 2010, the Kentucky House of Representatives will celebrate Brother Adams' retirement after twenty-eight years of service.

Brother Adams was born and raised in Kentucky, and began preaching at the age of fourteen. In 1966, he enlisted in the United States Air Force. Serving for four years, Brother Adams spent his last year in Vietnam.

Following his service to his country, Brother Adams enrolled in Western Kentucky University to study Accounting and began preaching in Simpson County. He later pursued a master's degree in Child Development and Family Living, but soon realized he was being called to devote his life to full-time ministry.

Brother Adams has been a pastor at several Baptist churches across Kentucky. Since 1983, he has dedicated himself to working with community and State officials through the God and Country Ministry. In addition to his duties as chaplain to the Kentucky State government, Brother Adams has contributed to the Commonwealth as a member of numerous boards and committees, including the Bardstown/Nelson County Chamber of Commerce, the Bardstown Public Housing Tenant Relations Committee, the Non-Public School Commission, and chairman of Christian Home Educators of Kentucky.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in commending Brother Joe Adams for his service to our country and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. He has touched thousands, literally being the hands and feet of his Lord Jesus Christ reaching into many dark places with the light of truth, hope, and love. May God richly bless him as he and Sandra enter the next chapter in their lives of service.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Madam Speaker, on Thursday, March 4, 2010, I was unable to be present for the recorded vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H. Res. 1079, as amended. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes" on rollcall vote No. 91.

JOSEPH FINNERTY: A JOB WELL DONE

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, mixed emotions describe the way I and the people of New Bedford feel about the retirement of Joseph S. Finnerty, as Executive Director of the New Bedford Housing Authority. Running a housing authority and a city is no easy job, as people well know. But Joe Finnerty has never been one to complain about this task for which he volunteered and which he has performed in an extraordinary fashion for thirty-five years. No one can begrudge him his retirement after all that service in such a demanding position, but Joe can't begrudge us our feelings of regret that he's leaving. As Executive Director of the Housing Authority, Joe Finnerty has served not just the residents of public housing, but all of the people of New Bedford, by the great contributions he has made to the quality of life for those residents and for the city as a whole.

Madam Speaker, tomorrow, March 10th, some of Joe's close friends, who know well what an extraordinary asset he has been to the city and people of New Bedford, are gathering with him to provide a well-earned salute. As you know, our business will keep me here in D.C. at that time, so I am taking advantage of this forum to send him my best wishes, not simply personally, but because the example of a man who has dedicated so much of his life to the important job of running a public housing authority, and done it so well, ought to be held up for those who sometimes become unduly pessimistic about the good that can be done in government. And I ask that the article by Jack Spillane, from the New Bedford Standard Times, be printed here for that purpose.

[Jan. 26, 2010]

RETIRING HOUSING CHIEF LOOKS BACK ON REIGN WITH PRIDE

(By Jack Spillane)

Few people in New Bedford have positively affected more people's lives over the last 35 years than Joseph S. Finnerty.

Entrusted with the housing care of thousands of low-income city residents since 1975, Joe Finnerty has presided over an era in which the city authority rebuilt much of its aging public housing stock, de-loaded more than 2,000 units, and put into motion rebuilding projects that will eventually make scores of housing units accessible to the disabled.

Under the leadership of the 73-year-old Finnerty—who will retire at the end of this month—the New Bedford Authority has, for decades, provided stable and reliable housing for thousands of low-income city residents.

But it's something else that Finnerty—a member of a political family long active in city and local Democratic politics—seems most proud of. During Finnerty's long tenure as executive director, the New Bedford Housing Authority did not lose any of its public units to market-rate housing. (Any apartments lost to demolition have been replaced by other units elsewhere in the city.)

That's a monumental achievement in an era when housing rental rates far exceed the ability of people who work in minimum-wage jobs to afford any type of housing.

Finnerty is a staunch defender of the need for government-sponsored public housing.

"I don't see why you don't want to provide housing that's affordable to people so that they can raise their families," he said.

Public housing's biggest beneficiaries are the elderly, children and the disabled, he noted. "It provides affordable rents so that a family is not struggling to maintain a decent environment."

Finnerty's philosophy notwithstanding, it's not unusual to hear local complaints that New Bedford possesses too much government housing, that people are moving down from Boston because the housing is more affordable in New Bedford and Fall River.

Finnerty says he doesn't understand the attitude.

It would not be progress, he said, to return to the massive slum and tenement districts that blighted American cities in the 1930s and 1940s.

"We can do a lot better than that now, and we are doing better," he said.

"Public housing is no different than public health. It's no different than public transportation. It's a vital part of an urban community," he said.

"There are judges, university presidents and community leaders who grew up in public housing, or who for a significant time in their lives lived in public housing," he noted.

And the cities, Finnerty said, take responsibility for most of the public-housing stock necessary to their surrounding towns and suburbs. (By and large, suburban communities have limited their public housing to elderly units, leaving their own low-income families and disabled to relocate in the cities.)

Finnerty seems like a model for what a good, low-end, urban private landlord should have been.

He touts the importance of mixing working tenants with non-working ones in public housing. And he was always a no-nonsense manager who made it clear to bad public-housing tenants that he would evict them. (He's even been consulted by private owners of low-income housing about how to keep developments safe and secure.)

"Public housing is not a right, it's a privilege," he said.

Many public housing tenants are ambitious, working two jobs, and some eventually get themselves out of public housing, Finnerty said.

"People who live in public housing are not different. They are intelligent people. Their character is the same as the people who live in non-public housing."

The job of a housing authority in a city the size of New Bedford (just short of 100,000 people at the last census) is not a small one.

There are some 4,355 government-supported housing units in New Bedford that were either directly or indirectly under Finnerty's management—more than 2,500 federal and state units, and an additional 1,600-plus Section 8 vouchers for private housing.

Finnerty, who worked for 13 years as a teacher and coach in the Fairhaven school system, originally thought he would preside over the housing authority for a comparatively short period. A political appointee of popular former Mayor John Markey, he thought he would return to public education, perhaps as a principal or superintendent.

(Finnerty, by the way, was one of the founding members of the board that built Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational-Technical High School and is a former trustee at both UMass Dartmouth and South-eastern Massachusetts University.)

But at the housing authority, Finnerty said there were always important projects proceeding and he wanted to oversee them to completion.

"I saw it (the public housing stock) as really an investment for the city," he said. "And it was definitely needed."