

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CIVIL RIGHTS

THIS PAST WEDNESDAY -- FOR THE FIRST TIME DURING MY NEARLY 30 YEARS IN CONGRESS -- I VOTED AGAINST A BILL THAT WORE THE CIVIL RIGHTS LABEL.

QUOTA JUSTICE

DESPITE MY RECORD OF SUPPORT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION -- A RECORD ABOUT WHICH I AM VERY PROUD -- WEDNESDAY'S VOTE WAS AN EASY ONE FOR ME.

IT WAS EASY BECAUSE WHEN YOU TAKE THE TIME TO LOOK BEHIND THE LABEL AND AT THE ACTUAL TEXT OF THE SO-CALLED CIVIL RIGHTS ACT, YOU'LL SEE THAT THIS BILL HAS VERY LITTLE TO DO WITH CIVIL RIGHTS, OR RACIAL JUSTICE, OR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY. YOU'LL SEE THAT IT HAS MORE TO DO WITH FORCING EMPLOYERS TO "HIRE-BY-THE-NUMBERS." WITH QUOTA JUSTICE. AND WITH DISTORTING -- NOT RESTORING -- THE CIVIL RIGHTS VISION THAT HAS SERVED THIS NATION WELL FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS.

THE SO-CALLED CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1990 ALTERS THE CAREFUL BALANCE OF TITLE VII BY ALLOWING "SKY'S-THE-LIMIT" JURY AWARDS -- UNLIMITED COMPENSATORY DAMAGES, UNLIMITED PUNITIVE DAMAGES, AND UNLIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PLAINTIFFS' BAR TO MAKE A KILLING IN THE COURTROOM.

THIS APPROACH DOESN'T PROMOTE CONCILIATION AND SETTLEMENT, ONE OF THE CORE PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING TITLE VII AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964. THIS PROMOTES NEEDLESS, TIME-CONSUMING, AND OFTEN VERY EXPENSIVE LITIGATION THAT WILL BREAK THE BACKS OF MANY SMALL BUSINESSES IN THIS COUNTRY.

THAT'S NOT FAIR. AND THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS SENATOR MEANS BY "CIVIL RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY."

WALK THE EXTRA MILE

PRIOR TO THE VOTE ON WEDNESDAY, PRESIDENT BUSH AND HIS ADVISORS WALKED THE EXTRA MILE IN AN EFFORT TO NEGOTIATE A COMPROMISE WITH SENATOR KENNEDY AND WITH THE WASHINGTON CIVIL RIGHTS LOBBY.

FAXES WERE EXCHANGED. NEW LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE WAS PROPOSED -- IT SEEMS ALMOST ON AN HOURLY BASIS. AND VERY LENGTHY MEETINGS WERE HELD BETWEEN THE BILL'S PROPONENTS HERE IN CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT'S TOP ADVISORS, INCLUDING CHIEF OF STAFF JOHN SUNUNU, WHITE HOUSE COUNSEL BOYDEN GRAY, AND ATTORNEY GENERAL DICK THORNBURGH.

SO, EVEN THOUGH NO AGREEMENT WAS EVER REACHED, PRESIDENT BUSH CAN HOLD HIS HEAD HIGH. HE GAVE IT HIS BEST SHOT. AND HE DID NOT BACK DOWN AND RUN-FOR-THE-HILLS SIMPLY BECAUSE THE BILL'S SPONSORS WERE CRAFTY ENOUGH TO BLESS THEIR LEGISLATIVE CHILD WITH A WONDERFUL-SOUNDING NAME.

STILL HOPEFUL FOR A COMPROMISE

THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE UP THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1990 EARLY NEXT WEEK. AND THE FULL HOUSE WILL PROBABLY CONSIDER THE BILL SOMETIME IN LATE AUGUST OR EARLY SEPTEMBER.

SO THERE SEEMS TO BE ENOUGH TIME FOR BOTH THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE BILL'S PROPONENTS TO GET TOGETHER AND GIVE A NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT ONE LAST SHOT.

BUT THE BILL'S PROPONENTS HERE IN CONGRESS MUST REALIZE THAT PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE IS A TWO-WAY STREET. THERE HAS TO BE "GIVE" ON BOTH SIDES. THEY MUST UNDERSTAND THAT A "DEAL'S A DEAL," AND THAT WHAT MAY BE PERCEIVED AS THE RHETORICAL UPPER-HAND DOESN'T JUSTIFY RENEGING ON AGREEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE IN GOOD FAITH.

I KNOW THAT PRESIDENT BUSH WANTS TO SIGN A CIVIL RIGHTS BILL, AND HE WANTS TO SIGN IT THIS YEAR.

AND I, AS SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER, HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO HELP PUT THAT BILL ON THE PRESIDENT'S DESK.

THERE'S STILL TIME. AND I STILL REMAIN HOPEFUL THAT AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED ON A BALANCED AND RESPONSIBLE CIVIL RIGHTS BILL FOR THE '90S.

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