

Thursday, June 6, 1991

House passes civil rights bill

Lawmakers fear businesses will be defenseless against discrimination charges

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a painful break with his party, Democratic Rep. Charles Stenholm voted against civil rights legislation Wednesday, saying the bill would have a "chilling effect" on business.

But Rep. Bill Sarpalius, D-Amarillo, who voted against last year's civil rights bill, said he decided this year's version was "a giant step" toward equal treatment for women while protecting small businesses. He was the only Democrat who voted down the 1990 version to support Wednesday's legislation.

The only Texas Democrats voting against the measure were Stenholm, a conservative Democrat from Stamford and member of the House leadership, and fellow conservative Rep. Ralph Hall of Rockwall. The state's eight Republicans also voted it down.

The bill passed the House by a

vote of 273-158, but it fell short of the margin needed to override a veto by President Bush, who has attacked the measure as a formula for racial quotas.

Sarpalius, however, said he decided to support the legislation because it specifies that quotas would be illegal.

"I spent a lot of time studying this bill before I cast the vote," Sarpalius said. "I spoke with the president, businesses, business organizations and constituents in the district who would be affected. The president tried to make the American people believe that it's a quota bill, but the language is very clear that it's not."

Sarpalius said he also decided to support the bill because businesses with 14 or fewer employees would be exempted from its provisions.

"I think that our ultimate goal in this country should be to have

How They Voted		Yes	No
Republicans	Democrats		
Archer	Andrews	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> Half Stenholm	Democrats 250 yes / 15 no Republicans 22 yes / 143 no
Armey	Brooks		
Barton	Bryant		
Combert	Bustamante		
DeLay	Chapman		
Fields	Coleman		
Johnson	de la Garza		
Smith	Edwards		
	Frost		
	Gera		
	Gonzales		
	Laughlin		
	Ortiz		
	Pickle		
	Sarpalius		
	Washington		
	Wilson		

equality for all people, regardless of the color of their skin or their religious beliefs, or whether they're male or female, or whatever their national origin," Sarpalius said. "But it's got to be a delicate balance. ... The government can't come in and tell a business who to hire."

But Stenholm said he could not support the bill because employers would face "an unreasonable burden when defending themselves against charges of discrimination" and would be penalized for being guilty until they could prove themselves innocent.

Stenholm said he was also afraid

the bill would encourage more litigation.

"I wanted to support this bill," Stenholm said. But he said civil rights groups "would not move" and that was when he realized they had written the bill.

"It suddenly dawned on me that I was not dealing with the Judiciary Committee, the staff of the Judiciary Committee, not with the House leadership, but with special interest groups, and I said that was not the way to write legislation this important," Stenholm said.

Rep. Joe Barton, R-Ennis, who voted for last year's bill, said he could not support the 1991 version because it was much more "politically motivated" and included provisions that he opposed on comparable worth, punitive damages and job testing.

Strauss breaks language barriers

MOSCOW (AP) — Bob Strauss may not speak Russian. He knows more about the Democratic Party than the Communist Party. But the proposed United States ambassador to the Soviet Union does speak the international language of money.

Members of the American business community in Moscow applauded President Bush's choice of Strauss, known as a dealmaker, saying Soviet-American relations should concentrate heavily on business.

Strauss would succeed Ambassador Jack F. Matlock, a career diplomat whose broad knowledge of the Soviet Union, love of languages and down-to-earth manner has made him popular among Soviets.

A Washington-based lawyer and former Democratic Party chairman, Strauss last visited the Soviet Union two years ago. Although he was U.S. trade representative under President Carter, his only other experience in the diplomatic field was when he briefly worked as special negotiator on the Arab-Israeli dispute in 1979. He held the job five months.

Last year, the 72-year-old native of Lockhart, attracted attention when he helped expedite the \$6.6 billion purchase of the MCA entertainment conglomerate by the Japanese electronics firm Matsushita. His law firm received an \$8 million fee from the deal.

"The business background that Mr. Strauss would bring as ambassador is a language that bridges the gap between cultures," said Alexander Papachristou, a Moscow-based attorney for the U.S. law firm White & Case.



Jack Matlock

"(It's) a language that Soviet-American entrepreneurs need to learn to speak with each other better," he said.

Papachristou said the Soviet Union is "headed toward either better cooperation with the West or state domination," but believes Strauss would be able to handle a possible hard-line shift in Soviet policy away from President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's reformist policy of perestroika.

"I can only imagine that Strauss' experiences in the smoke-filled rooms of American politics would prepare him sufficiently to bring to Soviet attention the full range of views that the American government would wish to express," he said.

Soldiers enforce state of emergency

ALGIERS, Algeria (AP) — Soldiers backed by Soviet-made tanks surrounded the presidential palace and major public buildings to enforce the state of emergency declared Wednesday after an uprising by Muslim fundamentalists.

Authorities in this North African nation reported at least seven people dead in the unrest, which prompted President Chadli Bendjedid to postpone Algeria's first multiparty parliamentary elections, scheduled for June 27.

In Washington, State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher expressed regret that Algeria's democratic process has been interrupted and that there had been loss of life.

"We hope that all parties will show restraint in the coming days and we share President Bendjedid's hope that the conditions for holding elections will be rapidly restored," he said Wednesday.

Bendjedid, who dismissed the government of Premier Mouloud Hamrouche, issued a presidential decree that would last up to four months. He also left open the possibility it could be lifted earlier.

Under the decree, the military can detain anyone whose activities are considered dangerous to public order and security.

Muslim fundamentalists of the Islamic Salvation Front, whose

confrontation with authorities triggered the crisis, called more protest marches and rallies "if possible." But the group ordered followers to "respect order and avoid confrontations" during the gatherings.

The Front, made up mainly of Sunni Muslims seeking to remove Bendjedid and establish an Islamic state, pledged to continue a 12-day-old general strike.

Bendjedid, in a nationally broadcast message, said a new government would be formed following consultations with political parties.

That suggested he did not mean to halt the democratic process that began in the aftermath of 1988 riots in which hundreds died. But the state of emergency, which suspends civil liberties and places public security in the hands of the army, at least temporarily stopped the clock on reform in this nation, once a staunchly Marxist-socialist state.

On Wednesday, the city center was all but emptied of activity after nearly two weeks of urban havoc caused by demonstrations by the Front.

Soviet-built tanks and armored cars, surrounded by soldiers in combat fatigues, were stationed at major public buildings.

Texas farmers cry out for federal aid as they face certain disaster

WASHINGTON (AP) — The cotton and wheat fields of West Texas are parched, the rice fields along the Coastal Bend are under water, the state's dairy farmers are reeling from low prices and farm activists want Congress to investigate an imminent disaster.

Joe Rankin, president of the Texas Farmers Union, said losses are climbing toward the hundreds of millions of dollars because of extreme spring weather from the Panhandle to

the Rio Grande and the Gulf Coast.

"It has not been a very promising spring for farmers in many parts of the country," says Rep. Kika de la Garza, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee.

The committee plans a hearing today to assess damages to agriculture nationwide and the Agriculture Department's response to both farmers and agriculture-dependent communities, said de la Garza, D-Mission.

"Chairman de la Garza is very prudent in calling for this hearing now, to make people aware of the impending disaster we have shaping up ... to review the situation and determine where we go from here," Rankin said.

According to Sen. Phil Gramm's office, the Panhandle wheat crop is 62 percent below average because of extremely dry conditions in West Texas, while the state's overall wheat crop is 42 percent below normal.

Body exhumed for autopsy

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — The body of civil rights leader Medgar Evers was exhumed and secretly transported here to be re-examined as part of a renewed investigation into his slaying, officials confirmed Wednesday.

Evers' body was exhumed Monday from Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, said Maj. Arlene Beatty, a U.S. Army spokeswoman. She said the Jackson, Miss., district attorney's office, which has reopened an investigation into Evers' 1963 death in that city, requested the exhumation.

The body was brought to Albany Medical Center, where an autopsy was performed Tuesday, WTVN-TV in Albany reported.

Dr. Michael Baden, chief of forensic services for the state police, wouldn't deny that an autopsy was performed in Albany. But he wouldn't elaborate,

saying only, "It's a homicide case investigation." It wasn't immediately clear why the autopsy was done in Albany.

Evers' body was reburied in Arlington early Wednesday, Beatty said.

Evers, a field secretary with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was shot to death June 12, 1963, in front of his Jackson home.

Byron De La Beckwith, 70, was tried twice but never convicted in the slaying. The Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals on Monday ordered him extradited to Mississippi to stand trial a third time.

Beckwith, who has been held in a Chattanooga, Tenn., jail since Dec. 30, has 30 days to appeal the extradition ruling.



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