B.S. degree in Broadfield Science Education, and later an M.S. in Geology. From 1983 to 1997 he was Research Associate at the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas at Austin. Later that year, Mr. Mullican began his career at the Texas Water Development Board, first serving as Director for Water Resources Planning, then as Deputy Executive Administrator for the Office of Planning. While serving as Deputy Executive Administrator, his areas of responsibility included water data collection, environmental programs, and research and planning fund management. As a leading authoritative figure for state water planning, Mr. Mullican assists other States such as California, Illinois, Indiana, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania in establishing statewide water planning initiatives.

It is with great honor that I recognize Mr. Bill Mullican for years of hard work and dedication. As a citizen of Texas, I am truly grateful that he has continuously taken a proactive role in our water development. I am pleased to join his friends, family and colleagues in congratulating him on this prestigious milestone.

OAK PARK HIGH SCHOOL ACE MENTOR PROGRAM

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly rise to honor four outstanding individuals, Chris Avery, Clint Coffelt, Anh Nguyen, and Steven Yung who competed and finished in third place in the Ace Mentor/Construction Industry Round Table 2007 Design Competition Awards Program, representing Oak Park High School. The Oak Park team designed a small sports complex that would offer an opportunity for kids and young adults to escape the local streets.

The ACE mentor program was designed to help high school students who are interested in careers in architecture, construction, or engineering. Students are introduced to the various design professions and the role that each performs in planning, designing and constructing a project. Students in this program gain firsthand insight into the design industry by touring project offices, visiting active construction sites, and by working closely with their mentors on ''real world'' projects.

Also, I want to recognize the great leadership of the team including Amy Light, the math and science coordinator for the North Kansas City School District. It is also important to acknowledge the parents, family, mentors and friends who have helped these students succeed in their academic efforts.

Madam Speaker, I ask you to join me in congratulating the Oak Park High School Ace Mentor Team on their achievements and wish them the best of luck in their future academic endeavors. It is an honor to represent this team in the U.S. Congress.

INTERNET GAMBLING

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to support H.R. 2046, the Internet Gambling Regulation and Enforcement Act. Last year, a ban on internet gambling was snuck into a port security bill. This ban on internet gambling is an outrageous affront to individual freedom. H.R. 2046 restores respect for the right to patronize internet gambling sites as long as the sites follow certain Federal laws. The bill does not create new Federal laws, and it respects the authority of States and Native American tribes to regulate gambling. I hope all my colleagues will join me in cosponsoring this bill and restoring respect for the American people's right to decide for themselves whether or not they gamble online.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS OF EQUAL PAY DAY

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of ensuring equal pay for equal work for all Americans.

Since 1963, when President Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law, women have made significant strides in the workplace. However, there continues to be a wage gap, and in 2006, women earned 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. A new study by the American Association of University Women finds that just 1 year out of college women are earning only 80 percent of what men earn, and by 10 years after graduation the gap has widened and women are making only 69 percent as much as men.

More than 40 years after the Equal Pay Act was signed into law, a woman has to work nearly 16 months to earn an amount equal to the amount a man earns in just 12 months. This gap results in $250,000 in lost wages over the course of the average woman's life. This wage gap not only affects a woman's current income, but often means she will have less money available to her in retirement. For women of color the pay disparities are even greater—African American women earn 71 percent and Latinas earn 58 percent of what their male colleagues earn.

The gender wage gap is not just a women's issue, it is an issue that affects the strength of our families and our communities. This is why I am a cosponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act to strengthen the Equal Pay Act of 1963 to provide for equal rights in pay regardless of a person's sex, race or national origin. This legislation should be a priority for the 110th Congress.

It is long past time to close the gender pay gap. I urge my colleagues to join me in working to eliminate these unjust pay disparities.

RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR DIPLOMATIC DIALOG WITH CARIBBEAN NATIONS

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to enter into the RECORD an opinion editorial published in the CaribNews newspaper the week ending March 20, 2007 titled ''Caribbean-U.S. Summit In Washington: A Photo-OP or Meeting Of Substance, Only Time Will Tell.'' As well as, an article written by Tony Best, appearing the same week in the CaribNews paper, entitled ''Caribbean Leaders and President Bush to Meet; In Washington, In June, U.S.-Caribbean Relations, Economic Development, Trade To Be High On Agenda.'' Both articles comment on the Administration's sudden interest with the Caribbean nations in the Western Hemisphere.

The White House has invited the leaders of the Caribbean nations (CARICOM) to a dialog regarding strengthening relationships between these countries and the United States. I am glad to see the Administration is reaching out to our Western Hemisphere neighbors, since these relations have been neglected far too long, making the U.S. an increasingly isolated nation among Western Hemisphere states and placing CARICOM-U.S. relations at an all time low.

It is imperative that the United States find a way to pragmatically assess and be responsive to the social and economic challenges facing our neighbors in accordance with Washington's long-term political interests, since the region is often described as our ''Third border.'' CARICOM leaders have accepted Washington's invitation and are interested in addressing trade issues, as well as competitiveness and investment in mutually beneficial ways.

In addition, CARICOM leaders during their visit to Washington will be reaching out to the members of Congress most interested in and with the jurisdiction over the issues affecting the Caribbean and the members of the Diaspora here in the United States.

As we continue to strengthen our national economy and improve our standing in the international community it is important that we devote serious attention to strengthening U.S. relations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

CARIBBEAN LEADERS AND PRESIDENT BUSH TO MEET IN WASHINGTON IN JUNE, U.S.-CARIBBEAN RELATIONS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRADE TO BE HIGH ON AGENDA

(By Tony Best)

Caricom leaders are going to the White House in June to meet with U.S. President George W. Bush.

And the invitation list are to Presidents and Prime Ministers, ranging from St. Vincent's Prime Minister, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, who is the current Chairman of Caricom, Haiti's Rene Preval, Guyana's Bharrat Jagdeo, Jamaica's first female leader, Portia Simpson Miller, and St. Lucia's Sir John Compton, to Trinidad and Tobago's Patrick Manning, Antigua's Baldwin Spencer, his counterpart in St. Kitts-Nevis, Dr. Denzil Douglas, and Grenada's Dr. Keith Mitchell, not to mention Barbados' Owen Arthur, the Bahamas' Perry Christie, Dominica's Roosevelt Skerrit and Suriname's Ronald Venetiaan.

In short, quite unlike the invitations, which the White House sent out to a handful of Caribbean leaders a few years ago to sit down with President Bush over breakfast, a glaring attempt to snub those countries, which opposed the invasion of Iraq, all of Caricom's heads of government are to be invited this time around.

Although President Bush has met with a few of the region's leaders from time to time, the upcoming summit will be the first of its kind in Washington with Caribbean Prime Ministers and Presidents since Bush took office.

It is being arranged at a time when the Bush Administration is under fire throughout the Western Hemisphere for virtually ignoring Caribbean and Latin American economic and social issues.

It is scheduled for June 21 when many of the Caribbean leaders are due in Washington for the U.S. Conference on the Caribbean. While the White House agenda has not been finalized, diplomatic sources say trade, investment, economic and social development and U.S. role in the Western Hemisphere may be discussed.

It is not yet known how many of the Prime Ministers and the Presidents would attend the conference or accept the invitation to the White House session.

''It's too early to indicate what will be discussed at the conference but it is our expectation that most if not all of the Prime Ministers and Presidents as well as the foreign Ministers will be traveling to Washington for the conference,'' Elsworth John, St. Vincent's Ambassador in Washington and coordinator of the conference told the New York Carib News.

But Michael King, Barbados' Ambassador to the U.S., pinpointed a few issues, which might be discussed during the Caribbean conference.

''We are hoping that all 15 heads of government will attend from our region,'' said King. ''The conference is going to look primarily at three or four issues, mainly the strengthening of the relationship between the U.S. and Caricom with a view to addressing the priority areas for the Caribbean's future growth and development. We will be looking at such issues as trade, competitiveness and investment in mutually beneficial and reinforcing ways. Obviously, we would be looking at deepening and broadening the dialogue between the Governments and peoples of Caricom and the United States.''

John said that when Caricom leaders met recently in his country under the Chairmanship of Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, St. Vincent's Prime Minister, they approved the broad outlines of the conference and approved the summit with President Bush.

''The conference was discussed at the recent Caricom Heads of Government Conference held in St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

The Heads of Government meeting signed off on the conference and supported the program as it was structured,'' he explained. ''The meeting with President Bush is scheduled for the Thursday, the final day of the conference which begins on June 19th and ends on the 21st. It will be at the White House.''

Dr. Gonsalves, current Chairman of Caricom, has already urged the region's leaders to ''clear their calendars for that particular time'' so they could participate in the conference and the meeting with President Bush, said John.

The conference will be part of the celebrations marking Caribbean Heritage Month that is being observed across the United States in June to underscore the contributions of Caribbean immigrants and the countries themselves to America's prosperity.

After much prodding, President Bush last year signed into law a Bill that designates June as Caribbean Heritage Month and West Indians in such places as New York, Washington, Miami, California, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore are planning a variety of cultural, economic, religious and other social events to draw attention to the region.

''Caribbean Heritage month is important to all of us,'' said King.

John put it differently.

''This conference comes at a time when the United States is beginning to show a lot more interest in its relationship with this Hemisphere,'' he said.

''This conference came out of a meeting between the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, and the foreign ministers from the Caribbean where it was decided that it would be a good idea for the leaders from the Caribbean to come to Washington to meet with the President in a summit and the Foreign Ministers to meet with the Secretary of State.

But the plans go beyond Caribbean and U.S. Government officials sitting down and talking about political and economic issues.

''We felt that it was an opportune time for us to have a people to people connection, seeing that there are so many people from the Caribbean in the Diaspora,'' John added. ''In addition, we want to establish closer links between the businesses, the private sector from the Caribbean and the United States. What we are doing is to proceed on all of those fronts in our preparations for the conference.''

Hence, sessions on the Diaspora, the private sector and culture and a meeting with key Congressional leaders, including Congressman Charles Rangel, Chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee.

''We are in the process of having consultations with the State Department on exactly what the content of the discussions will be,'' said John.

The World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Organization of American States are also being consulted on the plans for the different sessions.

Mr. Bush is winding up a week long tour of Latin American nations where he was met with demonstrations and criticisms from thousands of citizens who oppose the Bush foreign policy, especially the war in Iraq.

CARIBBEAN-U.S. SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON—A PHOTO-OP OR MEETING OF SUBSTANCE, ONLY TIME WILL TELL

After six years of lost opportunities, the Bush Administration has decided to open the White House doors to all the leaders of the Caribbean whose countries form Caricom. What a pity it has taken so long for the United States Chief Executive, George Bush, to do what was right and to come to terms with the realities of the Western Hemisphere in general and the Caribbean in particular.

The invitation to the Presidents and Prime Ministers to a sit down meeting shouldn't simply be a photo opportunity but a chance to open up a meaningful dialogue with countries that have been principled allies of the United States for centuries.

The summit which is scheduled for June 21, the end of a three day U.S. Conference on the Caribbean can be made into a meaningful exercise with sessions, not simply at the White House but on Capitol Hill, with the Congressional Black Caucus and other lawmakers who have the Caribbean's interest at heart. Meetings with the Diaspora and the private sector, all with the goal of advancing the economic and social development of the countries in the region can be useful to the process of bringing people together and helping the region to attain its goals. Although trade, investment, immigration and broad areas of economic and social development are expected to dominate the agenda, it's our hope that the region would resist the temptation to put 30 items on an agenda for a series of short meetings. That has prevented previous meetings from turning out to be productive exchanges of views.

How much better it could have been if the high-handedness of Republicans in and out of the White House and the Congress hadn't been a fact of life for the Caribbean. Only if the Bush Administration and the Republicans in the House and Senate had recognized the importance of treating small countries with dignity and respect, instead of trying to make them feel as if they were Lilliputians that should be ignored.

Presidents Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton thought it was useful to travel to the Caribbean to exchange ideas and discuss programs and policies with America's neighbor, but not this Chief Executive.

Indeed, Bush behaved in such an unfortunate manner by seeking to snub those countries and their leaders who disagreed with the invasion of Iraq and the resulting debacle that he dissipated so much goodwill. For at a time when Bush should have been making friends with his natural allies he sought to punish many of them by declining to meet with critics of his policy. That pettiness is unbecoming of the most powerful nation in the world.

Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister and Mr. Bush's principal ally in Iraq had the good sense to schedule a meeting in London, invited all of them for a session in London, so they could talk about the way forward, economically and socially for the Caribbean.

That's why Caribbean-U.K. relations are so warm.

The conference and the summit offer Bush and the Caricom heads a chance to address questions of common concern such as Washington's future role in efforts to strengthen economic and trade links within Caricom itself and in the Hemisphere as a whole.

For their part, the Prime Ministers and Presidents can send a strong message to Congress that the unresolved immigration mess, including the deportation of all criminal aliens, regardless of their individual histories, was damaging the Caribbean's social system.

It's important that the dialogue in Washington reaches out to the Diaspora across the United States. With the exception of Trinidad and Tobago, remittances and other forms of assistance from the Caribbean immigrants abroad are a vital source of foreign exchange, so much so that in Jamaica's case they top the list while in others they amount to number two or three. Caricom has paid lip service to the Diaspora, with officials making periodic forays into North America and England but avoiding the creation of any permanent method of communication and follow-up to initiatives that are talked about but allowed to fall by the wayside.

If that problem isn't addressed the conference during Heritage Month would end up as yet another exercise in futility.

In the past, town meetings have been held, presentations by leaders were scheduled and made but afterwards, nothing happened.

For instance, cricket World Cup has started and the promised collaboration with U.S.-based Caribbean firms and other interests have not materialized.

A somewhat similar thing is happening with the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. Caricom as an institution should use this conference to put meaningful and permanent links and establish effectively relationships with the communities that pump more than $2 billion in foreign exchange annually into the economies back home.