

Senator Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project

Briefing Materials

Ralph G. Neas
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RALPH G. NEAS TIMELINE

Prepared by Hilde Eliassen Restad

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1946

May On the 17th, Ralph G. Neas is born in Brookline, Massachusetts.

1968

Neas begins serving in the U.S. Army.

1973

Neas starts working as Chief Council to Senator Edward W. Brooke (R-MA), a position he holds until 1979. During this time, Neas gets to know Senator Edward Moore Kennedy (EMK) and his staff through his work for Brooke on civil rights legislation. (Ralph Neas consultation, Washington, D.C., November 14th, 2006)

1975

July On the 24th, the Senate passes the 1965 Voting Rights Extension Act, which President Gerald Ford signs on August 6th. The act extends the 1965 Voting Rights Act for another seven years. Neas works with EMK on the bill. (Ralph Neas consultation, Washington, D.C., November 14th, 2006)

1978

EMK campaigns against the re-election of Brooke and for Representative Paul E. Tsongas (D-MA) for the junior Senate seat from Massachusetts. (*The Washington Post*, 10/29/1978)

1979

Neas starts working as Chief Council to Senator Dave Durenberger (R-MN), a position he holds for one year.

1980

Neas serves as Executive Director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR) until 1995. According to Neas, EMK develops into a great parliamentarian and becomes the undisputed leader for civil rights legislation after his unsuccessful presidential bid in 1980. (Ralph Neas consultation, Washington, D.C., November 14th, 2006)

1981

April Neas and the LCCR work with EMK for the enactment of the 1965 Voting Rights Act Extension. There is initial tension due to the fact that EMK had campaigned against Brooke in 1978, but according to Neas, this quickly becomes a non-issue. On the 7th, EMK joins with others in both houses to introduce the extension, stating, "It was sixteen years ago that Lyndon Johnson came before us and challenged us to join with him in the historic pledge that 'We Shall Overcome.' This is not the time to retreat or surrender." The extension is reportedly in danger due to the opposition of Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Strom Thurmond (R-SC), who argues that the section requiring states with a history of discrimination at the polls to clear any changes in voting laws with the Justice Department is unfair to the South. (Ralph Neas consultation, Washington, D.C., November 14th, 2006; Adam Clymer, *Edward M. Kennedy*, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999, p. 332)

- October* The Democratic-controlled House passes its version of the Voting Rights Act Extension on the 5th, containing “bail-out provisions” under which states can free themselves from the requirements of the act after several years of good conduct. (*The Washington Post*, 11/07/1981)
- November* On the 7th, President Ronald Reagan states he supports the extension of the 1965 Civil Rights Act, but also states he is in favor of two provisions that will moderate the bill. EMK says any expansion of the bailout provisions beyond what the House has already voted on will amount to a “back-door repeal of the most critical safeguards of the act.” Earlier this week Neas has warned the administration the LCCR will use the battle over the Voting Rights Act extension to mobilize voters for the midterm election next year. (*The Washington Post*, 11/07/1981)
- December* EMK and Senator Charles McC. Mathias (R-MD) introduce the House version of the bill to the Senate on the 16th. With sixty-one senators supporting this bill, Neas reportedly states the Voting Rights Extension has regained momentum. (Clymer, p. 334)

1982

- January* Senator Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, opens hearings on the bill on the 27th.
- March* On the 24th, Hatch reports his version of the bill out of the subcommittee, and EMK, Mathias, and the LCCR concentrate their efforts on building support for the bill in the full Judiciary Committee. The LCCR and Burt Wides of EMK’s staff start generating pressure in Kansas in order to influence the vote of Senator Robert Dole (R-KS), who is on the Judiciary Committee and seen as persuadable. With reportedly mere cosmetic changes to the legislative text, Dole decides to back the bill. (Clymer, p. 336)
- May* On the 3rd, EMK, Mathias, and Dole hold a news conference, announcing support for the bill. Dole’s seal of approval brings with him several undecided Republicans as well as, finally, Reagan’s support. (Clymer, p. 336)
- On the 4th, the Judiciary Committee approves the bill 17-1. Both Hatch and Thurmond join EMK in voting for the bill.
- On the 26th, *The Washington Post* reports that Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) is planning a filibuster on the bill, despite Reagan’s support for it. Neas reportedly is confident that a filibuster can be broken. (*The Washington Post*, 05/26/1982)
- June* On the 9th, the Senate takes up the bill and Helms threatens to talk “until the cows come home.” EMK replies, “Once again, we shall overcome. We may be briefly delayed by diehard efforts to cripple the act. But we shall not be deterred by the threats of filibuster.” Little more than a week later, the Senate passes the bill 85-8. (Clymer, p. 336) According to Neas, the passage of this bill – which extended the Voting Rights Act for 25 years as opposed to the previous seven as well as overturns *Mobile v. Bolden* (1980) – was a “magnificent coup” on the part of EMK. Neas thinks this legislative victory paved the way for the ensuing civil rights legislation passed during the remaining presidency of Reagan. *Mobile v. Bolden* is a 1980 Supreme Court decision which had stated that electoral districts must be drawn with racially discriminatory intent and effect to warrant

constitutional protection. (Ralph Neas consultation, Washington, D.C., November 14th, 2006)

1983

May On the 19th, the Reagan administration proposes a new civil rights bill aimed at strengthening the 1968 Fair Housing Act. However, civil rights groups are skeptical and say they prefer the bill EMK and Mathias, along with 37 other senators, had introduced two weeks ago. This bill will create the equivalent of special fair housing judges inside the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Neas states that Reagan's proposal is a "positive change from the Reagan administration's systematic attacks on our civil rights," but that it does not go far enough. (*The Washington Post*, 05/20/1983)

November On the 2nd, Reagan signs into law a bill declaring the third Monday in January a legal public holiday honoring the late civil rights leader the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. During the Senate battle, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) provokes heated debate when he states King surrounded himself with Communists who took "directions from a foreign power." Replies EMK, "Those charges were raised first and most vigorously by the arch-segregationists bent on retaining the rule of racism. It is their heirs in the last ditch effort against equal justice who seek to divert us today on this legislation with such matters." (1983 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 601)

1984

June In a 375-32 vote, the House votes to reverse *Grove City College v. Bell*. *Grove City* held that Title IX of the 1972 Education Act amendments banning sex discrimination by educational institutions receiving federal funds applies only to the program receiving the aid, not to the entire institution. The implication of *Grove City* has been the curbing of federal efforts to use funding halts as a weapon against discrimination. (*The Washington Post*, 09/30/1984)

September On the 29th, the Senate is able to end a filibuster on its version of the reversal of the *Grove City* decision, known as the Kennedy-Packwood proposal, after EMK and Senator Robert W. Packwood (R-OR). States EMK, "This is an outstanding day for the United States Senate and an outstanding day for the country in its commitment to civil rights." However, the impasse continues in the Senate. Dole offers two proposals to renew negotiations on a compromise bill, to which Neas responds, "They are totally unacceptable. They would put us in a worse position than after the *Grove City* decision." The Senate in the end does not complete action on the legislation in 1984 when negotiations fail to produce a solution acceptable to everyone. (*The Washington Post*, 09/30/1984; 1984 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 239)

1985

January On the 4th, White House officials announce Reagan's intent to support Dole's legislation on the *Grove City* issue. Civil rights organizations are opposed to it, arguing it does not go far enough because it only addresses discrimination in education, not hospitals or other institutions receiving federal funds. "This is a very deficient proposal," says Neas. "It would leave millions of women, minorities, disabled persons and senior citizens unprotected by our civil rights

laws.” The House plans on introducing new legislation that covers discrimination in all institutions that receive federal funds, to be named the 1985 Civil Rights Act. EMK supports this effort, stating through his spokesman Bob Mann, “We are pleased that Majority Leader Dole feels civil rights legislation is a priority issue. But at the same time we intend to work with him and other members toward legislation” broader than the Dole-Reagan proposal. (*The Washington Post*, 01/05/1985)

1986

- June* On the 17th, Reagan announces the retirement of Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and the selection of Associate Justice William Hubbs Rehnquist as the next Chief Justice, along with Antonin Scalia as Rehnquist’s replacement as Associate Justice.
- July* Hearings are conducted in the Senate on the confirmation of Rehnquist to be Chief Justice from the 29th through August 1st. On the 29th, *The Wall Street Journal* reports EMK as warning Dole that Rehnquist’s “coronation may not be the smooth sailing you foresee.” Neas is reported as describing Rehnquist as a “right-wing ideologue.” (*The Wall Street Journal*, 07/29/1986) EMK states upon commencement of Rehnquist’s hearing that he is “too extreme to be Chief Justice.” (*The New York Times*, 08/01/1986) The hearings are mostly concentrated on Rehnquist, particularly his civil rights record, which EMK grills him on. Scalia, although of the same conservative judicial philosophy, reportedly receives little critical questioning from the liberal members of the Judicial Committee. (*The Washington Post*, 08/20/1986; *The New York Times*, 08/07/2005)
- August* On the 14th, EMK votes for Scalia to replace Rehnquist in the Judiciary Committee (18-0). He votes against Rehnquist (13-5), however. The votes against Rehnquist are all Democratic votes. EMK argues Rehnquist’s record “contains overwhelming and shocking evidence of his intense and lifelong hostility... to the claims for racial justice.” EMK serves notice of a floor fight, reminding the Senate that the Judiciary Committee had approved Supreme Court nominee Harold Carswell before he was defeated on the floor in 1971. Neas states, “The battle has just begun. I believe there’s going to be a hell of a fight on the floor.” (1986 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 71, 72; *The Washington Post*, 08/15/1986)
- September* On the 25th, Rehnquist is confirmed by a 65-33 vote in the Senate.
- November* After the November midterm elections the Democrats become the majority party in Congress and EMK is urged by civil rights leaders to take the chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee, predicting several Supreme Court vacancies in the near future. “No matter how many votes you’ve got, you’ve gotta have some measure of control over the process,” says Neas. EMK rejects the offer, saying he got into politics “to help people” as opposed to defeating judicial nominees. According to Clymer he still promises Neas that he will do anything they ask him to as a member of the committee. (Clymer, pp. 406-7; *The Washington Post*, 11/07/1986)

1987

- May* On the 20th, EMK successfully maneuvers a bill aimed at overturning *Grove City College v. Bell*. Neas and other civil rights leaders are “overjoyed,” according to

Clymer. Says Neas, “Now you see what happens when you have a civil rights champion in charge of the [Labor and Human Resources] committee.” (Clymer, p. 412) However, because senators and civil rights lobbyists become tied up in the fight against the nomination of Judge Robert Heron Bork as Justice to the U.S. Supreme Court from July on, the *Grove City* issue is not acted upon until 1988. Neas chairs the successful bipartisan effort by the 300-organization Block Bork Coalition to defeat the confirmation of Judge Robert Bork to the U.S. Supreme Court. (Clymer, p. 427)

June On the 23rd, a Senate Judiciary Constitution subcommittee approves a bill that gives the federal government more authority to crack down on housing discrimination. The bill authorizes administrative law judges within the HUD to hear complaints of housing discrimination. This is meant to strengthen HUD’s enforcement authority of Title VIII of the 1986 Civil Rights Act. Hatch is the only senator on the committee who opposes the bill, and argues on behalf of the National Association of Realtors, the principal opponents of the bill, that the administrative law judge plan is unconstitutional because defendants can be assessed damages without a jury trial. Due to the nomination process of Bork, however, further action on this bill is also postponed. (*1987 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 282)

Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr., resigns on the 26th.

July On the 1st, Reagan nominates Bork to replace Powell. Less than an hour after the nomination, EMK declares on the Senate floor, “Robert Bork’s America is a land in which women would be forced into back-alley abortions, blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters, rogue police could break down citizens’ doors in midnight raids... and the doors of the Federal courts would be shut on the fingers of million of citizens for whom the judiciary is often the only protector of the individual rights that are the heart of our democracy.” (*1987 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 271)

August At a weekend “retreat” of 1,200 organizers of consumer, civil rights, feminist, environmental, and public-interest groups, EMK rallies the troops against the nomination of Bork to the U.S. Supreme Court. EMK derides the “White House public relations campaign to portray Robert Bork as a moderate conservative. Those public relations advisers must be smoking Admiral Poindexter’s pipe.” Neas states “it is a winnable fight,” estimating between 25-30 senators on the fence. (*The Washington Post*, 08/03/1987)

September During the Senate hearings, Senator Alan Simpson (R-WY) asks Bork why he wants to be a Supreme Court Justice, to which Bork replies he thinks it would be an “intellectual feast.” At this point, Neas believes Bork can be successfully denied appointment to the Court. (Ralph Neas consultation, Washington, D.C., November 14th, 2006)

On the 4th, Neas is quoted in *The New York Times* as saying, “There is a 25-year paper trail” on Judge Bork’s legal opinions. “That record can’t be shredded.” EMK is quoted critiquing the administration’s “preposterous campaign to change Mr. Bork’s spots.” (*The New York Times*, 08/04/1987)

October On the 23rd, Bork becomes the first Supreme Court nominee to be rejected since G. Harold Carswell in 1970. The margin of defeat, 42-58, is the largest in

American history. For his effort in leading the interest group coalition against Bork, Neas is named ABC's "person of the week". (1987 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 271; "Ralph G. Neas Biography," *People for the American Way*, www.pfaw.org)

November On the 8th, Neas states not enough is known about Supreme Court nominee Anthony M. Kennedy at this time for the LCCR to take a position on his candidacy. (*The Washington Post*, 11/09/1987)

December On the 13th, Neas is quoted in *The Washington Post* as saying that "[m]any of the organizations [that opposed Bork] want to know more about Anthony Kennedy, especially about his judicial philosophy. Unlike Judge Bork, there is not an extensive written record that explains that philosophy." Neas warns that the lack of a solid liberal opposition before the hearing does not guarantee smooth sailing for Kennedy. (*The Washington Post*, 12/13/1987)

1988

January On the 28th, the Senate votes 75-14 in favor of the Civil Rights Restoration Act, which reverses the Supreme Court's 1984 *Grove City v. Bell* decision. The House is expected to approve the bill in a lopsided vote. Neas, who has helped campaign for the bill, states that the vote is an "overwhelming bipartisan rejection of the Reagan administration's efforts to weaken" the nation's civil rights laws. An amendment to the bill by Senator John C. Danforth (R-MO), which scales back some protection for women seeking abortions, is not received enthusiastically by civil rights advocates but is necessary for the vote's wide margin. (*The New York Times*, 01/29/1988; 1988 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 64)

March On the 2nd, the House votes in favor of the Civil Rights Restoration Act, 315-98.

On the 16th, Reagan vetoes the act, stating it will "diminish substantially the freedom and independence of religious institutions in our society" by expanding the power of the federal government.

On the 22nd, Congress overrides Reagan's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act. According to the 1988 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, congressional Republicans are weary of being labeled anti-civil rights in an election year, which aids the passage of the bill and its subsequent veto override. This despite a letter circulated by Reverend Jerry Falwell and his *Moral Majority* organization warning pastors that a veto override could mean forcing churches to hire a "practicing [*sic*] active homosexual drug addict with AIDS to be a teacher or a youth pastor." Notably, Danforth switches his vote to *nay* on the veto override. (1988 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 67, 68)

June On the 21st, a deal is announced between civil rights groups, led by Neas and Penda Hair of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and the National Association of Realtors on the Fair Housing Act Amendments to the 1968 Fair Housing Act. Rather than letting the bill's enforcement mechanism be the settling of disputes and imposing of fines by a administrative law judge in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, either side is allowed to take their case to a federal court proceeding. EMK praises the compromise as a "giant step toward enacting legislation that will make the promise of fair housing a reality." (Clymer, p. 440)

August On the 8th, Congress approves the Fair Housing Act Amendments with a margin that surprises even the bill's sponsors, among them EMK. As the Senate votes on the 2nd, EMK calls the bill "the most important expansion of civil rights in the last 25 years... This moment has been many years in the making, and what a beautiful moment it is." (1988 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 73) Neas states the legislation is "the most dramatic and significant improvement in civil rights law since 1965." (*St. Petersburg Times*, 08/03/1988)

1990

February On the 9th, a bipartisan coalition in Congress introduces the Civil Rights Act of 1990, designed to undo several major Supreme Court decisions in 1989 that restricted the reach of federal employment-discrimination laws. EMK, as one of the bill's chief sponsors, calls the Rehnquist Court's decisions "an abrupt and unfortunate departure from [the court's] historic vigilance in protecting civil rights" and says the legislation is needed to close "significant gaps" that the decisions have left in antidiscrimination laws. In a surprise countermove, the Bush administration, which previously has stated there is no need for a new law, announces plans for a competing, more limited measure. Attorney General Dick Thornburgh says the administration strongly disagrees with some of the congressional proposals. Neas calls the administration's approach "very disappointing" and says it "will fall far short of correcting the serious problems created by these decisions." (*The Washington Post*, 02/08/1990)

May On the 17th, President George H. W. Bush pledges to "leave no stone unturned" in advancing the nation's civil rights agenda, although he subsequently outlines three significant areas of administration disagreement with the pending 1990 Civil Rights Act. These have not been worked out despite a week of pleas by the civil rights community. Bush, flanked by members of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission who sharply disagree with him, outlines to a Rose Garden audience his objections to provisions some assert will result in quotas, the major area of contention. "I want to sign a civil rights bill," Bush says, "but I will not sign a quota bill." Shortly afterwards, EMK and Senator John C. Danforth (R-MO) announce an agreement on new language in the legislation they argue eliminates any question that the bill will lead to quota systems in hiring. According to Neas, "There continues to be a considerable gap between the president's soothing rhetoric and the hard-line positions of his top aides. Indeed, the attorney general's statement reaffirming his opposition to the core elements of the bill is certainly inconsistent with the president's statement earlier this week that there are only minimal differences left. The administration can not have it both ways on civil rights." (*The Washington Post*, 05/18/0990)

July Neas and EMK successfully work for the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The legislation is cleared on the 13th, after two years of waiting. Passage of the bill is a major triumph for the coalition of civil rights, disability rights, public health and AIDS support groups that have worked for its passage since 1988. On the floor of the Senate, EMK speaks of his developmentally challenged sister, Rosemary, and his son Teddy Jr., who lost a leg to cancer. "Americans with disabilities deserve more than good intentions. They deserve emancipation from generations of prejudice and discrimination, some of it well-meaning but all of it wrong-minded." (1990 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 447, 461)

October The House and Senate pass the Civil Rights Act on the 16th and 17th, but without the necessary supermajority to override an anticipated presidential veto. After days of turmoil over whether the White House should compromise, Bush sends Congress a handful of wording changes dealing with pivotal issues on employee and employer rights in discrimination cases. With those changes, which have been in dispute for months, “we can produce legislation that will strike a blow against racial bias without institutionalizing quotas,” Bush says in a message to Congress. Neas says the changes will “gut the civil rights act” and have the opposite effect intended by the law. He also calls Bush “a Ronald Reagan in sheep’s clothing.” EMK says, “I am concerned that with this proposal, the president is bowing to his anti-civil rights advisers and is moving even further away from the strong measures that are needed to prevent discrimination in the workplace.” On the 22nd, Bush vetoes the bill successfully. EMK states he will reintroduce the bill in 1991. (*The Washington Post*, 10/21/1990; *1990 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 462, 473)

1991

June On the 27th, Bush announces the retirement of Justice Thurgood Marshall and the nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. Danforth, with whom EMK is currently working on civil rights legislation, is “Thomas’s patron.” (Clymer, p. 494) The LCCR waits six weeks to oppose him, in stark contrast to 1987 when the civil rights groups immediately came out against Bork. (Ralph Neas consultation, Washington, D.C., November 14th, 2006)

October On the 5th and 6th, *Newsday* and *National Public Radio* (NPR) reveal the charges law professor Anita Hill has made against Thomas, and sharp criticism ensues regarding the lack of investigation of Hill’s charges by the Judiciary Committee. (Clymer, p. 497)

On the 8th, the vote on Thomas’ confirmation is postponed for one week. Danforth lashes out in an emotional speech against some Democratic senators and interest groups, accusing them of using dirty tricks to try to scuttle the nomination. The postponement also upsets the schedule for voting on civil rights legislation, as Danforth says he will be unable to handle debate on both Thomas’ nomination and the civil rights bill at the same time. According to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, some civil rights advocates worry privately that the bitter debate over Thomas’ nomination may further damage the effort to get a “veto-proof” Senate majority on a compromise civil rights bill sponsored by Danforth and EMK. But the LCCR, while expressing doubts about some provisions, has been generally supportive of Danforth’s civil rights bill. “I’m not sure that I can remember a time that we were on opposite sides of two big issues like this at the same time,” Neas reportedly says. But he states he hopes that Danforth and civil rights groups can keep the two issues separate. “Up until now, our approach - and Senator Danforth’s approach - has been to judge each issue on its individual merits,” Neas says. “We expect that this will continue after the Thomas vote.” (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 10/11/1991)

On the 30th, the Civil Rights Act of 1991 is adopted by the Senate 93-5, after having cleared the language beforehand with Bush. It is important as a symbol to women and minorities that the country is not forgetting about them. One new provision allows damages in cases of intentional discrimination based on sex, religion, or handicapped status, amending Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Under existing law, damages can only be ordered in cases of racial discrimination. Some civil rights groups are disappointed in that the damages are capped, which is not the case for racial discrimination cases, but Neas says “I think this is as good a deal as we can get.” States EMK, “This bill is all the more satisfying because it involves a welcome restoration of the bipartisan coalition in Congress and between Congress and the Administration that has been responsible for so much of the historic progress we have made the past half century.” (Clymer, pp. 501, 503) The legislation counters the effects of nine decisions passed down by the Rehnquist Court that have made it harder for workers to bring and win discrimination lawsuits. (*1991 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 251)

1992

September On the 9th, the Senate votes 62-36 to confirm Bush’s nomination of Edward Earl Carnes, Jr., to the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, over strong objections from EMK and Neas on behalf of the nation’s civil rights groups. The objection over Carnes’ nomination stems from his previous job as an Alabama assistant attorney general who headed the state’s capital punishment litigation division since 1981. States EMK, “Death penalty justice in America is separate and unequal... and the Senate should not confirm a nominee who cannot see it.” The *1988 Congressional Quarterly Almanac* notes that the LCCR is “conspicuously noncommittal” during the hearing process, whereas Neas argues that the LCCR’s stance on Carnes is not unusual because the conference rarely takes a stand on judicial nominations. The LCCR, along with the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), do oppose Carnes in the end. (*1992 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 319-321)

1995

EMK, in a Senate floor statement, describes Neas as the “101st Senator for Civil Rights.” (“Ralph G. Neas Biography,” *People for the American Way*, <http://www.pfaw.org>)

With the Republican takeover of Congress, Representative Charles T. Canady (R-FL) and Dole introduce legislation in both houses to undue virtually all federal affirmative action programs. Facing increasing complaints from employers and the growing resentment against affirmative action, its supporters concede that a review might be needed. According to Neas, however, “A review will corroborate what we’ve been saying. Affirmative action has been an American success story.” (*1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 6-24)

Neas becomes president of The Neas Group, a position he holds until 1999.

1998

Neas runs for Congress on behalf of Maryland’s 8th congressional district against Representative Constance A. Morella and loses. EMK holds a fundraiser for Neas in Bethesda that reportedly raises more money than any Democratic challenger in history has done. During the campaign, Neas explains to the press that he switched parties in 1996 because he no longer believed the GOP leadership represented his liberal Republican roots. (*The Washington Post*, 04/21/1998; *The Washington Post*, 05/17/1998)

1999

July The Senate amends its fiscal 2000 Commerce-Justice-State (CJS) appropriations bill to federalize crimes motivated by the dislike of gays or the disabled, or by gender bias. It expand federal jurisdiction over hate crimes and create new grants for states to prosecute such cases. However, all those provisions are abandoned in conference. Under a 1968 law, hate crimes are defined as assaults motivated by the victim's race, color, religion, or national origin. EMK and Representative John Conyers (D-MI) have both been working – unsuccessfully- to expand the definition to include gender, sexual orientation, and disability. (1999 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 2-26)

2000 Neas begins his tenure as President of People for the American Way Foundation, a position he still holds.

June On the 20th, the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act (LLEEA) passes the Senate as an amendment to the 2001 defense authorization bill. The Act expands the definition of hate crime to include gender, sexual orientation, and disability and is a revised version of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

July During the conference on the 2001 defense authorization bill, EMK introduces the amendment to expand the definition of hate crime to include gender, sexual orientation, and disability. The House of Representatives votes in September to instruct its conferees on the defense bill to accept the Senate hate crimes amendment. However, on October 5th the language is dropped after a lengthy stand-off. (2000 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 15-27)

2001

January On the 16th, the confirmation hearing on John Ashcroft as president-elect George W. Bush's Attorney General commences. According to Neas, the civil rights groups had learned their lesson from Bork and Thomas and oppose the nomination immediately. EMK again acts as the leader for the civil rights opposition, and although not successful, manages to obtain more votes against any Attorney General since 1925. (Ralph Neas consultation, Washington, D.C., November 14th, 2006)

July On the 26th, the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act (LLEEA) passes the Senate Judiciary Committee, which contains the expanded definitions of hate crimes and is sponsored by EMK and Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR).

August EMK re-introduces the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), saying at a press conference at an August 2001 press conference that "Civil rights is the unfinished business of America. It is long past time to prohibit such discrimination based on sexual orientation." Due to the terrorist attacks on the September 11th, however, EMK postpones hearings on the bill. (*People for the American Way*, www.pfaw.org)

2002

June On the 10th, the Senate begins to consider the LLEEA, but is met with amendments from Republicans only loosely related to the bill itself. Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) files a motion to invoke cloture on the 11th but can

only get 54 votes. Proponents of similar legislation in the House, led by Conyers, also fail to obtain a vote on the bill. (*2002 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 13-11, 12)

September On the 25th, People for the American Way releases a press statement in support of the EMK-sponsored Hate Crimes Prevention Bill, which has been stalling in conference committee since last year. “Many right-wing leaders in Congress have opposed efforts to include sexual orientation in the federal Hate Crimes Law,” says PFAW. “Part of their argument is that gays are not a group singled out for discrimination.” According to the press release, there exists a “hostile climate” for legislation combating bigotry in Congress. (*People for the American Way*, www.pfaw.org)

2003

May On the 1st, the LLEEA is re-introduced in Congress.

2004 People for the American Way under the leadership of Neas register 400,000 African-American and Latino voters in preparation for the presidential election between incumbent George W. Bush and John F. Kerry.

Vanity Fair names Neas one of the “Best Stewards” of the environment. (“Ralph G. Neas Biography,” *People for the American Way*, www.pfaw.org)

February On the 12th, EMK introduces the 2004 Civil Rights Act, called the Fairness Act.

June The LLEEA again passes the Senate, this time with a vote of 65-33.

2005

May The LLEEA is again introduced in the Senate by EMK as well as in the House.

On the 12th, EMK and Senator John McCain (R-AZ) introduce the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act (S.1033), which the People for the American Way supports. According to its website, the bill provides “a realistic solution to our immigration crisis by providing: (1) clear legal channels, proper vetting, meaningful protections, and realistic quotas for workers and their families entering the country; (2) incentives for undocumented immigrants already working and residing in the U.S. to register, pay a penalty and earn permanent residency; (3) reunification of families with loved ones on a timely basis by eliminating unrealistic and outdated quotas; (4) pragmatic enforcement provisions that target smugglers and lawbreaking employers; and (5) programs to allow more immigrants to learn English and prepare for citizenship.” (*People for the American Way*, www.pfaw.org)

July Bush nominates Judge John G. Roberts, Jr., on the 20th to the Supreme Court to replace Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. EMK states that it is critical not to prejudge the nominee. (*The Washington Post*, 07/21/2005) According to Neas, it is much harder to obtain information about Roberts than it was with for instance Bork, stating it has taken five weeks for the PFAW to obtain documents on Roberts from the Ronald Reagan presidential library. (Ralph Neas consultation, Washington, D.C., November 14th, 2006)

August Whereas the civil rights groups take some time to decide on their view of Roberts, Neas predicts in August that a “significant number of progressive organizations” will oppose the nomination, referring to Roberts as “a charter member of the policy team that attempted to dismantle the civil-rights regime that has been enforced by Democratic and Republican administrations for decades.” EMK states Roberts is “beyond the fringe.” (*Omaha World-Herald*, 08/23/2005)

September On the 14th, the LLEEA passes the House by a vote of 223-199.

On the 22nd, the Senate Judiciary Committee approves Roberts’ confirmation 13-5. EMK votes against. On the 29th, Roberts is confirmed 78-22, with the Democrats numbering 44 in the Senate.

October EMK and Mike Enzi (R-WY) propose a measure giving parents from the Katrina and Rita storm-ravaged areas as much as \$6,000 to use toward tuition at private schools. Children with disabilities will receive as much as \$7,500. On the 21st, Neas releases a statement opposing the EMK-Enzi measure. Neas and People for the American Way warn that since private schools are free from many of the restraints placed on public schools, the federal monies can end up supporting religious discrimination in hiring - a constitutional violation. “There is a better alternative to help public- and private-school students affected by the hurricane,” Neas argues. “The Senate can and should use an already-existing mechanism called ‘equitable participation,’ which would hold private schools accountable for the use of public funds, as well as resolve any constitutional questions.” (*The New Standard*, <http://newstandardnews.net/content/index.cfm/items/2520>, 10/25/2005)

On the 31st, Bush nominates Judge Samuel Anthony Alito, Jr., to replace Justice Roberts as he takes over the late Rehnquist’s position as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. EMK, along with Leahy, Schumer and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) call it a “needlessly provocative nomination.” (*The Seattle Times*, 11/02/2005)

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January On the 5th, EMK announces his intent to question Alito on his views about executive power. The issue is pertinent after recent revelations that the Bush administration has authorized wiretapping of Americans’ international calls despite a 1978 law requiring warrants for such surveillance. (*The Boston Globe*, 01/06/2006)

On the 19th, EMK announces he will vote against Alito to be a Supreme Court Justice, stating Alito will not provide a judicial check against the expansion of presidential power or be properly vigilant about protecting the rights of ordinary Americans. (*The Washington Post*, 01/20/2006)

During the Alito battle, a 1985 job application memo is leaked in which Alito wrote that “the Constitution does not protect a right to an abortion.” Neas uses the memo, telling an interviewer at the time, “I believe this will be seen as a catalytic moment, when senators and the public questioned what they knew about him.” (*The Weekly Standard*, 02/13/2006) On the 31st, Alito is confirmed by the Senate 58-42.

February On the 5th, Neas releases a statement on behalf of People for the American Way commending EMK and five other Congressmen for introducing bills to renew Sections 5, 203, and 6-9 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, key provisions of the VRA set to expire next year. Says Neas, "I especially want to express my sincere gratitude to Senator [Arlen] Specter [R-PA] and Chairman [F. James] Sensenbrenner [R-WI] for their commitment to work across the aisle with Senators Leahy and Kennedy and Congressmen Conyers and [Melvin] Watt [D-NC]. They have done the right thing for America's voters by moving forward to reauthorize and restore this landmark civil rights measure that ensures a fair and equal voting process for all." (*People for the American Way*, www.pfaw.org)

March On the 2nd, 2006, EMK is one of ten senators to vote against the USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act, a bill to extend the USA PATRIOT Act. Neas and People for the American Way have also been working to amend the Act since its passage in 2001.

CIVIL RIGHTS BATTLES

Civil Rights Legislation

- Adam Clymer, *Edward M. Kennedy*, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999, pp. 332 -337, 410-412.
- “Reagan Takes Flexible View on Voting Rights Extension,” *The Washington Post*, 11/07/1981.
- “Bush Presses White House Version of Rights Act; Language on Work Place Is Step Backward That Would ‘Gut’ Legislation, Opponents Say,” *The Washington Post*, 10/21/1990.
- “Thomas Fight Called Threat To Rights Bill Advocates Fear Rancor May Damage; Cause,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 10/11/1991.
- “President Signs Civil Rights Bill; White House Disavows Proposed Directive to End Affirmative Action,” *The Washington Post*, 11/22/1991.