

HARRISON A. WILLIAMS, JR:
A Biographical Sketch of his Senate Career

by

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Harrison Williams left the Senate on March 11, 1982, nearly 30 years after first being elected to Congress, after nearly 30 years of landmark legislation on a variety of issues – human resources, urban transit, conservation, civil rights, education, market regulation, labor issues, and more.

Upon leaving office, Williams commented upon President Ronald Reagan’s budget-cutting economic policies, calling them “inequitable, unworkable, and a retreat from the commitments we had made to maintain essential funding levels for programs that serve critical needs.”¹ He was, indeed, typical of the era which preceded Reagan, fighting for aggressive social policy from a highly active, dynamic government in the areas of civil rights, social equality, environmental passion, and a realistic sense of where the nation’s values were at times of massive defense spending. Always conscious of the negative effects of rapid growth, Williams was also aware of the ugliness of urban decay, noting that “our surroundings are the outward reflection of our inner self-esteem,”² and, more tangibly, of the “increasingly invisible poor whose needs are overlooked in the midst of the self-congratulatory uproar over our success.”³ In many ways, he symbolized the arc of the Democratic cause in his nearly three decades in office. Williams helped write essential civil rights legislation – including a section of the 1964 Civil Rights Act – and fought for stronger human rights, environmental policy, securities protection, and other liberal causes through the fiscally troublesome 1970’s. His efforts were exhausted when caught by the Abscam scandal in the early 1980’s, preventing him from actively representing the liberal cause in a crucially more conservative age.

This biographical sketch captures the most significant aspects of Harrison Williams’s career and policies centered on the strengths of the collection of his papers held by Rutgers University. Principally, this involves his years in the U.S. Senate between 1959 and 1982, and the details of his most active policy issues, in this specific order – metropolitan affairs, environmentalism, energy resources, civil rights, education, labor, health, elderly issues, business, and foreign affairs.

Harrison Arlington Williams, Jr. was born on December 10, 1919, in Plainfield, NJ, where he grew up and attended public schools. He received his AB from Oberlin College in 1941, and did graduate work at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. He served four years as a Navy pilot during World War II, after which he received a LL.B. degree from Columbia University Law School in 1948. After graduating, he practiced law in New Jersey, while at the same time running unsuccessfully for the New Jersey General Assembly in 1951 and for city councilman in 1952.⁴

¹ (*Report Home*, February 1982 – in process, never printed)

² Press Release 63-41

³ Press Release 63-40

⁴ Katzmann, Gary S. *Inside the Criminal Process* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 3-4

Williams served in the House of Representatives from 1953 to 1957. In 1958, he was elected to the Senate (the first Democrat to be elected to the Senate from New Jersey in 22 years), and then won landslide re-elections in 1964, 1970, and 1976. He was the first Democratic Senator in the history of New Jersey to be elected to four terms.

In his 23 years in the Senate, Williams chaired many committees and subcommittees. He chaired the Special Committee on Aging from 1967 to 1970 as well as the Labor & Human Resources Committee from 1971 to 1980. He was also an active chair on a number of subcommittees of varying interests, most notably Securities (1959-1978) and Migratory Labor (1961-1968). He was also head of Poverty (1964-1966), Frauds and Misrepresentations Affecting the Elderly (1965-1966), Consumer Interests of the Elderly (1967-1968), Urban & Rural Economic Development (1969-1970), Labor (1969-1978), Housing for the Elderly (1971-1976), and Housing & Urban Affairs (1979-1980), among others.

Metropolitan Affairs

One of Williams's most distinctive marks in Congress – and one for which he consistently fought over nearly three decades – was under the topic of Metropolitan Affairs. Representing the most crowded state, it is perhaps no surprise that Williams felt strongly about the issue; a 1971 poll showed that “the problems of the cities” was the fifth most pressing issue to residents of New Jersey.⁵

Williams's pioneering efforts in improving mass transportation significantly improved the lives of commuters and travelers both around urban areas and in rural areas across the country. Noting the rapid increases in private cars in the early 1960's, Williams was concerned about pollution, increased gas prices, and simply the displeasure caused by waiting in congested traffic jams and how congestion marred the beauty of urban areas.

Williams first introduced a mass transportation bill in 1960. Though passed by the Senate, the House did not act on it. The next year, he re-introduced the bill, and President Kennedy signed it into law in June; the Mass Transportation Act of 1961 provided \$50 million for mass transportation loans. In 1962, Williams authored the Urban Mass Transportation Bill, which created a \$500 million program of grants for the development of transit systems. In 1964, President Johnson signed a bill, providing aid to urban transportation, that Williams authored and had been working on for the previous two years. Williams continued to push for aid to transportation through the late 1960's and into the 1970's. In 1969, he pushed for legislation that would provide operating subsidies to commuter-service transit companies in order to keep transit systems from failing during difficult periods of improvement and renovation. His 1969 act also asked for establishing a fund financed from automobile excise taxes, guaranteeing \$1.8 billion over three years.⁶

⁵ Press Release 71/63

⁶ All in 1/23/69 (summary of Mass Transit article)

In 1973, Williams was the main author of a major package which nearly doubled the federal aid level to mass transportation, providing \$11.8 billion for six years, and included major capital improvements, operating subsidies, and funds for transit in rural areas.⁷ Four years later, President Carter signed Williams' \$51 billion, four-year program for the nation's highways and mass transit systems.⁸ Finally, in 1980, Williams introduced yet another mass transportation bill, a \$25.6 billion project, most of which was for new capital improvements, modernizing facilities and the construction of new subway and rail lines.⁹

Among other legislation concerning transportation were the National Park Transportation measure of 1977 (to better organize transportation services to and from National Parks) and an amendment to the 1973 Federal Highway Act which would have given funding for bus lines (vetoed by Nixon).¹⁰ Williams also made sure to protect dying franchises, including his Railroad Services Act of 1976 which assured the continuance of commuter service on bankrupt railroads in the Northeast and Midwest.¹¹ The Senate-passed 1969 Emergency Commuter Relief Act authorized \$400 million for two years of federal assistance to rail and bus commuter operations, keeping lines operating until they got back on solid footing.¹² He also wrote up several pieces of legislation to assure public input on rate increases and schedule changes by Amtrak.¹³

Besides mass transportation, another big concern of Williams was to provide housing to underprivileged segments of the population. On May 9, 1960, he introduced a bill to expand the National Housing Act in order to amend the laws relating to cooperative housing, adding that *any* local public agency could make requests from the Commissioner. The bill also cleared up mortgage complications in the original act, in which mortgages would cover the replacement cost or values of property.¹⁴ Williams also played a significant part in the Housing Act of 1961 (signed into law), writing provisions which gave federal grants to state and local governments to acquire and preserve open space land in and around urban areas; and also for a \$75 million mass transportation program for long-range research and demonstrations.¹⁵ In 1965, he introduced a bill to authorize assistance under Title VII of the Housing Act for the development of additional open-space uses of land.¹⁶

Williams also worked on the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 to help in the provision of housing for low-and-middle income families; to, specifically, allow the Housing and Home Finance Administrator to make annual payments to a house owner on

⁷ Press Release 77/252

⁸ Press Release 77/252

⁹ 12/12/80 Article

¹⁰ Press Release 74/2

¹¹ Press Release 76/30

¹² Press Release 69/171

¹³ Press Release 75/16

¹⁴ Box #704, Bill S.3512

¹⁵ Box #704, article "Housing Act of 1961 Becomes Law" in *Journal of Housing, Volume 18, No. 7, July 1961*.

¹⁶ Box #719, Bill S.1577

behalf of a “qualified tenant,” meaning those who were, while dealing with other hardships, “displaced by government action, 62 years or older, handicapped, occupying substandard housing, or affected by natural disaster.”¹⁷

Among other measures, he introduced the Emergency Middle Income Housing Act of 1975 to construct one million homes over the next year; to, in effect, subsidize interest costs on mortgages to help middle-income families buy homes.¹⁸ He also sought to strengthen the 1941 Housing Act,¹⁹ and worked on several measures of the Housing and Community Development Act. A 1974 bill would have financed construction at low interest rates and would have amounted to up to \$900 million, enough to finance 45,000 units.²⁰ A 1977 measure provided a \$1.2 billion action grant program for economic development and neighborhood reclamation.²¹ One year before Williams left Congress, the House and Senate passed a 1981 appropriations bill for the Department of Housing and Urban Development which included several provisions authored by Williams, including emergency homeownership assistance, rehabilitation loans, and the provision of services to elderly and handicapped people who wished to continue living in their homes rather than move to more expensive nursing homes.²²

Another of Williams’s major accomplishments was the Open Space Act of 1961 and subsequent follow-up legislation. The Open Space Act was passed in order to alleviate the congestion of urban areas and to provide federal support for parks and recreational areas in crowded places that needed it most. The original act allowed for \$100 million a year to go to state and local governments to share 25% of the cost of preserving open land in and around urban areas. In 1963 alone, New Jersey received \$1.2 million in federal aid to help cover the cost of acquiring more than 10,000 acres of valuable recreation, conservation, and historic open space land. For instance, 227 acres of West Milford Township was developed as a marina site with picnic and camping areas.²³

Various other measures for improving the urban condition included the 1961 Federal Airport Act (to help fund organizations’ efforts to construct new airports in apt zoning areas),²⁴ the 1961 Area Redevelopment Act,²⁵ the 1972 Federal-Aid Highway Act, which would have made an additional \$3 billion in contract authority available for grants to purchase new mass transit equipment or build new facilities (Nixon vetoed the bill).²⁶

Williams fought for improving urban areas for over two decades in the Senate. Although Williams largely agreed with the policies of the Democratic presidents – Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter – in office during his time in the Senate, he challenged them all to

¹⁷ Box #719, Bill S.1354

¹⁸ Press Release 75/18

¹⁹ Press Release 63/48

²⁰ Press Release 74/113

²¹ Press Release 77/236

²² 12/3/80 Article

²³ Press Releases 61/15, 63/163, 73/184,

²⁴ Press Release 61/48

²⁵ Press Release 63/165

²⁶ Press Releases 72/226, 227

improve their concentration on urban affairs.²⁷ When he left Congress, one of his signature legacies was in urban affairs, specifically the improvements to mass transportation he made while in the Senate.

Environmentalism

Williams's interest in metropolitan affairs was coupled with – and somewhat connected with – his interest in preserving the environment through conservation efforts and in providing more recreational areas for Americans. As part of his Open Space Act, for instance, he fought for a \$270,000 project to preserve nearly 3,000 acres of recreational and conservation land in Cape May County realizing that, especially in New Jersey, rapid population growth and a decline in leisure time (statistics Williams sought out) meant people were pressing for more recreational opportunities.²⁸ Tying in with a strengthening American environmental movement in the 1960's and 1970's – he was an active Earth Day participant in its debut in April 1970²⁹ – Williams regularly fought for environmental issues throughout his time in the Senate. Always noting the ill effects of over-urbanization, Williams said in 1976, “Our 200-year link with cheap energy, cheap food, cheap raw materials, and unlimited bounty from the earth, the oceans, the rivers, and the forests of the world is ending ... the plain truth is that abundance as we have known it – abundance in the sense of unlimited sources of substance for ourselves, our machines, and our way of life – is over.”³⁰ He introduced a resolution in 1973 which would permanently authorize “Annual Arbor Day” in America.³¹

Responding to many constituents concerned over animal safety rights, Williams brought up several pieces of legislation to protect the rights of animals. In 1973, the Senate passed his follow-up to the Endangered Species Act of 1969 (with a vote of 92-0) which, for the first time, made it illegal to kill endangered species.³² He also introduced legislation in 1971 to prevent the unnecessary slaughter of marine animals, pushing for a Marine Mammal Commission to specifically study the issue.³³ He also introduced a bill to outlaw steel jaw animals traps in the United States,³⁴ and, in the mid-1970's, a law making dog fighting illegal.³⁵ In 1976, he introduced a bill making the shipment of horses overseas for slaughter illegal.³⁶

Following the tradition of Theodore Roosevelt, Williams was an extremely active conservation advocate when it came to preserving America's national parks (he received, perhaps not surprisingly, the “National Congressional Award of the National Recreation

²⁷ Press Releases 63/17, 78/42

²⁸ Press Release 63/175

²⁹ Press Release 74/34

³⁰ Press Release 76/91

³¹ Press Release 73/66

³² Press Release 69/155

³³ Press Release 71/234

³⁴ Press Release 73/118

³⁵ Press Release 73/127

³⁶ Press Release 76/172

and Park Association” in October 1973).³⁷ His National Parks Access Act asked for a comprehensive reevaluation of transportation to national parks, considering environmental, energy and recreational factors in developing new transport systems (besides cars) to get people to and from the parks.³⁸

Williams was most active in New Jersey itself – one of the more heavily urbanized states – when it came to environmental concerns. In the early 1960’s, he helped promote efforts to preserve Sandy Hook, a six-mile peninsula 15 miles from Manhattan, as the Department of the Interior worked with the state of New Jersey to study a plan for the long-range development of the area with the closing of a military base located there; Williams noted it could become the “Cape Cod of New Jersey.”³⁹ The Senate also passed Williams’ 1968 co-authored legislation to create a 3,750-acre wilderness area in the Great Swamp of Morris County.⁴⁰ He successfully pushed to make the Delaware Water Gap a National Recreation Area.⁴¹ In addition, he approved of an \$11 million budget for acquisition of Tocks Island on the Delaware River for a recreational and conservation project, as opposed to focusing it on the nearby dam project.⁴²

Williams also was aware of New Jersey’s potential for water problems, and approved of a \$150,000 team going directly to the Meadowlands to study the water resources of the meadows in 1962.⁴³ In 1977, he and Senator Case adamantly joined the National Reserves Act to use a variety of conservation and land management techniques to, in part, save New Jersey’s Pine Barrens land, by providing a \$26 million measure to oversee a comprehensive land-management plan for the mostly forested area. (They ended up getting \$3 million, a small victory.)⁴⁴ The Pine Barrens area was initially threatened because of the swelling of urbanized areas around it, with development plans including a jetport in the region.⁴⁵

Noting that New Jersey’s coastline alone provided \$2 billion of annual revenue through tourism, Williams introduced the Marine Resources Preservation Act of 1969 to set aside seaward areas as marine sanctuaries, in which commercial development would be limited and the emphasis would be place on wildlife and scenic preservation, as well as a recreational area.⁴⁶ He also fought to preserve the ocean’s sanctity in other ways. In the late 1970’s, for instance, he introduced comprehensive legislation to ban ocean dumping, increase regulatory oversight by the EPA Administrator and improve Coast Guard surveillance of dumping operations.⁴⁷ His 1976 National Sludge Control Act attempted to

³⁷ Press Release 73/184

³⁸ Press Release 77/133

³⁹ *Report Home*, 9/11/1961

⁴⁰ Press Release 68/49

⁴¹ Press Release 68/28, 77/132

⁴² Press Release 67/8

⁴³ November 1962 in *Newark Commerce*, titled “Congress Affirms National Interest in Meadows” (Box 345)

⁴⁴ Press Release 77/256

⁴⁵ Press Release 78/233

⁴⁶ Press Release 69/76

⁴⁷ Press Release 77/131

provide major funds toward moving sludge dumping sites further out to sea as dumping sites became oversaturated.⁴⁸

In the mid-1970's, Williams introduced a unique measure, modeled on the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930's, which would authorize \$200 million in grants to the states to hire an estimated 30,000 poor youths and unemployed people to work on conservation and environmental-improvement projects in order to, for instance, maintain parks and forests.⁴⁹ The initial bill, responding both to major environmental concerns of the day and to a failing economy, was titled The Emergency Conservation Jobs Act of 1975.⁵⁰ President Carter eventually passed a similar measure two years later, co-authored by Williams, the Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act of 1977, which allocated \$1 billion to form over 200,000 training and employment positions, with 500,000 youth serving in the coming year.⁵¹

Williams was very vocal when it came to environmental concerns. He gave several aggressive speeches with attention to pollution efforts,⁵² and, in one of his last sponsored bills, tried to provide compensation to victims of hazardous waste.⁵³ He also tried to save the dwindling farmlands in America at a time of rapid urbanization: his 1977 National Agriculture Land Policy Act aimed to protect farmlands threatened by development, noting Americans were losing a million acres of prime land each year to development, and that this was harmful to maintaining crop and food sources.⁵⁴

Energy Resources

Connected with environmental matters were specific energy concerns in the mid-to-late 1970's, as the nation was running short on fuel and the economy was in trouble. Williams was highly active during Carter's administration to ensure that Americans were able to survive the energy crisis. Williams noticed a crisis looming early, as he co-sponsored the National Energy Research and Development Act of 1973 which would have created a 10-year, \$20-billion program to set new goals for the country's self-sufficiency; it would, the bill stressed, rely less on the importation of oil, but include the building of oil commercial plants inside the United States and the development of geothermal plants which could tap the heat of the earth.⁵⁵ In 1977, he alone introduced legislation to create a federal National Energy Center, composed of both the Energy Conservation Service and an Office for Energy Research and Policy Analysis, that would coordinate conservation efforts in an attempt to use energy supplies more wisely.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Press Release 76/200

⁴⁹ Press Release 77/114

⁵⁰ Press Release 75/77

⁵¹ Press Release 77/188

⁵² Press Releases 63/27, 63/225, 71/158

⁵³ Unfinished *Report Home* in Unprocessed Box 378, Bill S.1486

⁵⁴ Press Release 77/142

⁵⁵ Press Release 73/84

⁵⁶ Press Release 77/14

Responding directly to the crisis, in 1975 Williams introduced a bill which would give the Federal Power Commission specific authority to assist in emergency natural gas shortages,⁵⁷ and urged the White House to pay particular attention to New Jersey because of its population density factors.⁵⁸

The price of fuel oil increased 100% between October 1978 and September 1979.⁵⁹ Noting the acute need for help, in the winter of 1979, he introduced a bill – signed by Carter – which provided \$6.6 billion in federal aid to families needing to help pay the rising costs of heating fuel.⁶⁰ In that year, he also introduced a bill to provide federal grants amounting to \$600 million over three years to help cities and smaller communities develop comprehensive plans for energy conservation.⁶¹

Williams approached the energy problem creatively, searching for alternative ways to raise money for oil. In 1977, he introduced legislation to provide tax relief to motorbus energy, repealing an excise tax on replacement parts, gasoline, diesel fuel, lubricating oil and tires paid by privately-owned bus companies.⁶² He even looked to outer space to solve America's energy problem, sponsoring the Solar Energy Act of 1976 to authorize \$238 million for funding to look into the long-range potential of tapping the sun's energy for human advantage.⁶³ In 1978, after speaking with Princeton professor Gerard K. O'Neill, Williams introduced a bill to authorize a two-year, \$1 million investigation by the National Science Foundation into "the feasibility of colonizing space" and constructing orbiting facilities for collecting solar energy.⁶⁴ Williams's legislation, passed by the Senate Human Resources Committee, pondered the possibility of creating three-by-twelve-mile orbiting solar power stations which could beam thousands of kilowatts of energy to Earth in the form of microwaves.⁶⁵

In his final years in the Senate, Williams continued pushing for energy assistance. In early 1982, the Senate passed his H.J. Res. 389, providing financial assistance for energy programs.⁶⁶ As Williams left office, two of his bills were awaiting committee work – one to provide energy assistance to low-income persons, and another to continue tax incentives for energy conservation and renewable energy sources.⁶⁷

Civil Rights

Aside from conservation and energy issues serving to enhance human comfort, Williams was presciently aware of human concerns when it came to civil rights. His arc of time in

⁵⁷ Press Release 75/34

⁵⁸ Press Release 79/122

⁵⁹ Press Release 79/153

⁶⁰ Press Release 79/159

⁶¹ Press Release 79/209A

⁶² Press Release 77/182

⁶³ Press Release 76/94

⁶⁴ Press Release 78/45

⁶⁵ Press Releases 78/45, 78/51, 78/81

⁶⁶ Press Release 2/11/82

⁶⁷ Box 378, Unfinished *Report Home*, bills S.1165 and S.Res.232

the Senate not only paralleled with rising environmental and energy concerns, but also a rapid rise of interest in human rights and anti-discrimination social policies.

As a House member, Williams heavily supported the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, calling it “a dramatic and major step forward for American democracy.”⁶⁸ In the Senate, he was active from the beginning, working with President Kennedy and others on civil rights legislation, but being skeptical of holes in the legislation which he perceived as not being strong enough. For instance, he critiqued the Civil Rights Act of 1960 because of its exclusive reliance on the judiciary, which would not make enough of a difference for African-Americans voting.⁶⁹ In 1961, he fought for the two-year extension of the Civil Rights Commission.⁷⁰ In 1963, he introduced a broad civil rights conciliation which, although it did not pass, aimed to promote greater social justice.⁷¹ Williams authored the provision of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 that outlawed discrimination in employment.⁷²

Williams was vocal in Congress on civil rights, as he claimed angrily that even in Rome, slaves were accommodated in hotels.⁷³ When a former Rutgers student was jailed for being at a voter registration drive in Americus, Georgia, Williams quipped that the boy’s “crime” was “making the mistake of believing that people have a right to vote in Americus.”⁷⁴ He supported the August 28, 1963 March on Washington and offered the use of his office as a message center for any New Jersey marchers separated from their groups.⁷⁵ Years after the major pieces of civil rights legislature were passed, Williams continued pushing for their successful implementation. In 1968, for instance, he organized a workshop to develop legislation to bring about fuller integration of African-Americans in higher education.⁷⁶

Williams’s biggest civil rights mark in the 1960’s, however, was in his adamant support of Kennedy’s idea of the National Service Corps Bill in 1963. Reflecting traditional American volunteer spirit and modeled on Kennedy’s Peace Corps, Williams’s bill asked for an eventual buildup of 5,000 volunteers to go on assignments at the request of public and private organizations, to assist the disadvantaged – mentally ill and handicapped, migratory workers, Indians, depressed and slum areas, the elderly, disabled, and delinquent and dependent children.⁷⁷ Throughout his time in the Senate, he tried to create law to provide voting rights to all citizens; in 1977, for instance, the Senate Rules

⁶⁸ Press Release, 5/27/54

⁶⁹ Press Release 6/20/60

⁷⁰ *Report Home*, 10/2/61

⁷¹ Press Release 63/101

⁷² Becker, Ronald L., “Beyond Abscam: The Harrison Williams Senatorial Papers,” unpublished paper delivered at the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, 1994.

⁷³ Press Release 63/182

⁷⁴ Press Release 63/234

⁷⁵ Press Release 63/213

⁷⁶ Press Release 68/32

⁷⁷ Press Releases 61/9, 63/47, 63/80

Committee passed his Universal Voter Registration Act to expand voting opportunities for many segments of society, including the elderly and handicapped.⁷⁸

Reflecting the women's movement which gained strength in the late 1960's and 1970's, Williams tried extending civil rights to encompass women's rights. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) as an independent bipartisan agency to actively prevent discrimination in employment.⁷⁹ Williams worked to strengthen this agency, especially as he noted that women made 57 cents for every dollar made by males.⁸⁰ In 1969, he proposed a bill to strengthen enforcement of equal employment guidelines by consolidating federal equal employment programs within the EEOC, a move directly meant to strengthen the EEOC's jurisdiction.⁸¹

Williams worked extensively for other women's causes in employment. In 1973, he introduced The Equal Credit Opportunity Act which would eliminate discrimination against women in extending credit.⁸² In 1976, he introduced a bill to correct the inequities between women and men under Social Security law; under contemporary law, benefits based on a former husband's earnings record were available for aged divorced wives, but comparable protection was not provided by aged divorced husbands or for widowers.⁸³

In 1969, Williams proposed a day care bill, which would let employers and employees, develop a firm bargaining agreement to set up an educational trust fund to make it possible for working class mothers to obtain care for their children during the work day.⁸⁴ He also joined in introducing the important Opportunities for Adoption Act of 1977, which would establish a system of financial grants for adoption programs in individual states, including services for women who planned to put their children into adoption.⁸⁵ Also, in the late 1970's, Williams helped overturn the 1976 *Gilbert v. General Electric* Supreme Court case which declared that pregnant women did not have similar benefits to those with disabilities. Carter signed Williams's legislation banning employment discrimination against pregnant workers, preventing employers from firing or downgrading a worker's salary if she took time off to bear a child, and requiring employers with large medical insurance plans to cover workers undergoing pregnancy and childbirth.⁸⁶

Williams also regularly reached out to the mentally ill. In the early 1970's, he helped sponsor the Developmentally Disabled Assistance and Bill of Rights Act which provided funding for five years for construction and renovation of facilities, training and

⁷⁸ Press Releases 63/123, 77/116

⁷⁹ Press Releases 71/178, 71/179

⁸⁰ Press Release 79/19

⁸¹ Press Release 69/81

⁸² Press Release 73/49

⁸³ Press Release 76/12

⁸⁴ Press Releases 69/126, 69/113

⁸⁵ Press Release 77/53

⁸⁶ Press Releases 77/135, 78/247

operational grants, and comprehensive planning for programs to aid the mentally disabled. Williams authored a key portion of the bill, to provide for a specific Bill of Rights for the mentally handicapped.⁸⁷

Williams also fought hard to protect the rights of handicapped citizens. In addition to his landmark Education for All Handicapped Children Act (signed into law in 1975), he pushed for more protection for handicapped citizens.⁸⁸ In 1979, he introduced a law to amend Title VII of the Civil Rights Act to add a prohibition against discrimination on the basis of a person's handicapped condition.⁸⁹ In 1972, the Senate passed two Williams-sponsored bills to aid the handicapped: the Rehabilitation Act would help create an office for the Handicapped in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the Multiple Sclerosis Act, to establish an 11-member National Commission on the disease for doing research and finding the most productive avenues toward finding causes, cures, and treatments.⁹⁰ In 1973, Williams's Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was officially made into law, the first bill developed by the new subcommittee Williams helped create in 1972, the Subcommittee on the Handicapped. The Vocational Rehabilitation Act authorized over \$1.5 billion over two years to strengthen vocational rehabilitation, which then only covered one-third of the handicapped people in the country, including authorization to create an Office of the Handicapped and new requirements for the states to give priority to serve the severely handicapped.⁹¹

Elderly Issues

Aside from African-Americans, women, disabled and handicapped citizens, Williams was strongest in providing civil rights to the elderly, a segment of society Williams felt was severely underappreciated in the era; at age 49, he was dubbed "Mr. Aging" in Congress.⁹² Protection against age discrimination, he declared, was "a matter of basic civil rights."⁹³

Williams took a leadership role in all matters relating to aging. In 1963, he became Chairman of the Subcommittee on Frauds and Misrepresentation of the Elderly after having recommended its establishment.⁹⁴ Many frauds targeted the elderly in the early 1960's. For instance, one Donald Wilson used the mail system to charge \$76 for bracelets he bought for \$1.50, making \$400,000 in 1963 alone (he was later convicted).⁹⁵ In 1967, Williams tried to toughen bill S. 274 which protected (albeit leniently) the elderly against frauds, by striking the word "fraudulent" in the bill, and substituting it

⁸⁷ Press Releases 74/65, 76/102

⁸⁸ Press Release 76/108

⁸⁹ Press Release 79/29

⁹⁰ Press Release 72/196

⁹¹ Press Release 73/180

⁹² Press Release 69/8

⁹³ Press Release 77/241

⁹⁴ Press Releases 63/12, 63/114

⁹⁵ Box #723, Bill S.274

with “misleading,” and, after the word “misleading,” adding the words “without any regard to whether such pretenses, representations, or promises are intentional.”⁹⁶

He also responded to a high number of frauds in real-estate advertising pitched toward the elderly. “In today’s buy-by-mail or buy-by-telephone market,” Williams said, “forebodings arise when we consider those who have bought land in swamps, deserts, high arid plateaus, mountains, remote valleys, and – in some cases – actual jungles or lava beds outside the continental U.S.”⁹⁷ In 1967, he introduced the Interstate Land Sales Full Disclosure Act to provide full and fair disclosure of real estate subdivisions sold through the mail; for instance, making it illegal for any developer or agent, directly or indirectly, to sell or lease a property unless a registration statement with respect to interests of the bill was agreed upon.⁹⁸

The same year, Williams introduced legislation calling for a White House Conference on Aging, focusing on four major details: housing, job discrimination because of age, income maintenance, and health.⁹⁹ In 1968, Williams and Edward Kennedy (D-Mass) pushed for “The War on Poverty as it Affects Older Americans.”¹⁰⁰ He introduced a bill to establish an Aging Research Commission, charged with the job of preparing a five-year master plan into the basic project of discovering why people grow old and what could be done about it.¹⁰¹ He also made amendments to bolster the Older Americans Act of 1965, including extending grants for older persons’ programs and authorizing more area-wide model projects to meet urgent social service needs.¹⁰² Williams tried to affect the aging problem in far-reaching, general programs as well, like his bill to create an Institute on Retirement Income, to map out a plan for meeting the income needs of Americans after retirement.¹⁰³

Williams often tried to bolster Social Security benefits. When President Nixon stepped into office, he proposed a 7% increase in Social Security benefits, but Williams chastised him, calling for a 20% hike. (Nixon vetoed both the Older Americans Comprehensive Services Amendments and the Research on Aging Acts.)¹⁰⁴ Williams also asked for a bill to protect elderly homeowners from excessive property taxes, the relief targeting those in the greatest need; when property taxes exceeded 4% of an aged household’s income, relief would become available.¹⁰⁵ Noting that healthcare insurance for the elderly cost three times as much as for other age groups, he took advantage of many ways to help senior citizens in strictly financial operations.¹⁰⁶ In 1971, he introduced a bill for a 15% increase in Social Security benefits, which also pushed for giving widows benefits at

⁹⁶ Box #723, Bill S.274

⁹⁷ Box #723, *Congressional Record*, January 12, 1967

⁹⁸ Box #723, Bill S.274

⁹⁹ Press Release 67/65

¹⁰⁰ Press Release 68/2

¹⁰¹ Press Release 68/50

¹⁰² Press Release 68/46

¹⁰³ Press Release 68/10

¹⁰⁴ Press Releases 69/63, 69/74, 72/231, 72/232

¹⁰⁵ Press Release 75/241

¹⁰⁶ Press Release 69/94

100% instead of the contemporary 82.5%.¹⁰⁷ In 1978, he introduced a bill to aid blind senior citizens, extending Medicare to cover low vision lenses and aids.¹⁰⁸

Housing for the elderly was a major concern that Williams worked to improve. He introduced multiple bills on the topic, some of which are noted below. The Housing for Elderly Act of 1976 asked to borrow \$2.5 million to support construction of 10,000 apartments to house elderly.¹⁰⁹ The same year, the Senate approved a section of a bill to give \$375 million in additional funds to authorize the Department of Housing and Urban Development to make low-cost loans to nonprofit sponsors of housing for the elderly and handicapped.¹¹⁰ In 1981, the House and Senate passed Williams's appropriations bill for the same department to include emergency homeownership assistance, rehabilitation loans, and services to elderly wishing to continue living in their homes rather than moving to more expensive nursing homes.¹¹¹ He also introduced two acts in 1973 to improve housing for the elderly: the Intermediate Housing for the Elderly and Handicapped Act and the Housing Security Act of 1973.¹¹² His amendment to H.R. 4877, a supplemental appropriations bill, authorized an additional \$150 million in loans for elderly and handicapped people in housing projects in 1977.¹¹³

Williams introduced a bill for states to meet the rising costs of veterans' care in state-operated veterans' homes.¹¹⁴ In 1977, he pushed for legislation designed to extend veterans benefits to women who served in WWII as Women Air Force Service Pilots.¹¹⁵ Before leaving office in 1982, two of his bills concerning veterans were pending; one would have authorized the president to establish a White House Conference on Veterans.¹¹⁶

Williams was extremely active when it came to the practicalities of helping the aged. Nixon signed the Older Americans Act of 1969, enabling people over the age of 60 to sign up for activities in the community (for example, tutorial services to children in day-care centers, nurseries, and foster homes), by allowing the reimbursement of travel and out-of-pocket expenses.¹¹⁷ Two years later, Williams offered the Older American Community Service Act, to create nearly 50,000 community service jobs for low-income workers 55-years and older, a \$95 million proposal for two years.¹¹⁸ In 1976, about 60,000 out of three million elderly Americans benefited from volunteer programs delivering meals to their homes. In that year, Williams introduced the National Meals-

¹⁰⁷ Press Release 71/25

¹⁰⁸ Press Release 78/156

¹⁰⁹ Press Release 76/62

¹¹⁰ Press Release 76/110

¹¹¹ Box 378, *Report Home*, 12/3/80

¹¹² Press Release 73/146

¹¹³ Press Release 77/75

¹¹⁴ Press Release 75/238

¹¹⁵ Press Release 77/125

¹¹⁶ Box 378, Unpublished *Report Home*, February 1982

¹¹⁷ Press Release 69/128

¹¹⁸ Press Release 71/15

on-Wheels Act to provide \$180 million in 1977 and '78 to expand these sorts of programs.¹¹⁹

When Williams left office in February 1982, five of his bills concerning the aged were making their way through Congress; one of them, an amendment to restore funding for the Social Security Minimum Benefit which was eliminated by a 1981 act, was passed.¹²⁰

Health

Williams was very active when it came to helping citizens debilitated by health problems of all kinds. He pushed several broad pieces of legislation which bolstered the health professions across the board. In 1969, he introduced his "Preventicare" bill to the Senate, which asked for establishing computerized health-screening centers where people over the age of 50 could receive extensive medical testing services free of charge.¹²¹

He also added an amendment to a bill which would officially establish a Commission on Disease Prevention and Health Protection.¹²² In 1971, Williams tried to bolster the quantity of jobs in the medical professions, introducing The Physician Manpower Support and Services Act to increase and expand upon educational resources in medicine, and the Health Professions Educational Assistance Amendments to expand resources for training of physicians, dentists, pharmacists, and veterinarians.¹²³ Noting a national shortage of 150,000 nurses, and in complete support of the American Nurses Association, he introduced the Nurse Manpower Training Act to significantly increase the number of nurses in the country. (Williams co-sponsored over 12 bills relating to nursing in his time in the Senate.)¹²⁴ Noting the few medical facilities in rural areas, he introduced legislation to make rural medical facilities more eligible for governmental loans in his Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act.¹²⁵

From an educational standpoint, in 1976, Williams addressed the shortage of doctors in a creative way, focusing especially on rural and inner-cities areas with shortages; the Health Professions Educational Assistance Act required medical schools to set aside 25% of their openings for first-year students for those willing to participate in a full scholarship program in exchange for serving one year in a medically-underserved area.¹²⁶

Amongst other Senators, Williams shared his constituents' concerns with the safety of processed foods. He introduced a "Truth in Labeling" bill in 1971 to require complete ingredient labeling of all manufactured foods.¹²⁷ Williams also was adamant on providing healthy meals to children; in 1975, he introduced a bill to preserve and expand

¹¹⁹ Press Release 76/239

¹²⁰ Box 378, Unpublished *Report Home*, February 1982

¹²¹ Press Release 69/5

¹²² Press Release 68/60

¹²³ Press Release 71/27

¹²⁴ Press Releases 71/44, 75/54

¹²⁵ Press Release 75/63

¹²⁶ Press Release 76/86

¹²⁷ Press Release 71/104

the School Breakfast Program, especially focusing on the disadvantaged, including those whose parents were unemployed, by basing eligibility for free or reduced price lunches on the family's income during the period of unemployment rather than on annual earnings. Congress passed the bill over President Ford's veto.¹²⁸ In 1978, he introduced a food bill to protect commuters from faulty foods by requiring food processors to develop and maintain adequate safety procedures, giving FDA officials better access to safety records of food processors, and requesting various federal agencies to conduct a study of the need for warning labels on alcoholic beverages.¹²⁹

An alcoholic himself, Williams worked on numerous pieces of legislation relating to the prevention and treatment of the disease of alcoholism. Recalling that alcoholism was “an epidemic of alarming proportions,” the leading health problem in America when taking into account highway deaths, accidents, and suicides, Williams worked on the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare to address the problem.¹³⁰ As Chairman of the committee, he pressed legislation co-authored by himself, the Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention and Treatment Act of 1970, which would provide \$6 million for three years to build and improve current alcoholism research centers. The Williams section of the bill asked for the creation of up to six National Alcoholism Research Centers in various regions of the country.¹³¹ In 1976, Congress overwhelmingly approved Williams's call for authorization of more than \$600 million for anti-alcoholism programs. Two years later, he tried to pass an amendment to the 1973 Rehabilitation Act to require any federal contractor doing more than \$2500 in business with the government to provide occupational alcoholism treatment programs for their employees.¹³²

Also noting America's drug problem – specifically, that 30% of college students had experimented with heavy drugs in 1969 – Williams tried to strengthen the nation's services in the prevention and treatment of drug abuse. His Drug Abuse Prevention and Rehabilitation Act of 1969 would provide grants to states and private agencies for the establishment and improvement of rehabilitation centers; some centers would focus on research, while others would explore the community causes of drug abuse.¹³³

Williams focused on several other diseases as well. For instance, in 1976, he introduced a bill to tackle diabetes, which would create a national diabetes advisory board, enabling more research to be undertaken in the relation between diabetes and small vessel disease, kidney malfunction, pregnancy, blindness, and numerous other physical problems.¹³⁴ As Chairman of the Human Resources Committee, he passed a bill increasing research in spinal-cord injuries, noting that they affected up to 10,000 Americans.¹³⁵ He also tried to push legislation toward aiding the four million underserved Americans suffering from epilepsy, seeing that 80% of them could live a “normal life” through the aid of drugs and

¹²⁸ Press Release 75/199

¹²⁹ Press Release 78/21

¹³⁰ Press Release 76/57

¹³¹ Press Releases 70/146, 76/54

¹³² All under Press Release 76/146

¹³³ Press Release 69/50

¹³⁴ Press Release 76/122

¹³⁵ Press Release, 3/23/80

other medical treatments.¹³⁶ Williams also stood up for those suffering from hemophilia, as his National Hemophilia Act would permit the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to provide funds covering up to 100% of treatment costs for hemophiliacs, call for the development of at least 15 hemophiliac diagnostic and treatment centers, and establish a National Hemophilia Advisory Board.¹³⁷

Education

If Williams was active in helping the underprivileged in terms of healthcare or from discrimination of all sorts, he was equally committed to the cause of education, the most practical form of improving the underprivileged.

From the beginning, he co-sponsored a 1959 bill to give \$500 million a year for two years for public school construction.¹³⁸ In the early 1960's, he tried several times to pass a bill for a four-year liberal arts college based on Ellis Island, which would "retain the symbolic meaning of the island."¹³⁹

Williams supported migrant workers on all issues, including education. He organized a migrant educational program in New Jersey, a major success of the Health, Education, and Welfare Committee; it would provide education programs for 2,000 migrant youngsters, from conventional summer schools to evening classes, to the preparation of a film to aid community groups in understanding solutions to the educational problems of migrants.¹⁴⁰

He worked hard to give disadvantaged youths educational opportunities. Williams was the author of three amendments to reduce the barriers to college entrance for disadvantaged young people (part of the Higher Education Bill). He authored several amendments as part of one package. One was in strengthening "Peer-Group Recruiting": encouraging college students to work with those from disadvantaged backgrounds, guiding their academic preparation and assisting in applying for college entrance, etc. He also tried to start up a one-year test to increase the college admission rate of "high risk" students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The third amendment tried to bolster support for financial aid.¹⁴¹ Williams also tried to amend the Higher Education Amendments of 1968 to exempt student financial aid from family income computation for welfare payments.¹⁴² He also introduced legislation to provide tuition grants of up to \$500 per year for children of limited income families in their first two years of college.¹⁴³ In 1976, the Subcommittee on Education accepted a Williams's amendment to broaden student

¹³⁶ Press Release 72/79

¹³⁷ Press Release 73/199

¹³⁸ Press Release, 2/3/60

¹³⁹ Press Release 63/77

¹⁴⁰ Press Release 68/30

¹⁴¹ Press Release 68/48

¹⁴² Press Release 68/64

¹⁴³ Press Release 68/35

loan programs for middle-income families, making thousands of additional students eligible for federal assistance to reduce the amount paid for college.¹⁴⁴

Williams worked to improve education on a number of creative levels. In 1977, he joined in sponsoring a bill to create an independent Department of Education which would unify education issues, and include such programs as Head Start, some civil rights functions, Indian schools, and the school lunch program.¹⁴⁵ He actively supported the “Teacher Corps Program,” which, for instance, had 39 graduates participate in an 8-week program to fill a vital gap in the teaching manpower of the Trenton public schools.¹⁴⁶ In the late 1960’s, he organized a workshop to develop legislation to bring about fuller integration of African-Americans in higher education.¹⁴⁷ In 1979, he introduced a bill to provide grants to 1,240 educational institutions which trained teachers to fund specific programs designed to provide alternative careers for graduating teachers in fields where shortages existed.¹⁴⁸

Noting, “the traditional access to higher education is closed” for many people, Williams saw the high potential in expanding America’s community colleges.¹⁴⁹ He introduced the Comprehensive Community College Act of 1969 to provide federal assistance for planning and developing more community colleges, and re-introduced a version of the bill two years later.¹⁵⁰

Williams achieved several notable successes in education. In 1976, Congress approved the major \$20.8 billion education bill, for which Williams authored numerous provisions, including those providing for \$60 million annually for continuing education programs to benefit adult students, \$10 million a year for a new program of assistance to major research libraries for support of collections and research facilities for scholars and general public, and for the removal of architectural barriers for handicapped students.¹⁵¹

Williams’s biggest success under education was his Education for All Handicapped Children Act, signed into law by President Ford in 1975. Realizing that more than one million handicapped children were excluded entirely from public schools, and that less than 50% of all handicapped children were provided minimal special education programs, the act included several main provisions. It included coordination of all federal assistance for improved procedural safeguards for parents and children in securing their rights, and required individualized educational plans to be established between parents, children, and teachers and to be revised at least annually. Overall, it assured a policy which provided that all handicapped children achieved a free, appropriate form of public education.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁴ Press Release 76/26

¹⁴⁵ Press Release 77/63

¹⁴⁶ Press Release 68/77

¹⁴⁷ Press Release 68/32

¹⁴⁸ Press Release 79/18

¹⁴⁹ Press Release 71/15

¹⁵⁰ Press Releases 69/93, 71/15

¹⁵¹ Press Release 76/211

¹⁵² Press Releases 73/102, 75/108, 75/235

Labor

Along with his efforts in urban affairs, environmentalism, civil rights, health, and education, Williams's efforts in labor were very exhaustive. Williams reached out to struggling labor workers across the country and in all areas relating to workers' rights.

In 1968, he supported a New Jersey program to integrate lower-class people into Wall Street opportunities; the program initially gathered 25 unemployed from Newark to begin a six-month training course designed to upgrade their educational skills to high school equivalency and to provide them with the technical skills required for Wall Street back offices.¹⁵³ Also, Williams's creative Youth Employment and Training Program provided jobs and training for youth in innovative and experimental programs.¹⁵⁴ One example was the Job Corps program intended to train urban youths to become policemen, seeing that "hard-core ghetto youngsters who known intimately the problems of the street and the pulsebeat of the city." Nixon shut it down, going against his famous advocacy of law and order.¹⁵⁵

In the late 1970's, after the death of a postal worker, Williams sponsored a bill to extend OSHA protections to postal workers subject to danger on their jobs.¹⁵⁶ In 1979, he introduced legislation to protect the economic rights of workers and communities faced with the closing or relocation of plants, providing federal job training programs to assist terminated employees finding new jobs.¹⁵⁷ Nixon vetoed Williams' amendment to the Public Works and Economic Development Act to assist workers who lose their jobs because of new pollution-control actions.¹⁵⁸ Carter later signed Williams's bill to develop on-the-job training programs, aid in job placement efforts and provide special skill training for participants, which would bring \$11.7 million to New Jersey.¹⁵⁹

Williams consistently supported bills to raise the minimum wage. In 1969, he introduced a bill to raise it to \$2 an hour, and to extend minimum wage coverage to 13 million workers.¹⁶⁰ In 1975, after three years of work, he finally passed a piece of minimum-wage legislation, increasing it to \$2.30 an hour for 1976 (after previous vetoes by Nixon).¹⁶¹

At times of desperate measure in the spring of 1969, he encouraged a food stamp bill to offer free food stamps for the poorest American families.¹⁶² Again responding to the desperate state of the economy in 1973, Williams sponsored legislation to extend

¹⁵³ Press Release 65/59

¹⁵⁴ Press Release 77/114

¹⁵⁵ Press Release 69/100

¹⁵⁶ Press Release, 3/3/80

¹⁵⁷ Press Release 79/150

¹⁵⁸ Press Releases 72/231, 72/232

¹⁵⁹ Press Release, 12/14/80

¹⁶⁰ Press Release 69/64

¹⁶¹ Press Release 75/283

¹⁶² Press Release 69/58

unemployment benefits for thousands of workers who would otherwise begin losing them in April; this would authorize an additional 13 weeks of benefits for some two million workers.¹⁶³ In the summer of 1973, he urged the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare to budget \$680 million as an emergency step to provide jobs for unemployed youth that summer.¹⁶⁴

Williams was a constant supporter of workers' rights. He introduced the Labor Reform Act of 1977 to give labor workers better opportunities to express their desires in free elections and fairer chances to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement.¹⁶⁵ This was in part a response to the infamous corruption in the United Mine Workers, which led to the murder of UMW presidential candidate Joseph Yablonski and his wife and daughter, a murder eventually traced to then-UMW president, W.A. "Tony" Boyle. On January 8, 1970, Williams helped organize a 200-man task force to investigate the election, as Williams commenced the Subcommittee's inquiry into the matter. Williams authored a resolution, passed by the Senate, which authorized the conduct of a full-scale investigation of the UMW election, ranging over five states, several hundred interviews, and the issuance of more than 100 subpoenas.

When it came to the rights of migratory workers, Williams was adamant to support them. As chair of the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor for eight years (1961-1968), he tried to assist them in a variety of measures. Noting in the early 1960's that America had set an all-time record for total employment, Williams addressed Congress in saying that we needed to extend this progress to the forgotten in a prosperous society, the migrant workers.¹⁶⁶

Williams's subcommittee focused much of their research on the health risks to migratory workers. After months of research and building upon complicated legislation, they passed the Migrant Health Act in 1962. The act allowed groups – like state and local health departments, growers associations, and educational institutions – to ask the Public Health Service to make grants to public agencies and private non-profit organizations to pay part of the cost of family health service clinics and other projects which would “improve health conditions and services for migratory farm-workers and their families.”¹⁶⁷ It was one of Williams's biggest successes in Congress. By 1968, the Migrant Health Act, which began with 31 projects serving migrants in 114 counties in 20 states, had expanded to 115 projects serving 300 counties in 36 states including Puerto Rico.¹⁶⁸ The act's success continued to snowball, increasing its funding from \$7 million in 1968 to \$20 million by 1971.¹⁶⁹

Directly following the passing of the Migrant Health Act in 1963, Williams proposed six bills to his Subcommittee to help migrants, comprehensive legislation covering:

¹⁶³ Press Release 73/40

¹⁶⁴ Press Release 73/45

¹⁶⁵ Press Release 77/171

¹⁶⁶ Press Release 60/24

¹⁶⁷ Press Releases 62/133, 63/133

¹⁶⁸ Press Release 68/5

¹⁶⁹ Press Release 68/34

education of migrant adults and children, daycare services for migrant children, agricultural child labor protection, registration of agricultural labor contractors, establishment of a National Advisory Council on migratory labor, and adequate sanitation facilities for migratory labor.¹⁷⁰ In the early 1960's, he also tried to block the bracero programs (programs initiated during the Korean War to use Mexican workers during a period of labor shortage in America) from impeding opportunities for American workers.¹⁷¹ In 1968, he tried passing the Collective Bargaining Bill, which would give farm employees the same rights and responsibilities in regard to union representation and bargaining on wages and other conditions of employment that were enjoyed by industrial workers.¹⁷²

Williams also focused much of his labor attention on mineworkers. As chair of the Subcommittee on Labor between 1969 and 1974, he took on research in the alarmingly high rate of accidents and deaths of workers in the mining business. As a result, Williams and his Subcommittee worked extensively on legislation to protect the rights of mineworkers under suspect leadership in mine companies.

Receiving its impetus from a tragic mine explosion in Farmington, West Virginia, the legislation Williams helped design focused on, first of all, reducing the risks of explosions, roof falls, and other mining accidents. It also aimed at limiting the high rate of "black lung" disease among workers, and its limited requirements backed up by weak enforcement measures, in addition to the lack of adequate compensation to workers and their families who died from the disease. The legislation was much needed, and Nixon signed the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act into law in 1969.¹⁷³ By 1971, 1,300 mineworkers in New Jersey alone had received a total of \$1.24 million in disability benefits.¹⁷⁴ By 1972, about \$5.5 million in benefits was paid to New Jersey residents and their families affected by the "black lung" disease.¹⁷⁵

Williams continued to protect mineworkers throughout the 1970's, following three tragic mine disasters in 1972: a dam breakdown causing 125 deaths in Buffalo Creek, West Virginia; a destructive fire in the Sunshine Mine of Kellogg, Idaho; and a fire causing entombment of nine workers resulting from lazy safety protections in Blacksville, West Virginia. All three broke the safety standards of the 1969 act.¹⁷⁶ His Federal Mine Health and Safety Amendments of 1976 worked to upgrade mine safety by merging safety and health protection for metal and non-metallic miners with the protection provided coal miners under the 1969 Act, and to transfer the functions of mine safety responsibilities from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Labor.¹⁷⁷ In 1977, President

¹⁷⁰ Press Release 63/148

¹⁷¹ Press Releases 63/192, 63/198

¹⁷² Press Release 68/5

¹⁷³ Press Release 69/177

¹⁷⁴ Press Release 71/6

¹⁷⁵ Press Release 72/2

¹⁷⁶ Buffalo Creek and Sunshine: Box #357, Ref #301; Blacksville: Box #356, Ref #263.

¹⁷⁷ Press Release 76/142

Carter signed another Williams-authored bill related to mining, which substantially revised and improved details of the federal mine safety and health program.¹⁷⁸

Aside from providing protection to mineworkers, Williams was aware of the dangers to other labor employees, including those in construction. He authored the Construction Safety Act in 1969 to authorize the Secretary of Labor to promote health and safety standards, noting that construction workers were twice as likely to suffer accidents compared with other industrial workers.¹⁷⁹ He also authored much of the Federal Employees Compensation Act of 1966, stressing an increase in 5% in benefits paid to surviving spouses in injuries related to work, paying an employee for up to 45 days after filing a claim for a traumatic injury, and an increase in monthly allowance for services of attendants for disabled workers from \$300 to \$500.¹⁸⁰

Related to all this was Williams's pivotal action in OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Act. The act, signed into law in 1970 and affecting millions of working Americans, was, along with his legislation in support of migratory labor and mineworkers, one of Williams's greatest accomplishments in Congress. The act took into consideration the comprehensive rights of all workers, driving much of its impetus from the fact that, every year, more than 14,000 American workers were killed in occupational accidents. In essence, it provided clearer safety standards, established safety training programs, and improved enforcement machinery and standardized accident-reporting procedures in all labor organizations. It also included strong government inspection procedures and a stringent system of penalties to organization in order to encourage workable health and safety practices.¹⁸¹ For years, Williams defended key elements of the act; in 1978, when the Supreme Court ruled in a case that "unannounced inspections" by OSHA officials violated the Fourth Amendment protections against warrant-less searches and seizures, Williams was livid and tried to write legislation to overturn the ruling.¹⁸²

Williams's other major accomplishments in support of labor included the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, which sought to improve the security of pension benefits to workers. Worked on exhaustively with New York Senator Jacob K. Javits over a four-year period, the act provided, in Williams's words, "a most historic moment in the struggle to provide dignity and security for the average working American." The act did four main things: it provided funding requirements to assure all pension liabilities to be funded over a 30 year period; provided a federally administered, mandatory insurance program to protect plan participants against loss of benefits through premature plan termination; provided new rules of conduct for pension fund trustees and fiduciaries; and created rules aimed at forming better communication between plan administrators and participants.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Press Release 77/33

¹⁷⁹ Press Release 69/30, 69/103,

¹⁸⁰ Press Release 74/111

¹⁸¹ Press Release 69/66

¹⁸² Press Release 78/105

¹⁸³ Press Release 74/119

Five years later, Williams and Javits introduced the ERISA Improvements Act of 1979 to help refine and improve private pension plans; specifically, to simplify and clarify some of ERISA's provisions and stimulate the creation of more private sector retirement plans through economic incentives.¹⁸⁴ Williams also worked to help retired workers in specific areas suffering from low support; his Railroad Retirement Act, for instance, provided a pension program for the financially troubled railroad retirement system. It would have given a 20% increase in Social Security benefits under the Railroad Retirement Fund had Nixon not vetoed it.¹⁸⁵

Business Securities

Williams was extremely protective of investors against the violations executed in the business world, especially in protecting frauds from occurring in the wily world of business transactions. He was Chair of the Subcommittee on Securities under the Banking and Currency Committee from 1959 to 1978.

Williams was, first of all, highly supportive of the Small Business Administration, which was established in 1953 to overcome the problem of the increasing number of small business failures at a time of massive private economic growth. The SBA offered counsel and guidance through regional offices, arranged set-asides of contracts for competitive bidding, and issued directories to help businessmen learn the product and service needs of the government. For example, in 1959, through the SBA "set-aside" program, New Jersey small business firms received 4,912 prime contracts valued at approximately \$206 million.¹⁸⁶

Williams also felt a need to protect shareholders; in 1960, there were 12.5 million of them, and 13 million people held corporate securities.¹⁸⁷ In 1960, he introduced several bills aimed at increasing the SEC regulatory power in the over-the-counter market and the commission's power to prevent criminal and civil violations of Federal Securities Acts.¹⁸⁸ He introduced the Securities Act of 1973 to prohibit any member of a stock exchange from effecting any transactions for any institutional account which it managed; meaning an institution would not be prohibited from having a subsidiary or affiliate which was an exchange member, but would not be able to do any of its portfolio business through that member.¹⁸⁹

In 1969, Williams was named chair of the new Subcommittee on Urban and Rural Economic Development (under the Select Committee on Small Business) to specifically investigate small business failures in the inner city and identify programs which might spark success. The job also was meant to examine the economic structures of both city

¹⁸⁴ Press Release 79/8

¹⁸⁵ Press Release 72/203

¹⁸⁶ *Report Home*, 4/18/60

¹⁸⁷ Press Releases, 5/23/60, 6/28/60

¹⁸⁸ Press Release, 4/29/60

¹⁸⁹ Press Release 73/14

and country, seeking solutions to reduce the large number of small business failures.¹⁹⁰ He also co-sponsored the Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1969 to protect the privacy of borrowers from random disclosure of credit information by credit rating bureaus.¹⁹¹

In 1974, Williams's Municipal Securities Act passed the Senate, and, two years later, his Municipal Securities Full Disclosure Act of 1976 was structured to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to require timely disclosure of important financial information by state and local governments which issue municipal securities. In addition, it required full disclosure of crucial financial information about municipal securities in order to boost flagging investor confidence.¹⁹² The Senate also passed Williams's Municipal Securities Act of 1974 to give the SEC regulatory authority over both banks and securities dealers dealing in municipal bonds.¹⁹³

The Senate passed his Securities Acts Amendments of 1975, which would have resulted in major reforms in the nation's securities exchanges industry; it would define the SEC's oversight role more effectively and, in general, create a system of regulation and decision-making covering all facets of the securities handling processes.¹⁹⁴ Four years later, he introduced a bill to mandate the first federal regulation of the securities market, working to establish a seven-member government securities rulemaking board, a self-regulatory organization to prescribe equitable principles of trade and ethical business practices.¹⁹⁵

In the late 1970's, Williams worked on the ambitious National Securities Market System Act, a comprehensive bill which would in effect give the SEC "authority over all securities-related communications systems," including, for instance, the implementation of a "composite tape for reporting securities transactions and a composite quotation system including all market makers."¹⁹⁶ He also introduced the strict Investment Advisers Act Amendments of 1976 to authorize more stringent standards for people engaged as securities investment advisors, as well as the Institutional Investor Full Disclosure Act which would require institutional investors to disclose their portfolio holdings and large transactions regularly.¹⁹⁷

Noting that the availability of low-interest loans and mortgages was critical to the success of rehabilitation efforts, Williams introduced a bill in late 1979 to preserve billions of dollars for communities and moderate income families, mostly through trying to prevent the dismantling of tax-exempt bond programs which provided an estimated \$13 billion in low-interest mortgage funds nation-wide during the previous year.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁰ Press Release 69/13

¹⁹¹ Press Release 69/15

¹⁹² Press Release 76/36

¹⁹³ Press Release 74/128

¹⁹⁴ Press Release 75/83

¹⁹⁵ Press Release, 3/28/80

¹⁹⁶ Press Release 74/26

¹⁹⁷ Press Release 69/152

¹⁹⁸ Press Release, 12/2/79

Foreign Affairs

Outside of the United States, Williams had a high interest in preserving the American democratic way of life in the field of foreign affairs, while at the same time curbing enthusiasm for nuclear buildup and the Vietnam War. He was active on several issues in foreign affairs, including favoring the Panama Canal Neutrality Treaty in 1978.¹⁹⁹ Williams pushed for creative measures to stop some of the world's ills; he recommended, for instance, establishment of a committee focused on preventing genocide, originally a Harry Truman petition still waiting on the floor of Congress.²⁰⁰ He also introduced a joint resolution to create a permanent commission in Congress titled the "Commission on United States Participation in the United Nations," noting that the U.S.'s activity level in the U.N. could be strengthened and more clearly defined.²⁰¹ Before leaving the Senate in 1982, Williams proposed a bill to lessen world hunger while promoting global security; the bill waited on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.²⁰²

Williams was also an active supporter of Israel. After Syrian and Egyptian attacks on Israel in 1973, he favored doubling support for Israel.²⁰³ While he stressed respect for the independence of each nation, he also went to extremes in supporting Israel's independence.²⁰⁴ He opposed Syria joining the Security Council because they had captured two Israeli hijack victims,²⁰⁵ and he specifically introduced legislation to cut U.S. funding for a special U.N. information unit on Palestinian Rights, saying "this so-called special unit is nothing more than a tool for continued harassment of Israel."²⁰⁶ Williams was adamant in not only protecting Israel from harm from Syria or Palestinians guerillas, but also from Egypt, as he spoke against Egyptian President Nasser when he requested the UN to withdraw the Emergency Force which had been stationed along the Egypt/Israeli border as a blockade since 1956.²⁰⁷ He also fiercely opposed selling F-15 fighter aircrafts to Saudi Arabia in 1978, noting that American support of Israel was strong.²⁰⁸

Part of Williams's strong support of Israel was connected with the economic sanctions broken by Arab boycotts of Israel. In 1965, for instance, the Anti-Defamation League found that the main reasons an Israeli soft drink manufacturer, Tempo Soft Drinks Company Ltd., failed to be granted a franchise were because of a carefully-executed Arab boycott in an Egyptian-owned Coca-Cola bottling plant in Cairo.²⁰⁹ He introduced a bill in 1965 to amend section 2 of the Export Control Act of 1949 so that this last paragraph

¹⁹⁹ Press Release 78/47

²⁰⁰ Press Release 74/12

²⁰¹ Press Release 72/43

²⁰² Box 378, Unfinished *Report Home*, February 1982 (Bill S.1675)

²⁰³ Press Release 73/186

²⁰⁴ Press Release 69/3

²⁰⁵ Press Release 69/140

²⁰⁶ Press Release 78/9

²⁰⁷ Press Release, 3/24/67

²⁰⁸ Press Release 78/69

²⁰⁹ Box #731, Folder: "Anti-Arab Boycott," article titled "Coca-Cola" (not formally released), research based on January 11, 1961 *New York Times* article

was added: “The Congress further declares that it is the policy of the U.S. to oppose restrictive trade practices or boycotts fostered or imposed by foreign countries against other countries friendly to the U.S.” The bill was specifically designed to promote free trade and to help make Arab-Israeli peace more of a possibility.²¹⁰

Previously, he had introduced the Foreign Investment Act of 1975 to specifically prevent boycotting, primarily from Arab nations; it required that the SEC and the President be notified before a foreign investor could acquire 5% or more of a U.S. company.²¹¹ In 1977, Williams tried passing the Export Administration and Foreign Boycott Amendments to make it unlawful for American businessmen to participate in the Arab boycott of Israel, having realized that American firms doing business with Israel had become targets of Arab blacklisting, religious discrimination and economic reprisals.²¹²

Apart from the Middle East, Williams tried to weaken war of all kinds. He favored the idea of creating a “World Court” in order to focus on nuclear disarmament, using all countries, including those which did not have nuclear weapons.²¹³ He was also in complete disagreement with the Defense Department’s decision to build a \$5 billion Anti-Ballistic Missile System in 1967;²¹⁴ after Nixon decided to install the system, Williams said, “I can only say – humanity has lost another battle to the Defense Establishment.”²¹⁵

Williams supported President Johnson in his domestic efforts, but disagreed with his continued engagement in Vietnam. Responding to his constituents’ biggest concerns – in 1971, one-third of New Jerseyans said their “most urgent problem” was the Vietnam War²¹⁶ – he called the bombing of North Vietnam a “reckless” action, and disagreed on many other fundamental issues.²¹⁷ In February 1971, he co-sponsored the Vietnam Disengagement Act, to withdraw all U.S. forces from Vietnam by the end of the year,²¹⁸ and in 1973 co-sponsored a bill to limit presidential powers in war-making decisions.²¹⁹

He was also the main sponsor of an act to improve the care and protection of Vietnamese children who were victims of war, and to facilitate the adoption of Vietnamese orphans, particularly those whose fathers were American. Noting that 43% of the Vietnamese population was under 14 years old, his Foreign Aid Authorization Act was made into law, as \$10 million was given in the first year to humanitarian aid for children in Vietnam.²²⁰ He co-sponsored another bill to authorize \$100 million in emergency humanitarian aid, including medical supplies, food and shelter, to the refugees of Southern Vietnam and

²¹⁰ Box #731, Folder: S.948

²¹¹ Press Release 75/12

²¹² Press Release 77/4

²¹³ Press Release 63/186

²¹⁴ Press Release 67/77

²¹⁵ Press Release 69/40

²¹⁶ Press Release 71/63

²¹⁷ Press Release 72/85

²¹⁸ Press Release 71/14

²¹⁹ Press Release 71/68

²²⁰ Press Releases 71/174, 73/135

Cambodia, channeled through the U.N. “Our nation, so deeply involved in Southeast Asia’s agonies of war,” he said, “should now move swiftly to help heal the wounds of these tragic people.”²²¹

As a tribute to one of the century’s foreign-policy leaders, Williams pushed hard for a Woodrow Wilson memorial in Washington, DC. Wilson, a US President, New Jersey governor, and President of Princeton University, was mostly revered, according to Williams, for his international peace efforts, recalling that his messages were “an authentic Twentieth Century voice for this nation.”²²²

The project took hold in the late 1950’s, when notable television journalist Chester R. Huntley suggested the idea of a Wilson memorial to Williams. On October 4, 1961, Williams introduced a Joint Resolution providing for the creation of the Wilson Memorial Commission; the commission would decide on one of two kinds of memorials: “one which would be a monument similar to those which honor Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, or one which will serve as a building of a functional nature, a ‘living memorial.’” The debate continued as Arthur J. Goldberg, Secretary of Labor-designate, worked to redevelop Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC as a place for the potential memorial.

In 1966, with Williams’s input, a standing subcommittee was established for the proposed Wilson Center; in March of that year, it unanimously recommended the memorial as a center for scholars to be located at 8th street, across from the National Archives. The first building to be constructed would be an International Center for Scholars, with other buildings related to “Wilson’s ideals set for the future.” President Nixon gave a dedication to the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in February 1971.²²³

Williams and the Abscam Scandal

The close of Williams’s career began in early 1980 with the disclosure in the press that he was a target of the FBI undercover operation known as Abscam. In October 1980, Williams was indicted on nine counts, including bribery, receipt of an unlawful gratuity, conflict of interest, and interstate travel to carry on the unlawful activity of bribery, for “the purchase and operation of a titanium mine, a proposed loan of \$100 million to be financed by an Arab company known as Abdul Enterprises, Ltd., and a promise by Harrison Williams to use his Senate position to secure government titanium contracts.” In May 1981, Williams was found guilty. On September 2, 1981, after conducting hearings, the Senate Select Committee on Ethics recommended expelling Williams for his “ethically repugnant conduct” in violating federal laws. On March 11, 1982, as the Senate neared the conclusion of its deliberations on the Committee’s recommendation, Williams resigned his Senate seat. A month earlier, on February 16, Williams was sentenced to a

²²¹ Press Release 75/73

²²² Press Release 61/19

²²³ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “*How the Wilson Center Came to Be*,” January 2001

three-year prison term and a \$50,000 fine. He began serving his sentence in January 1983, completing it in 1986.²²⁴

Williams lived the rest of his life in New Jersey, and died of heart disease at St. Clare's Hospital in Denville on November 17, 2001. He was 81 years old.²²⁵ The Abscam scandal tarnished an otherwise impressive legacy in Congress, in which he ironically fought hard against not only criminal behaviors but also basic violations of human and moral dignity.

²²⁴ All the above "Abscam" information in Katzmann, 3-30.

²²⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrison_A._Williams