

7/25/2008- Congressman Albio Sires attends portrait unveiling of Congresswoman Mary T. Norton Portrait

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For immediate release

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July 25, 2008

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(Washington, D.C.) – Yesterday, U.S. Congressman Albio Sires (D-NJ) attended the unveiling of a portrait of Congresswoman Mary T. Norton. After being found in storage, the portrait now rightfully hangs in the House Committee on Education and Labor’s hearing room.

Congresswoman Norton was one of the first women to be elected to and serve in the United States Congress. She began her social activism in Jersey City, New Jersey and quickly became the first female member of the New Jersey Democratic State Committee. She was then elected to the House of Representatives for the 12th Congressional District in New Jersey in 1924.

During her time in Congress, Norton was the first woman to chair a major committee. One of the Congresswoman’s most accomplished moments came while she was Chair of the Labor Committee in 1938 when the House passed the Fair Labor Standards Act. Despite much opposition to what was, at the time, a controversial bill, the House passed the final version of the legislation by a vote of 314 to 97. The Fair Labor Standards Act was later signed into law by President Roosevelt on June 25, 1938.

The Fair Labor Standards Act plays a significant role in our history. It is the formative legislation for the labor rights that we take for granted today- minimum wage, overtime pay, and child labor laws. This law has improved the quality of life for so many workers in our country. “Congresswoman Norton was a champion for the American worker and played an integral role in passing critical legislation that would shape our nation for years to come,” stated Congressman Sires. “It is an honor for me to serve the 13th Congressional District where Congresswoman Norton first began her journey as an activist for the people, not just in her district, but throughout the country,” added Congressman Sires.

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