

STATEMENT BY CONGRESSMAN GEO. W. CROCKETT, JR.
ON H.R. 2567 BEFORE TASK FORCE ON LIBRARIES AND
MEMORIALS, COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
JUNE 20, 1985

Madame Chairlady and distinguished Members of this Task Force,

Thank you for this opportunity to express my support for the proposed legislation to require the Smithsonian Institution to divest its financial interests in companies doing business in South Africa. One would have thought that the Smithsonian, given the nature of its origins and its dedication to the enlightenment of man, would have been out front on this issue instead of taking refuge in silence and doing nothing until there is, and I quote, "a national consensus."

The House of Representatives has spoken very forcibly on the issue with the recent passage of the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985 and this proposed legislation before us today is a natural supplement to that effort. I support this proposal, as I did the Anti-Apartheid Act, not because I believe it will force South Africa to end its repressive policy of racial segregation, but because it signals a divorce of the United States from its silent support of apartheid through its policy of constructive engagement. In short, it brings the United States back on the right side of the issue.

For what is clear to me today, more so than ever before, is that 22 million Black South Africans, now under the tyranny of South Africa's apartheid regime, will gain their freedom and will enjoy full citizenship in the land of their birth.

What is uncertain is whether the white minority controlled government of that country will continue to pursue those repressive policies that will lead to its violent overthrow or whether it will work toward a peaceful resolution that will include all segments of its populace in the search for accommodation and reconciliation.

And the crucial question for us in all of this is the role America will play. Will our country be credited with having helped the Black South African to achieve freedom in his own country or will we be seen, as so often has been the case, as having strengthened the status quo by doing nothing positive to foster change.

I believe it is vital and essential that the United States seek to minimize the emerging violence in South Africa and attempt to maximize the chances for peaceful change there.

This proposed legislation for the Smithsonian, and the current legislative actions by many states and cities to remove their funds from companies doing business in South Africa, further strengthen our resolve and our message to the Pretoria regime that it must begin meaningful negotiations with Black South African leaders. And it also demonstrates to the Black South African community that the United States stands firm for the rights and liberties of all men and women, wherever they may be. Thank you.