

# An Exclusive Interview With Senator Richard Bryan

The Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice recently had an exclusive interview with U.S. Senator Richard Bryan - D-NV. This is the first of two parts, covering the entire interview.

**Sentinel-Voice:** What has been your position in the past on the sanctions against South Africa and now that Mandela has been freed, has or will your position change?

**Senator:** I've supported sanctions for South Africa. It is my view that the DeKlerk government would not have made the dramatic move that it has just done, in terms of releasing Mandela. They're making some very tentative steps to be sure, but never the less, I think significant steps (need to be made) towards a new dialogue in terms of pluralism that needs to come to South Africa - the recognition that one man, one vote is inevitable. The sooner the better. So I think economic sanctions have been helpful and I would not favor lifting those sanctions at this point. Although, to be fair to the DeKlerk government, now it has been significant, and its actions have been significant, modest as they are and overdue as they are. That was a pretty dramatic series of events that has been unfolding this past week.

**Sentinel-Voice:** Do you have any further steps that you feel the government could take to help do away with apartheid?

**Senator:** Well, certainly they could begin to strip away even more of the legal underpinning that's been in place there since 1948, when the Nationalist government came to power. I think it's very important, from my own perspective, that the meaningful dialogue - the one thing Mandela provided - seems to me is a national symbol in which the Black majority in South Africa can buy largely - if not everyone, at least a broad range of folks can rally behind the African National Congress and in effect, begin to develop the dialogue with the DeKlerk government in which a framework and a series of timetables (can be developed). It will not, in my view, come overnight, but as long as there's a timetable, that's meaningful. So, if these things don't occur, we're talking about 10, 15 or 20 years down the road, but there'll be a step by step, I think that would be very helpful in terms of easing tensions and providing real political democracy in South Africa for the disenfranchised majority.

**Sentinel-Voice:** Many feel that the recent Supreme Court decisions are against human rights and have caused setbacks for minorities, particularly in the areas of affirmative action and minority setasides. What is your view on this issue?

**Senator:** Well, I think the Supreme Court decisions do hurt. Now I know that the legal scholars say that affirmative action has not been emasculated, that there are some distinctions that can be made that you do have to establish an affirmative foundation on a factual basis for the affirmative action ordinances or codes that you're putting in place, but pretty clearly, the practical fact of the Supreme Court's decision has made it more difficult for affirmative action programs to be continued. The decision should not be an excuse for dismantling those affirmative action programs, but my own view is that the affirmative action decisions by the court have been setbacks to the cause of the affirmative action and I think that the decisions are regrettable. They come as a consequence of a philosophy that's been in Washington since 1981, which has appointed members to the Supreme Court who clearly have indicated anti-sympathy and disagreement, with a desire to undermine the affirmative action or decisions in laws that we have on the books.

**Sentinel-Voice:** The new Civil Rights Act of 1990 that is coming up - or at least, some congressmen are trying to propose this Act - how do you stand on that and are you a member of the group of Senators and Congressmen who seeking to get together on this issue?

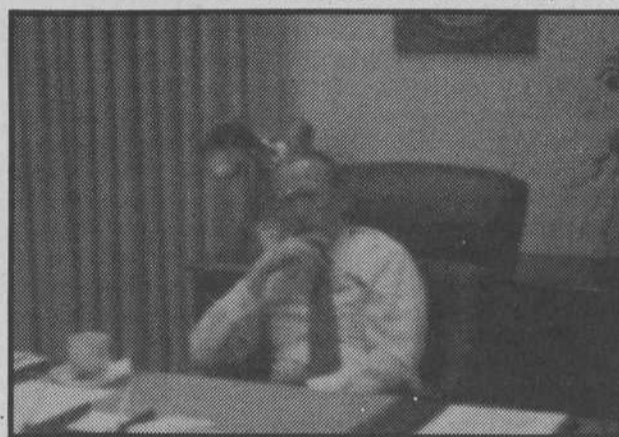
**Senator:** I have not been asked to participate and I must tell you that I do not know what the provisions of the new law, or the proposed new law, would be. I'd like to take a look at that and get back to you. I've been told that Sen. Kennedy has been one of the leaders in terms of putting this package together. I've not seen it, frankly. It's my impression that it's fairly recent - it would have to be if it's the 1990 Act. We only went into session less than a month ago, was it the 23rd or 24th, Jim (his press secretary) of January, so we'd be talking about something that has been introduced in the last 2 or 3 weeks.

**Sentinel-Voice:** I think they introduced it first about 2 weeks ago.

**Senator:** Well, let me take a look at it and I'll certainly indicate to see whether I would be in a position to support it. I suspect that I will be, but I want to take a look at it first.

**Sentinel-Voice:** I believe that you are sponsoring a bill in the Senate which would curtail the export of chemicals used in the manufacture of drugs. How effective do you feel this bill will be?

**Senator:** Actually, what we have is a piece of legislation which was enacted in 1988, the year before I came to the Senate, called the Chemical Diversion and Trafficking Act, and what it seeks to do is to require all shippers of chemicals that are in a certain category - they are essentially, the essential elements and chemicals used to process cocaine, and you recall that MEK, mentolethokete, is mentioned as one of them. There's the acetone, potassium permanganate and there's a list of 20 chemicals. What the law requires is that any shipper in the U.S. who attempts to send these chemicals to Columbia or Andean countries, must notify the Drug Enforcement Administration 15 days before the shipment is to occur. In those 15 days the DEA takes a look at the proposed recipient of the shipment and makes a determination as to whether this is a legitimate bonafied commercial user. The testimony that we had and the reason is that we held a hearing on the Foreign Commerce and Tourism Committee, on which I serve, and I



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chaired a portion of the hearing. In the evidence brought forth by the DEA, (it came out) that among those shipments going to Columbia, 3 out of 4 of those customers designated by American shippers, proved to be either store front operations, were proved to have no legitimate business need for those chemicals, or indeed were of such a suspicious nature that it appeared that they were not bonafied. The DEA tells us that 40 to 70 percent of all these chemicals that go to Columbia, ultimately wind up in the clandestine lab in the jungle. Now, that piece of legislation only has been in effect 90 days. It appears to be working and President Bush addressed the issue in Cartagena yesterday in a support resolution which we had offered last week. I guess that the big picture is that as America appears to be getting a better handle on this, their shipments from Germany and the Netherlands appear to be picking up the slack, that is, they're shipping much, much more of this and so we need to get a global recognition of this kind of a problem and I have been active in that cause.

**Sentinel-Voice:** What is your position on the continuing Social Security changes that are being made, in particular, the cuts, as opposed to the President calling for an increase in defense spending, and what do you feel the impact of these changes is on our Senior Citizens, particularly as concerned with health care, hospitalization and long-term care?

**Senator:** I think that the present administration has been playing around with Social Security. Every dollar that the Social Security encounters, every dollar is being used to

finance the deficit. The President tells us in the State of the Union message, "don't fool around with Social Security" and the latter part of the message says, "you know, the deficit is getting better." That's just not true. We are raiding the Social Security System to finance debts, and I think that's wrong. So I've introduced a piece of legislation last year, shortly after coming to the Senate, which would prohibit using Social Security monies to finance the debt, and I think that's one thing we should do. I have supported on an on-going basis, the cost of living adjustments, the KOLLAs and indeed the Social Security recipient KOLLAs are in the budget proposal this year. What is inconsistent and frankly unfair to those for-a-long-time federal civil service retirees, the older federal civil service retirees were not members of the Social Security System. Military retirees previously were not members of the Social Security System and the President, in his budget, proposed eliminating, for all intents and purposes, or phasing out, the cost of living adjustments for federal civil service retirees and military retirees. I think that's unfair and pretty hard to justify - why a Social Security recipient should get it and a person who has spent the same amount of time in federal employment or has rendered a service for his or her country, as the case may be, and to simply say that service is less entitled to cost of living adjustment than someone who is a Social Security contributor. So I do not agree with the President on that issue and I believe it's wrong to discriminate against those people.

**Sentinel-Voice:** Speaking of Federal employees, how did you vote on the issue of statehood for the District of Columbia, and how do you stand on that now?

**Senator:** Well, it really hasn't come up yet, and I must say that I don't think that there's much likelihood that it's going to occur this year, with Mayor Barry's troubles and the way in which the District of Columbia is run. And I can speak as a resident of the District of Columbia. I live in the District. I live two blocks from the Capitol. I must say the inaptitude in which the District is handled - they were the highest taxed in the country and the services are deplorable - services for the people. So I don't think you're going to see any movement of the statehood until the District cleans up its own house, sort of to speak, and I think you're going to see some partisan objections from the Republicans because the two members of the Senate from the District, were it to become a state, are almost a surity to be Democrats, and of course, that would please me greatly, as a Democrat. But the District has a lot to do to clean up its house. People in Congress are, I think,

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