

Justice

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Those who knew Luna said he was a dedicated lawyer who was loved by juries and colleagues alike.

U.S. District Judge William Quarles Jr., who was presiding over the drug trial, called Luna a "wonderful young man, responsible, charming and highly intelligent. He had genuine trial skills as a lawyer and juries loved him."

Luna, who attended Fordham University and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill law school, was married and had two children. He had been with the U.S. Attorney's office for four years.

Lou Bilionis, a UNC law professor who taught Luna, said he was a bright and gifted lawyer. He said Luna visited the law school recently and they had caught up.

"I was pleased as any professor to learn how well he'd done. ... He was well liked," Bilionis said.

"I remember as a student he was dedicated to justice and fairness and he was the kind of lawyer and graduate that makes a bar and a law school proud."

Winston Crisp, associate dean for student services at the UNC law school, said he attended law school at the same time as Luna and was in some of the same classes with him. Luna was the class president when both of them were third-year law students, he said.

"He got along with everybody," Crisp said. "Everyone in the class, no matter who

you hung out with, everybody was friendly with Jon."

After interning for the Bronx County District Attorney, Luna worked as an associate at Arnold & Porter in Washington in 1993-1994. He was one of only a handful of Black attorneys at the firm - something that wasn't always easy for Luna, who was Black.

"I can't say personally that there's been any overt racism here," Luna told the Legal Times in 1994. "However, Black attorneys feel a little more isolated than their white counterparts."

He left the firm to become a staff attorney at the Federal Trade Commission from 1994 to 1997, before moving onto the district attorney's office in Brooklyn and then the federal prosecutor's office in Baltimore.

All the while, he remained an advocate for minorities.

In a 1995 letter published in The (Baltimore) Sun, Luna praised a column that had condemned the "racist logos of the Atlanta Braves and Cleveland Indians."

"The difference between Native Americans and African Americans or Jews is that (Native Americans) make up barely 1 percent of the U.S. population, and compared with the other two groups have virtually no political power," Luna wrote. "Should population or political clout determine the level of tolerance we are willing to give to racist imagery?"

College

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"Increased education is a critical factor in whether a person will transition off welfare and keep a job with a decent income," Snowe says. "Parents as Scholars has been wildly successful with graduates averaging a 50 percent increase in salaries and with 90 percent of working graduates leaving welfare behind permanently."

Studies conducted of former welfare recipients in Maine show that the median hourly wage for Parents as Scholars graduates is \$11.71, versus \$7.50 for those making the shift from welfare to work.

The college provision in the Senate welfare bill is widely viewed by advocates for low-income women as a silver lining to an otherwise dark legislative horizon.

Women's groups, advocates for low-income people, community colleges and many Democrats in Congress have been fighting welfare bills in the House and Senate that impose higher work requirements without concurrent funding for the higher amount of child care that recipients would need to pay for.

Billions of dollars in such funding would be required to support parents who must work while receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, according to the Center on Law and Social Policy and advocates.

Billions more would be needed for post-welfare and other low-income families whose wages can not cover the cost of full-time day care, according to the Washington-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Advocates also cite many other problems with the welfare bills in Congress.

These include funding for the Bush administration's "marriage promotion" programs, which they criticize as untested, more restrictions on how states can structure their programs and a continued prohibition on

providing Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and other welfare services such as food stamps to many legal immigrants.

As well as adding the educational provision, Snowe, as part of a deal for her support for the Republican welfare bill, secured a promise from Senate Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley, a Republican from Iowa, that she will be able to offer an amendment during floor debate that adds \$5 billion or more in child care funding to the \$200 million new funding per year over the next five years that is already included in both the Senate and House bills, aides say.

Even with this \$200 million added per year, advocates for low-income people say that nearly half a million children will lose subsidized child care by 2008 when stiffer work requirements will be in full effect.

Hart, one of a few thousand graduates of the Parents as Scholars program, was one of a group that met with Snowe last year as the senator prepared for the welfare debate.

Hart used the opportunity to articulate the cost-effectiveness of a supportive welfare policy.

"By educating parents, it's helping them to become self-sufficient," Hart says. "I'll pay far more in taxes than I ever got out of the system."

Hart says that Snowe - Who has made the same argument herself - made it clear she found the argument compelling. "She said, 'Be careful, you're starting to sound like a Republican.'"

"It was a funny moment, but the fiscal argument is true," says Hart, echoing other Maine advocates. "It's a lot more cost-effective to educate parents than when you're just picking up the pieces all the time. People who have low-wage jobs are just cycling in and out of welfare."

Mary Tessier writes for Women's eNews.

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