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Glickman exits his new Refugees International position

June 25, 2010

Motion Picture Association of America chairman and CEO post still open as Kerrey says he's 'still talking' about the job.

By Mark Tarallo

Former Rep. Dan Glickman (D-Kan.), who stepped down in April as CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America, confirmed earlier this week that he has resigned as head of Refugees International, a job he held for less than three months, and will be a senior fellow at the Bipartisan Policy Center.

Glickman told CEO Update June 24, that while RI is an invaluable life-saving organization, American politics and domestic policy "is what really lights my fire," and he realized after starting his new job that he couldn't be actively involved in both international refugee work and the U.S. political scene.

"The work they do is almost exclusively outside of the U.S. It would have removed me from the area that over the years has been my sweet spot," Glickman said.

Refugees International concurred.

"He has decided that he cannot devote the necessary time and attention to leading [our] organization while also pursuing multiple lifelong interests he developed during his 35 years in public service," the group said in a June 23 statement.

Pangburn Partners LLC had conducted the search. RI board member L. Craig Johnstone, former Deputy United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, will serve as interim president of the group, effective immediately.

Against partisan rancor

The Bipartisan Policy Center job appealed to him, Glickman said, in part because serving in the House for 18 years as a Democrat from largely Republican Kansas taught him the value of working across party lines. In Congress, Glickman was a lead sponsor of a bipartisan bill creating the U.S. Institute of Peace, a conflict resolution organization.

In the last several months, Glickman had been working informally with the BPC on a project designed to develop reform measures that will encourage constructive political dialogue on Capitol Hill.

"The American political system has so much rancor in it," Glickman said.

The new job at the BPC will be "substantially full-time," and serve as his base in Washington, D.C., Glickman said, but he would still have time to work on other projects. After his time in the House, Glickman was also Secretary of Agriculture for 6 years during the Clinton administration, and he said he will continue his involvement in food security issues.

Replay of Tauzin scenario?

Meanwhile, nearly five weeks after reports surfaced that former Sen. Bob Kerrey (D-Neb.) was in line to replace Glickman at MPAA, Kerrey has now said he is still in talks with the group, leading to speculation that the appointment is less than a sure thing. This came in a June 24 report on Variety.com, which reported that Kerrey, in a response to an email inquiry about the MPAA post, said, "We are still talking."

Last month, industry journal The Wrap reported that the Kerrey selection was close to being a

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done deal, with an announcement expected within a week. Korn/Ferry International is assisting with the search.

Kerrey, 66, was governor of Nebraska from 1983 to 1987, and senator from 1989 to 2001. He ran for president in the Democratic primary in 1992. Since leaving the Senate, he has served as president of The New School in New York City, a position he is scheduled to leave in June.

For some industry observers, the delays bring to mind MPAA's courting of former Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-La.) for the same CEO job back in 2004, after longtime leader Jack Valenti retired. Tauzin ultimately rejected MPAA's bid for a more lucrative position as head of Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association.

With Tauzin no longer in the running, MPAA then selected Glickman, who headed the group from 2004 until he stepped down. Since then, former MPAA COO Bob Pisano has served as interim.

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