

Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, and to urge its swift passage in the House of Representatives.

This important legislation would expand the federal definition of hate-motivated crimes to include gender, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity. Violence provoked by prejudice has no place in our society. It jeopardizes not only the safety of the victims but also their friends and neighbors, and upsets public order by making people feel threatened in their communities.

For example, persons with disabilities are often vulnerable to criminal hateful acts because they may seem different or use unfamiliar assistive technologies. Thirty-one states and the District of Columbia, including my home state of Rhode Island, already recognize and prosecute these cases as hate crimes. However, there is still no uniform recognition on the national level that a disability could make a person uniquely susceptible to prejudice. Equally troubling is that Rhode Island law enforcement officials reported that nearly 50 percent of hate crime victims were targeted because of their sexual orientation. Yet even as so many Americans joined together to mourn the loss of Matthew Shepard last October, on the tenth anniversary of his brutal murder, hate-motivated crimes still go unrecognized under federal statute.

H.R. 1913 has the practical purpose of authorizing training and grants for local law enforcement officials to facilitate prevention, investigation and prosecution of hate crimes. However, the passing of this bill today is equally as important as the civil rights legislation that was enacted several decades ago, which enforced the principle that our country does not accept targeting any American for violence or discrimination based on hatred. I urge my colleagues to join me in fighting bigotry that threatens our communities by voting for the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

CREDIT CARDHOLDERS' BILL OF RIGHTS ACT OF 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN LEWIS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 29, 2009

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration of the bill (H.R. 627) to amend the Truth in Lending Act to establish fair and transparent practices relating to the extension of credit under an open end consumer credit plan, and for other purposes:

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Chair, for too long now, credit card companies have toyed with the lives and financial health of the American people. For far too long, credit card companies have seemed to offer hard-working Americans a lifeline, but that lifeline is really an endless web of debt.

Cardholders are surprised by huge hidden fees that are buried in the fine print.

Credit card companies aggressively prey on our young college students who are not yet working. These companies rove college campuses and entice students with gifts, with the intent of collecting interest payments as the student ravel herself in debt.

We are in the midst of a horrible recession. Millions of Americans are without work, trying to keep their homes, feed their families, and stay healthy, because a trip to the doctor could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. But credit card companies remain cold, chasing the almighty dollar.

Many people have a hard enough time just paying monthly interest charges, yet these companies add on additional fees and increase interest rates by 10 and 20 percent—all without notice.

The truth is they do not want consumers to pay off their balances. It is much more profitable to feast on the interest.

We must put an end to this. We can no longer allow these unjust practices to continue. We cannot allow this industry to continue to profit on the hardship of Americans who use their services.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE "WAYSIDE SHRINE AND CROSS CRAFTING IN LITHUANIA" EXHIBIT

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the Folk Art exhibit of "Wayside shrine and cross crafting in Lithuania" on the occasion of Lithuania's Millennium being celebrated this year.

Cross crafting in Lithuania has a rich 400 year old history and was inscribed into the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage List of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2001. The exhibit "Wayside shrine and cross crafting in Lithuania," displayed at the Embassy of Lithuania in Washington, DC features beautifully crafted crosses and shrines which are traditionally built to recognize special occasions and significant events for individuals, families or communities. These crosses can be found throughout Lithuania in churchyards, roadsides, villages and even government buildings, and typically feature the Virgin Mary and various saints. The craft of cross making is one that has been passed down through generations since the 16th century and serves as a symbol of Lithuania's rich cultural and historical history.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, please join me in honor and recognition of Lithuania's rich history and the cultural significance of cross crafting as featured in the "Wayside shrine and cross crafting in Lithuania" exhibit.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Mr. POMEROY. Madam Speaker, on March 23, 2009, March 24, 2009, March 30, 2009, March 31, 2009, and April 21, 2009, I missed rollcall votes Nos. 145-149, 157-168 and 193-195 due to flooding in my State of North Dakota. Had I been present, I would have voted in the following manner: Rollcall No.

145, "aye"; rollcall No. 146, "aye"; rollcall No. 147, "aye"; rollcall No. 148, "aye"; rollcall No. 149, "aye"; rollcall No. 157, "aye"; rollcall No. 158, "aye"; rollcall No. 159, "aye"; rollcall No. 160, "aye"; rollcall No. 161, "nay"; rollcall No. 162, "aye"; rollcall No. 163, "aye"; rollcall No. 164, "aye"; rollcall No. 165, "aye"; rollcall No. 166, "aye"; rollcall No. 167, "aye"; rollcall No. 193, "aye"; rollcall No. 194, "aye"; and rollcall No. 195, "aye."

INTRODUCTION ON IRAN REFINED PETROLEUM SANCTIONS ACT

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, our nation has a vital national security interest in ensuring that Iran does not possess nuclear arms or achieve the means to produce them on short notice. My bill, the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act (IRPSA), is designed to help prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapons capability.

This legislation requires that any foreign entity that sells refined petroleum to Iran—or otherwise enhances Iran's ability to import refined petroleum through, for example, financing, brokering, underwriting, or providing ships for such activity—will be effectively barred from doing business in the United States. The same would be true for any entity that provides goods or services that enhance Iran's ability to maintain or expand its domestic production of refined petroleum.

Because of its limited refining capacity, Iran is forced to import roughly one-quarter of the gasoline and other refined petroleum products it consumes from other countries. Without this outside help, much of the Iranian economy would grind to a halt. It seems hard to believe that one of the world's leading oil exporters could find itself in this position, but it is reality—one that can only be attributed to shockingly poor planning and administration by the Iranian regime.

I and the other co-sponsors of this bill therefore believe that this measure could have a powerfully negative impact on the Iranian economy, rendering it more difficult for the Iranian government to continue to fund a nuclear program that the international community has repeatedly called upon it to suspend. Our goal, of course, is not to punish the Iranian people, but to maximize the chances that we can persuade the Iranian government to accede to the will of the international community.

Let me be clear: I fully support the Administration's strategy of direct diplomatic engagement with Iran, and I have no intention of moving this bill though the legislative process in the near future. In fact, I hope that Congress will never need to take any action on this legislation, for that would mean that Iran at last has complied with the repeatedly-expressed demand of the international community, as embodied in five separate U.N. Security Council resolutions, to verifiably suspend its uranium enrichment program and to end its pursuit of nuclear weapons once and for all.

The larger purpose of my bill is to demonstrate to one and all—but particularly to the Iranian regime—the importance that the U.S. Congress places on the Iranian nuclear issue.