

NOT VOTING—10

Campbell	Jones	Wenstrup
Culberson	McCarthy (NY)	Young (AK)
Franks (AZ)	Peterson	
Herrera Beutler	Rush	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). There are 2 minutes remaining.

□ 1726

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, which the Chair will put de novo.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

SUPPORTING THE RIGHT TO COUNSEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and agreeing to the resolution (H. Res. 196) supporting the Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution, the right to counsel, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HOLDING) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1730

PASS THE KEEP YOUR HEALTH PLAN ACT

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, Midge, one of the women I represent from Alexander County, wrote me to say:

I am one of the many . . . policy holders whose policy was canceled due to ObamaCare mandates.

My policy was great, affordable, and I liked it. The most similar policy Blue Cross can put me on has higher deductibles, higher co-insurance, and coverage that I don't need.

For this new coverage, Midge and her husband are going to have to pay 81 percent more. Midge closed off her letter to me with this simple request:

Please do all you can to help us be able to keep the plan we like as we were promised by our President.

Letters like Midge's are pouring in from across the country to Democrats and Republicans alike. That is because promises aren't partisan issues, and promises matter to the American people.

Let's require the President to keep this central ObamaCare promise by passing the Keep Your Health Plan Act.

RECOGNIZING THE SPIRIT OF THE AMERICAN FARMER

(Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the spirit of the American farmer.

A 31-year-old farmer from Hammond, Illinois, tragically succumbed to cancer in September of this year. Kyle Hendrix was an avid golfer, farmer, and family man who left behind a wife and two young children.

His untimely passing brought out the best in his rural Piatt County community. In the middle of the harvest season, his friends and family organized a tribute of over 60 tractors and other pieces of farming equipment that lined up along Bement Road to honor Kyle's life. And all of the equipment, worth millions of dollars, had the keys left in the ignition overnight without a single worry.

Thanks to the photographer, Matt Rubel, who captured the moment, the story has now gone viral. Matt said:

It seems to me that farming communities all over the country may still hold the key to what makes this country a shining beacon in a world of trouble.

Matt, I agree. This rural community story is a tribute to rural American values.

My thoughts and prayers go out to Kyle's family and friends, and may God grant him favor.

PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRIDENSTINE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, in the midst of all of our difficult debates that are occurring in this body and throughout Washington, whether it is about the right type of health care reform or how to stop the ever-expanding Federal debt which threatens both our economic as well as national security, and as important as these debates are, it should not be lost on us, though, that there is a grave struggle for the protection of a fundamental proposition of human dignity and a basis for civilization itself. This is the protection of the rights of conscience and religious freedom.

Even in the midst of all of our other debates, many Americans are concerned about the heart-wrenching stories of individuals who have been detained, condemned, incarcerated, often tortured, sometimes for years, throughout the world, even under the sentence of death for some, simply for the peaceful exercise of their religious rights.

Mr. Speaker, given the scale of human suffering endured and extensively documented in this past century alone, it is often difficult to grasp that humanity, in the 21st century, with all of its technological advances at our disposal, has not yet learned some very basic lessons.

These lessons of the 20th century, after two horrific world wars and other unspeakable human tragedies, including the Holocaust and the slaughter of tens of millions of persons under the repressive and cruel Communist regimes, should not be lost. They are indispensable in pressing forward toward a more hopeful future, one based upon the unchanging principles that underlie a free and noble society.

One of these basic lessons is that religious freedom is a foundation for social stability, security, civility, as well as economic prosperity, because it is built upon a foundation of respect for human dignity. Mr. Speaker, this is why we should, this body and the administration, we should all redouble our efforts to ensure that that first principle of religious liberty is integrated as a critical element of American foreign policy generally, and is prioritized in the day-to-day work of the diplomacy of this country.

With our position of Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom now being vacant, we should act quickly to quell any potential sense of ambiguity about where the United States stands on this important issue.

Let me first make an important distinction, Mr. Speaker: Religious freedom is not the same as freedom to worship, which is a much more restrictive concept and should not be confused. We are not merely concerned about allowing people to worship, think freely in their own minds or in their own home or in their own church, but about championing the free exercise of religion, grounded in human dignity, in its fullness, robustly, in the public square, as is guaranteed by our own Constitution in the First Amendment.

Religious freedom, the cornerstone of our civil society, is something that we can actually still take for granted, though, in the United States; although, this freedom has been eroding here in recent years. It is a painful irony that our own Department of Health and Human Services is mired in litigation over challenges to fundamental laws and basic standards of religious freedom in health care policy. Even here, this right is fragile.

So think of the many people throughout the world, in countries where the precepts of religious liberty are routinely and often egregiously violated

by the state, persons who must witness or endure cruel abuses for exercising this right of conscience.

Mr. Speaker, the prominent case of Pastor Saeed Abedini in Iran is a good example. He is an American citizen who is currently under house arrest in Iran for his Christian faith, and it is one of the more urgent cases worldwide. He and his family need our thoughts and prayers now. And we have been given the recent news that he has been moved to a notorious prison, reportedly confined in a small cell with hardened and ruthless criminals, with no access to sanitation or desperately needed medication.

In the United States, thankfully, we are starting to see a groundswell of concern over such barbaric treatment of Pastor Saeed. And, ironically, this again is so close to the anniversary of the storming of the United States Embassy in Tehran in 1979.

We are not alone in our appeal to something higher. Together with many good people of faith throughout world, or people who have no faith throughout the world, many are calling for his immediate release and safe return to his family. But, unfortunately, this is not an isolated case.

Beyond our intuitive understanding of right and wrong, we must also say that religious freedom is not simply a matter of exercise of a principle of justice. We know that it is inextricably linked to security and stability.

According to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, those nations that work to respect human dignity tend to perform more strongly on a broad scale of metrics than command and control societies, where freedoms are restricted and economic prosperity can seem unattainable, especially for those individuals who are marginalized and subjected to wrongful religious discrimination. The metrics in countries where religious freedom abounds are so much stronger in multiple areas of well-being versus in controlled societies where religious freedom is oppressed. Religious liberty is a principle tied to both security and stability in civil society itself.

Areas of the Middle East, for example, where religious minorities have traditionally served as a leavening influence for all peoples, they are now under severe distress. Can civil society really have a chance under such conditions as minority faith groups flee from persecution in their ancient homelands?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the United States has been one of the world's greatest champions of religious freedom, and we cannot afford to backslide or be seen as ambivalent in this regard, especially at this fragile time of our history, when social upheavals and economic dislocations demand principled leadership from this Congress and the President.

Pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act passed by Congress in 1998 and signed into law by President Clinton, the State Department is

required to provide a detailed annual report on the status of religious freedom throughout the world. The current report, which covers last year, provides a robust overview of recent trends and concerns. It also leaves us with the enormous challenge of confronting serious and escalating levels of abuse, particularly in environments where impunity reigns and powerful forces align to intimidate and brutalize vulnerable faith communities. Not only have affronts to religious freedom over the past year been widespread, but sadly, Mr. Speaker, they are escalating.

Before I review some of the key concerns highlighted during this past year, let me take a moment to recall a courageous official in the country of Pakistan who made a profound impression upon me a number of years ago when I went to Islamabad, along with the House Democracy Partnership, which is an effort of this United States Congress to partner with emerging democracies to help in any way, share technical expertise as to how to properly run a legislature or a parliament.

While in Pakistan, I had some time with the Interior Minister, whose name was Mr. Shahbaz Bhatti. Mr. Bhatti was a man of great humility, great decency, great courage. I worried for a time, Mr. Speaker, because where we met was out in the open in a public setting, and him being seen as proximate to a United States official, I just wondered if this might be problematic for him, given the stress between our two countries.

Our conversation turned to some basic requests. He wanted to create student exchange opportunities for individuals representing Pakistan's minority faith communities. He proposed establishing a three-judge panel for blasphemy trials, which, as is commonly reported, are sometimes used for persecuting minorities or the settling of personal grievances. These were neither grandiose nor unreasonable propositions.

Mr. Speaker, as we continued our conversation, again, although brief, this man of deep faith—he was a Catholic—impressed me significantly. He not only showed great humility, he showed a great desire, in his public commitment and witness, to protecting the rights of all religious minorities, even beyond his own faith tradition.

About a year later, I was getting ready to give a speech to a group of Nebraskans who had gathered for the Nebraska Breakfast, which we hold many times throughout the year here. Any Nebraskan who is in town is welcome to meet with the entire delegation. It is an important 70-year tradition that we have enjoyed in our State.

So, as I was gathering my thoughts, a message came to me that Mr. Shahbaz Bhatti had been murdered, had been executed, had been martyred in Pakistan simply for exercising the legitimate authority of standing up for the minority faith communities in that country.

□ 1745

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, my face must have been ashen as I was preparing to speak to the community where I come from. I told them about Shahbaz Bhatti. I changed what I was going to say and added a few lines as best I could about, again, his courage, his decency, and how in our few moments together, he had deeply impacted me.

Mr. Speaker, over the past year, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has identified several countries that “have engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom.” This is their report, Mr. Speaker. If you look closely, you can see a photo, a picture, a placard held by people who were probably in attendance at Shahbaz Bhatti's funeral. It has his picture on it.

These violations, documented by the Commission, include “systematic, ongoing, and egregious” examples of torture, prolonged arbitrary detention, or “other flagrant denials of the right to life, liberty, or the security of persons.” These tier one countries, as they are called, which the Commission has urged the Secretary of State to designate as countries of particular concern, include Burma, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Uzbekistan, and China. Try going a week without buying something that wasn't made in China. Moreover, the Commission also identified other countries who are “on the threshold” of such status. These included Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam.

Mr. Speaker, there is a large minority community where I live in Lincoln, Nebraska, made up of persons who come from the country of Iraq, who fled that country due to persecution. They have made their home where I have made my home, and they contribute greatly to the well-being of our society.

There is one minority faith group there in Lincoln, an ancient religious tradition called the Yazidis. One of the elders of that community came to see me one day because the Yazidis have traditionally lived very quietly in Iraq. They have not created the conditions on which they should in any way be targeted by anyone else, but the community had come under great distress and was also under persecution and attack. One of the elders of the Yazidi community said this to me: “Congressman, we protected the Christians. Now we ask the Christians to protect us.”

To emphasize the deep and abiding concerns over religious violence, the Commission has also launched the Religious Violence Project, which has recently focused its efforts on both Nigeria as well as Pakistan, where targeted religious violence has torn at social foundations and created an atmosphere of widespread fear and intimidation. Over the past year in Nigeria, for example, where the Islamic militant

movement called Boko Haram is considered the “primary perpetrator of religiously related violence and gross religious freedom violations,” there have been 50 churches attacked, killing some 366 people. Thirty-one attacks have been documented on Christians, killing 166 people. Among the other violence, 23 attacks on Islamic clerics or senior figures critical of that group have killed some 60 people.

Over 18 months going back from July of 2013, the Religious Violence Project tracked some 203 incidents of sectarian violence that resulted in more than 700 deaths and attacks by militants and terrorist organizations in Pakistan, primarily against their Shia community. Attacks on other minority populations in Pakistan included the Christians, Ahmadis, Hindus, Sikhs, and other groups that were subjected to targeted bombings, shootings, and rapes.

Mr. Speaker, the trend toward the type of violence that has been documented by the Commission in recent years is profoundly disturbing and should be addressed in a thoroughgoing manner by member countries at the United Nations and at all appropriate venues of international engagement, in a credible and reliable manner. Interestingly, Mr. Speaker, the *Los Angeles Times* just reported that yesterday, several of the 14 new States elected by secret ballot to the United Nations Human Rights Council are widely considered by human rights advocates as violators of personal freedoms. The new countries elected to the Human Rights Council are Russia, China, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Vietnam. Again, they are considered by human rights advocates to be violators of personal freedoms.

In view of this development, it concerns me that our own administration has downgraded the status of the State Department’s Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. This is an important position, Mr. Speaker. It is a reflection of who we are as a Nation. Also, the position of the special envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism remains unfulfilled in our government as well. I would like to see us elevate the principle of religious freedom as a core measure of civil society and diplomatic intent, institutionalizing this as a priority with the Department of State and building upon the very commendable work of our last Ambassador, who is now gone, Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook.

The time to do this is now. Otherwise, we risk sending a very dangerous signal that, again, really doesn’t fit who we are as a Nation. We must care about this fundamental principle of the rights of conscience and religious liberty. We cannot afford to convey a message that religious freedom really doesn’t matter all that much to us while so many lives throughout the world hang in the balance, while so many people still look to us for the ideals which bring about civil society

in its fullness, where we respect one another’s differences, work them out through comity, work them out through legislative debate and not at the point of a sword or at the end of a gun.

Mr. Speaker, the world is screaming for meaning. Religious liberty is a cornerstone of human dignity and a foundation for civil society itself. We don’t think about it very often, but it is true here. We don’t think about the fact that we could enter our church or synagogue or mosque each Sunday, Friday, Wednesday freely, for the most part, without threat of fear of intimidation, without the government listening to us, without persons seeking to do us harm.

People can preach and teach as they see fit within the civil society to try to reflect their deeply held faith traditions out of respect to not only those who follow them but those whom they wish to convince or tell their story to. This is a great tradition in America. We have our differences, but we respect those. We actually honor that right, the right of conscience to speak freely and the right of religious liberty in the public square.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be interesting to point out that it is the image of Moses who looks down upon me right now as I am speaking, who looks upon this body as we deliberate, one of the great lawgivers of all time who actually also happened to be a great religious leader of all time.

Our country is replete with the strong condition for the exercise of religious liberty both at home, within our churches, and in the public square. This is one of the reasons that people are so attracted to America, because it is a principle consistent with human dignity. It appeals to the hearts of all persons to be able to exercise freely who they are and what they would like to believe with respect to others.

This is a great tradition that we have institutionalized in law and have tried to project through our diplomacy. That is why it is so important that we actually fill this open Ambassador’s position and we do so now, and we elevate the ideals of religious liberty and the rights of conscience as a core part of our diplomatic outreach in order to give people hope, a hope that they are yearning for, a hope that they need, and a hope to give balance and equality in the 21st century to a world that is very unsure as to where it is going next.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

SANCTIONING IRAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentlewoman from Minnesota (Mrs. BACHMANN) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. BACHMANN. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity and the

privilege to be able to be here in the well of the greatest deliberative body on Earth, the United States House of Representatives, to talk about what I believe is one of the most crucial issues facing the national security not only of the United States but for freedom-seeking people all across the world.

You know, I had a tremendous privilege. This last week, seven Members of Congress—Democrat, Republican, and myself—were privileged to be on a trip that was life-changing in many ways. We had the privilege of going to Israel. We met with leaders of Israel. We met with the people of Israel, and we talked about issues of national security.

Israel is a Nation that has been literally under attack since the time of its founding of the modern Jewish State in May of 1948. Very wisely, the United States President at the time—a Democrat, Harry Truman—gave Israel what she needed more than anything else: to be able to show the world that she could be an independent, sovereign power. It was this: President Harry Truman recognized Israel as a sovereign, independent nation. That told the world that the United States of America would have Israel’s back because we recognized her right to exist, unlike Israel’s current neighbors—many of whom, particularly in Hamas and the Palestinian Authority—to this day continue to deny Israel’s right to exist and Israel’s right to defend herself. As is often said, Israel lives in a very tough neighborhood. We had the privilege to find out more about the concerns and the issues that face our greatest ally in the world that we have, and that is the Jewish State of Israel.

While we were there, Mr. Speaker, our delegation was able to quite literally witness world history as it happened. Secretary of State John Kerry decided to add Jerusalem to his itinerary in addition to Cairo. He went to Jerusalem because he was in the process of speaking about the Palestinian-Israeli talks for a so-called two-State solution, but something even more important that week was at stake, and it was this: a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. It was a meeting of the nations that talked about whether or not the economic sanctions that have worked so well to prohibit Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons—the question was, Will those sanctions now be lifted?

As we went through the course of our time in Israel last Thursday, we were about to have our scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. The meeting had been rearranged, and rightly so; because Secretary of State Kerry was in town, the prime minister adjusted his schedule. We, Members of Congress, adjusted our schedule so that the Prime Minister could meet with Secretary Kerry according to his timetable. That was the right thing to do.

When we filed into the office that we usually meet the Prime Minister in late Thursday afternoon, it was very