

allowing commercial vehicles serving these communities to continue to use this long-established highway. Specifically, it directs the Department of the Interior to establish a fee and permit program for commercial vehicles serving these communities.

This bill enjoys broad support in the affected communities, and Congressman MARINO should be commended for his efforts to resolve this vexing issue for his constituents.

I urge the passage of the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This bill amends the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Improvement Act to extend the authorization of a waiver for certain commercial traffic on U.S. Route 209, a federally owned highway that runs through the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

When Congress decided to restrict commercial traffic on the portion of the highway that runs through the recreation area, the law included an exemption for certain vehicles that belong to nearby businesses and municipal governments. This bill provides a 5-year extension of that exemption in order to facilitate continued access for local residents.

It is supported by the National Park Service, and I urge my colleagues to support its adoption.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the author of this measure, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MARINO).

Mr. MARINO. I thank the chairman.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my bill to reauthorize commercial traffic along Route 209 through the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

For nearly 5 months now, uncertainty has reigned over this 21-mile stretch of road that is running through my district. Over 30 years ago, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania—as the chairman so eloquently stated—transferred Route 209, then a State road, to the National Park Service.

As commercial thru traffic is banned on roads within our national parks, it would also be so on this stretch of Route 209; but, at that time, a 10-year exemption was made to support the local freight transportation industry and because acceptable alternative routes were unavailable. After multiple extensions, the most recent commercial vehicle authorization expired at the end of September of 2015.

To address the problem, county and township officials from the surrounding areas met with the National Park Service and my staff to negotiate a new plan. They recognized the continued need to allow some commercial vehicle access, and they settled on the carefully crafted language we are considering today.

The work to produce this extension acknowledges the continued need of

employers, businesses, and homeowners I represent in Pike and Monroe Counties. The expiration in September cast a cloud on the local business community and put countless jobs in jeopardy. Passing this bill so that it can be swiftly considered by the Senate is imperative as the weather warms and business activity increases through the region.

I thank Chairman BISHOP for his support and assistance in bringing this bill to the floor as quickly as possible. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3620.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HONORING PENN STATE'S MIKE HERR, "MIKE THE MAILMAN"

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Mike Herr on his retirement from the United States Postal Service. For generations of students at Penn State University, Mike is lovingly known as "Mike the Mailman."

Mike's first day with the Postal Service was April 1, 1968—48 years to the day of his expected retirement this year. In his nearly five decades of working at the university's main campus in State College, he has formed bonds with countless students and has become a fixture at the school's annual dance marathon, also known as THON—the largest student-run philanthropy in the world. In fact, Mike has become known for delivering Mack Trucks that are full of letters and packages for dancers who are participating in the event.

When asked about becoming a Penn State campus institution, Mike said: "My secret is fairly simple: kindness matters; humor always helps; staying enthusiastic about the big and little things and showing compassion to every single person that I meet."

Mr. Speaker, these are words that we can all live by, and I wish "Mike the Mailman" the best of luck in his retirement.

THE GENOCIDE OF CHRISTIANS AND OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Ne-

braska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous materials on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Nebraska?

There was no objection.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I had the extraordinary privilege of being in the room when Pope Francis was given a small cross, a crucifix. This crucifix belonged to a young Syrian man who had been captured by the jihadis and then given a choice—convert or die—and he chose. He chose his ancient faith tradition.

He chose Christ.

And he was beheaded.

His mother was able to recover his body and the crucifix that he wore and bury him, and then she subsequently made her way to Austria by which this cross came into the possession of the Holy Father.

This type of incident—the killings, the beheadings, the crucifixions, the immolations—occurs day, after day, after day to the beleaguered religious minorities of the Middle East—the Christians, the Yazidis, and others—who have ancient faith traditions, who have every right to be in their ancient homelands as does anyone else.

□ 1515

This is a genocide. This is a deliberate attempt to exterminate an entire set of peoples based upon their faith.

Mr. Speaker, in the year 2004, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell came to the United States Congress and in a committee hearing—the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—he declared what was happening in Darfur in Sudan a genocide. In making that simple declaration, using that powerful word, he helped put an end to that grim reality.

Thankfully, what is happening now that should give the beleaguered communities of the Middle East some hope is that there is an international coalition developing that has recognized the fact that this is a genocide being committed.

Nearly 200 Members of the United States Congress, this body, have signed on and are cosponsoring a resolution that declares this a genocide. The International Association of Genocide Scholars has stated it as such.

Others, including the Yazidi community, the United States Catholic bishops, Pope Francis himself, Hillary Clinton and MARCO RUBIO, both Presidential candidates, have declared this to be a genocide.

Genocide is a powerful word. It evokes special meaning. It creates the conditions for when there hopefully is inevitably and perhaps miraculously

some proper settlement in the Middle East—security arrangements, political, economic, and cultural settlement—that the religious minorities of that area who once made up the rich tapestry of that region will have their rightful place restored and re-integrated back into those communities.

This would give hope again to persecuted peoples. It provides a gateway for the discussion of further policy recommendations, for instance, that could place people who are being forced to flee under the threat of genocide in proximity to where their ancient homeland is so that, once stability is restored, they can return and reclaim what is rightfully theirs.

A little while back when the Yazidi community, primarily women and children, were trapped on Mount Sinjar, President Obama, to his credit, acted quickly.

The House of Representatives had passed a resolution calling for additional humanitarian assistance, and the President, with great deliberateness, decided to save their lives. I want to personally state that I am grateful for that.

I represent the largest Yazidi refugee community in America. This is an ancient faith tradition that usually enjoyed a quiet and peaceable life in areas of Iraq and who began to come under increasing pressure during the Iraq war and now are, of course, subjected to ISIL's attempt to exterminate them. They were saved by quick action.

So in an exchange with Secretary Kerry today, I commended the administration for that quick action to save the Yazidis and I asked the administration to actively consider and call this what it is, a genocide.

When we do so, again we create the conditions not only for which the international consciousness on this problem will be raised and other international organizations, including the European Union Parliament who have spoken to it. Other parliaments around the world have also declared this a genocide.

However, in our complicated times, we rush from urgency to urgency. It is difficult to keep the mind focused because the horrors that continue to come at us are so extreme we almost get numb to it all. Yet, we have to act. In doing so, we can save lives.

We can reposition and potentially preserve the remnant of the rich tapestry of minority voices that are critical to stability in the Middle East and are critical to saving civilization itself and stopping this grievous assault on human dignity.

That is why I urged the Secretary to make the declaration of genocide. It was a thoughtful exchange, but we will continue to do so.

I am so grateful to so many of my colleagues who, again, have signed onto this resolution that calls it such, a genocide against the Christian Yazidis and others.

I am also grateful to have some colleagues here, including my good friend, Congressman DAN LIPINSKI of Illinois, who has tirelessly spoken to the issue of human rights and stood for life, stood for stability, stood for justice on the whole spectrum of issues that are facing humanity now.

I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI) so that he may give us his consideration on this essential topic.

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I only have a few minutes this afternoon. No matter how busy things get, there has to be time to come here to stand up for basic human rights.

I thank Congressman FORTENBERRY and, also, Congresswoman ESHOO for organizing today's Special Order and for all the work that they have done to speak out on this issue of protecting all of those minority groups who are under threat, so many murdered, driven from their homes.

It is very important that we focus the eyes of Congress and the Nation on this humanitarian tragedy that is happening in Syria and Iraq. I think it is very important. It is really past time, as far as I am concerned, but it is never too late.

We need to stand up and pass H. Con. Res. 75 for this Congress to declare that there is a genocide that is going on. The genocide is against not just Yazidis, but also Christians, Turkmen, and other groups in Syria and Iraq and in the region.

Since 2013, when ISIL began their murderous march through Syria and northern Iraq, the world has witnessed the targeted killing of all of these groups that I have mentioned. As I said, we should have done this a while ago. The United States should have stood up and declared this a genocide.

Now, it seems there are reports, at least, that the United States may be declaring that there is a genocide of the Yazidis. While certainly no one is going to downplay that, as my colleague mentioned, we all remember what happened with the Yazidis trapped on Mount Sinjar and the quick intervention that helped to save so many lives and the continued genocide going on against the Yazidis.

We don't want to downplay that in any way, but I think it is important that we recognize it is not just the Yazidis who are suffering from genocide.

In fact, the State Department's report on International Religious Freedom for 2014 acknowledged that ISIL was systematically targeting religious minorities it considered heretical and that their abuses disproportionately affected religious minorities, with between 100,000 and 200,000 Christians and an estimated 300,000 Yazidis displaced in Iraq.

Now, these numbers have only gotten greater since that time. In Syria, that same report states that ISIL has executed Christians, kidnapped priests, and forced tens of thousands to flee

across the desert or face ISIL's genocidal campaign.

Leaders across the world, including the European Union Parliament and Pope Francis, have recognized that genocide is being committed by ISIL against many ethno-religious groups, and the United States must join them in condemning these crimes as a genocide.

Here in Congress, we remain in a critical position to promote religious freedom and ensure that it remains a priority in our foreign policy.

That is why I was an original cosponsor of Congressman FORTENBERRY and Congresswoman ESHOO's H. Con. Res. 75, which expresses that Congress views the attacks on Christians and other ethnic and religious minorities as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and, yes, genocide. We must not wait or be apprehensive about speaking the truth.

The administration and Congress must prioritize religious freedom and protect all minorities in the Middle East from the ongoing genocide. It should begin here in Congress by passing H. Con. Res. 75. I certainly want to ask all of my colleagues to join us in cosponsoring this resolution.

Again, we continue to see the horrible crimes being committed in Syria and Iraq. We are not here today to say that there are easy solutions, that any of this is easy to solve.

We have to not look away, but we need to look at what is going on in Syria and Iraq and call it for what it is, a genocide. It is a genocide against a number of groups, including Christians there in Syria and Iraq.

By Congress standing up, it means something. The world takes notice when it happens. We must do more. It is our duty to do more to protect these people, starting out with this declaration of genocide.

I want to again thank Congressman FORTENBERRY for all the work he is doing on this issue and many other human rights issues, standing up for life itself, which is something critically important that we all must do here.

I thank Congressman FORTENBERRY for organizing this Special Order and for all of his work on this issue.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman LIPINSKI as well for his tireless commitment to justice, to human dignity, to human flourishing.

Really, ultimately, that is what this resolution is intended to do, to call it what it is, a genocide, in order that there might be the proper settlement, when we finally come to the day when there is a proper security arrangement in the Middle East, when there is a reintegration of the religious minorities who, again, made up the rich diversity of the Middle East in a prior time who are critical to the ongoing stability of Iraq and Syria and other places.

I am grateful as well that the gentleman pointed out the extraordinary work of our colleague, Congresswoman

ANNA ESHOO, a Democrat from California. I am a Republican.

We have other Republicans here who will speak in a time when Congress seems so divided on every issue—again, we have 200 of our colleagues—in a transpartisan initiative to say that this is unjust, this must be stopped.

By our actions of calling it a genocide, we not only elevate international consciousness, but again we create the conditions for the proper redress once we come to some proper settlement in the Middle East.

I am so grateful for the gentleman's time and efforts on this behalf and for his leadership in Congress. I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI.)

Let me turn to my good friend as well, Congressman JODY B. HICE, a new Member of Congress from Georgia, who has shown initiative, entrepreneurial endeavor, integrating quickly as an impact player, if you will, in the proceedings here in Congress. I am grateful for his willingness to speak on this topic, but, more than that, grateful for our growing friendship.

I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JODY B. HICE).

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ESHOO) for bringing attention to this incredibly important issue and the absolute carnage that is occurring in the Middle East against Christians, Yazidis, and people of other religious faiths and minorities.

You know, the right to practice a chosen religion is a right that I—and I believe all of us—believe should be universal. Yet, the religious persecution, especially by such violent means that is occurring now, is absolutely deplorable.

ISIS has shown its true nature in the treatment of these religious minorities. We have all witnessed in recent months the violent expansion of ISIS in the Middle East as they have single-mindedly persecuted those who adhere to different faiths.

In fact, those who refuse to convert have been driven from their homes, brutally tortured, crucified, raped, murdered, enslaved, and not by just few in number. We are talking thousands that fall under this horrific scenario.

□ 1530

The systematic violence of ISIS toward communities of Yazidis, Christians, Kurds, Turkmen, whatever it may be, as you have well mentioned, goes far beyond war crimes. We are talking absolute genocide.

In looking at all this, it was interesting to me that, when the world came together after the atrocities of the Second World War in an effort to define genocide, they actually defined it as an actor committing certain acts against a designated group with an intent to destroy the group in whole or in part.

ISIS has. They absolutely have the intent to destroy, in whole, Christians, Yazidis, and all religious groups throughout the Middle East. In fact, their entire propaganda even brags about the abhorrent crimes that they are committing, and they show absolutely no signs of willingness to stop these atrocities.

It is clear to me that we have an obligation—not only a moral one, but a legal obligation—to prevent these atrocities from occurring. In fact, 3 weeks from now this administration must fulfill its own legal obligation to make a determination on whether it will name ISIS' crimes as acts of genocide or not.

The time has come. In fact, the time is long past for our Nation and our world to officially recognize these crimes by ISIS for what they truly are and to commit fully to defeating ISIS. We simply cannot ignore this any longer, and we must bring H. Con. Res. 75 to the House floor as soon as possible.

Again, I thank you for yielding this time and thank you for your leadership in this regard.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. I thank the gentleman from Georgia for his thoughtful commentary and leadership as well on this essential issue. In fact, it is not an issue at all. This is an assault on all humanity. This is a threat to civilization itself.

If a group of people can succeed in exterminating another group because they have the power to do so, because they do not believe in another's religion, they violate that sacred space that is essential to all persons and, therefore, the conditions of liberty that are necessary for human flourishing.

This goes beyond the grotesque tragedy in the Middle East. It is a call to the entire responsible community of nations to act, to say that we will not allow eighth-century barbarism that happens to have 21st-century weaponry to rule in a land, destroy, kill, maim, and exterminate entire groups of people because of their religious tradition. It is wrong. It is unjust. If not addressed, all of civilization is at threat. That is the core of the problem here.

I thank you so much for your willingness to spend a little bit of time and your leadership on these critical points. Thank you so much.

Mr. Speaker, again, it is H. Con. Res. 75, House Concurrent Resolution 75. It has been introduced here in the House, and there is a similar resolution in the Senate. It will be forthcoming in the coming weeks. The House Committee on Foreign Affairs will be considering this resolution soon.

I am hopeful that, again, with my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ESHOO), and others, who have shown just extraordinary leadership and deep concern and compassion for those who are in need, we can continue to build the numbers and make the case to all of our colleagues and

our government that it is time to call this genocide and, by declaring such, again setting the conditions that will be necessary to reintegrate people, those who have survived, back into their ancient lands for which they have a rightful claim.

I heard a story recently from a commander who had been in Mosul during the height of the Iraq war. Part of their obligation and responsibility was to protect the various religious minorities who were there. He talked about seeing the very beautiful Christian church that was there.

All the Christians are gone from Mosul. The remaining ones had the Arabic letter N, Nun, spray-painted on their door in blood red. That is a symbol for the word Nazarene, which some use as a derogatory term to Christians. They were told: Convert, leave, or die. Many had to flee with whatever they had on their back.

Of course, we know the horrific stories of those who gave their life in fidelity to their faith. This is a systematic attempt to wipe certain peoples off the map. It is not fair. It is unjust. It must be countered with a worldwide response.

The designation of genocide is that critical first step, again, toward the possibility of restoring some tranquility of order whenever there is the right type of security and economic and cultural settlement that must come to the Middle East if it has any chance, again, to flourish.

We can lead in this regard. We must lead. Other countries around the world have already taken up this banner. As I said earlier, the European Parliament has declared it so.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the ability to converse today with my colleagues on this threat, this threat to civilization itself, and our need to act.

I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BUCK (at the request of Mr. MCCARTHY) for today on account of illness.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 2234. An act to award the Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the members of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in recognition of their superior service and major contributions during World War II; to the Committee on Financial Services; in addition to the Committee on House Administration for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills