

Cofield who is celebrating 40 years as pastor of Whitfield Baptist Church.

Pastor Cofield grew up in Decatur, Georgia, and attended Georgia State University, graduating with a degree in Business Administration.

He was later ordained to preach at Wesley Hills Baptist Church in Decatur, where he was an active member for 22 years.

Then after serving for several years at Gospel Baptist Temple in Claxton, Georgia, he moved with his wife Connie and their four children to Dalton in 1978 to establish Whitfield Baptist Church.

Pastor Cofield's first service at Whitfield Baptist Church was held on February 4, 1978, with 42 attending the service and 29 children attending the Sunday school.

A few short months later, Whitfield Baptist had more than 200 people attending morning service and more than 170 attending Sunday school.

Since that time, under Pastor Cofield's steady leadership, Whitfield Baptist continues to grow and thrive.

I am proud today to recognize Pastor Cofield's service and contributions to our community and state.

I want to close by saying thank you to Wayne for his dedication and commitment to service.

IN HONOR OF THE CLAREMONT,
NEW HAMPSHIRE AD HOC AM-
TRAK PLATFORM COMMITTEE
MEMBERS

HON. ANN M. KUSTER

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the members of the Claremont, New Hampshire, Ad Hoc Amtrak Platform Committee. The people of the Upper Valley owe a tremendous debt to the public servants and civic-minded citizens who took up the important work of this committee. Those individuals are: Jeffrey Albright, State Representative Raymond Gagnon, Mayor Charlene Lovett, Scott Magnuson, former City Councilor James Reed, Walter Stapleton, and former City Councilor Carolyn Towle. Since its formation in 2014, the committee has worked extensively to promote and improve rail transportation and access in the region. Through new signage around Claremont and effective digital marketing, the committee did an outstanding job of raising awareness of the value and opportunity the Amtrak Vermonter line had for the Claremont community, and vice versa. They spearheaded a campaign to construct a passenger shelter at the Claremont station with all-volunteer funding and labor. As a direct result of their efforts, ridership numbers have notably increased each of the last three years, and the New England Intercity Rail Initiative has decided that Claremont should remain included in future high speed rail service.

It is also important to recognize the national and international impact of the committee. Its members worked closely with my office to provide input and help advance the Promoting Travel, Commerce, and National Security Act, which I introduced in 2016. This legislation

paved the way for a bilateral border security agreement that allows the United States and Canada to expand preclearance customs facilities, including rail facilities for the first time. It improves travel and trade opportunities for our northern border communities while also strengthening our national security. The bill was signed into law by President Barack Obama, and in 2017 the agreement was approved by the Canadian House of Commons. I commend the committee members for all they have done to help bring this meaningful policy to fruition.

On behalf of my constituents in New Hampshire's Second Congressional District, I thank Jeffrey, Richard, Charlene, Scott, James, Walter, and Carolyn for their dedicated service and advocacy. Their achievements will continue to benefit Granite State transportation, tourism, and economic development for years to come. I am honored to recognize and congratulate them.

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS AT TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate an important and longstanding part of the fabric of the 9th Congressional District of Illinois: Temple Beth Israel in suburban Skokie, north of Chicago. January 31, 2018 marks 100 years since the Temple's incorporation in the State of Illinois, and it is considered its official birthday.

Temple Beth Israel was the first Reform congregation in the Albany Park neighborhood of Chicago; and while its location may have changed over the last century, it has remained a stable presence in the lives of its congregants. For 100 years, Temple Beth Israel has allowed individuals and families to come together and express their Judaism—providing comfort in dire times, a place to celebrate in happier times, and an opportunity to reflect and pray.

This congregation has seen success because of the diligent work of its rabbis and staff over the years. Three different rabbis have spent more than 30 years apiece at this congregation, and each has left their mark on this institution.

Rabbi Michael A. Weinberg has served as the Temple's beloved rabbi since 1987 and is a past president of the Chicago Association of Reform Rabbis, in addition to serving in other roles of distinction. Rabbi Weinberg was preceded by Rabbi Ernest M. Lorge, who served from 1947 through 1984. Rabbi Lorge worked hard to expand the congregation, was very involved in the issues of the day, and met with President John F. Kennedy at the White House to discuss civil rights issues. Rabbi Felix S. Mendelsohn served as the first full time Rabbi for Temple Beth Israel. He began his service in 1919 and is credited with founding both the Temple Center, a Jewish social center for young adults, and National Jewish Book Week—today known as Jewish Book Month.

Today, the Temple Beth Israel congregation numbers approximately 400 families, and remains a vibrant part of the 9th Congressional

District's diverse community. I offer my sincere congratulations to Rabbi Weinberg, the congregation's past and present staff and the many congregants who are celebrating this important milestone. I wish them all the best in the years ahead and hope for another century of good work ahead for Temple Beth Israel.

HONORING MARVIN HILL OF DIERKS, ARKANSAS

HON. BRUCE WESTERMAN

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize a true American hero. Marvin Hill of Dierks, Arkansas, is a 103-year-old veteran of World War II. On Tuesday, January 30, the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System will recognize Mr. Hill with a commemorative coin in honor of his service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States.

I ask the people of Arkansas to join the VA and myself in honoring Mr. Hill and thanking him for fighting in defense of freedom.

CHINA IMPOSES COMMUNIST CONTROL OVER LARUNG GAR MONASTERY IN TIBET

HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my outrage about the action by the Chinese authorities to impose Communist Party control over Larung Gar, the Tibetan Monastery and learning center of Tibetan Buddhism.

According to information published by Human Rights Watch on January 24, 2018, some 200 Communist Party cadres and lay officials are taking over all management, finances, security, admissions, and even the choice of textbooks at the Larung Gar center, following demolitions and expulsions carried out last year.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues the information released by Human Rights Watch. It is a significant blow to freedom of religion in Tibet and China, and a matter of great concern to all members of Congress.

[Human Rights Watch, Jan. 24, 2018]

CHINA: NEW CONTROLS ON TIBETAN
MONASTERY

NEW YORK—The Chinese authorities have imposed new administrative controls on the Tibetan Buddhist monastic center of Larung Gar that infringe upon freedom of religion, Human Rights Watch said today.

According to an official document obtained by Human Rights Watch, some 200 Communist Party cadres and lay officials are taking over all management, finances, security, admissions, and even the choice of textbooks at the center, following demolitions and expulsions in 2017.

"The new government controls over Larung Gar fly in the face of Party claims that China respects constitutionally protected religious beliefs," said Sophie Richardson, China director at Human Rights Watch. "The micromanagement of the Tibetan monastery encroaches on religious

freedom and is likely to fuel resentment against Beijing.”

The brochure emphasizes increased security and heightened control of the monks and nuns, calling for rigid limits on the numbers allowed to stay there, and for ongoing surveillance of the monastery population through the establishment of a “grid management” system throughout the settlement. It also states that all residents and visitors will be subjected to “real-name registration,” with monks required to have red tags or labels (Tibetan: byang bu), while nuns will have yellow labels, and lay devotees will have green ones.

Larung Gar was the largest center of Buddhist monasticism in Tibet, if not the world, until an eight-month program of expulsions and demolitions, which ended in April 2017 after reducing the number of residents to around 5,000. It had previously been run by Tibetan monks and nuns selected by senior members of the monastery. The government’s takeover of the administration—described in the official document as “standardization”—could have far more significant impact than the demolitions and expulsions. The actions led a group of experts from the United Nations in November 2016 to ask the Chinese government to provide information about the legal grounds for the expulsions.

The new document is an undated, four-page brochure printed in color in Chinese and Tibetan and apparently intended for public distribution. It ends with a quotation from Liu Chengming, Party secretary of Kandze prefecture, a supposedly autonomous area of Sichuan province that includes Larung Gar. The document appears to have been issued either by his office or by officials running Larung Gar.

The document, made available in or shortly before August 2017, calls for the monastic settlement (Tibetan: gar) to be divided into two sections with a wall between them, with one section designated as an “institute” or academy with a maximum of 1,500 residents, who would be mainly monks, and one as a monastery with a maximum of 3,500 residents, mainly nuns.

The original order for the demolitions, which Human Rights Watch obtained and published in June 2016, indicated that in the future three-fifths of the members of the main management committee at Larung Gar would be lay officials instead of monks. That plan was put into practice last August when local authorities announced the names of six top lay officials who had been given positions within Larung Gar’s two main management committees. All of them, including the deputy police chief of Kandze prefecture, are Communist Party cadres and are therefore required to be atheists.

The new document shows that scores of other cadres are to be installed not just in the management committee, but at every level and in each section of the monastic settlement. They will hold nearly half of the positions on most committees and in most offices, and in most cases will occupy the top positions. The prefectural deputy police chief will be party secretary and principal at the Larung Gar Institute, three of his seven deputy principals will be cadres, and the six “sub-area management units” (Chinese: guanli zu) that supervise the monks at the institute will each be headed by a cadre rather than a monk.

According to the brochure, new committees will also be set up to handle propaganda, “internal security,” finances, education, and students within the institute. Half of the people running these committees will be cadres, 97 of whom will be stationed in the institute. Monastery sources have confirmed to Human Rights Watch that at least the same number will be stationed within the other

section of the settlement, which is now officially designated as the “monastery.” These sources said that a large building has already been constructed to house the cadres.

“The administrative takeover of Larung Gar by Party officials shows that the government’s aim was not merely to reduce numbers at the settlement,” Richardson said. “Chinese authorities are also imposing pervasive control and surveillance over every level of activity within religious communities.”

According to the brochure, 40 percent of teaching at Larung Gar Buddhist Institute must now consist of classes in politics and other non-religious subjects. The primary criterion for accepting students will be whether they “have a firm political stand, accepting the Great Motherland, the Chinese [Chinese: Zhonghua] people, Chinese culture, the Chinese Communist Party and socialism with Chinese characteristics.” The objectives of study will include to “honor and support the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system” and to train monks who “defend the unification of the Motherland, uphold nationality unity and patriotic religion and abide by their vows.”

Only residents of Sichuan province will be allowed to apply, other than in exceptional cases, eliminating monks and nuns from other Tibetan areas—which had been a distinguishing mark of Larung Gar. Since 2008, Chinese authorities have imposed similar limits on other major Tibetan monasteries, banning them from accepting monks and nuns from outside the local area. The document also indicates that steps will be taken to stop those who have been expelled from returning to the settlement.

The scale of the Communist Party’s intervention at Larung Gar is unprecedented, Human Rights Watch said. Since October 2011 permanent teams of cadres have been stationed in all monasteries in the Tibet Autonomous Region, the central Tibetan area far to the west of Larung Gar, where they have taken over the management committee of each monastery. There have been reports of similar takeovers of some monasteries in eastern Tibetan areas. But none are known to have consisted of such large teams of cadres, or to have included cadres even at the lowest levels of monastery management.

The changes at Larung Gar are in line with current religion policy, which emphasizes ensuring political stability in monasteries by intensifying official management. It also rewards political compliance by monks and nuns with public praise, titles such as “model patriotic monk,” and other material or social benefits. The document aims to make the study of Buddhism “standardized, law-abiding and modern,” a reference to a new, centralized system for managing religious training, textbooks, and curricular content maintained mainly through a network of higher studies institutes being constructed throughout China to retrain Buddhist monks.

The scheme appears designed to micro-manage religious institutions rather than close them down and to produce a new generation of Buddhist teachers trained equally in religious doctrine and state ideology in order to “adapt Tibetan Buddhism to socialist society.”

“The Chinese government’s latest inroads at Larung Gar show a pernicious intent to exercise extreme control over religious practice,” Richardson said. “This is an immediate threat to the religious freedom of all Tibetans, but a long-term threat to all Chinese.”

HONORING COLLEEN C. DiPIRRO ON HER RETIREMENT AS AMHERST CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT AND CEO

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Colleen C. DiPirro, a visionary pioneer who began her career 35 years ago as a single staff person and is now retiring as the President and CEO of the Amherst Chamber of Commerce having overseen the explosive growth of membership from less than 200 members to more than 3,000, representing more than 1,300 businesses.

She grew its annual budget from \$24,000 when she started to more than \$1.9 million with a full-time professional staff offering 50 plus annual events, business services, advocacy, economic development strategies and an Emerging Business Leaders forum.

Colleen’s career is filled with firsts. She was the first President of the WNY Chamber Alliance, an organization for Chamber Executives spanning an eight county region; the first woman honored as the Executive of the Year by the Buffalo Sales and Marketing Executives, and in 2009, the first woman named the Buffalo Bills Citizen of the Year, the second recipient behind Ralph Wilson.

Colleen is a builder. Her tools were not brick and mortar, but a consummate ability to build a business advocacy organization with teamwork, tenacity, compromise and consensus and at times, leading with only the courage of her convictions. Recognized for her hard work, heart, humanity and humor, she was identified as one of the top 100 most influential people in Western New York by Business First several times. In 2016, she was listed in the Top Ten Most Influential Women and named Citizen of the Year by Daemen College.

A leader, a legend and a true friend, Ms. DiPirro’s legacy will be her tireless dedicated service to her community and beyond its borders. I can attest to that as my first interaction with Colleen as a Congressman was in 2005 when we took up the fight with the New York Power Authority (NYPA). As a first year minority member of Congress, we had few allies in this battle. And then a call came from Colleen DiPirro who in her role as President of the WNY Chamber Alliance invited me to speak to the Alliance Leaders about why I was fighting NYPA for the Buffalo waterfront. After our roundtable discussion, Colleen asked if I would be willing to debate a NYPA representative before the invited membership of the Alliance at WNED studios. That November afternoon debate made possible by Colleen’s outreach to provide a neutral forum to promote understanding of the issue helped further galvanize our community to stand up and fight for itself and contributed to our ultimate victory of a \$300 million settlement that continues to fuel the redevelopment of the Buffalo waterfront. I didn’t represent Amherst at that time but that didn’t matter to her as she understood what was good for Buffalo’s waterfront was good for all of Western New York.

Others have certainly shared my appreciation and respect for her abilities as she received the Governor’s Award for Excellence in