

site to medical education, forging an alliance between the Fresno Family Practice and the Firebaugh-Mendota Health Center. This brought medical students from a variety of west coast medical schools.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I pay tribute to Dr. John H. Blossom. Dr. Blossom's life long dedication and hardwork in the health care arena has allowed other physicians to enter and start their own practice. I ask my Colleagues to join me in wishing Dr. Blossom many years of success.

GRATULACJE, POLISH LEGION OF AMERICAN VETERANS LADIES AUXILIARY

**HON. JAMES A. BARCIA**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 6, 1998*

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a group of people who are the embodiment of the American spirit of volunteering and selfless dedication to others. These people are the members of the Polish Legion of American Veterans Ladies Auxiliary. The objective of this group is to bring moral and material support to hospitalized veterans and aid widows and orphans of the Polish Legion of American Veterans. It is these wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, granddaughters and nieces of honorably discharged Veterans of the Armed Forces, who preserve the eminence and sanctity of American ideals.

On Saturday, August 22, 1998, Michigan will celebrate the Legion's 75th anniversary in Lansing. With members from 66 chapters throughout the nation, in attendance, this event will not only be a time to celebrate, but also a time to reflect. It will be a time in which both members and the community will come together and solemnize 75 years of community service and involvement.

The first chapter of the "Ladies Legion" of the American Veterans of Polish Extraction Association was formed, in Chicago Illinois in September 1920. It wasn't until 1931 that the Polish American Veterans held a Consolidating Convention in Cleveland. It was at that time Ohio formally adopted the name of Polish Legion Of American Veterans, U.S.A. An Auxiliary of the National Ladies Legion was also formally formed. The first official consolidated Ladies National Convention was held in 1932 in Hamtramck, Michigan, represented by 56 delegates from the several states where their membership originated.

Today membership in the Ladies Auxiliary continues to grow and new projects have been implemented. The Auxiliary provides service to U.S.O. centers (Detroit), the Aid to the Blind Program (Illinois), which includes braille flags, books to schools, American essay and poster contests for middle school students, financial aid and scholarships to students and Hospitalized Veterans Wheelchair Olympics, to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, PLAV Ladies Auxiliary has been working tirelessly for 75 years to improve the quality of the lives of others. Their efforts should not go unrewarded. Please join me today in congratulating the Ladies Legion on its 75th anniversary, and hoping they will enjoy countless more years into the future.

BLACK AMERICANS' RIGHT TO VOTE WILL NOT EXPIRE IN 2007

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 6, 1998*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in commemoration of the thirty-third anniversary of the signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. On this day, it is fitting that we take the time to assure Black Americans that they will not lose their right to vote in 2007, contrary to a widespread rumor that has been circulating around the country.

To correct the misunderstanding of the Voting Rights Act, I am introducing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an article that was featured in The New York Amsterdam News (July 16–July 22, 1998).

DON'T PANIC—YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE WILL NOT EXPIRE

(By Charles B. Rangel)

I am writing to address a widespread rumor that in the year 2007, Blacks will lose the right to vote. The recent editorial by Brandy Darling, "Blacks' right to vote ends by the year 2007," is the latest reinforcement of well-intentioned but frightening misinformation. There is no expiration date on African-Americans' voting rights. This right is provided and guaranteed by the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The confusion is due to a misunderstanding of the Voting Rights Act. First enacted in 1965, the law removed the infamous barriers that had been systematically imposed to prevent Blacks from voting for nearly a century, despite the mandate of the 15th Amendment. Among those forbidden practices were the imposition of poll taxes and literacy tests, not to mention the threat of violence.

While some provisions of the Voting Rights Act will expire in the year 2007, the most important protections of African-American voting rights will remain in place. The prohibition against racial discrimination in voting is permanent and is guaranteed in the 15th Amendment. Prohibitions against poll taxes, literacy tests and the like have no expiration date. Technically these protections could be removed by amending the law, but that would provoke a monumental battle.

Certain provisions in the Voting Rights Act will expire in 2007 with serious implications for non-English speaking citizens and for the election of minority office holders.

States or political subdivisions with significant numbers of non-English speaking citizens would no longer be required to provide bilingual services to eligible voters. If not corrected, this could minimize the growing political strength of Hispanics.

The growth in number of minority elected officials could also be affected by the expiring administrative provisions of the act. It includes the requirement for preclearance of election observers. This provision does not guarantee election of minorities. Rather, it prevents jurisdictions with a history of discrimination and racial polarization from manipulating the electoral systems to render the Black vote ineffective.

Although African-Americans were granted the right to vote in 1870 with the passage of the 15th Amendment the legal and illegal measures which many southern states used to prevent Blacks from voting resulted in the exclusion of most African-American citizens from voting for nearly a century. In response, in 1965, Congress passed the first Voting Rights Act.

Generally, the Voting Rights Act was first applied to any stake or political jurisdiction that used tests or other devices as a condition for voter registration. The law was amended by Congress in 1970, 1975, 1982 and 1992 to expand coverage beyond the southern states and to apply to non-English speaking citizens. There is no truth to the claim that the extension of the Voting Rights Act requires ratification by the states. To be renewed, only a vote by Congress is required.

Soon after emancipation from slavery, Blacks earned the right to vote. This victory did not come easily. African-Americans were subjected to fraud, violence (including murder) and other unsavory tactics as a means to stop them from voting. Over the years, Blacks have sacrificed unduly for the right to vote. No one should ever have to experience such threats. That is why it is extremely important for African-Americans to continue to monitor potential threats to their right to vote.

We must be mindful of the fact that most of the gains made over the years have resulted from political activism. On the other hand, many of the losses that we are now experiencing stem from political apathy. In the 1996 presidential election, approximately 51 percent of African-Americans voted. To look at it another way, almost half of the eligible African-Americans voters did not vote in the last presidential election. If there are 40 African-American members in the U.S. Congress using a little over half of the voting power, imagine what can be done if all Black Americans participated in the political process.

Black America is under attack. Affirmative action is being dismantled; Black churches are burning; racial hate crimes are on the rise; public schools are crumbling; and young Black men are filling the jails. These are reasons why we must fight back politically. And the struggle cannot end there. There is a serious need for improvements in education and training, affordable housing and increased job opportunities. Blacks must be prepared to compete in a global technological society.

Although the rumors over the Voting Rights Act are not true, the concern is real. Blacks are not in danger of losing the right to vote. However, the political power of African-Americans is being diluted. There is a need to monitor political threats and to inform the president and Congress of your concerns.

EXECUTION OF BAHAI IN IRAN—PERSECUTION OF MINORITY RELIGIONS CONTINUES

**HON. JOHN EDWARD PORTER**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 6, 1998*

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, it was with cautious hope that we observed last year the election of a "moderate" leader of Iran and the first tentative signs that the government of Iran might be willing to rejoin the community of nations. Iranian President Mohammed Khatami addressed the American people and expressed his dedication to the principles of freedom, justice, and the rule of law for all Iranians. Unfortunately, it appears that Iran's hardliners, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, remain committed to keeping Iran a pariah state and are apparently using Iran's largest religious minority, the Baha'is, to send a rebuke to both the moderates in Iran and to the international community.