

bringing this before the end of the year, the year 2007, the year in which Mr. Pavarotti died.

He was born on October 12, 1935, and he died on September 6, 2007, in Modena, Italy. I know, because I was in the Veneto that day when his death was announced by his family. And during his life, Mr. Pavarotti shared his incredible talent and passion for opera with the entire world. During his life, he actually began as a second grade teacher before he decided to turn to his pursuit of music full time. After devoting himself to serious voice training for over 7 years, Mr. Pavarotti made his operatic debut in the role of Rodolfo in Puccini's "La Boheme."

From that initial performance, Pavarotti continued to follow his dream of performing opera around the world. And after many years of hard work, of course, he became really one of opera's premier performers. But in addition to his incredible voice and his talent on stage; Mr. Pavarotti made frequent television performances, and as a result he really opened up the world of opera to a whole new audience. Mr. Pavarotti, with Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras, entered into one of the most famous collaborations in music, and The Three Tenors continued to bring opera music to more and more people around the world. As an established opera star, he decided to use his talent and his connections to benefit charities, and he began hosting the annual Pavarotti and Amici, or Pavarotti and Friends, concerts in Modena, Italy, to raise money for worthy United Nations causes.

Mr. Pavarotti's appeal to opportunities, he got an opportunity to see things that are rarely enjoyed by most of us. He earned five Grammy Awards and a Grammy Legend Award, and he became the first and so far the only opera singer to perform on "Saturday Night Live." Mr. Pavarotti also received numerous honors for his charitable work including being named the United Nations' Messenger of Peace and receiving the Nansen Medal from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in honor of his efforts to raise money on behalf of refugees around the world.

Mr. Pavarotti's career is an inspiration to aspiring young artists around the world, and it encourages them to continue to go after their dream. In addition, Mr. Pavarotti's commitment to charitable causes provides an important example of how artists can raise awareness in funding for people in need.

Mr. Speaker, since his death, the world has missed his talent and his passion. And although we will always have recordings of his beautiful music, we will continue to miss his presence and his love for life. And I know that in the last 10 years of his life he filled his life and was very fulfilled. But we should remember that Mr. Pavarotti once said: "A life in music is a life beautifully spent, and this is what I have devoted my life to."

Mr. Pavarotti's life was indeed a life beautifully spent, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting House Resolution 708 to honor his life and his achievements.

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

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 708.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTMAS AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 847) recognizing the importance of Christmas and the Christian faith, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 847

Whereas Christmas, a holiday of great significance to Americans and many other cultures and nationalities, is celebrated annually by Christians throughout the United States and the world;

Whereas there are approximately 225,000,000 Christians in the United States, making Christianity the religion of over three-fourths of the American population;

Whereas there are approximately 2,000,000,000 Christians throughout the world, making Christianity the largest religion in the world and the religion of about one-third of the world population;

Whereas Christians and Christianity have contributed greatly to the development of western civilization;

Whereas the United States, being founded as a constitutional republic in the traditions of western civilization, finds much in its history that points observers back to its Judeo-Christian roots;

Whereas on December 25 of each calendar year, American Christians observe Christmas, the holiday celebrating the birth of their savior, Jesus Christ;

Whereas for Christians, Christmas is celebrated as a recognition of God's redemption, mercy, and Grace; and

Whereas many Christians and non-Christians throughout the United States and the rest of the world, celebrate Christmas as a time to serve others; Now, therefore be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the Christian faith as one of the great religions of the world;

(2) expresses continued support for Christians in the United States and worldwide;

(3) acknowledges the international religious and historical importance of Christmas and the Christian faith;

(4) acknowledges and supports the role played by Christians and Christianity in the founding of the United States and in the formation of the western civilization;

(5) rejects bigotry and persecution directed against Christians, both in the United States and worldwide; and

(6) expresses its deepest respect to American Christians and Christians throughout the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me first thank our colleague from Iowa, STEVE KING, for introducing this important and timely resolution.

Mr. Speaker, along with people of other faiths, our Christian friends and neighbors around the world mark this time of year as a special festive season. As Kwanzaa approaches and Hanukkah draws to a close, it is notably the Christmas season. We are in the midst of Advent, and this discussion today is bracketed by two holidays observed by many Catholics who make up the majority of Christianity: the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and Our Lady of Guadalupe. There are approximately 2 billion Christians, making Christianity the largest religion of the world and the faith of about one-third of the global population.

On December 25, Christians will celebrate Jesus the Christ, whom they have embraced as their savior. For believers, this holiday is a recognition of God's redemption, mercy, and grace. For Christians and non-Christians alike, Christmas is also a time to serve others. The celebration of Christmas requires devotion to faith, community, and family, truly universal values we all can share.

It is both fitting and important for the United States House of Representatives to mark this event. This legislation expresses the deep respect we feel for Christians in the United States and throughout the world. The House must reject bigotry and persecution directed against Christians, both in the United States and worldwide. We must affirm the values of religious freedom in this country and abroad. I strongly support this legislation, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased, as original cosponsor, to rise in support of this

timely resolution recognizing the significance of Christmas and the contribution of the Christian faith to the United States and to other nations throughout the world. While Christmas does not have the same religious meaning for all citizens, it nevertheless invokes the values of friendship and goodwill that are common to all nations.

December 25, or Christmas, as we say, commemorates a birth that influenced the world in an unmatched way. Christ's life, his teachings, his example, his sacrifice, and his death brought to life one of the great religions of the world, one which underpins the foundations of democracy in our own United States of America and even other countries throughout the world.

Even in complex times such as those in which we live at this time, the simple central message of Christianity endures: "love thy neighbor as thyself."

For many, Christmas invokes the images of Santa Claus and exchanging of gifts. This comes from the patron St. Nicholas, who helped poor children hundreds of years ago by giving them presents. But Christianity is more. It is the birth of the Christian religion and commemorates the birth of its founder, Jesus, on Christmas day.

At its core are the fundamental important ideals of "Peace on Earth, Goodwill toward men." The poor, the suffering, those left alone or far from their families, and those departed who were dear to us whom we remember from time to time are all recognized in this great religion of Christianity, and, through it, all have been offered hope.

At this time of year in this season of Christmas, I ask my colleagues to join in supporting House Resolution 847 introduced by our colleague, Mr. KING of Iowa, recognizing the importance of Christmas and the Christian faith.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MEEKS of New York. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) such time as he may consume.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I rise today in support of House Resolution 847, which recognizes the importance of Christmas and the Christian faith.

While there may be some who bristle at the idea of the House of Representatives considering this resolution or any similar resolution, I would note that though the first amendment states that the Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, the first amendment also states that the Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

Mr. Speaker, our Founders had the foresight to realize that a state-run church of America would do more harm to the perseverance of faith and the hearts of our citizenry, and it would certainly lead to irreconcilable division. However, at the same time, the Founders and writers of the Constitution also recognized that the success of

this great American experiment, this historic social contract, was contingent upon a moral and a religious people and the recognition that we had inalienable rights, because those rights are given to us by our Creator. If these rights are given to us by a Creator, then no human being can take them away. And this is the foundation of our system of justice, the foundation of our American society.

And so today we take just a few minutes to consider this resolution which respects the faith and the beliefs of a vast majority of this country and a plurality of the world, stating that, and I quote:

"Whereas Christians identify themselves as those who believe in the salvation from sin offered to them through the sacrifice of their savior, Jesus Christ, the son of God, and who, out of gratitude for the gift of salvation, commit themselves to living their lives in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Bible."

So I hope that no Member of this Congress, no individual anywhere takes offense to this debate and this resolution, because none is intended. This resolution simply offers recognition to a faith and the values of that faith which has sustained hundreds of millions of people throughout the world, not just the United States. And after more than two millennia, we once again approach the commemoration of a birth that many recognize as holy but all recognize as historic.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that just this past weekend I took my granddaughters, 9-year-old, almost 10 they would want me to say, identical twin granddaughters with my wife, and we were in Representative MEEKS' great City of New York and we had an opportunity to take our grandchildren to the Radio City Music Hall to see that annual Christmas performance. That 1½ hour performance, Mr. Speaker, was absolutely wonderful and a great tribute to the city, a great tribute to Representative MEEKS and all of our colleagues from New York.

In that performance, Mr. Speaker, they had a nativity scene, the most beautiful nativity scene that I have had the opportunity to witness. And it meant so much to my granddaughters for me to explain about our Christian faith and heritage. So if it is good enough for New York City and Radio City Music Hall, it is good enough for this Congress. And, by golly, I want to encourage all my speakers to support the resolution of Representative KING from Iowa. He was detained because of inclement weather; otherwise, he would be on this floor. But I commend and thank my colleague from New York, Representative MEEKS, and also my colleague from Texas, Representative POE, for allowing me time.

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, the author of this resolution, Mr. KING from Iowa, is already having a white Christmas. He

is stuck in Iowa because of the snow. He could not be here.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, this just shows how great our Nation is as we celebrate holidays, as we indicated Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, we look at other religions, Islam and Ramadan. It shows the diversity and it shows the tolerance that we have for all. And as we enter this great holiday season, this is the example I think that we show around the world, that we celebrate each other's religion in great joy here, recognizing with respect whom they worship.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 847, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1315

BLOCK BURMESE JADE (JUNTA'S ANTI-DEMOCRATIC EFFORTS) ACT OF 2007

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3890) to amend the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 to waive the requirement for annual renewal resolutions relating to import sanctions, impose import sanctions on Burmese gemstones, expand the number of individuals against whom the visa ban is applicable, expand the blocking of assets and other prohibited activities, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3890

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Block Burmese Jade (Junta's Anti-Democratic Efforts) Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The Burmese regime has continued and worsened its obstruction of democratic processes and mass violation of human rights identified in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-61; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note). In August and September 2007, Burmese people from all walks of life conducted their largest peaceful public protests since 1988. The peaceful public protests responded to a drastic increase in fuel prices, as well as the Burmese regime's ongoing denial of the democratic and human rights of