

pamphlets which advocated democratic change in Vietnam. One of those five is an American citizen, Dr. Nguyen Quoc Quan, who continues to languish in prison despite numerous appeals by the U.S. government for his release.

According to the Human Rights Watch, since mid-2006, 40 peaceful activists have been arrested. They join the over 350 religious and political prisoners sentenced since 2001. Vietnam it not progressing, it is regressing. Government officials continue to harass religious groups.

Religious institutions are required to apply for permits; but many of these applications are ignored or denied leaving congregations without protection of the law and vulnerable to abuse. In the Central Highlands, provincial officials have been trained to deny medical, educational, financial and other government services to religious families. Local police beat a Protestant man in Phu Yen province for refusing to renounce his religion; he later died of internal injuries from the beating. The activities of the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam are actively banned.

I was disappointed when the State Department removed Vietnam from its list of Countries of Particular Concern in regard to religious freedom. I have asked the State Department that Vietnam be added back onto the list.

Trafficking in persons also remains a major problem. Vietnam was listed as a Tier Two country in the State Department's 2008 Trafficking in Persons Report. Poor women and teenage girls in rural areas remain most at risk of being trafficked, primarily for sexual exploitation.

I was very disappointed when I read of an exchange U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Michael Michalak had with journalists and he only mentioned human rights one time. I have written to Ambassador Michalak several times and urged him to make promoting human rights his top priority.

The U.S. Embassy in Vietnam should be an island of freedom and work to promote human liberty and dignity. Regrettably, it is not. Several of my colleagues have joined me in writing Ambassador Michalak and asking that he invite all Vietnamese dissidents to the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi on July 4—America's Independence Day. I look forward to his response.

I will continue speaking out for the Vietnamese people who want to see their government turn away from violence and repression, and embrace the universal principles of human rights and religious freedom.

RECOGNITION OF THE 145TH
BIRTHDAY OF THE STATE OF
WEST VIRGINIA

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 145th birthday of my home State, West Virginia.

The most violent conflict in the history of our Nation, the Civil War, gave America a new definition of freedom, strengthened the role of the Federal Government, and ultimately reconciled our fractured Union. For West Vir-

ginians, the 1861–1865 conflict remains significant for another reason: Virginia was rendered in two, east and west, and a new State, West Virginia, was born.

This June 20th marks the 145th birthday of the State of West Virginia. I ask all West Virginians—the hardest working, most hospitable, and most patriotic people in the United States—to join me in celebrating how far our State has come.

West Virginians have long known their uniqueness and celebrated it. As the only State to be formed by seceding from its parent State, West Virginia blazed a trail of independence of mind and spirit in a country that was tearing itself apart. West Virginia is the only State to achieve Statehood by the proclamation of a President on the provision that West Virginia would support the gradual abolishment of slavery in its newly formed constitution. On June 20, 1863, West Virginia became the 35th State.

On this West Virginia Day, I reflect upon the treasures of our State—truly one of the most beautiful in the Nation. With its majestic mountains, rolling hills, awesome gorges and rivers, picturesque towns, hospitable people, and a “wild and wonderful” atmosphere, I thank God for the opportunity to call it home.

Many historic figures have lived and traveled through the Mountain State on their way to shaping the course of our Nation's history. Daniel Boone settled and lived in present day Kanawha County. Stonewall Jackson, the stalwart Civil War general, was born in Clarksburg and Pearl S. Buck—Pulitzer Prize and Nobel Prize winning author was born in Hillsboro, Pocahontas County.

Many modern-day heroes and stars also hail from the hills of West Virginia. Jennifer Garner, who received a Golden Globe for her performances on ABC's hit television drama “Alias,” is a Charleston native. Chuck Yeager, who broke the sound barrier and has used his influence to promote scholarship and development opportunities for the State, was born in Myra. The mining town of Coalwood, in McDowell County is now world-renown as the home of Homer Hickam, best-selling author of Rocket Boys, upon which the award-winning 1999 motion picture “October Sky” was based.

In addition to celebrities, both historical and modern, West Virginia's elected leaders have brought vision and opportunity to our State. Most notable, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD, the “Big Daddy” of West Virginia politics, is the longest serving Senator in history and has secured billions of dollars for the future of our State. He remains a force to be reckoned with in the Senate with his longevity and leadership.

Home to an abundance of natural resources, West Virginia has helped feed and power our Nation. West Virginia's “Coal Keeps the Lights On.” Our agricultural industry provides dairy, poultry, and feed crops for our State and beyond. The lumber industry makes use of the bountiful forests that cover 75 percent of our beautiful terrain.

Lastly the greatest gift and most precious resource our State has nurtured are West Virginians themselves—honest, hard-working people who are very the lifeblood of our State. Today West Virginians thank the Lord for our bountiful blessings, bound together in loyalty and love for our State as we remind ourselves that, yes—John Denver was right, West Virginia is truly almost Heaven.

Happy Birthday West Virginia.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS
OF SENATOR JOHNNY ISAKSON

HON. JOHN LEWIS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON as he honors our elders for their inspiration in our lives by honoring and remembering his own parents, Ed and Julia Isakson, at the 6th Annual Thanks Mom & Dad Celebration on June 20, 2008.

A loving son, Senator ISAKSON credits his parents for instilling in him his strong work ethic, his love of family and his respect for others. A good father in his own right, Senator ISAKSON's children credit him for teaching them through his example, not just words.

Senator ISAKSON has long championed the rights of older adults and supports programs and services that promote healthy living, employment services and other programs vital to both active and homebound older adults.

The Thanks Mom & Dad Fund® honors parents, grandparents and mentors by supporting programs and services for older adults, and each year asks someone in the community each year to honor their parents, grandparents or mentors. Senator ISAKSON was selected to honor his parents and is also being honored because he has inspired the lives of his children and so many others in the community.

I know well the power of his work in Georgia and here on Capitol Hill where he has demonstrated the ability to inspire members and staff alike to respond to the needs of the elderly.

I rise to honor Senator ISAKSON's contributions and to express my gratitude that he continues on in service on behalf of his constituents.

HONORING IRENE MOORE

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19th, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Irene Moore of Saint Joseph, Missouri. Irene is a student at Benton High School and she has been chosen to receive the YWCA Women of Excellence Future Leader Award.

Irene is an academic leader who has challenged herself with rigorous classes and ranks in the top 10 percent. She is the editor and a chief writer of the school newspaper and was business manager for two years, as well as Vice President of her junior class and President of the senior class. Irene was one of the founding members of Students Everywhere Encourage Diversity (SEED), a group that promotes respect and tolerance among students. As a 3-year member of the Fellowship for Christian Athletes, she has helped the group grow to as many as 15 students. She is on the FCA Leadership Crew and often prepares the lesson for the meeting. Her school honors