

on the field. Over 1 million visitors enjoyed the free festivities of Super Bowl Village, and a record 265,000 fans visited the NFL experience to test their passing and kicking skills and to meet their favorite players. So I was not surprised when Indianapolis received rave reviews for its accessibility, downtown amenities, civic commitment, and famed Hoosier hospitality.

Yet this success, Mr. Speaker, did not stop with the blocks surrounding Lucas Oil Stadium. With Commissioner Goodell and the NFL's assistance, I am confident that the impact of this Super Bowl will last far longer than the memories of that final Hail Mary pass.

Indianapolis embarked on an unprecedented effort to rebuild one of its hardest-hit areas. Even before the recession hit, Indianapolis' Near Eastside, a patchwork of neighborhoods just outside of downtown, led the Nation in foreclosures, and families were too often rattled by violent crime; but today, thanks to relentless efforts by community residents and with the Super Bowl as its springboard, Indianapolis' Near Eastside has been rejuvenated.

It has been given new life through housing developments like the St. Clair Senior Apartments, Commonwealth Apartments, and Building a Living Legacy housing initiative. These new housing options will help seniors and low-income families stay in the community they love and access the services they rely on, like the John Boner Community Center and People's Health and Dental Center. They will help the homeless find a new start and working men and women to locate near their employers.

On Super Bowl weekend, we also saw the grand opening of the Chase Near Eastside Legacy Center, which includes the area's only fitness center now offering low membership rates. This center will be home to the Youth Education Town. It is a facility that will provide classes to students of all ages through great national and local nonprofits.

While other host cities spend Super Bowl weekend breaking ground on projects, Indianapolis spent ours opening doors for these new facilities. Collectively, the Near Eastside redevelopment effort serves as a model, not only for what can be achieved throughout Indianapolis, but across this great Nation. Just a few years ago, the Near Eastside and all of Indianapolis were suffering the worst of the economic downturn. We had some of the Nation's highest unemployment, foreclosure and bankruptcy rates; but today our unemployment rate is near the national average and is getting better. Our critics counted us out many times, but this weekend showed that we are a modern city.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend, Indianapolis showcased why it is America's best-kept secret. It showed that we are a prime destination for conventions and big events and that we have some

of the best sports facilities anywhere. It is with great pride that I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Indianapolis, Indiana, and all of those who worked so hard to make this event a huge success.

ASSAULT ON OUR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, THE FIRST AMENDMENT, AND OUR FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. CRAVAACK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRAVAACK. Mr. Speaker, I will be brief because my message is clear and concise.

I rise today out of grave concern for this most recent assault on our religious freedom, the First Amendment, and our freedom of conscience.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' order requiring every Catholic institution larger than a single church—and even in some cases a single church—to pay for contraceptives, sterilization, and morning-after abortifacients for its employees is directly contrary to the principles of the Catholic faith.

Let us ensure we do not confuse the issue here.

This is a direct attack against religious liberty for all religions—but forcing Catholic schools, hospitals, Catholic charities to comply with a Federal mandate that violates the core moral commitment of protecting the lives of the unborn is unconscionable. This act threatens to sabotage the very foundations of our First Amendment rights and our religious liberties.

Continually chipping away at our basic constitutional freedoms that set the foundation of this great country sends us down a very slippery slope to further government overreach and intrusion into our individual lives.

This must stop, and we as Americans must stop it.

AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE of California. First, let me thank my colleagues Congressmen MCGOVERN and JONES, Congresswomen WOOLSEY and WATERS, and Congressman HONDA for their efforts to bring the war in Afghanistan to a swift and safe end.

Mr. Speaker, I am here this morning to remind my colleagues that there is no military solution in Afghanistan. It is time to bring our troops home and to make sure that we leave no permanent military bases. While many, and a growing number, of my colleagues have come to this conclusion, there are still those who claim that Afghanistan is going well and that we should stay there indefinitely.

We are gathered here this morning to give some real and important insight

into the reality that nothing could be further from the truth. We are here to discuss very important revelations brought to light by a brave Army officer, Colonel Daniel Davis.

Colonel Davis has honorably served this country for over a quarter century, and has received praise from his commanders for his maturity, determination, and judgment. He recently made the brave decision to release an unclassified account of the war in Afghanistan after witnessing the huge gap between what the American public was being told about the progress in Afghanistan and the dismal situation on the ground. Declassifying the National Intelligence Estimate on Afghanistan is a necessary step so that our policy is based on accurate information.

In an article published this past Sunday in the Armed Forces Journal, Colonel Davis asks:

“How many more men must die in support of a mission that is not succeeding and behind an array of more than 7 years of optimistic statements by United States senior leaders in Afghanistan? No one expects our leaders to always have a successful plan, but we do expect—and the men,” and women, I must add, “who do the living, fighting and dying deserve—to have our leaders tell us the truth about what's going on.”

Mr. Speaker, the American people deserve to know the truth after spending the past decade on failed military strategies which have cost us over \$450 billion in direct funding. The costs, of course, have been even greater in injuries, lives lost, and in the trillions of dollars we will need to spend on long-term care for our veterans, including hospitals, clinics, job training, post-traumatic stress disorder treatment, housing assistance, and homeless services. But we must spend these resources for our veterans.

The American people, though, are sick and tired of these endless wars. Fully two-thirds of Americans support ending combat operations in Afghanistan in 2013, and three out of four Americans favor a speedy withdrawal of all United States troops out of Afghanistan. We are set to spend an additional \$88 billion, mind you, \$88 billion in Afghanistan over the next year while domestic cuts in education, health care, roads, bridges, and other essential priorities are sacrificed.

We cannot afford an indefinite stay in Afghanistan. We need to ask what we have to show for the past decade of war. Instead of a stable democracy, we have a broken state which is completely dependent on foreign countries for its budget, with rampant corruption and widespread violence. For the fifth straight year, civilian casualties rose in Afghanistan. In fact, 2011 was a record year for the number of Afghan civilians killed. There were 3,021 Afghan children, women, and men who were caught in the crossfire between an insurgency and the heavy presence of NATO troops.