

The common core, in fact, provided relief from competitive pressure from other states. Sonny Perdue, the governor of Georgia at the time that the common core was created (the initiative was launched in 2009, and the standards were released in 2010), did not like it when the low-performing students of his state were compared with students in other states with standards different from Georgia's. He became the lead governor in bringing the National Governors Association into the national standards effort.

Nationalizing standards and tests eliminated them as differentiated school reform instruments that could be used by states in competition over educational attainment among the states.

The common core undermines citizens' exit option and competitive federalism. It was designed to do so. It likewise evades and negates the voice option. But the makers of this malign utopia have forgotten a few things.

They forgot that the desire for a voice, the desire for political action, can become particularly intense when people are faced with the prospect of nowhere to exit to. They forgot that hemming in parents and teachers would create a demand for alternatives and escape routes. Alternatives to the national common-core-aligned tests have arisen. States are dropping these national tests. States are also struggling to escape the common-core cartel itself. Parents are opting out of common-core testing.

By trying to block exit and voice, the designers and proponents of the Common Core State Standards have caused blowback: A large parent-, teacher-, and community-based movement has arisen to oppose the common core and its national tests.

#### DEDICATION TO RESEARCH

### HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 27, 2015*

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dr. Arturo Hernandez, Pearland, Texas resident and University of Houston professor, on receiving the Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Research Award. This award honors his groundbreaking research on how the brain processes and learns language.

Dr. Hernandez's research on language study merits such recognition not only because it is an outstanding accomplishment in its own right, but also because it opens the gate to a new and undiscovered field of study at the convergence of language processing and genetics.

I commend Dr. Arturo Hernandez on his dedication to research that promises to inform and meaningfully impact the education process. On behalf of the residents of the Twenty-Second Congressional of Texas, congratulations again to Dr. Hernandez for receiving the Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Research Award.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. MIKE POMPEO

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 27, 2015*

Mr. POMPEO. Mr. Speaker, on roll call no. 92, 93, 94 I was unable to cast my vote due to attending a speaking event on the impor-

tance of U.S. Cyber Security. Had I been present, I would have voted Yea.

#### NIGERIA ON THE BRINK?

### HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, February 27, 2015*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation and is the continent's largest economy. Unfortunately, Nigeria is beset by various challenges that threaten the peace and stability of this African giant. The terrorist group Boko Haram continues its bloody reign of terror, now threatening to establish a "caliphate" on the model of ISIS in the Levant. Religious and ethnic discord, which pre-dates Boko Haram's emergence, continues unabated. Lower oil prices have serious damaged an economy significantly dependent on oil revenues. Meanwhile, the prospect of a violent repeat of the 2011 post-election scene has ratcheted up tensions in Nigeria even further. A hearing that I recently held examined the situation in Nigeria and the U.S. efforts to maintain positive relations with the largest U.S. trading partner in Africa and a major ally in international peace-keeping.

U.S.-Nigeria relations were understandably rocky during the military rule of Sani Abacha in the 1990s. However, the advent of democracy with the 1999 elections ushered in an improved atmosphere of cooperation. Nigeria consistently ranks among the top recipients of U.S. bilateral foreign assistance and is the second-largest beneficiary of U.S. investment in Africa. In recent months, though, our relations have deteriorated. Apparently, some in the government of President Goodluck Jonathan feel the United States is meddling in their internal affairs, especially when it comes to our noting deprivation of the due process rights of citizens by Nigerian military and security forces. Our view is that friends don't just stand by when friends commit human rights abuses.

The subcommittee that I chair held a hearing last July 10th to examine the complaints that human rights vetting was a major obstacle to U.S. counterterrorism. What we found was that the State Department estimated that half of Nigerian forces would pass our vetting process, which we found is slowed by too few staff working on these important issues. Still, the Nigerian Government must be more cooperative. Some units in larger divisions may have human rights issues, but if replaced by units without such baggage, there would be created an entirely acceptable division for training. Late last year, the Nigerian Government cancelled the counter-terrorism training of one of its battalions, which now places the entire training program on hold. We are making arrangements for discussions in the near future with Nigerian Military officials and Members of Congress and the Obama administration to overcome the current stalemate and resume the cooperation necessary to meet the challenge posed by Boko Haram.

This terrorist group has wreaked havoc on the people of Nigeria, particularly in the northeast. It is estimated that more than 5,500 people were killed in Boko Haram attacks last year alone, representing more than 60% of the more than 9,000 deaths caused by this group

in the past five years. As many as 2,000 people may have perished in the Boko Haram attack on the town of Baga and nearby villages last month. More than a million Nigerians have been displaced internally by the violence, and tens of thousands of others are now refugees in neighboring countries. Clearly, Boko Haram violence is escalating drastically.

Boko Haram has become part of the global jihadist movement and threatens not only Nigeria, but also Cameroon, Chad and Niger. While the terrorist group may not be an official affiliate of al-Qaeda or ISIS, they appear to be trying to create an Islamic caliphate in Nigeria. Various press reports estimate that the group has seized as much as 70% of Borno state, with additional territory under its control in neighboring Yobe and Adamawa states. In fact, Reuters calculated that by mid-January of this year, Boko Haram was in control of more than 30,000 square kilometers of territory—an area the size of the state of Maryland. For approximately two years, I pressed the administration to designate Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist organization (FTO). I argued that, like cancer, early intervention can mitigate its spread, severity and duration. I traveled to Nigeria twice and convened three hearings during the last Congress on why an FTO designation might help, only to be told by then-Assistant Secretary of State Johnnie Carson that "the phenomenon of Boko Haram is one of discrediting the Central Government in power for its failure to deliver services to people."

On the very day of our hearing to consider a bill on FTO designation, the state Department, led by Secretary of State Kerry announced that Boko Haram was being designated a Foreign Terrorist organization.

Meanwhile, Nigeria faces the prospects of post-election violence after presidential voting. The race pits President Jonathan against former Nigerian military ruler General Muhammadu Buhari in a re-run of the 2011 elections. This time, however, Buhari's All Progressive Congress (APC) is a coalition of major opposition political parties and includes defectors from President Jonathan's People's Democratic Party (PDP), such as Speaker of the National Assembly Aminu Tambuwal.

Some PDP officials have referred to their opponents as "Nigeria's Muslim Brotherhood," while APC officials accuse the Jonathan administration of representing only Christian southerners. Party spokesmen on both sides have warned of potential violence if their candidate doesn't win. Out of nearly 69 million registered voters in Nigeria, political observers believe this race could be decided by as few as 700,000 votes. Lack of action by the government to ensure that internally displaced voters can participate in the elections, delays in the distribution of voter cards and in the recruitment and training of poll workers places in question the effectiveness of the February elections.

Moreover, the election laws require that a winning presidential candidate must achieve a majority of the votes and at least 25% of the vote in two-thirds of the states. With so much territory in the control of Boko Haram or under the threat of their violence in the North, the northern-based APC likely would question a loss even though they have refused to accept a delay in voting to ensure that pre-election preparations are complete.

According to a recent Gallup poll, only 13% of Nigerians have confidence in the electoral