

REDONDO UNION HIGH SCHOOL PROTEST

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

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, this upcoming Monday, the Westboro Baptist Church plans to hold protests outside of Redondo Union High School in Redondo Beach, California. We have seen these protests before, often at the funerals of our fallen servicemen and -women. They are known, unfortunately, for their hateful message, especially against LGBT Americans.

The members of this church believe that America's generation of high schoolers is "utterly without hope." They say that because these young students are promoting acceptance and inclusion of all people, regardless of whether they are gay or straight.

I couldn't disagree more with their premise of calling these students "without hope." I think because these students are promoting acceptance and inclusion of all people, regardless of whether they are gay or straight, they are building a future full of hope. I have the utmost faith in the next generation as the future leaders of this Nation.

Of course, no matter how much I disagree with this group, these individuals should be allowed to exercise their right to protest, and they do have a right to free speech in this country. The students have those same rights, and an inspiring group of Redondo High students are organizing a peaceful counterprotest on Monday.

Yesterday, I wrote a letter to the members of the school's Gay-Straight Alliance and told them that I wished I could be there on Monday to protest alongside of them. These students deserve to live in a world where they can be who they are and love whom they choose. In standing up against hate and living a life of acceptance, inclusion, and understanding, they are making that world a reality.

I know my colleague here, TED LIEU, who represents Redondo Beach, joins me in saying that we are so proud of these students. We are proud of their courage, their bravery, their intelligence, and skill in standing up for what they know is right, just, and for being brave enough to organize a counterprotest.

□ 1045

I am going to be in Washington, D.C., on Monday. But if I were not here, I would want to be standing alongside each and every student to show my solidarity with them. Instead, let me tell them that I will be there in spirit.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Miami-Dade

County Public Schools, where the graduation rate recently reached an all-time high of 78.1 percent for the 2014–2015 academic year, surpassing the State average of 77.8 percent.

This is a 1.5 percent growth from last year's rate, marking the highest graduation rate MDCPS has achieved since the Florida Department of Education began implementing new standards to track graduation figures in the late 1990s. This is a landmark accomplishment, considering the major challenges Miami schools face, including high poverty rates and a large population of English language learners.

As a former member of the Miami-Dade County School Board, I salute the students, teachers, faculty, and parents for their dedication and for their commitment to excellence. I also want to recognize School Board Chair Perla Tabares-Hantman, my other former colleagues, and Superintendent Alberto Carvalho for their exceptional leadership. I think of them frequently, and I am constantly reminded of how fortunate our community is to have them.

To the entire MDCPS family, congratulations. You are a model for the Nation. I am proud to represent you.

BULLETPROOF VEST PARTNERSHIP GRANT ACT OF 2015

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on October 24, 2015, Monroe County Sheriff's Deputy Josh Gordon found himself in a firefight with a robbery suspect on Stock Island in the Florida Keys. Amidst the exchange of gunfire, Deputy Gordon's bulletproof vest stopped a round of ammunition, ultimately saving his life. If a bullet would have strayed a few inches one way or another, the outcome could have been entirely different.

Every day, men and women in law enforcement put their lives on the line to ensure our safety. Incidents such as this shed light on the significance of effective body armor for those who protect us. Officers like Deputy Gordon are never off duty, and we must, in turn, do everything in our power to protect them.

To address this, I stand in strong support of H.R. 228, the Bulletproof Vest Grant Act of 2015, which extends the grant program for armored vests through fiscal year 2018. I strongly encourage Congress to pass this essential legislation and protect the backbone of our Nation's domestic defense.

MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PASSENGER RECORDS

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Miami International Airport and their record-breaking year in 2015. Forty-four million passengers passed through this world-renowned airport last year, shattering the previous annual record of 40.9 million passengers in 2014.

MIA has some of the most dedicated employees in the country who ensure passengers have a pleasant experience on their journey, whether visiting relatives, conducting business, or visiting the abundance of attractions south

Florida has to offer. Tens of thousands of passengers pass through MIA on a daily basis, and I am proud to recognize an airport that connects so many people throughout the world.

I offer my continued support to my friend, MIA Director Emilio Gonzalez, as his team works in the new year to attract more domestic and international routes, and I know cafecitos will continue to be available at each terminal so all visiting guests can enjoy the wonderful culture of south Florida.

VIOLENCE AGAINST SIKHS

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

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support and stand with the Sikh community in the San Joaquin Valley.

In the past 2 weeks, two Sikh men have been brutally attacked and, very sadly, one of them was killed. He lost his life. The Fresno City Police Department has labeled these two crimes as potential hate crimes.

Amrik Singh Bal was attacked in the middle of the street while waiting for a ride so he could go to work, as any average American would do throughout our country. Gurcharan Singh Gill was killed while working at a local convenience store. Both tragic incidents took place in my district. My thoughts and prayers are with Amrik and his family, and my deepest sympathy and condolences go to the Gurcharan family for the loss.

The attacks on these innocent American citizens are really an attack on all American citizens who choose to practice their religion and observe their cultural heritage, as Americans do throughout our land.

Sadly, since September 11, 2001, the Sikh community has endured discrimination because of a lack of understanding of Sikhism, which is based on equality and love. They are not alone.

As a nation of immigrants, we must remember, we have an opportunity to learn and benefit from the thousands of different cultures that are part of the mosaic of what makes America great. After all, we are a nation of immigrants, both past and present, and we must never ever forget that.

Today, in Fresno, in spirit, we are all part of the Sikh community as we mourn these tragic incidents. Every American citizen, regardless of race, creed, or gender has the right to live free of fear and discrimination.

I commend Chief Dyer and the Fresno City Police Department for working diligently to find the individual or individuals who killed Gurcharan and for continuing to look for the other individuals who are responsible for the attack on Amrik.

I continue to urge the FBI and the U.S. Attorney General's office to work, as they have been, in making this investigation inquiry resolve itself, solving these very sad crimes that we