

child poverty rate by half in five years; a task that would require both political will and creativity.

We said that ideological warfare had allowed too many children to fall between the cracks of our faulty political discourse; liberal and conservative false choices about whether family values or living family incomes are more central to the causes and cures for poverty. I noted that churches across a broad spectrum are finding remarkable unity on these issues, and maybe it was time to try it on a political level. Evangelical and liberal, Catholic and Protestant, black and white church leaders have been motivated by prosperity's contradictions and united by the biblical imperatives of compassion and justice. Around the country, faith-based initiatives to overcome poverty show remarkable progress. But the president-elect needs to send an early signal about poor children and families being high on his agenda.

Bush asked theological questions such as, "What is justice?" That is a key question, especially amid fears that an emphasis on faith-based initiatives will be used to substitute for governmental responsibilities. We told him that in forging new partnerships to reduce poverty, the religious community will not only be service providers but prophetic interrogators. Our vocation is to ask why people are poor, and not just to care for the forgotten. Shelters and food banks aren't enough. We need solutions to the many problems of poverty, a pragmatic approach that produces results.

Could our divided political leaders rally around the moral cause of using our prosperity to finally address this nation's shamefully high poverty levels, especially among children? Could this divided nation find common ground if politicians would collaborate across old barriers, as religious leaders have begun to do?

Since neither party has succeeded in breaking the grip of persistent poverty, isn't a bipartisan effort called for? Republicans preaching compassionate conservatism and family values, Democrats fighting for poor working families and a religious community ready to lead by example; these forces could do something significant about poverty.

It is an encouraging sign that the president-elect is reaching out to begin discussions with leaders of faith-based initiatives. "I hope you surprise us," I told him afterward. We'll see; for now, the ball is in both our courts.

INTRODUCTION OF A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROVIDING FOR THE DIRECT ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2001

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I am today introducing legislation to abolish the electoral college and provide for the direct popular election of the President and Vice President of the United States.

Until our recent national crash course in the federal election process, most Americans saw the Electoral College as a harmless anachronism. But 10 days ago, for the first time in over a century, the nation watched as the oath of office was administered to an elected president who failed to secure a plurality of the

votes cast. The Constitution is clear, and I do not question the lawfulness or legitimacy of electing a president under these circumstances. Indeed, I join all patriotic citizens in wishing our new president well. But we must also ask—as many of my constituents have—whether an electoral system that negates the votes of half a million citizens is compatible with democratic values. This is not a partisan question. Indeed, I first raised it on the eve of the election, when it looked as though the shoe might be on the other foot—when many were predicting that the candidate of my own party might prevail with a minority of the popular vote. And the answer to that question is far more important than the political fortunes of any one candidate or party.

The Electoral College presents a troubling contradiction for our democracy in at least two respects. First, and most obviously, it cannot be squared with the principle of majority rule. To award the presidency to the loser of the popular vote undermines respect for the system and compromises the new president's mandate to govern.

Second, the Electoral College is inconsistent with the principle of "one person, one vote". This is because the system by which electors are assigned gives disproportionate weight to less populous states. Massachusetts has one electoral vote for every 500,000 people, while Wyoming has one for every 160,000. In other words, a vote cast in Wyoming counts three times as much as a vote cast in Massachusetts.

Some defend the Electoral College because it carries the weight of constitutional authority. I agree that the Constitution should be amended only rarely and with great care. But the system designed by the framers for electing the president has already been amended, by the 12th and 22nd Amendments. And until ratification of the 17th Amendment in 1913, the U.S. Senate was elected not by the people, but by state legislatures. Few would argue that the original purpose of the Electoral College retains any relevance today. It reflected a mistrust of the electorate which we no longer endorse—the same mistrust that denied the people the right to elect their senators, and withheld the vote altogether from women, African-Americans and persons who did not own property.

Far from embodying some essential constitutional principle, the Electoral College was a political compromise, born of an era in which the states were 13 separate sovereignties determined to defend their interests. While regional differences have not disappeared, they have been greatly diluted by the growth of a common national identity. After 200 years of migration of people and ideas, the states themselves are far more heterogeneous, and far more similar, than when the compromise was struck.

While admitting that the original justification for the Electoral College no longer exists, its defenders claim that it serves some other, modern purpose. They argue, for example, that without the Electoral College, candidates will campaign only in major population centers, ignoring more sparsely populated regions. Yet even the residents of rural states tend to live within close proximity to a major metropolitan area. And even if their fears were to materialize, it is hard to see how this would be worse than the targeted campaigning in which the candidates recently engaged, writing off

whole sections of the country and concentrating only on the so-called "battleground states." With every vote in play, candidates would no longer have an incentive to take anyone for granted. Others contend that abolishing the Electoral College would further undermine the stability and finality of the electoral process. They point out that Florida's was not the only state race to be decided by a very small margin, and argue that if every vote were to count equally, recounts and court challenges would proliferate. Yet wouldn't this be likelier to happen if the Electoral College is retained? Without it, state wins and losses would no longer have electoral significance. All that would matter is the nationwide count.

Let's not forget that what happened in Florida was only a glimpse of the problems the Electoral College can cause. Had neither candidate received the required 270 electoral votes, the election would have been thrown into the House of Representatives—where the controversy could have taken weeks or months longer to resolve. I am under no illusion about the difficulty of enacting a constitutional amendment. But now is the time to act—while the memory of our recent experience is fresh. Congress has considered Electoral College reform before—but only when spurred on by electoral crises. The Senate held hearings in 1992, when it seemed that the Perot candidacy might deadlock the Electoral College. After George Wallace ran as a third-party candidate in 1968, the House actually approved a constitutional amendment, but it fell victim to a Senate filibuster.

We shouldn't wait for the next crisis before confronting the problem. There have been several thoughtful proposals to reform the Electoral College without a constitutional amendment, and they deserve a hearing. My own view, however, is that halfway measures cannot address the fundamental contradiction which the Electoral College represents in a mature democracy. That's why the bill I am introducing today would abolish it outright. Public officials, from selectmen to senators, are chosen by majority vote. That's the way it's supposed to work in a democracy. And that's how we should elect the president of the greatest democracy on earth.

CHRISTIANS THANKS SIKH IN INDIA: DR. GURMIT SINGH AULAKH COMMENDED

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2001

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, on January 17 a group of Christians in India known as the Persecuted Church of India issued a statement commanding the protection that Sikhs have provided to Christians in India from Indian government persecution.

Father Dominic Immanuel appeared on Star News to thank the Sikhs community for protecting Christians from Indian government persecution. As you know, the Christians in India have undergone a wave of violence and terror by militant Hindu nationalists associated with the pro-Fascist RSS, the parent organization of the ruling BJP. This violence has taken the form of church burnings, rape of nuns, murders of priests, and attacks on Christian

schools and prayer halls. Graham Staines and his two little boys were burned to death in their jeep while they slept. Earlier, in 1997, police broke up a Christian religious festival with gunfire. No one has ever been punished for these activities. Instead, there have been Indian officials who have been quoted as saying that everyone who lives in India must either be a Hindu or be subservient to Hinduism. Last year RSS leader Kappa Halli Sitharamaiya called for a ban on foreign churches.

Interestingly, the article mentions Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, the President of the Council of Khalistan, for his lobbying efforts here on Capitol Hill. The Sikhs and Christians are suffering from the same kind of terror. More than 250,000 Sikhs have been murdered by the Indian government since 1984, according to Inderjit Singh Jajee's "The Politics of Genocide". The Indian government has also killed more than 200,000 Christians in Nagaland. According to Amnesty International, there are about 50,000 Sikhs held in Indian jails as political prisoners without charge or trial. In November, Indian police with heavy sticks called lathis attacked 3,200 Sikh religious pilgrims at a railroad station on the Indian-Pakistani border. These pilgrims were attempting to get to Nankana Sahib in Pakistan to celebrate the birthday of the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak. Only 800 managed to get to the celebration. In July, police arrested Rajiv Singh Randhawa, the only witness to the September 1995 kidnapping of human-rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra, while he was trying to give a petition to the British Home Minister in front of the Golden Temple, the holiest Sikh shrine that the Indian government brutally attacked in June 1984. Mr. Khalra was killed in police custody about six weeks after he was kidnapped. More than five years later, no one has been punished. Now the Indian police are harassing the only witness. In March, according to the findings of two independent investigations, the Indian government murdered 35 Sikhs in the village of Chithi Singhpora.

In addition to its persecution of Christians, Sikhs, and other minorities, India has worked aggressively to thwart several U.S. foreign policy goals around the world. Not only does it vote against the United States at the United Nations more often than any country except Cuba, but in 1999 the Indian Defense Minister led a meeting with the Ambassadors from Iraq, Cuba, Libya, Russia, Serbia, and China in which the parties discussed setting up a security alliance "to stop the U.S."

We should stop U.S. aid to India until the oppression of Christians, Sikhs, Muslims, and other minorities ends and human rights are observed. We must also put the United States on record in support for the freedom movements in Khalistan, Nagaland, Kashmir, and the other nations seeking their freedom from India, through a free and fair plebiscite. That is the democratic way and the way that world powers do things. These measures will help bring peace, freedom, stability, prosperity and dignity to all the people of the subcontinent.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit a statement issued by the Persecuted Church of India that discusses the efforts that Sikhs have made on behalf of India's Christian community. I commend this statement to anyone who would like to better understand the plight of minorities in India.

PERSECUTED CHURCH OF INDIA—JANUARY 17, 2001—THE SIKHS RUSH TO PROTECT THE CHRISTIANS

A few days ago when the attacks against the Christian missionaries in Rajasthan took place, Fr Dominic Immanuel went on record on Star News to acknowledge the protection that the Sikh community was providing to the persecuted Christians of Haryana and elsewhere. That was a belated recognition to the much maligned Sikh minorities. We had earlier reported the incidents wherein the nuns were protected by the Sikhs at the time of attacks. However almost all the cases have gone unreported. Fr Dominic did great justice to the Sikhs when he underlined incidents in rural Haryana where the helpless Christians had none to help but the Sikhs during the attacks by the Hindu fascists. He quoted the incidents in Panipat, Sonepat and Gannore where the Christians have been saved by the Sikhs, many a time risking their own lives as the Hindu terrorists struck. The recognition is too little for the community whose plight was ignored by the Christians as they too had been under the influence of the Hindu nationalist lies against the Sikhs.

THE LEGACY OF SADHOO SUNDER SINGH

Sadhu Sunder Singh was one of the greatest Christian missionaries India has known. Punjab, more particularly the districts like Ludhiana has a considerable concentration of Christians. The Sikhs themselves have been victims of Hindu majoritarianism and ethnic cleansing. A vast number of their youth had been annihilated in the anti-Sikh riots and fake encounters. Thousands of innocent Sikh youth are persecuted in jails as undertrials. The anti-Sikh crackdown saw the flight of thousands of Sikhs abroad. When the recent wave of anti-Christian persecution started, at least one Christian bishop recognized the injustice done to the Sikh minority by the Christians. Bishop Philipose Mar Chrysostom, the Mar Thoma Metropolitan, wrote that it was due to our apathy during the earliest atrocities against other (minorities) that this danger has befallen us. The community which we did injustice to has now become our saviors. In fact Gurmeet Singh Aulakh, the Sikh leader in the U.S. was one of the first persons to lobby against the Christian persecution in the U.S. Congress by the Hindu fundamentalists.

THE ANTI-SIKH MOVEMENT

One of the reasons for the insurrection in Punjab was the attempt by the Hindus to brand Sikhism as a part (or panth) of Hinduism. The RSS went on to call the Sikhs "Kesadharis Hindus". History says that the no Sikh participated in the drafting of the Constitution, and as they were away, the Hindu nationalists branded them as "Hindus". The governments finally accepted the independent identity of the Sikhs apart from the Hindus. Recently the Hindu majoritarians revived the old tension by once again branding the Sikhs as part of Hinduism. The Sikhs are idol-haters and do not like to be linked to its worship forms. The Sikh community warned with one voice that any attempt by the Hindus to carry the Guru Granth Sahib to the temples will be met with stiff resistance. The tension in Punjab has increased manyfold due to the upsurge in the activities of RSS, VHP and the Bajrang Dal. There are reports of the raising of a Bajrang Dal army of 30,000 cadres from Punjab. As per an article that appeared in the Hindu, the Bajrang Dal is giving fierce arms training to their cadre. They have the blessings of the rulers of Delhi. The formation of the new organization Rashtriya Sikh Sangatana (RSS) by the Rashtriya

Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have angered the Sikhs and this has once again brought most Sikhs to a single platform. The majoritarian ambitions of the Hindutva forces in Punjab are sure to lead to doom.

CONCLUSION

At this instance we can only pray for peace in Punjab. We pray that good sense prevails with the majoritarians and they do not do anything harmful to the interests of the nation. We also thank the valiant but unsung Sikh heroes and heroines who have and are risking their own lives to save the defenseless Christians in Haryana, Punjab and elsewhere from the atrocities of the Hindu organizations.

TRIBUTE IN HONOR OF TEXAS COMMUNITY LEADER SAM FLORES UPON HIS RETIREMENT

HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 30, 2001

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a true public servant and long-time colleague, Mr. Sam Flores of Seguin, TX. After 36 years of working for the Seguin City Council, Mr. Flores retired the beginning of this year after devoting half of his life to the council and most of his life in the service of others. He is an inspiration for us all.

Mr. Flores was born in San Marcos, TX, during the Roaring Twenties, but grew up during the difficult years of the Great Depression. A young Flores soon learned the value of hard work as the middle child of seven raised during this trying time. As soon as he was physically capable of manual labor, Flores was thrust into the life of an adult migrant worker, traveling from California to Minnesota as the seasons changed. When only 17, he dropped out of school to join the Marines. His six-year career was distinguished, and included serving as a Platoon Sergeant in the Korean War and aiding in the evacuation of Shanghai by Americans during the communist revolution in China.

After finishing his time with the Marines, Flores continued his formal education and earned a degree in education from Southwest Texas State University in 1955. Four years later Sam Flores had earned his Master's degree in school administration, was married to Velia Flores, and moved to her hometown of Seguin, TX. For the next 35 years Flores would serve the Harlandale ISD. He taught regular and special education classes to elementary and secondary school students. He distinguished himself as the first Hispanic Principal for the Harlandale ISD. He then became the Director for Special Education for six school districts. Even after this extensive career, Mr. Flores, knowing the value of education, works for the Seguin school district as the Attendance Officer.

Flores did not limit himself to his teaching vocation, but also took an active interest in other aspects of the community. Flores helped others. And it was both the small and large things that made an impact, everything from helping a single mother fill out a college application to working for the establishment of the Seguin Housing Authority, from assisting an elderly widow with her Social Security to helping establish the Seguin Boys Club. We owe