

country, culture and language that bore no resemblance to their own. Before arriving in the U.S., the Hmong were a tribal society without a written language until the mid-20th century. Additionally, many of the Hmong were recruited to be guerrillas at the ages of 12–14 and hence did not attend school after that point. Since 1975, over 200,000 Hmong refugees have resettled in the U.S. Their adjustment to American society has been difficult, but with perseverance and determination the Hmong people have overcome and succeeded.

Last year, I cosponsored and the House passed legislation later enacted into law, which expedites the naturalization of the Hmong who served with special guerrilla units in Laos during the Vietnam war. Yet a comprehensive acknowledgment of the plight and indomitable will of the Hmong-Americans that reside in our country and community is needed. I strongly support this legislation encouraging the President to declare a National Lao-Hmong Recognition Day and calling on the American people to recognize the service and sacrifice of the Hmong people. It is proper for all that the Hmong have done, similar to countless other immigrant groups, as they add one more thread to the fabric of our American society and history.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 88, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The title of the concurrent resolution was amended so as to read: "Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress that the President should issue a proclamation to recognize the contribution of the Lao-Hmong in defending freedom and democracy and supporting the goals of Lao-Hmong Recognition Day."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### CELEBRATING 300TH ANNIVERSARY OF WILLIAM PENN'S CHARTER OF PRIVILEGES, 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERTY BELL, AND 225TH ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST PUBLIC READING OF DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 254) encouraging the people of the United States to celebrate the 300th anniversary of William Penn's Charter of Privileges, the 250th anniversary of the Liberty Bell, and the 225th anniversary of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 254

Whereas William Penn was a distinguished statesman and a principled defender of human rights and religious liberties;

Whereas in 1701, William Penn wrote Charter of Privileges, which set a new standard for religious liberty that profoundly impacted the Nation's history and still provides an example for the world today;

Whereas religious freedom is still one of the most fragile liberties, and today, millions of people around the world are persecuted for their religious beliefs;

Whereas the year 2001 marks the 300th anniversary of the publication of Charter of Privileges;

Whereas the Liberty Bell was designed to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Charter of Privileges and is a powerful reminder of the Nation's commitment to freedom and justice;

Whereas the Liberty Bell became a defining symbol of the abolitionist movement, which sought to rid the Nation of slavery;

Whereas the year 2001 marks the 250th anniversary of the completion of the Liberty Bell; and

Whereas the year 2001 is also the 225th anniversary of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence, which contains the immortal phrase: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights": Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—*

(1) encourages the people of the United States to celebrate the 300th anniversary of William Penn's Charter of Privileges, the 250th anniversary of the Liberty Bell, and the 225th anniversary of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence; and

(2) encourages the Nation's leaders to reaffirm their commitment to promoting human rights and religious freedom in the Nation and around the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. Ros-Lehtinen. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 254.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 254 today, and I commend my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS), for introducing this resolution and for working so hard to bring it to the floor.

House Concurrent Resolution 254 encourages the people of the United States to celebrate the anniversaries of three important events in the history of Pennsylvania and indeed in our Nation's history. This resolution also encourages our country's leaders to reaffirm our commitment to promoting human rights and religious freedom in the United States and around the world.

The year 2001 marks the anniversaries of three historic events which have profoundly influenced the principles upon which this great Nation was founded. It is the 300th anniversary of William Penn's "Charter of Privileges," the 250th anniversary of the completion of the Liberty Bell, and 225th anniversary of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence.

William Penn, author of the Charter of Privileges, was a distinguished statesman and a principled defender of human rights and religious liberties. When William Penn wrote the Charter of Privileges in 1701, he set a new standard for religious liberty which impacted the Nation's history and still provides an example for the world today. Both the concepts underlying the "free exercise" and the "establishment" clauses of the First Amendment were embodied in that charter.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Penn felt so strongly about the importance of religious liberty that he guaranteed that this provision of the charter would remain inviolate forever because, in his words, "the happiness of mankind descends so much upon the enjoying of liberty of their consciences." This was the only provision so guaranteed.

The Liberty Bell was designed to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Charter of Privileges. Later, the Liberty Bell became a defining symbol of the abolitionist movement, which sought to rid our Nation of slavery.

□ 1445

And to this day, Mr. Speaker, it remains one of the most recognized and most powerful reminders of our Nation's commitment to freedom and justice.

The Declaration of Independence has also been one of the most potent symbols of our commitment to liberty. Its first public reading marked the first public utterance of a phrase that has since been revered by Americans and freedom-loving people around the world: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights."

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members to vote for this important resolution. That vote will reaffirm our commitment to promoting human rights and religious freedom in the Nation and around the world, and it will encourage all Americans to reflect upon these important events.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, William Penn was a distinguished statesman and a principled defender of human rights and religious liberty. Born on October 14, 1644, to Anglican parents, William Penn converted to Quakerism after hearing the famous apostle Thomas Loe. He spent much of his time in prison for his radical

preaching for personal property and religious rights. In 1672, he wrote the concessions and agreements charter for a group of Quaker colonists who were settling in the newly acquired New Jersey. Among its provisions were the right to trial by jury, the freedom from arbitrary imprisonment for debt, and edict against capital punishment. Penn also strongly urged religious freedom, writing, and I quote, "No men hath power or authority to rule over men's consciences in religious matters."

Penn is more famously known, however, as the founder of Pennsylvania. He designed the city of Philadelphia as a rectangular gridiron with a center square that divided the city into four quadrants. Penn planned for the city's principal public buildings, the meeting house, school, and statehouse. His conception of Philadelphia has been characterized as one of the earliest attempts at utopian city planning and represented the most extensively preplanned American city at that time. I must confess, Mr. Speaker, that every time I visit Philadelphia, I am always amazed at the ideas and concepts that Penn had even at that time.

Penn's Charter of Privileges, which was Pennsylvania's original constitution, speaks of valuable rights and freedoms. In the charter, Penn ensured that no citizen would be discriminated against because of his or her faith, nor would any citizen be denied a role in civil government because of the expression of his or her faith. Penn recognized the role of religion in public life and affirmed its importance.

In 1751, 50 years after Penn wrote the Charter of Privileges, the Pennsylvania General Assembly commissioned a bell for the statehouse to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the charter. The bell was rung to call the citizens of Philadelphia to the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence and became known as the Liberty Bell as abolitionists adopted it as a symbol of their cause.

H. Con. Res. 254 encourages the people of the United States to celebrate the 300th anniversary of William Penn's Charter of Privileges, the 250th anniversary of the Liberty Bell and the 225th anniversary of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Given Penn's profound impact on religious liberty and this Nation's history, I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution, as we shall always remember the words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights."

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS), the author of this resolution.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 254 and to celebrate our American legacy of religious

liberty, to honor the 300th anniversary of Penn's Charter of Privileges, Pennsylvania's first constitution, the 250th anniversary of the Liberty Bell, and the 225th anniversary of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Mr. Speaker, the events of September 11 serve as a powerful reminder that religious faith is deeply embedded in the hearts of many Americans. In times of chaos and uncertainty, many Americans turn to religious faith to reestablish priorities and to gather strength for the days ahead.

Our Founding Fathers knew that our American experiment would only succeed if men and women acted in good faith. Our American way of life is based on the belief that people will do what is right instead of what is easy or convenient. But the Founders also believed that that would happen only for as long as we had faith in God. And so they encouraged religious expression.

William Penn was born in England on October 24, 1644, the son of a wealthy English admiral. He grew up in a time of tremendous tension between England, France and Spain and the New World. He assumed that he would become a soldier, and he did. But in 1681, after the death of his father, Penn was granted a tract of land from King Charles II that later became known as Pennsylvania. Penn called Pennsylvania a holy experiment, a place where religious freedom and religious faith would be celebrated. Penn believed that religious faith contributed to good government. Penn's beliefs about the role of religion in public life were clearly demonstrated in his Charter of Privileges in 1701.

As a result of Penn's emphasis on religious liberty, Pennsylvania, and particularly Philadelphia, became a haven for those who had been persecuted for their faith. In fact, Philadelphia was one of the only places in the English-speaking world where Roman Catholics could legally worship. A plaque on St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Center City Philadelphia reads:

"In 1734, the provincial council of Philadelphia, defending the liberty of worship granted by William Penn to this colony, successfully withstood the demand of the governor of the province that this church be outlawed and such liberty suppressed.

"Thus was established permanently in our Nation the principle of religious freedom, which was later embodied into the Constitution of the United States of America."

Mr. Speaker, Americans of all faiths are indebted to William Penn's vision of religious pluralism. These days we seem to want to say that it does not matter what a person believes as long as he or she does not believe it very strongly. Well, Mr. Speaker, deep-seated religious faith and a commitment to moral absolutes served as the bedrock of the founding of our Nation. The abolitionist movement, the civil rights movement and the women's suffrage

movement all have their roots in religious faith and convictions. Those brave men and women fought diligently to ensure justice in our Nation. Those men and women were not merely invested in religious rhetoric. They earnestly believed that through their work, they were being faithful to God and His precepts.

Philadelphia's famous Liberty Bell was commissioned to honor the 50th anniversary of Penn's Charter of Privileges. The inscription on the Liberty Bell is a quotation from the Bible, the book of Leviticus: "Proclaim liberty through all the land to the inhabitants thereof."

And so, Mr. Speaker, we should not be embarrassed to speak about the religious faith of our forefathers or to speak about our own religious faith. There is nothing to be gained by rewriting history and editing out God or by emptying religious quotations or symbols of their original meaning. There is nothing to be gained from suppressing religious faith in public life.

But there is everything to be gained from working to maintain the kind of pluralistic spirit of William Penn. This spirit allows individuals to hold deep religious convictions, to defend those convictions, and even express those beliefs.

Mr. Speaker, we are all proud of our Nation's history. We recognize that religious bigotry is fundamentally un-American. Recently, I was deeply disturbed to learn that two Americans who own a diner in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, were singled out for discrimination because of their religious faith and ethnic background. They are Muslims and Egyptian Americans. These two men, owners of a local restaurant, were the subject of groundless rumors and speculation simply because one of them has Osma as his first name.

Religious bigotry is contrary to the spirit of the Declaration of Independence. In this country, we believe all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The role of government is to allow the free expression of religion, not to hinder it. We tamper with religious freedom at our peril.

Mr. Speaker, over the past 2 months, many Americans have been faced with a type of uncertainty that they never thought possible. Yet this fear has caused them to reflect on what it means to be an American.

I urge my colleagues to support the freedoms that made our country great. Support H. Con. Res. 254.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE).

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding time.

I rise in strong support of the religious liberty resolution, H. Con. Res. 254, celebrating the 300th anniversary of William Penn's Charter of Privileges and other historic items.

Mr. Speaker, three centuries ago, the Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges was enacted. You may be wondering why a son of Indiana is standing before you to recognize an event that took place in Pennsylvania. Very simply, the liberties we enjoy in the Hoosier State, I believe, were cultivated by this document, the Charter of Privileges from the Keystone State; and I rise in proud support of them.

Called the most famous of all colonial constitutions, the Charter of Privileges proved to be a major breakthrough in the history of government. This is because the charter had at its very core a liberty-of-conscience clause that granted religious liberty to the inhabitants of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. What is more, the charter's author, William Penn, ensured that this liberty clause, quote, "shall be kept and remain without alteration, inviolable forever." Other provisions of the charter could be changed by the will of the people, but not the liberty-of-conscience clause.

Mr. Speaker, this marked an enormously important advance in American liberties, one which should be celebrated as we do so today. As a result of this commitment to religious liberty, Pennsylvania, and especially the city of Philadelphia, became a haven for all religions. Historian Paul Johnson noted that Philadelphia in the 18th century was a bustling center of activity for people of every religious faith. Not coincidentally, Philadelphia also became the home to our Nation's very first independent African American denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Mr. Speaker, today in any number of cities and towns across this great land of liberty, you will find dozens of religious denominations represented, even many sharing a street corner or even a building. I would offer that in 1701, such a scene would not likely have been repeated anywhere in the world except in colonial America, perhaps outside of Philadelphia, which was aptly named the City of Brotherly Love. And it was all a result of Pennsylvania's visionary Charter of Liberties.

For it is religious liberty, the freedom to worship the Creator after the dictates of one's own conscience, that provides the firm foundation for all liberties. Thus Thomas Jefferson wrote that all men were created equal and endowed by their Creator with unalienable and inviolable rights.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that it is religious liberty which gave birth to this Nation, to our unquenchable thirst for freedom, our unparalleled pursuit of innovation, our unyielding love for representative government, our unabashed sense of a higher national purpose, and our unprecedented tolerance of our fel-

low man. Each of these symbols that we celebrate today stands in broad opposition to the trends in the world that move in the opposite direction of tolerance.

Mr. Speaker, I simply could not let this moment pass without connecting the dots between this great event in American history and those we also celebrate, the commemoration of the Liberty Bell, the public reading of the Declaration, without reflecting on what we see in tragedies unfolding when religious liberties are forsaken around the globe. In Sudan, slavery and brutality arise out of religious persecution. Tens upon hundreds of thousands are on the brink of death because the Sudanese Government fails to recognize the liberty of conscience that was established in Pennsylvania on our shores 300 years ago. And in Afghanistan, a great religion has been twisted by some into one that supports persecution and violence and murder rather than freedom and transcendence, one that uses terrorism to stifle the voices of religious liberty.

□ 1500

The very shaving of the beards that is happening in the capital of Kabul today is in many ways driven by the same sentiment that emerged in the Charter of Privileges some 300 years ago.

I urge all of my colleagues to support the religious liberty resolution. I commend my colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS), for his visionary commitment to religious liberty and for his own testimony of faith. Let us today reaffirm our commitment three centuries strong on this continent to the freedom of religion and continue to be that shining city on a hill that gives hope to all of the nations.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, but I would say as I yield back the balance of my time that sometimes people ask me why this type of resolution is on the floor, and they are wondering what it really means.

I often will say to them, if you forget where you come from, then it is hard to understand how you got to where you are, and you really would never understand where you need to be going. So it is important that we look back and reflect upon the history and development of our Nation and continue to acknowledge and revere those things which have made America what it is today.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am proud to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS).

Mr. GEKAS. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, to the Members, I want to say that I have a peculiar and unique interest in William Penn, in that after completion of junior high school, the high school I entered was aptly named for these proceedings, William Penn High School. It was then that I first learned of the life and work and significance of William Penn.

As a 14 year old, a wide new world of American history opened for me in the name of William Penn. Our school periodical was named *The Founder*; the yearbook was named *The Sylvania*, so "Pennsylvania." The founder of Pennsylvania and his woods, Penn's Woods, were always firmly ensconced in my educated mind at that point as very significant in American history.

Also I learned in my personal study of William Penn that ours was the only State, I say egotistically, that was named after its founder. The other States, for instance, Washington, the State of Washington was named after George Washington many years after he was President of the United States; Maryland was named after the Queen of Charles I; the Virginias were named honoring Queen Elizabeth; the Carolinas were named after King Charles; Georgia was named after King George; Louisiana was named after King Louis; New York was named after the Duke of York; and Delaware was named after the first Governor of Virginia, Lord de la Warr. All the rest of the States were named after Indian tribes or Indian phrases or Indian words, thus forming the blend that we are so proud of in our country. But Pennsylvania was the only one which honored its founder.

Those principles which have been so well enunciated on both sides of the aisle in commemoration of the day which we seek to honor in this resolution aptly have put forth the real rectitude of having this resolution.

One other little anecdote: The 4th of July, 1776, Declaration of Independence did not reach the capital of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, until 10 days after the declaration, around July 10th, 11th, 12th or 14th. When it reached there, the founder of Harrisburg, John Harris, convened the entire town to come before him on River Front in Harrisburg, at a mansion which still stands, to read the Declaration of Independence as it was transmitted to him from Philadelphia. Thus, the founder of Harrisburg, who always revered the founder of Pennsylvania, helped found the principles of our country by spreading the word of the Declaration of Independence.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, I speak as a former resident of the State of Pennsylvania. When Cuban refugees first started coming over to the United States, there were no jobs in Miami, Florida. The Federal Government had a refugee resettlement program, and we were fortunate enough to be resettled in a town in Pennsylvania called York. My brother and I were very much in love with

York, Pennsylvania. It was our first taste of snow. Coming from Havana, we did not get too much of that.

On the weekends, when we could put together the little pennies we had, I remember taking weekend trips with my parents, where we got to see the many historic sites that Pennsylvania had to offer. For me, Pennsylvania will always be just like this wonderful city, and New York also, symbolic images of the freedom and democracy and the liberty that we enjoy so much in our country, and we sometimes take for granted.

I again commend the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) for introducing this important proclamation and for working hard to ensure its passage. In light of the challenges facing our Nation today, Madam Speaker, it is certainly appropriate in this time for Congress to reaffirm our commitment to religious liberty and human rights, and it is certainly an appropriate time for all of us as Americans to reflect upon the principles underlying each of these three important historical symbols of our democracy.

Madam Speaker, I urge all Members to support this resolution.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 254.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### NATIONAL WORDS CAN HEAL DAY

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 235) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding the establishment of a National Words Can Heal Day, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

##### H. RES. 235

Whereas the Jerusalem Fund has launched a Words Can Heal Campaign on September 4, 2001, to reduce verbal violence and gossip and to promote the value and practice of ethical speech in order to improve our democracy, build mutual respect, honor, and dignity in our country;

Whereas words used unfairly, whether expressed through excessive anger, unfair criticism, public and private humiliation, bigoted comments, cruel jokes, or rumors and malicious gossip, can traumatize and damage many lives;

Whereas an unwillingness or inability of many parents to control what they say when angry causes the infliction of potentially damaging verbal abuse on many children;

Whereas bigoted words are often used to dehumanize entire religious, racial, and ethnic groups, and can inflame hostility;

Whereas the spreading of negative and often unfair, untrue, or exaggerated com-

ments or rumors about others often inflicts irrevocable damage on the victim of such rumors;

Whereas the Words Can Heal Campaign will raise awareness regarding the damage that can be caused by destructive language; and

Whereas the House of Representatives supports the goals of the Words Can Heal Campaign: Now, therefore be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) the House of Representatives supports the goals of the Words Can Heal Campaign; and

(2) the President should issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to support the goals of such campaign with appropriate programs and activities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

##### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 235.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, the Words Can Heal Campaign, sponsored by the Jerusalem Fund, is a visionary national media and educational campaign designed to reduce verbal violence and gossip. The goal of the campaign is to promote the value and the practice of ethical speech in order to improve our democracy and to build mutual respect, honor and dignity to our country.

The Words Can Heal Campaign launched a media campaign on September 4, 2001, right here in our Nation's Capital. The campaign includes posters in D.C. Metro stations and bus shelters. It includes advertisements in newspapers, such as Roll Call, and publications such as the National Journal, Congressional Quarterly, and television ads on all major networks.

The campaign also includes educational modules for use in schools, in companies, community centers, government offices, houses of worship, every building throughout the Nation. We can all practice and participate in this initiative to improve our society and make a difference in the lives of millions of Americans, one word at a time.

In the aftermath of the tragedy of September 11, the Words Can Heal Campaign is now more important than ever. We must all be committed to unite and strengthen America through the power of words.

Each and every one of us have been touched by the events of September 11, and we as Americans have pulled together as a country to show our true

colors. Americans reached out to each other with kind words and helping hands. We embraced each other with words of comfort. And through these difficult days, we as a country have come together in fellowship with expressions of kindness and caring.

As we work our way back to normalcy, let us continue the outpouring of concern that we have shown each other. We should have a new Golden Rule: Say unto others as you would want said unto you.

Mother Teresa once said, "Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." Her words capture the essence of the Words Can Heal Campaign. Words are powerful. Words can build love, or they can destroy it. Words can be encouraging, or damaging.

We must choose what we say carefully because we cannot take back our words. Once something is said, it can never be erased. We have all said something which later we have wished that we could take back. The Words Can Heal Pledge is one way to avoid that terrible feeling when you regret what you have said.

It says, "I pledge to think more about the words that I use. I will try to replace words that hurt with words that encourage, engage and enrich. I will try to see how gossip hurts people, including myself, and work to eliminate it from my life. I will not become discouraged when I am unable to choose words perfectly, because making the world a better place is hard work. And I am helping to do that, one word at a time."

The Words Can Heal Pledge helps us to remember what someone says to you can change your entire day.

Words are contagious. A friendly "hello" can spread from one colleague to another, from one brother to sister, one friend to another, from a stranger to a stranger. We must work to avoid harsh words and gossip which makes everyone feel badly.

We can all play a role in this undertaking to improve our society and make a difference in the lives of millions of Americans. Our ability to voice views freely and resolve differences through dialogue and persuasion is fundamental to our American system of democracy, and for that process to work, our words must reflect mutual respect, truth and fairness.

As our dialogue in Congress needs to be civil and ethical, so do communications throughout society.

Please join me in support of the Jerusalem Fund's Words Can Heal Campaign, along with the Executive Director of the Words Can Heal Campaign, Rabbi Irwin Katsof, whom I had the opportunity to meet along with my husband and children in our trip to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv this August, and Rabbi Chaim Feld; also President and CEO of the IAC Group, Ana Maria Fernandez Haar; Senior Fellow of Foreign and Defense Policy Studies, Dr. Jeane Kirkpatrick; New York Mayor