

rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING COMMENCEMENT OF RAMADAN AND COMMENDING MUSLIMS FOR THEIR FAITH

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 635) recognizing the commencement of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal, and commending Muslims in the United States and throughout the world for their faith, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 635

Whereas it is estimated that there are approximately 1,500,000,000 Muslims worldwide;

Whereas since the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, some threats and incidents of violence have been directed at law-abiding, patriotic Americans of African, Arab, and South Asian descent, particularly members of the Islamic faith;

Whereas, on September 14, 2001, the House of Representatives passed a concurrent resolution condemning bigotry and violence against Arab-Americans, American Muslims, and Americans from South Asia in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the United States;

Whereas some extremists have attempted to use selective interpretations of Islam to justify and encourage hatred, persecution, oppression, violence and terrorism against the United States, the West, Israel, other Muslims, and non-Muslims;

Whereas some Muslims in the United States and abroad have courageously spoken out in rejection of interpretations of Islam that justify and encourage hatred, violence, and terror, and in support of interpretations of and movements within Islam that justify and encourage democracy, tolerance and full civil and political rights for Muslims and those of all faiths;

Whereas Ramadan is the holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal for Muslims worldwide, and is the 9th month of the Muslim calendar year; and

Whereas the observance of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan commenced at dusk on September 13, 2007, and continues for one lunar month: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the Islamic faith as one of the great religions of the world;

(2) expresses friendship and support for Muslims in the United States and worldwide;

(3) acknowledges the onset of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal, and conveys its respect to Muslims in the United States and throughout the world on this occasion;

(4) rejects hatred, bigotry, and violence directed against Muslims, both in the United States and worldwide; and

(5) commends Muslims in the United States and across the globe who have privately and publicly rejected interpretations and movements of Islam that justify and encourage hatred, violence, and terror.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our colleague from Texas, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, for introducing this important and timely legislation, and I look forward to hearing her remarks as we proceed with this debate.

As we speak, millions of our Muslim friends and neighbors around the world are in the midst of Ramadan, a holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal. The observance of Ramadan requires devotion to faith, community and family, truly universal values we all share. During the month of Ramadan, observant members of the Islamic faith fast from sunrise to sunset and focus their attention on the teachings of their religion as well as purity of thought and action.

It is appropriate and necessary for the U.S. House of Representatives to mark the commencement of this important event which began this year on September 13 and continues for one lunar month. This legislation expresses the deep respect we all feel for Muslims in the United States and around the world.

Since the horrific events of September 11, 2001, unfortunately, peaceful patriotic members of the Islamic faith have been subject to hateful and demeaning threats, words, even acts of violence. This House must stand with these law-abiding citizens in this time of conflict. I strongly support this legislation and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 635, which recognizes the commencement of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal, and expresses respect to Muslims in the United States and throughout the world on this occasion.

Regarded as the holiest month in the Islamic calendar, Ramadan signifies a time of deep reflection for the 1.5 billion Muslims across the globe. During this month, special emphasis is put on prayer, giving to charity, daylight fasting, and self-examination and improvement.

It is tragic that radical Islamists have used selective interpretations of Islam to justify and encourage hate, injustice, oppression, violence, and ter-

ror. They have indoctrinated many young Muslims to hate and target for violence America, Israel, the West, other Muslims, and non-Muslims.

Worse still, some have exploited the month of Ramadan, which should be devoted to spirituality and self-perfection, to stoke the fires of fanaticism and destruction.

It is important to note that a growing number of Muslims, including many in America, are rejecting radical Islam and its culture of death. Instead, they are articulating interpretations of Islam that embrace the values of human life, liberty, and democracy.

Indeed, today we are seeing a clash within Islamic civilization between those who wish to step into the light of progress and those who wish to return the entire world to the dark ages.

Given the threat that radical Islam poses worldwide, the clash within Islamic civilization affects everyone throughout the world. That is why this House should take the opportunity to pass H. Res. 635. This resolution commends Muslims who reject interpretations of Islam that justify and encourage hatred, violence, and terror.

May Ramadan this year truly be a time when Muslims and people of all faiths embrace freedom and tolerance for all, and reject violence and extremism.

I thank my friend and distinguished colleague from Texas, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, for introducing this resolution; and I urge its adoption.

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

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Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlelady from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), who is the chairperson of the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment and, more importantly, is the author of this important legislation.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on September 13, 2007, Muslims in America and around the world celebrated the commencement of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. I'd like to thank Chairman LANTOS, Congresswoman ROS-LEHTINEN, Congressman MEEK, Congressman ELLISON and the Congressional Muslim Staffers Association for their continued support and leadership on this historic bill.

The two best that I know are on my staff: my chief of staff, Murat Gokcigdem, a Turkish American; and Ilham Jaffer, legislative assistant.

H. Res. 635 recognizes Muslims around the world and commemorates them during their holy month of Ramadan. Ramadan is observed in the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Of the Abrahamic faiths, Islam is a faith that places great emphasis on knowledge; therefore, it is a faith of reason and peace.

The month of Ramadan is a time of heightened spiritual awareness, family

bonding, communal service and worship, and self-renewal for Muslims everywhere. It is the month of fasting from sunrise to sunset for over 1 billion Muslims throughout the world.

During this month, Muslim Americans are appreciative of America's tradition of diversity. The community displays its appreciation by reconfirming its duty to ensure human dignity and a better future for all.

The Muslim American community contributes to the vibrant growth of American society and culture. Muslim Americans play a significant role in our Nation's political process, economic growth, scientific development, free enterprise, religious tolerance, law enforcement and homeland security.

American pluralistic ideals, democratic institutions and multiculturalism are expanded and strengthened by the contribution of Muslim American civic participation.

During this holy month, I'd like to say Ramadan Mubarak to all Muslims.

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

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to a member of both the Committee on Ways and Means and the Homeland Security Committee, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL).

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 635, which recognizes the commencement of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal, and commending Muslims in the United States and throughout the world for their faith.

I'm proud to be a cosponsor of this bill, and I want to congratulate the sponsor, Congresswoman EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON. This is the first time in history that the United States Congress will commemorate and recognize the month of Ramadan, a month which Muslims have been observing for more than 1,300 years.

In this month, I know that Muslims will fast from sunrise to sunset, but the month of Ramadan is about so much more than the act of abstaining from food.

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims will strive to become stronger in their faith and in their character. This means striving to be better members of our families and within our communities, striving to perform acts of charity for those who are less fortunate, striving to set a better example to those around us. In truth, it is a striving to become a more complete human being.

But this month should not just be important for Muslims. It should also be imperative for all of us non-Muslims to learn about this faith, which too often has been misunderstood and mischaracterized.

Muslims share a great deal of commonality with other faiths. For example, the practice of fasting is not just done by Muslims but is also observed by Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and

Hindus, among others. These United States of America, this is a Nation of God and all religions.

Indeed, the book of Exodus tells us that Moses fasted for 40 days and 40 nights while he was on the mountain with God, and the accounts of Matthew and Luke tell us that Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights while in the desert prior to the three temptations.

I've always been extremely fortunate to represent probably one of the most diverse districts in the entire country, the Eighth District of New Jersey. It has been through the many good works of my Muslim constituents that it has become clear to me that the true faith of Islam is one of peace and mutual understanding.

Despite what others may say, we should have no qualms about electing a Muslim to any elected office in the United States, for our Nation was founded on the principle that there can be no religious test for holding office, only a test of that individual's character.

We are all part of the beautiful tapestry that comprises our Nation, and Muslim Americans are starting to move to the forefront where they belong.

I wish all Muslims in our Nation a happy and a blessed month of Ramadan.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota, who serves with me on both the Financial Services Committee and the Judiciary Committee, Mr. ELLISON.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman for yielding time and for this excellent resolution. I'd like to thank all of the authors, including Congresswoman EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON and everyone who signed on to the resolution commemorating the month of Ramadan.

I am celebrating Ramadan myself personally, and I have been doing so ever since my 19th birthday. I'm 44 now, and I can tell you that it is a time of reflection, a time of renewal, and regeneration.

It's true that we fast during the daylight hours during Ramadan, but it also says in the sayings of Prophet Mohammed, that if you do not refrain from ill speech, bad speech, bad words, basically a bad attitude and negative disposition, then God has no use of your refraining from food and drink. And so in this month of Ramadan, it's important to reassess your life, to contemplate your role in society and to benefit your neighbor.

I think it's very important when we talk about "neighbor" that we reflect upon what that word really means, "neighbor." It was Jesus, who the Muslims call Esau and who they revere very highly, who told the lawyer in the Bible that his neighbor really wasn't even somebody of his own religion or his own tribe but really was that Samaritan from that other group who lent assistance and gave a helping hand when it was needed. And that is

the origin of the story of the Good Samaritan.

This idea of the neighbor is something that's very important in Islam, especially during Ramadan where Muslims of all faiths, all colors, all backgrounds, reach out to our neighbors, Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist of all types.

I want to report to you, Mr. Speaker, that over the course of the last several weeks we've had several Iftar celebrations right here in the Capitol and also in the Pentagon and a tremendous demonstration of interfaith cooperation, interfaith working together and mutual respect and recognition.

As was said earlier, and I quite agree, every faith tradition relies on fasting as a means for spiritual regeneration. I also want to report to you that on the date of Yom Kippur, which is the Jewish holiday of atonement and the commemoration of the time of the new year, that my mosque in Minneapolis and the synagogue Temple Israel in Minneapolis joined together to break fast together, and we ended up with a good problem, Mr. Speaker, and that is, that there were 150 people who RSVP'd and said they wanted to come. We ended up with about 160 people coming, and we didn't have enough chairs for everybody, but we had enough food because we shared it, Mr. Speaker, showing again that we're not too far apart.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to let you know that many of our Christian friends came to celebrate the breaking of the fast with the Muslims and Jews together, and we're really warmed and encouraged by the fact that we can all come together even though we have different faith traditions.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me again thank the wonderful, excellent commemoration we're having today as a true expression of American values, religious tolerance, inclusion of everyone.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take this opportunity to wish all my Muslim friends, particularly those in the San Fernando Valley, a Ramadan Mubarak, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, we have no other speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the gentlelady from Texas for introducing this legislation and our committee leadership, Chairman TOM LANTOS and Ranking Member ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, for moving this bill to the floor.

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, as a longtime advocate and friend of the Muslim-American community, I am pleased to support H. Res. 635, a bill recognizing the commencement of Ramadan, and commending Muslims everywhere for their faith.

I have always admired the unwavering commitment Muslims show towards their faith during the holy month of Ramadan. It has been an honor to join many of my Muslim friends during this month of family togetherness, selfless service, worship and spiritual rebirth.

As the grandson of immigrants, I know true assimilation means preserving tradition while achieving success. I am in awe at how quickly the Muslim-American community has mastered both. In a matter of decades, the Muslim-American community has rapidly assimilated into American society. With shared values of hard work, discipline, community, family and culture, it's no wonder that Muslim-Americans are one of the fastest growing, most educated and highest earning ethnic groups in the U.S.

America owes much of its vibrant society and rich culture to the contributions of Muslim-Americans. From the medical professionals who care for us, the educators who teach us and the titans of industry large and small, Muslim-Americans are one of the most indispensable parts of our nation's ever-growing melting pot. Muslim-Americans are authentic Americans, and proof that the American Dream continues to thrive.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in strong support of H. Res. 635, a resolution honoring the month of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal. This is an important resolution in support of our Muslim friends, neighbors and citizens.

In my district we have many distinguished Muslim residents who contribute extensively to our community. They work tirelessly to educate our community about their faith and work to build interfaith relationships across our communities. For this I am deeply grateful. Their efforts, along with those of other people of faith in my district, are enabling us to build a strong and pluralistic environment that promotes tolerance and diversity.

In this time of international conflict, it is critical that we demonstrate solidarity with and support for members of the Muslim community in the United States and throughout the world. In two weeks I will be bringing faith leaders from across my district, including Jews, Muslims, Christians and Buddhists, to Washington, DC, for a day of discussions with Members of Congress and advocacy organizations to help further the important interfaith work already underway throughout the Central Coast of California.

I am grateful for all of the people of faith in my district who are working to promote peace and justice through understanding.

May this month of Ramadan bring us all closer to realizing a peaceful society at home and abroad.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on September 13, 2007, Muslims in America and around the world celebrated the commencement of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. I would like to thank Chairman LANTOS, Congresswoman ROS-LEHTINEN, Congressman MEEKS, Congressman ELLISON, and the Congressional Muslim Staffers Association for their continued support and leadership on this historic bill. The two I know best are Murat Gokcigdem who is Turkish American and my Chief of Staff and Illy Jaffer, Pakistani American and my Legislative Assistant. House Resolution 635 recognizes Muslims around the world and commemorates them during their holy month of Ramadan. Ramadan is observed in the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Of the Abrahamic faiths, Islam is a faith that places great emphasis on knowledge; therefore, it is a faith of reason and

peace. The month of Ramadan is a time of heightened spiritual awareness, family bonding, communal service and worship, and self-renewal for Muslims everywhere. It is the month of fasting from sunrise to sunset for over one billion Muslims throughout the world. During this month, Muslim Americans are appreciative of America's tradition of diversity. The community displays its appreciation by reconfirming its duty to ensure human dignity and a better future for all.

The Muslim American community contributes to the vibrant growth of American society and culture. Muslim Americans play a significant role in our Nation's political process, economic growth, scientific development, free enterprise, religious tolerance, law enforcement, and homeland security. American pluralistic ideals, democratic institutions, and multiculturalism are expanded and strengthened by the contribution of Muslim American civic participation. During this holy month, I would like to say Ramadan Mubarak to all Muslims.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of House Resolution 635, a resolution recognizing the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. On September 13 this year, millions of Muslims throughout the world, and a great number in Michigan's 15th Congressional district, began a month of fasting, prayer, and spiritual renewal. It is an important step for acceptance and tolerance within the United States that Congress, for the first time, is recognizing this exceptional religious observance.

During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims engage in self-discipline and purification. From sunrise to sunset, Muslims refrain from common daily activities such as eating and drinking, and tobacco use. Muslims also spend time reading the Koran, contemplating Islam, and cleansing their spirits. Ramadan is also a time to gather with family and friends, both at the nightly iftar, as well as at the conclusion of Ramadan, during the Id-al-Fitr.

It is a pleasure to join my colleagues in honoring the celebration of Ramadan, not simply because Muslims are an important and growing part of American society, but also because goals and tenets of Ramadan—self sacrifice, charity, and spiritual renewal—are shared by Americans of all faiths. Hopefully, Congressional recognition of Ramadan will lead to an increased appreciation for these shared values. Certainly, recognizing Ramadan, along with its observance in the United States, contributes to the vibrancy, dynamism, and character of our great Nation.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Ms. Speaker I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 635, recognizing the commencement of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal, and commending Muslims in the United States and throughout the world for their faith. I would like to thank my colleague, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, as well as the 30 other cosponsors for introducing this important and timely piece of legislation. I would also like to thank Chairman LANTOS for his leadership on this issue. This important legislation brings us together in celebration with our Muslim brothers and sisters, during this, their holy month of fasting and spirituality.

Since the tragic terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, patriotic, law-abiding Muslims-Americans of the Islamic faith have been targeted by threats and

incidents of violence. The House of Representatives has rebuked and condemned such actions from their very inception, with their September 14, 2001 resolution condemning bigotry and violence against American Muslims, and must continue to do so. It is important during this period of international uncertainty and apprehension to look to our commonalities, recognizing universal values that transcend culture, nationality, and religion.

The Muslim American Community has grown in size and prominence, and is an integral part of the fabric of this nation. The Muslim population in North America is characterized by its diversity. Some 80 nations are represented in the mosque communities of the United States, including a variety of traditions, practices, doctrines, and beliefs. Muslim Americans share the same values and ideals that make this nation great. These include ideals such as discipline, generosity, peace and moderation. In no month is this more evident than in the month of Ramadan, when more than a billion Muslims all across the world renew their bonds to family and friends, to neighbors and colleagues, and most of all to God. Ramadan is a special time of prayer and fasting, contemplation of God's greatness, and service to those in need.

Mr. Speaker, it is in the spirit of equality and sharing that we must recognize the universal values of family, community, and faith that we all share. By recognizing the Islamic faith as one of the great religions of the world, the House of Representatives may demonstrate solidarity with and support for the members of the Muslim community, both within the United States and throughout the world. By supporting this legislation, we may convey our respect to the Muslim community and commend the vast majority of Muslims within the U.S. and across the globe who have rejected the misapplication and misinterpretation of their religion.

As a co-sponsor of this legislation I feel that this is an issue we must address and I therefore strongly urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 635, a resolution recognizing the commencement of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting and spiritual renewal. This resolution also commends the Muslims in the United States and across the globe for their devotion.

Ramadan demonstrates the strength of each Muslim's faith with a month of prayers, fasting, charity and self reflection. It is a beautiful observance each year by those who believe in Islam.

It is important to have resolutions like this that recognizes and shows respect for one of the world's most significant religions, Islam, and the nearly 1.5 billion Muslims throughout the world. Following the September 11th attacks, I am sad to say, there was an outbreak of bigotry and violence against Arab-Americans, American Muslims and Americans from South Asia. Intolerance is not an American value and Congress must show its support for the community of Islam in the United States and throughout the world.

I would like to thank Congresswoman EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, Congressman GREGORY MEEKS and Congressman KEITH ELLISON for introducing the resolution and working to bring it to the House floor today.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 635.

As our Founding Fathers recognized, the strength of this great Nation derives from the tolerance we espouse. America builds strength from its diversity. I am proud to be a part of a country where every person may practice their religious beliefs without fear. At a time when religious differences are igniting conflicts throughout the world, America serves as a beacon of hope that religious tolerance is not only achievable, but only serves to make a country stronger and more viable.

The Islamic faith follows the lunar calendar. During the ninth month of the lunar calendar, called "Ramadan," the Arabic term for intense heat and scorched earth, Muslims throughout the world celebrate the revelation of the Quran. In 2007, the month of Ramadan lasts from September 13 to October 12. This sacred month is observed with prayers, fasting, and charity.

I believe we could all use a time of peace and reflection. Ramadan embodies these principles, and I applaud our Muslim friends and neighbors for their sincere religious beliefs.

I encourage my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 635, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

RECOGNIZING THAT VIOLENCE POSES AN INCREASINGLY SERIOUS THREAT TO PEACE AND STABILITY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 564) recognizing that violence poses an increasingly serious threat to peace and stability in Central America and supporting expanded cooperation between the United States and the countries of Central America to combat crime and violence, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 564

Whereas murder rates have been increasing throughout Central America in recent years;

Whereas in 2005, the estimated murder rate per 100,000 people was roughly 56 in El Salvador, 41 in Honduras, and 38 in Guatemala;

Whereas the February 2007 murder of 3 Salvadoran legislators from the Central American parliament and the subsequent murder in prison of the Guatemalan policemen

linked to the crime clearly illustrated to the international community the threat posed by violence in Central America;

Whereas a May 2007 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) makes the case that Central American countries are particularly vulnerable to violent crimes fueled by drug trafficking and corruption because they are geographically located between the world's largest drug producing and drug consuming countries;

Whereas 90 percent of the cocaine shipped from the Andes to the United States flows through Central America and thus contributes to increased violence on the Central American isthmus;

Whereas Central American governments and United States officials have attributed a large proportion of the rise in violent crime in Central America to youth gangs, many of which have ties to the United States;

Whereas UNODC estimates that there are 69,145 gang members in Central America;

Whereas on June 7, 2005, the Organization of American States (OAS) passed a resolution to urge member states to support the creation of holistic solutions to the gang problem;

Whereas Guatemala has experienced a surge in female murders during the past 3 years, with many of those murders allegedly committed by drug traffickers and other organized criminal groups;

Whereas violence between partners, particularly violence by men against their wives or girlfriends, is widespread in Central America and an International Violence Against Women Survey comparing selected countries in Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Asia found that 60 percent of women in Costa Rica—often considered the least violent country in Central America—reported having experienced domestic violence during their lives;

Whereas the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere held a briefing and hearing on June 26, 2007, on violence in Central America;

Whereas the Guatemalan government and the United Nations signed a groundbreaking agreement in December 2006 to establish the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) which was approved by the country's legislature on August 1, 2007;

Whereas the Central American Integration System (SICA) is an inter-governmental organization formed in 1991 comprised of the following member states: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama;

Whereas the Dominican Republic participates in SICA as an Associate Member State;

Whereas SICA and the United States held their first ever Dialogue on Democratic Security in Guatemala City from July 16 through 18, 2007, which focused on gangs, drug trafficking, and arms trafficking;

Whereas SICA and the United States signed an agreement at this meeting to improve intelligence sharing and policing and to institutionalize dialogue on regional security;

Whereas this meeting was the first time in almost a quarter century that high level officials from the United States and all 7 Central American countries and the Dominican Republic have met formally to discuss security issues;

Whereas United States Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas Shannon announced at this meeting the United States Strategy to Combat Criminal Gangs from Central America and Mexico designed to prevent youth from entering gangs and strengthen the fight against gang-related violence and other crimes;

Whereas Assistant Secretary Shannon recognized at this meeting that youth gang de-

linquency "has profound social roots and our way of fighting it cannot only be through policing";

Whereas the United States pledged \$1,000,000 at this meeting to help Central American governments draft a regional strategy to fight youth gangs and drug trafficking and \$3,000,000 to fund rehabilitation programs for youths in gangs; and

Whereas an enhanced political commitment and cooperation between the United States and Central America on security issues can help curb violence in Central America: Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) crime and violence pose an increasingly serious threat to peace and stability in Central America;

(2) officials from Central America and the United States should be commended for holding a historic meeting to discuss regional security strategies;

(3) the announcement on July 18, 2007, of the United States Strategy to Combat Criminal Gangs from Central America and Mexico should be commended;

(4) the President of the United States should follow through on commitments made in the United States Strategy to Combat Criminal Gangs from Central America and Mexico with concrete actions;

(5) the commitment of funds by the United States to fight youth gangs in Central America is an important step forward and greater resources should be considered in the future to fight this problem due to its severity and its transnational nature; and

(6) Central American and United States officials should be encouraged to meet on a regular basis to further cooperation in combating crime and violence in Central America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I want to thank our colleagues, Congressman ELIOT ENGEL and DAN BURTON, the Chair and ranking member respectively of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, for introducing this important legislation.

The measure brings a long overdue spotlight to the serious and growing problem of violence in Central America. The February murder of three Salvadoran legislators and the subsequent shocking murder in prison of the Guatemalan policeman linked to the crime illustrate the very real daily threat posed by violence in this region.

While this high-profile incident brought violence into the spotlight, it is unfortunately nothing new. In recent