

Historically, not only Catholics, but all believers have found here the freedom to worship God in accordance with the dictates of their conscience, while at the same time being accepted as part of a commonwealth in which each individual group can make its voice heard.

As the nation faces the increasingly complex political and ethical issues of our time, I am confident that the American people will find in their religious beliefs a precious source of insight and an inspiration to pursue reasoned, responsible and respectful dialogue in the effort to build a more human and free society.

Freedom is not only a gift, but also a summons to personal responsibility. Americans know this from experience—almost every town in this country has its monuments honoring those who sacrificed their lives in defense of freedom, both at home and abroad. The preservation of freedom calls for the cultivation of virtue, self-discipline, sacrifice for the common good, and a sense of responsibility towards the less fortunate. It also demands the courage to engage in civic life and to bring one's deepest beliefs and values to reasoned public debate.

In a word, freedom is ever new. It is a challenge held out to each generation, and it must constantly be won over for the cause of good. Few have understood this as clearly as the late Pope John Paul II. In reflecting on the spiritual victory of freedom over totalitarianism in his native Poland and in Eastern Europe, he reminded us that history shows time and again that "in a world without truth, freedom loses its foundation," and a democracy without values can lose its very soul. Those prophetic words in some sense echo the conviction of President Washington, expressed in his Farewell Address, that religion and morality represent "indispensable supports" of political prosperity.

The Church, for her part, wishes to contribute to building a world ever more worthy of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God. She is convinced that faith sheds new light on all things, and that the Gospel reveals the noble vocation and sublime destiny of every man and woman. Faith also gives us the strength to respond to our high calling and to hope that inspires us to work for an ever more just and fraternal society. Democracy can only flourish, as your founding fathers realized, when political leaders and those whom they represent are guided by truth and bring the wisdom born of firm moral principle to decisions affecting the life and future of the nation.

For well over a century, the United States of America has played an important role in the international community. On Friday, God willing, I will have the honor of addressing the United Nations organization, where I hope to encourage the efforts underway to make that institution an ever more effective voice for the legitimate aspirations of all the world's peoples.

On this, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the need for global solidarity is as urgent as ever, if all people are to live in a way worthy of their dignity—as brothers and sisters dwelling in the same house and around that table which God's bounty has set for all his children. America has traditionally shown herself generous in meeting immediate human needs, fostering development and offering relief to the victims of natural catastrophes. I am confident that this concern for the greater human family will continue to find expression in support for the patient efforts of international diplomacy to resolve conflicts and promote progress. In this way, coming generations will be able to live in a world where truth, freedom and justice can

flourish—a world where the God-given dignity and the rights of every man, woman and child are cherished, protected and effectively advanced.

Mr. President, dear friends, as I begin my visit to the United States, I express once more my gratitude for your invitation, my joy to be in your midst, and my fervent prayers that Almighty God will confirm this nation and its people in the ways of justice, prosperity and peace. God bless America.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATIONS WEEK

HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. REICHERT. Madam Speaker, April 13–19 is National Public Safety Telecommunications Week—a week dedicated to public-safety telecommunications who handle millions of calls every year with great efficiency. The selfless nature with which these public servants do their jobs is truly one of a kind. Since 1991, Congress has recognized their work. It gives me great pleasure to honor and personally say "thank-you," to the many men and women in my district and across Washington State that provide this valuable service to our communities each and every day.

As the former Sheriff of King County in Washington State, I worked alongside the men and women in our communications center, depending on them daily to provide me with the correct information in order to safely carry out my duties and keep our communities safe. I will never forget the great lengths the men and women at our communications center took to be sure I was okay after a head-on collision in 1991, and the care and compassion they showed me. After the collision, I was able to get out of my car and check on the others involved in the accident. I left my portable radio behind in the patrol car, not knowing that the men and women at the communications center were nearly in tears and beside themselves with worry, wondering if I was safe. It is a difficult and sometimes emotional duty they perform, not always knowing what's happening on the other end of the line because they can't see what's going on but can hear the cries for help and the commotion and confusion of the scene. I cannot adequately express how much it meant to me, knowing they cared so much about my well-being. The men and women at our communications centers are truly heroes to the law enforcement officers and citizens they serve.

A former Chief of Police in Colorado once wrote that dispatchers must possess, among other things, the humor of David Letterman, the endurance of the Energizer Bunny and the patience of Job. It is not often that such traits are found in one person. However, in my experience, to find such a person one need look no further than the telecommunications section of a local police, fire or Sheriff's office. These men and women work tirelessly with the heart of a servant; always ensuring the needs of the callers and the first responders they dispatch are met and placing their security above all else.

I encourage all my friends, colleagues, and neighbors to take a moment during this week

to thank a telecommunications dispatcher—let them know their service is appreciated and encourage them to continue providing guidance and help to their fellow citizens when they're most in need.

HONORING THE VISIT OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. EMANUEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the visit of the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, to the United States. In addition to commemorating this Pontiff's first visit to our Nation as the spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church, today also marks the 81st birthday for his Holiness. The theme for the Pope's U.S. visit is "On Christian Hope," and on behalf of the more than 200,000 Catholic residents of the Fifth Congressional District of Illinois, I would like to welcome Pope Benedict XVI to Washington, DC and the United States.

Pope Benedict XVI was elected the 265th Pope in August of 2005. Since that time he has traveled to nations all over the world spreading the beliefs of hope, peace, and justice. Throughout his life the Holy Father has touched the hearts of millions. From his humble beginnings in Germany through his current role as leader of the Roman Catholic Church, his religious doctrine and his belief in faith, hope, and kindness have guided his commitment to the Church and people around the world. He has connected with Catholics and non-Catholics alike through his dedication for advancement of human rights for all people.

The Holy Father has been honored throughout the world as a leader on issues that affect people of all races, religions, and creeds. He is an advocate for the poor and the needy, the hungry and the old, the sick and the tired. The belief that all citizens of the world should have rights is not simply a religious belief, but a human belief and one that we as Americans should honor.

Roman Catholics make up over 20 percent of the United States population and over one-sixth of the world's population. The Roman Catholic Church in the United States operates schools, universities, shelters, and hospitals to help and educate people of this great nation.

Madam Speaker, the Holy Father is a dedicated servant to the Church and his followers, and we are proud to welcome him on his first visit to America. I wish him continued success in his efforts for human rights and spiritual advancement, as well as a very happy birthday.

HONORING THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND RETIREMENT OF KEITH D. MCFARLAND, PH.D.

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. HALL of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a true public servant who has dedicated his entire life to higher education, Dr. Keith D. McFarland.

His teaching career began in 1966 while working on his doctoral degree, and since then, he has taught at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Dr. McFarland has published books, reviews and numerous articles dealing with twentieth century military history, and has also made professional presentations dealing with his discipline and graduate studies.

In 1969, Dr. McFarland became an Assistant Professor of History at East Texas State University. This position would pave the way for him to become President of the institution, which in 1996 became part of The Texas A&M University System as Texas A&M University-Commerce.

During Dr. McFarland's tenure, he was able to take Texas A&M University-Commerce to new academic heights—twenty new programs were introduced at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels. With enrollment at its highest point in 25 years, the university remains one of Texas' top producers of teachers, principals, superintendents, school counselors and educational diagnosticians. The MBA program is considered the number three best buy in the Nation.

In the past 4 years, administrative costs have dropped from 11½ percent to 9½ percent, while external gifts and research funding has increased by over 200 percent.

Passionate about improving a deteriorating physical plant, Dr. McFarland pushed for the first new Campus Master Plan in 40 years. In 2001, he began the first campus construction project since 1977. This project led to the demolition of forty-one defunct buildings, replacing them with modern and efficient classrooms and support facilities. Under construction today is the Sam Rayburn Student Center, named for one of my personal heroes.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to join the many graduates of Texas A&M University-Commerce, including my wife Mary Ellen, in congratulating Dr. McFarland upon his retirement. I can't think of a better testament to public service than educating tomorrow's leaders, and Dr. McFarland is to be commended for his commitment to the field of higher education. Please join me in honoring him on this prestigious occasion.

HONORING COMMANDER DANIEL K. BRIGGS FOR HIS CONTINUED SERVICE TO THE SONS OF AMVETS OF OHIO

HON. JIM JORDAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I am honored to commend to the House the distinguished service of Mr. Daniel K. Briggs to the Ohio Department of the Sons of AMVETS. A resident of Findlay, he will be recognized at a testimonial dinner this weekend for his outstanding work as Commander of the Ohio Department.

Born in Bucyrus, Ohio, Commander Briggs is a 1970 graduate of Bucyrus High School. His dedication to veterans' causes was evident from the start through his service to Bucyrus's Sons of the American Legion chapter.

Upon moving to Findlay in 1998, Commander Briggs continued this commitment to

our nation's veterans, joining Findlay's Sons of AMVETS squadron. He has held many offices in Findlay's Squadron 21—and continues in the position of First Vice Commander of the Findlay squadron even as he leads the state organization.

During his time as First Vice Commander of Ohio, six new squadrons were established in the state and Ohio membership increased to more than 8,000 sons, grandsons, brothers, and husbands of veterans.

Commander Briggs is a longtime employee of the General Electric plant in Bucyrus. Combining his work with his passion to give back to veterans, he started a program to donate light bulbs to veterans' homes and other veterans' organizations in Ohio. So many have benefited from the thousands of light bulbs donated through this program and the money saved as a result.

Commander Briggs has received numerous honors from his peers in the organization, including the 2006 Lifetime Achievement Award and the Gil Garza Award: the highest award bestowed by the Sons of AMVETS. His commitment to fulfilling needs at the Ohio Veterans Home in Sandusky garnered him the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services Leadership Award two years ago.

I am honored to join the chorus of well-wishers as the State of Ohio again recognizes his distinguished service to Ohio's veterans. He is a shining example of our mutual responsibility to serve those who devoted their lives to protecting the freedoms we enjoy.

SÖDERTÄLJE, SWEDEN ACCEPTS 5,000 IRAQI REFUGEES

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, as Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Helsinki Commission, I rise today to recognize the generosity of the people of Södertälje, Sweden, who have opened their doors to more than 5,000 Iraqi refugees. This small city has a population of 83,000 and has accepted more Iraqi refugees than the United States and Canada combined.

On April 10, the Mayor of Södertälje, Mr. Anders Lago, testified at a Helsinki Commission hearing entitled, "OSCE Partner States and Neighbors Overwhelmed by Iraqi Refugees: Band-aid Solutions to Implosion in the Middle East?" In his testimony, Mayor Lago noted, "The millions of refugees in the world must be a concern for us all, not just for those areas bordering on the breeding grounds of war, or for a small number of countries and cities such as Södertälje." In addition, he said, "Despite the fact that we need immigrants, Södertälje has become a town that must now say—STOP, STOP, STOP. Do not misunderstand me. We will always help others when we can. We must act when the lives of our brothers and sisters are in danger. It is imperative that we have a humane refugee policy world wide. Our common agreement that all people are equal, no matter what color, religion or gender, must become a reality."

Madam Speaker, the country of Sweden has accepted more than 30,000 Iraqi refugees

since 2003. This is no doubt a commendable act of humanitarian kindness. I offer my heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation to the government of Sweden which is truly committed to assisting Iraqi refugees.

It must also be noted that, while Mayor Lago has opened the doors of his small city to so many Iraqi refugees, the strains on its infrastructure have been tremendous. Nonetheless, his generosity, and that of the people of Södertälje, put the United States to shame. The Mayor has clearly gone above and beyond the call of duty to help refugees from Iraq and he is nothing short of a "humanitarian ambassador."

Madam Speaker. I thank Mayor Anders Lago and the people of Södertälje, Sweden for their kindness and generosity, and I submit the Mayor's statement for inclusion in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

TESTIMONY OF ANDERS LAGO—MAYOR OF SÖDERTÄLJE MUNICIPALITY AND CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BEFORE HELSINKI COMMISSION, APRIL 10, 2008

Chairman Hastings, Members of the Congressional Commission, Distinguished Speakers and Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost I would like to thank the Commission for your invitation. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about the difficult situation regarding the people now fleeing from Iraq.

Allow me to be totally frank. I am not the President, a Cabinet Minister, an Ambassador or even a Member of the Swedish Parliament. I am the Mayor of Södertälje, a small town with slightly more than eighty thousand inhabitants. I am here today as the representative from a small country on the northern edge of the European Union, but I can say with both pride and disappointment, that when it comes to refugees, I come from a great nation. The United States is the country in the western world that accepts the largest number of refugees. Directly thereafter comes Sweden, and according to census statistics, it is my hometown that receives most refugees in Sweden.

Many Iraqi refugees have sought shelter in Södertälje since the start of the war in Iraq. Almost all belong to the Christian minority. Södertälje accepts approximately five percent of all the Iraqi refugees who come to Europe. To illustrate this even more dramatically, my little town alone, receives more Iraqi refugees than the United States and Canada together.

We did not start the war in Iraq, however we assume a huge responsibility for those people who are affected.

Last week I met with seven Iraqi pupils at a local school. Meena, a girl in fifth grade, had a tear in her eye when she said "It is nice here in Sweden, but I miss my father." Her father is still in Iraq. Another little girl, Meryem, said with an edge to her voice, "If the war continues, the doors must be open for the refugees." All the children I met have relatives left in Iraq. And those children live in homes tormented with fear.

When I asked these children what they wanted to be when they are older, they brightened up and competed with one another to tell me. Renza wanted to become an artist. Steve wanted to become a policeman. Meena said shyly that she wanted to be a doctor. These children, in spite of all they have been through, have not let circumstances diminish their ability to dream of the future.

In Södertälje we face three problems. Firstly our schools and preschools are full; of the town's eight thousand pupils, five hundred are enrolled in the special preparation