

really don't know. We live in a dangerous world, and the criminal cartels that run loose on the southern border to me are just as dangerous to this Nation as the Taliban, and they are just as ruthless. Right now, they are in our own backyard.

In Texas, we are doing what we can on our own. Last week, the Governor of the State sent the Texas Rangers down to the southern border. They are being deployed in high traffic, high crime areas. The Governor has asked the National Guard to support the Texas Rangers. The Highway Patrol, the Department of Public Safety, aviation resources, and the Texas sheriffs are all part of this team to prevent the criminal element from coming into the United States. But our local law enforcement is overwhelmed, so the Federal Government needs to get its priorities straight.

Recently, at one of my town halls in August, talking about health care, an individual showed up and people in that town hall recognized who he was. His name was Ignacio Ramos. He and his wife, Monica, came just to appear at that town hall. When individuals in that town hall saw who he was, they stood, Mr. Speaker, for over 5 minutes and applauded the work of Ignacio Ramos and his partner and the work that they had done on the southern border of Texas. He and his partner, Jose Compean, were U.S. Border Patrol officers jailed for shooting a Mexican drug dealer. Their sentences were commuted, and properly so, by the prior administration. But it shows, Mr. Speaker, that our Federal Government doesn't have its priorities in order. They have them backwards.

One of the few things that our Constitution actually requires the Federal Government to do is to protect the national security of this Nation. Border security is a national security issue, and foreign criminals that have committed crimes in this Nation and been lawfully deported should be sent back home. We should do the obvious things first when it comes to national security. If a foreign national commits a felony in the United States and is deported but the home nation refuses to take back its outlaw, that country should lose foreign aid and the legal right to have its citizens come into the United States under our visa program.

And that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF ACORN WARRANTED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I am only going to speak for about a minute because I am going to be a little bit redundant.

The last couple of nights we have been talking about the ACORN organization. The ACORN organization over the past couple of decades got, you know, 30, 40, 50 million dollars for their services, quote/unquote. Now in the last authorization and appropriation bills, they have gotten \$8.5 billion, and this is an organization in just the last couple of weeks we found has been corrupt. They have been extolling the virtues of setting up a prostitution ring with young women coming into the country or being brought into the country illegally. And it is caught on television. It is caught on tapes.

It is really tragic that an organization like that should have any amount of legitimacy, let alone get taxpayers' dollars.

Tonight, I come here for a minute to say we need a thorough investigation of ACORN and why they have been authorized to get up to \$8.5 billion in taxpayers' money for the services that they perform. There is something funny going on here, and a lot of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have been reluctant to move towards an investigation. And the White House hasn't said much about this. I think probably because the President was the beneficiary of a lot of support from the ACORN organization when he was running for President.

Nevertheless, this should be investigated very thoroughly. We should not have a corrupt organization, known to be corrupt, proven to be corrupt. You see it every night on television. We should make sure that they don't get one dime of taxpayer dollars, and since they have been getting this money and we have authorized \$8.5 billion more for them to be able to utilize, there needs to be an investigation.

Now, the leader, the Republican leader of the House, has authored a letter which has been signed by many Members of the minority. I would urge Members on the majority side of the aisle to join with us in signing that letter requesting an investigation. This is something that should be done. It should not be postponed. We should get to the bottom of why ACORN got this money and why they have been doing what they have been doing.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PRAYER IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. FORBES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday of this week in the United States District Court of Northern Virginia, in Florida, Pensacola Division, a principal who served his school district for 30 years and an athletic director who served them for 40 years in a little school district in Santa Rosa County will be carried to a hearing in Federal court.

So why did over 60 Members of Congress today sign the letter standing with that principal and that athletic director and against this Federal judge? Why is it different than so many other cases? Why is it special? Because, Mr. Speaker, it is one of the first times we have literally had the potential for the criminalization of prayer in the United States of America.

What was the big crime that this principal and athletic director did? What was the great offense? This school principal, with 30 years of service, asked the athletic director of the school, who had 40 years of service, to offer a blessing before a meal that was being held for private donors to the school's athletic program.

The Federal judge for this court has set a date for this Thursday, suggesting that they could be punished with a \$5,000 fine, 6 months in prison, and the revocation of their retirement benefits. Why? Because one of them prayed. Why? Because one of them asked for the prayer. In fact, under the order issued by this judge in this court, this principal would not have been able to ask the President of the United States to speak at the school if the President concluded his speech, as he often does, with the phrase "God bless America."

If this action is allowed to stand, make no mistake, there will come a day when the Speaker of this House will be hauled into Federal court and threatened with jail because she dares to stand at that podium where you stand tonight and ask our chaplain to start our day with the prayer.

If this case stands, there will come a day when that chaplain is carried to court and threatened with jail because he offers that prayer he is asked to offer.

How far we've come from the day when 56 of the greatest Americans ever birthed pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to defend a set of rights that ultimately gave us the right to stand on this floor tonight, a set of rights that have guided this Nation through darkness and through the light. But most of all, a set of rights given to us by the very Creator, the mention of whom by this principal or this athletic director could now lead them to a jail term.

Mr. Speaker, tonight we need to ask how far we have come. And if we do, the answer is clear: Too far. It is time for Americans to simply say enough is enough.

PRAYER IMPORTANT PART OF
OUR SOCIETY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mrs. BACHMANN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BACHMANN. Mr. Speaker, prayer has been an important part of our country since the founding of our great Nation, and attempts to take prayer away from the American people are attempts to take away the essential freedoms that have been guaranteed to every American since the beginning of our United States Constitution.

I thank Mr. FORBES for bringing this to the attention of this body, and I share his shock, I share his dismay that criminal charges were brought on behalf of Mrs. Winkler, Mr. Lay and Mr. Freeman for the simple act of engaging in prayer.

As the court explained in Santa Fe, not all religious speech that occurs in public schools or at school-sponsored events is speech attributable to government. There were no students present at either event.

Additionally, the court held the proposition that schools do not endorse everything they fail to censor is not complicated. The Supreme Court held that "there is a crucial difference between government speech endorsing religion, which the establishment clause forbids, and private speech endorsing religion, which the free speech and free exercise clauses protect."

In no way were these individuals trying to associate the school with prayer. They were offering the prayer, one at a privately funded event, the other at an event with private donors. The court held that "private religious speech, far from being a First Amendment orphan, is as fully protected under the free speech clause as secular private expression."

Teachers and administrators, when they act in their official capacity, may not encourage or discourage or participate in prayer with students. However, teachers may take part in religious activities before or after school or during lunch since the context makes clear they are not acting in an official capacity. Although schools may not direct or endorse religious activities, students do not shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is that this displays a trend and a tendency that we are seeing where groups like the ACLU strike at one school district after another, one public display of religious expression after another, until they have reached their ultimate goal, which is to purge the marketplace of ideas of any semblance of religious expression. At that point, Mr. Speaker, we will have turned the First Amendment on its head, and the Founders in turn will be rolling in their graves.

PACE HIGH SCHOOL PRAYER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, there is trouble brewing in the small community of Pace, Florida, a community of less than 8,000 people just south of my hometown, and full of hard-working Americans where I believe a Federal judge has gone well outside the bounds of the Constitution to declare that prayer offered among adults is illegal. That's right. The judicial branch is once again trying to act like the legislative branch, and in doing so is hindering the First Amendment rights of Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I am not a lawyer and this is not a courtroom, but as a Member of Congress, I swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. And so help me God, that is what I intend to do.

The facts of the case in *Does v. School Board of Santa Rosa County* are clear. The Federal district court, without a hearing, issued an injunction preventing any school employee from promoting or facilitating prayer at any school-sponsored event. That action alone tramples upon the First Amendment rights of a specific group of people, denying them the equal protection that is provided under the very Constitution that we believe in.

The same Federal district court has now gone on to prohibit all employees from engaging in prayer or religious activities. The same court now thinks that Pace High School Principal Frank Lay and Athletic Director Robert Freeman violated this injunction at a private event with zero student participation. That the court would somehow consider this action to be criminal behavior is simply unconscionable.

However, Frank Lay and Robert Freeman now face criminal contempt charges for praying before a meal that was to be shared. All of this despite the fact that the Supreme Court itself has found that the free speech clause protects private religious speech. The Supreme Court has further gone to find that not all religious speech that occurs in public schools or at a school-sponsored event is attributable to the government.

As lawmakers, we cannot sit idly by and let this happen. As Members of Congress, we must act to uphold the Constitution. And as Americans, we must fight to ensure that our rights to freedom of religion and freedom of speech are not taken away.

America is a Nation of principles. We can sit here all night and argue about whether we are a Nation of Judeo-Christian principles or of secular principles. But the fact is that our Constitution protects all Americans and a court has no place deciding that some Americans do not warrant those protections. The Founding Fathers would be appalled, and I certainly am as well.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. TIM MURPHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FREEDOM OF PRAYER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address an issue that Americans from the time of our Founders found fundamental in the forming of our country. That issue is the freedom of prayer as it relates to that right as defined under our Constitution in Amendment 1, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Tomorrow, in the State of Florida, two men, including the Pace High School principal and athletic director, face criminal contempt charges for prayer offered at a fieldhouse luncheon for private contributors in which no students were present.

The right to practice religion is among the most fundamental of the freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. While this right is guaranteed through our Constitution under the legislative authority and responsibility of the legislative branch, it was the judicial branch and judges, I would argue, without constitutional authority, legislating from the bench, that imposed an unconstitutional infringement on the rights of teachers, administrators, and students to free exercise of their religion.

This outrageous action was driven by a lawsuit filed by the ACLU against the Santa Rosa County School District, claiming that some teachers and administrators were endorsing religion in their schools. The school district entered into an agreement without any legal argument that prohibited prayer at all school-sponsored events and even prohibited all employees from engaging in prayer. Prohibited individuals from praying.

Principal Franklin Lay and Athletic Director Robert Freeman offered a prayer. The prayer was offered innocently, without intent to violate the order, and they didn't do it to take a stand against the order. They did not realize the order applied to them in such a way—a prayer before a meal at an event with private contributors in which no students were present.

The U.S. District Court initiated criminal contempt proceedings and the