

While the situation in Iraq is perhaps the most glaring, it is but representative of a larger trend in the Middle East where religious minorities face growing discrimination, repression and outright persecution. The Journal continued, “In Egypt, Coptic Christians have been brutalized. Assaults on churches increase around Easter or Christmas, as worshipers attempt to observe holy days.”

During this season of Advent as millions around the world anticipate Christmas, let us be mindful of the fear gripping these communities and commit ourselves to prioritizing their protection and preservation throughout the Middle East. We have a moral obligation to do nothing less. For as the famed abolitionist William Wilberforce once said, “Having heard all this, you may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say that you did not know.”

I close with the solemn warning of the Chaldean Assyrian Syriac Council of America to President Obama, in a letter sent this November, in which they noted that the current situation in Iraq “promises more innocent Christian blood in Iraq, more turmoil in that country, and more shame for America.”

CHALDEAN ASSYRIAN SYRIAC
COUNCIL
OF AMERICA,

Southfield, MI, December 6, 2010.

Congressman FRANK WOLF,
House of Representatives, Cannon Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN WOLF: We are witnessing a tragic and historic event: The end of Iraq's native Christian community. And, even more tragically, this has happened due in part because of failed U.S. Policy, with the majority of congressional members taking little or no notice of the destruction of an ethnic and religious identity few know about.

The Christians of Iraq are also known as Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs or Arameans (or even ChaldoAssyrians or Chaldean Syriac Assyrians). They are the heirs of the ancient and pre-Christian civilization of Mesopotamia, the descendants of the Assyrians and Babylonians of old. They are also the descendants of the first Semitic-speaking Christians, whose churches spanned the entire Middle East and reached China and Japan. At one time, what is today known as the Assyrian Church of the East had more adherents than the Catholic and Protestant Churches combined. Their language is Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ.

Mesopotamia holds a special place in Biblical history. It is the land from which Abraham left his home, ‘Ur of the Chaldees; where the Hebrew people lived their captivity and survived into the modern era; where the fall of Nineveh was foreseen by the Prophet Nahum, whose grave lies in Alquish, in Nineveh, the ancient capital of Assyria visited by the Prophet Jonah; where Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt the glorious Babylon where the Prophet Daniel lived.

During the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad (758–1258 AD), Mesopotamia's Christians contributed greatly to the advancement of Islamic civilization through their literary and scientific accomplishments, including the translations of important Greek works into Syriac (Aramaic) and Arabic. It was through such accomplishments that the West came to know of the “Golden Age” of Islamic civilization and the Caliphate of Baghdad. Indeed, the very existence of the “House of Wisdom,” an institution dedicated to the translation and documentation of all knowledge on philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and other sciences into Arabic at the time owes itself to the Christians of Iraq.

As a result of the turbulence caused by a pattern of religious persecution and ethnic intolerance, the Christians of Iraq maintained themselves in the area of northern Mesopotamia or Assyria, also known as the Nineveh Plain. Here, and in the surrounding areas, they maintained their religious and ethnic identity and lived in hundreds of villages that dotted the landscape around the Tigris River until the coming modernity, at which time they suffered massacres and genocides at the hands of the Ottomans and their supporters. The First World War saw the uprooting and destruction of hundreds of Aramaic-speaking Christian villages in what is today Southeastern Turkey, Northwestern Iran, and Northern Iraq. Still, the Christian population survived, with its ethnic and religious identity intact.

The formation of the Kingdom Iraq resulted in further tragedy for Christians, with the most infamous being the Semel Massacre; where thousands of women, children, and unarmed men were slaughtered in cold blood, after being given assurances of protection by the Iraqi government. Crowds in Baghdad streets jubilantly welcomed Iraqi soldiers in what may be one of the most shameful displays in Iraqi history.

Despite the tragedies, the Christian population recovered and helped usher in an age of education and enlightenment for Iraq. Christians made up the most prominent doctors, engineers and scientists in Iraq. As any knowledgeable Iraqi would attest, they constituted, as a group, the most valuable human asset Iraq had. And despite the regime of Saddam Hussein, though politically repressed, Christians excelled in business and science.

Today, this minority may not be so lucky. The massacre that took place in the Lady of Salvation Church on Sunday, October 31, 2010, and the subsequent targeted killings afterwards, has many Christian leaders speaking of leaving Iraq for good. Recently, Archbishop Athanasios Dawood of the Syriac Orthodox Church is saying, “I say clearly and now—the Christian people should leave their beloved land of our ancestors and escape the premeditated ethnic cleansing,” he told BBC. “This is better than having them killed one by one.”

Scholars Eden Naby and Jamsheed Chosky recently wrote in Foreign Policy that the end of Christianity in Iraq is near. In a letter to President Obama, the Chaldean Assyrian Syriac Council of America, an organization serving this community in the United States, noted that the current situation “promises more innocent Christian blood in Iraq, more turmoil in that country, and more shame for America.”

As members of the world community, and as Americans, we bear a responsibility not to allow the disintegration and destruction of this community. Clearly, our entry into Iraq has caused consequences that we cannot walk away from.

Iraq's Christians have a unique heritage whose loss will be mourned by not only Iraq, but the United States and the World. Some have proposed a wholesale evacuation of this community in order to save it. Yet, there are other viable options; such as the recognition of an autonomous zone to be protected and monitored by the United Nations and the United States. It is time to consider the plight of this community seriously and propose action.

Regards,

ISMAT KARMO,
Chairman.

H.R. 4173, THE DODD-FRANK WALL STREET REFORM AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT—CLARIFICATION OF INTENT WITH RESPECT TO TITLE V, SUBTITLE B

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 15, 2010

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Madam Speaker, as a House conferee for H.R. 4173, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (“Dodd-Frank Act”), and the chief sponsor of the Nonadmitted and Reinsurance Reform Act (NRRA) that was included as Title V, Subtitle B of the Dodd-Frank Act, I rise to reaffirm these important provisions. The President signed the Dodd-Frank Act into law earlier this year (P.L. 111–203).

The NRRA seeks to address an issue that most people have never heard of. But it is an issue that we in this House have successfully addressed a number of times in the past few years, and one that affects the lives of millions of Americans, individuals and businesses large and small.

Non-admitted insurance, or surplus lines, is specialty insurance you cannot purchase in the traditional, admitted market. Often called the “safety net” of the insurance market, surplus lines provides for coverage when the traditional market is not available. This is insurance for satellites, toxic chemicals, new inventions, or insurance on homes and businesses in a scarce market.

With my distinguished colleague from New Jersey, Mr. GARRETT, I sponsored the Nonadmitted and Reinsurance Reform Act to fix the fragmented, cumbersome regulation of this important marketplace. The goal of the NRRA was not to eliminate regulatory protections, but to streamline the regulatory regime to enable insurers and brokers to more easily and efficiently comply with state rules and provide much-needed insurance protections to consumers. The law accomplishes this by giving sole regulatory authority over a surplus lines transaction—including the authority to collect premium taxes—to the home state of the insured.

The NRRA passed the House four times—three times as a stand-alone measure and, finally, as part of the Dodd-Frank Act. With the law's enactment, the responsibility for implementation moves to the states. I'm told that the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) is moving swiftly to draft a model agreement and statutory language to enable the states to collect and share surplus lines premium taxes. This sounds like a promising start, but only if the agreement and authorizing legislation are in keeping with the letter and spirit of the NRRA: to provide a simpler, uniform tax reporting and payment process with a single payment, to the insured's home state, for each transaction.

Premium tax simplification, while important, is but one part of the NRRA's goals. The broader intent of the law is to provide a comprehensive, uniform solution to the current regulatory mess by addressing the full spectrum of surplus lines regulation: declination and reporting requirements, broker licensing requirements and electronic processing, insurer eligibility standards, and treatment of sophisticated commercial purchasers. Most of

the provisions of the law will become effective next July without state action—as I mentioned, the rules of the insured's home state govern multi-state transactions and the insurer eligibility requirements and sophisticated commercial purchaser standards are set forth in the federal law.

Having said that, however, in order to truly realize the promise of the new law, the states need to take this opportunity to adopt a single set of uniform surplus lines regulatory requirements—requirements that are not just similar but the same in every state. I have no stake in how this is accomplished—by individual state laws based on NAIC or NCOIL models, through a standard-setting compact (which is authorized under the NRRA), or in some other manner. But it can and should be done—and the states should realize that now is the time to do it.

I urge the Congress to continue closely monitoring the full implementation of these important provisions.

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN ARNOLD

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 15, 2010

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor John Arnold, the Executive Director of the Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank. After working tirelessly for 28 years to help feed the hungry, John is retiring due to his advanced, inoperable cancer. My prayers and heartfelt thanks go to John and his family.

As the Executive Director for the West Michigan Food Bank for the past 21 years, John has run one of the most innovative food banks in the entire country. During his career, John has helped secure and distribute more than 300 million pounds of food aid across Michigan.

In an ambitious effort to end hunger throughout Michigan, John's food bank took on the challenge of adding the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to their service area. In addition to extending service to remote rural areas, John has developed more than 1,300 outlets for food, to ensure that every person in their 40-county service area has reasonable access to food aid.

The West Michigan Food Bank is so successful that it is able to provide food for less than a tenth of what it would cost at a grocery store. In 2010, the food bank expects to hit the 25 million pound mark for distributed food.

In 1994, under John's leadership, the food bank launched their "Waste Not, Want Not Project" with Michigan State University, to determine how communities in America can adequately address their hunger problems. This project has won international awards and has allowed the food bank to meet its goal of 15 percent growth per year until all needs are met.

As a participant in my church's food distribution program in Grand Rapids, I recognize full well the dramatic impact a little food aid can make in the lives of struggling families.

Although John's life may regrettably be cut short by his aggressive cancer, he should take comfort in knowing that his efforts have helped save and improve the lives of thousands of hungry people across Michigan. We are most

grateful for and appreciative of all that John Arnold has done to aid the poor and hungry people in Western and Northern Michigan. He serves as a model for all food bank directors and executives across our Nation.

TRIBUTE TO AIR FORCE SENIOR AIRMAN MARK ANDREW FOR-ESTER

HON. ROBERT B. ADERHOLT

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 15, 2010

Mr. ADERHOLT. Madam Speaker, one of the most somber and humbling duties of our jobs is when we attend the funerals of our fallen soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. On October 7, 2010, I attended such a funeral for a fallen airman who not only was my constituent, but was a family I had grown up with.

I would like to pay tribute to this American Patriot from my hometown of Haleyville, Alabama, who was killed in action on September 29, 2010, in the Uruzgan Province of Afghanistan.

Air Force Senior Airman Mark Andrew Forster paid the ultimate sacrifice to defend our great nation. Mark was assigned to the 21st Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina. He served as an Air Force Combat Controller and was embedded with a Special Forces Unit in Afghanistan.

When I think of a young man like Mark, I think of words like; honor and bravery. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."—John 15:13. Mark died while protecting his friends and fellow service members.

In the fall of 1864, President Abraham Lincoln, wrote the following message to the mother of a fallen soldier. "I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom." President Lincoln's words ring more powerful today than ever before.

Mark earned numerous awards during his service including a Bronze Star with Valor and a Purple Heart.

It is an honor to be able to say that I was associated with Mark and his family over the years. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with Mark's family and all those who knew and loved him.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GARY C. PETERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 15, 2010

Mr. PETERS. Madam Speaker, on December 9, 2010 I missed rollcall vote No. 627 because I was attending a White House signing ceremony for the Animal Crush Video Prohibition Act of 2010—legislation which I helped author. Had I been present I would have voted in favor of H.R. 6412, the Access to Criminal History Records for State Sentencing Commissions Act of 2010, legislation which will help improve criminal sentencing procedures in states throughout the country.

99-YEAR TRIBAL LEASE AUTHORITY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 14, 2010

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, S.1448 is identical to legislation that I introduced in the House of Representatives with Representative SCHRADER in March. The bill accomplishes two things: 1) it corrects a disparity between federally recognized tribes in Oregon in how these tribes lease land held in trust, and 2) it incentivizes long term investment that will attract businesses and create jobs for Oregon tribes and nearby communities.

Currently, four of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon are able to lease land held in trust by the federal government for up to 99 years without going through a maze of bureaucracy and red tape at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The 99 year lease authority is crucial to attracting and retaining long-term investment, incentivizing economic development projects on trust land, and creating jobs for communities that need them the most.

But five of Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes—the Coquille, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw, the Klamath, and the Burns Paiute do NOT have this important authority. These tribes are limited to 25 year leases or must rely on a lethargic BIA to approve longer leases on an individual basis.

S.1448 fixes this disparity and gives all nine federally recognized tribes the same authority to pursue economic development and job-creating activities on land held in trust.

The bill enjoys bipartisan support, has no opposition in the state of Oregon, and passed the U.S. Senate without amendment and by unanimous consent. This is a no-brainer. It's good for the Tribes. It's good for rural and tribal communities. The bill will create jobs and incentivize financial investment. I ask my colleagues to pass this bill today on suspension and send it to President Obama for his signature.

HONORING SERGEANT MATTHEW THOMAS ABBATE

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 15, 2010

Ms. LEE of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the extraordinary life of Matthew Abbate, Sergeant of the United States Marine Corps. Loved and respected by his family, friends and fellow Marines, Sergeant Abbate was killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan on December 2, 2010. It was his second tour of duty.

At just 26 years of age, Sergeant Abbate had already accomplished many things—including his life-long dream of joining the Marine Corps. He had traveled the world, started a family, and achieved satisfaction and recognition in his military career.

Sergeant Abbate grew up in Piedmont, California with his father Sal Abbate, a local business owner, and his stepmother Jane