

Religious liberty is, of course, a founding principle of the United States. The first line of the First Amendment states it flatly: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ."

Abundant experience shows that a government's lack of religious tolerance is a sure indicator of broader oppression. And it is a very modern problem. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, about 70 percent of the world's people live under regimes that restrict religious freedom.

The Clinton and George W. Bush administrations both named ambassadors-at-large for religious freedom but failed to afford them the status required by the 1998 law. Passed unanimously by Congress, the law requires the ambassador to be the principal adviser to the president and the secretary of state on matters of international religious freedom.

As noted by Joseph Grieboski, the Lackawanna County native who founded the Institute on Religion and Public Policy, the current administration would further diminish the status of the ambassador by having the eventual appointee report far down the chain of command rather than directly to the president or secretary of state.

Other ambassadors-at-large, for counterterrorism, war crimes and global women's issues, report directly to the president or secretary, or both, as required by the laws establishing the positions.

Religious liberty is a human rights issue inextricably woven into America's position of promoting democracy and freedom around the world. President Obama should signal repressive regimes that it is an important matter to the United States by quickly naming an ambassador and having that person consult directly with him and the secretary of state.

RECOGNIZING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL RESOURCE AND EDUCATION CENTER OF FLORIDA

HON. ALAN GRAYSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 15, 2010

Mr. GRAYSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. On this day, we remember and memorialize the 6 million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. In honor of this day, I would like to recognize the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida, which includes a staff and board of community activists who work tirelessly to combat anti-Semitism, racism, and prejudice through education and cultural programming.

The Center was founded in June of 1980, when Valencia Community College and the Jewish Federation of Greater Orlando came together to sponsor a series of community-wide events on the Holocaust and relevant human rights issues. The focus was on the social, historical, moral, ethical and economic implications of the Holocaust for today. Subsequently, a conference, co-sponsored by the newly created Holocaust Center, Florida Humanities Council, Valencia Community College and the Jewish Federation of Greater Orlando, was held in March 1981. The same coalition sponsored a Conference on Terrorism the following year, and in 1986 a Holocaust Center facility was constructed, a professional mu-

seum exhibit was installed, and a library with documentary and archival collections was developed. The Center received national and international recognition for its unique facility—the only one of its kind in the Southeast until 1996—as well as for its dedication to world-class, innovative programming.

The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to use the lessons of the Holocaust as a tool to teach the principles of good citizenship to thousands of people of all ages, religions and backgrounds each year. The Center hosts numerous educational and cultural events to promote their organization's mission. They've hosted events and activities ranging from conferences, speakers, and days of recognition, to marches, museum exhibits and the construction of a center on the Holocaust. This work has made a tremendous impact in Central Florida by engaging, educating and inspiring all of its citizens. The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center is ensuring we never forget and never repeat the tragedy of the past.

Madam Speaker, it is a tremendous honor to recognize the accomplishments of the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center in promoting acceptance and tolerance in the Central Florida community. As we all know, an organization can only be as good as the impressive staff and board that help run it. I applaud the Holocaust Center's board, which is represented by Central Florida's interfaith, multicultural community and the Center's staff, which is comprised of dedicated community activists. It is crucial we learn from our past to help better our future. Eva London Ritt, who many consider the cornerstone of the Center's staff and good works, said it best, "Be aware of what is written and spoken. Be aware of the first hint of hate or bias against any individual or group and then act. One person can make a difference. Be a kind person. Kindness rubs off. With kindness, you can improve the world around you."

PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, March 21, 2010

Mrs. MALONEY. Madam Speaker, today we will cast a series of historic votes.

The outcome of the votes will result in 32 million people without health insurance gaining coverage and 94 percent of Americans with guaranteed health care coverage.

In New York State, close to 2.5 million people who are currently uninsured will have health care coverage once the day is over.

To get to this point, the House had to first vote on the Senate passed health care bill and then vote on a bill that makes important changes that have been negotiated by the House to dramatically improve the Senate bill—this is called the reconciliation bill.

Without a promise of these important fixes, like taking out several of these "special deals" I would not vote for the Senate bill. However, with the guarantee of these improvements, today I will cast my vote in favor of the Senate health care bill.

I appreciate the opportunity to outline some of my concerns with the Senate passed health care reform bill.

Most importantly, the Senate bill would have cost New York close to a billion of dollars in Medicaid funding. Unlike the House bill which saves New York billions, the Senate bill penalizes States like New York for its expanded coverage of its citizens under Medicaid. Under the Senate bill, States that have not significantly expanded their Medicaid programs would receive a large influx of Federal funding, but States like New York are penalized for doing the right thing. The House bill contained a more equitable solution to sharing the costs of Medicaid expansion under health care reform by providing increased Federal funding for Medicaid expansion regardless of existing State eligibility levels. FMAP provisions in the Senate bill would result in a significant loss to New York State as a significant number of uninsured New Yorkers who are eligible for Medicaid enroll, while the House bill fairly shares in the costs for currently enrolled and newly enrolled childless adults and parents. Fortunately, the reconciliation bill that we will be voting on, fixes this problem, and the distribution of Federal Medicaid funding is more equitable and saves money for New York.

The Senate bill similarly penalized New York in terms of its treatment of payments to Disproportionate Share Hospitals, DSH. Historically, Medicaid hospital reimbursement rates, on average, have been lower than the cost of providing care, and DSH payments were instituted to cover reimbursement shortfalls and uncompensated care costs. The need for DSH reimbursement will remain even after health care reform is passed since there will millions of newly eligible individuals who will receive care through Medicaid.

The Senate bill reduced Federal funding for Medicaid DSH payments by \$19 billion and Medicare DSH payments by \$24 billion over 10 years; reductions to DSH payments of this magnitude will jeopardize the stability and the services provided by our safety net system. The original House bill which I supported had included more reasonable reductions of \$10 billion each from Medicaid and Medicare DSH and similarly, the reconciliation bill, while not as good as the original House bill, reduces the cuts that the Senate bill would have imposed.

I am also opposed to the restrictive abortion language contained in the Senate bill. The Senate bill is significantly onerous, stigmatizing abortion services and creating obstacles for those consumers who would like to purchase this coverage and to those insurance companies would like to provide this coverage. Though I am strongly opposed to these restrictions, I am voting for the final bill because overall, reforming our current health care system dramatically and positively impacts women. As Chair of the Joint Economic Committee, I prepared a report that looked at the specific health care challenges facing women and how women would benefit from comprehensive health care reform. More than 2 million women have lost their health insurance since the recession began due to their own job loss or their spouse's job loss. 1.3 million women lost their health coverage when their spouse lost his job and an additional 800,000 women lost their health care as a result of their own job loss. More than 2 million women have faced the brutal double-whammy of a lost job and lost health care. While job losses

during this recession were much greater for men than women, women have fared worse than men in recent months. And this has had real consequences for women's health care coverage: in the last 6 months, the number of women losing health insurance benefits due to their own job losses has increased by nearly 50 percent. Over one quarter, 28 percent of women ages 19–24 have no health insurance at all. Part of that number is likely explained by the economic challenges facing young women. Young women have been hit hard in the recession, facing an unemployment rate of 13.1 percent, significantly higher than the national rate of 9.7 percent, and making it less likely that they will have job-based coverage. Health care reform will help us to overcome inequities at the center of the current system—where women pay more than men for the same coverage, or even, where women who are not smokers pay more for coverage than men who are smokers. My report and the reality is that the current health care system is serving women poorly, the recession has made the situation worse, and now more than ever, we need health care reform.

I have been a strong supporter of the public option and voted for the House bill in large part because it contained a public option. I believed then and I believe now that a public insurance option will increase competition and reform our current system. Every day, 14,000 Americans lose their health care coverage. A public option would have brought down costs and expanded access. Unfortunately, the Senate was unable to pass a bill with a public option, though many Senators supported the provision. While I am disappointed that the final bill that will go to the President for signature will not include it, I feel confident that the end product will achieve the goals of covering the vast majority of Americans, reduce health care costs, and reduce our deficit by trillions of dollars.

Madam Speaker, it is clear that the Senate bill had flaws and as passed was not as good of a bill for the State of New York as it should have been. If I was just casting one vote today, it would be a no vote on this bill. However, we are being given the opportunity to fix and improve the Senate bill with the upcoming reconciliation bill which is why I am able to vote in favor of this bill. With this vote, I am voting in favor of helping Americans gain affordable, quality health care they both need and deserve, I am voting in favor of dramatically reducing the Federal deficit by \$143 billion in the first 10 years, and I am voting in favor of improving coverage by removing denials of coverage based on preexisting conditions or gender. I am voting in favor of a strong and healthy future for all Americans and for our great country.

EXPRESSING SYMPATHY TO THE PEOPLE OF POLAND

SPEECH OF

HON. MIKE QUIGLEY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 14, 2010

Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Speaker, I stand here today to join my Polish American constituents, the Polish nation, and the world in mourning those who perished in this week-end's tragic plane crash.

The crash that killed President Lech Kaczynski of Poland, First Lady Maria Kaczynski, and many ranking military and civilian officers was aptly described by one paper as "literally, a nation colliding with its past." The 97 aboard the plane were traveling to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre in Western Russia. Shrouded in secrecy, the events that took place in Katyn had long been concealed or denied. These events included a massacre of 20,000 Polish prisoners of war, killed and discarded in unmarked graves by Soviet secret police in 1940. But, many anticipated that the commemorative events scheduled to take place for the anniversary would be a positive step forward, a warming between countries.

One of my constituents, Wojciech Seweryn, no doubt held a wish for such a reception, and was aboard the plane on his way to participate. A Polish artist and influential member of Chicago's Polish community, Mr. Seweryn's father died at Katyn and Seweryn himself spearheaded the construction of a memorial to the event at a cemetery in Niles, Illinois. Seweryn was on hand last year when the monument was dedicated, as he was at many important events in the Chicago area's strong Polish community. Poles in Chicago make up the largest ethnically Polish population of any city outside of Poland, second only to Warsaw, the capital of Poland. The Polish American community will undoubtedly struggle to fill the void left by Mr. Seweryn and all those lost a few short days ago.

This loss of Polish leadership included a President hailed as a distinguished leader dedicated to advancing the ideals of democracy and freedom. President Kaczynski supported democracy movements in Ukraine and Georgia. He tirelessly advocated for shedding light on painful moments in Poland's past. It is therefore incredibly sad that his life, and the lives of so many other distinguished leaders, were claimed in the dark forest outside Smolensk, Russia, this past weekend.

Poland is a true friend and ally of the United States. Our two nations just recently celebrated 90 years of diplomatic relations. The contributions of Polish Americans to the United States are numerous. From the families who lost loved ones in the plane crash, to the nation of Poland, to Chicago's own shaken Polish American community, this loss will be felt around the world for years to come. We will stand with our friends as they find the resilience to emerge stronger, as they have before, following this unimaginable tragedy. As Adam Michnik, an intellectual imprisoned six times by the former puppet-Soviet Communist rulers, said: "... in my sadness I am optimistic because Putin's strong and wise declaration has opened a new phase in Polish-Russian relations, and because we Poles are showing we can be responsible and stable." I look forward to Poland's recovery, and re-emergence as a country that can, and will, overcome.

HONORING DR. BENJAMIN L.
HOOKS

HON. MARCIA L. FUDGE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 15, 2010

Ms. FUDGE. Madam Speaker, this morning, Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks—civil rights leader,

minister, scholar, and attorney—passed away. With great sorrow, I extend my condolences and sympathy to his family and friends.

Dr. Hooks was a champion of minorities and the poor, who raised the stature of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People in his 15 years as executive director (1977–1992). He repositioned the organization to increase its national prominence and added thousands of new members.

A staunch advocate of self-help among the Black community, who urged wealthy and middle-class Blacks to give time and resources to those less fortunate, Dr. Hooks once stated, "It's time today to bring it out of the closet. No longer can we proffer polite, explicable, reasons why Black America cannot do more for itself. I'm calling for a moratorium on excuses. I challenge Black America today, all of us, to set aside our alibis." His challenge powerfully resonated throughout the NAACP and, in turn, impacted the Black community.

Throughout his life, Dr. Hooks continued his advocacy and focused on opening channels of dialogue among all races and classes in America. Upon retirement he served as a professor and later returned to preaching.

In honor of a man who dedicated his life to the service of others, I encourage each of us to remember Dr. Benjamin Hooks great contributions to our Nation.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX RELIEF

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 15, 2010

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, it has been a little over a year since this Congress approved, and the President signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

As we are set to finish tax season this week, the Middle Class is continuing to see the positive impacts from this bill and other significant pieces of legislation.

95 percent of families have already received immediate and sustained tax relief with the Making Work Pay Tax Cut.

First-time homebuyers were able to take advantage of significant tax benefits—benefits that have now been increased and expanded.

The Recovery Act also provided up to \$2,500 in tax credits to help 4 million students go to college.

We have also provided tremendous relief to small businesses struggling to stay afloat in these tough economic times.

The Recovery Act cut the capital gains tax on investors who buy and hold small business stock over 5 years which incentivizes investments in America's small businesses.

We also offered tax credits to companies that hire recently discharged and unemployed veterans and young adults who are having trouble finding work.

This relief wasn't limited to the Recovery Act.

Last month, we passed the most sweeping healthcare reform package since the 1960s.

This provides 40 million families with incomes up to \$88,000 with tax credits to help pay for healthcare.

It also provides \$40 billion in tax credits for 4 million American small businesses.