

oath of office you must serve the public. She did so.

As a member of the United Way board, one of the first African Americans to ever serve on our Harris County United Way board, she made sure that the vulnerable were taken care of. A member of the Harris County Council of Organizations. An active and loving member of the Galilee Baptist Church, where she loved her pastor, Pastor Davis, and the first lady.

More importantly, let me tell you that she was a woman of courage and strength and inspiration. I loved her when she stood and fought. She would understand all the debate, those who are against and those who are for. But I tell you she would tell it straight. And the way she would say it is that health care is going to help those who have never had health care before. She would say to those soldiers “thank you” for fighting on the front lines for our freedom. And she would say to them, I am using that freedom.

Because you know, Beulah Shepard had to buy a poll tax to vote. She bought it in 1948. She came to Texas from Louisiana. She was named for her grandmother. She came from the salt of the earth. But she is an inspiration to all of us.

And I am excited today to be able to say that Beulah Shepard lived to be 87 years old and had as one of the starring moments of her life to be able to vote for President Barack Obama. And why do I say that? Because Beulah Shepard walked and fought so that there might be those who would vote who had never voted before to have the opportunity to choose someone of their choosing.

Let me tell you what she did in Commissioner Squatty Lyons’ office. Yes, she worked historically for this commissioner as the first African American among some that came after in those offices. I am gratified for that, because she took care of the vulnerable, those who were afraid to come downtown, those who didn’t think government would work for them. Beulah Shepard took care of them.

She will be laid to rest in these next hours. And I will simply say that we have the flag waving over this great woman’s life and legacy.

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Why do I say that, having not had her serve in the United States military? Because I know that our military represents the people of the United States and all of us have the opportunity to represent the value of the flag of this country. That value is to be able to cherish democracy, justice and to have the courage to fight for it, a loving mother who nurtured her children, a loving friend who cared for everyone, someone who brought joy.

And it was a great joy to me to spend time with her in these last few years as she was so joyful with her family members all around her. She smiled, what a beautiful smile. When we took our pictures together in the front yard and in-

side the house, I know that she had great joy.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is with great sympathy to the family that I offer, on behalf of the United States Congress, this tribute to Beulah Shepard. God bless you, may you rest in peace, and we love you.

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

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

CONSTITUTION

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, the last action that we took in this body today was a resolution honoring the Constitution, which we celebrate tomorrow. Since we are not in session tomorrow, I wish to talk for a moment about that inspired document this evening.

It’s difficult to do that, because as we talk about the Constitution, I am looking straight at the relief of George Mason, who was one of those unique characters in American history, one of three men who spent the entire time at the Constitutional Convention and then refused to sign the document.

When I was teaching school, I always insisted my students had to tell me why Mason refused to sign it, which, of course, was because it did not have the Bill of Rights. But I was always hoping, and hoping in vain, that some bright student would ask the better question, which is not why did Mason not sign, but why did all the other people who were there at the Founding Fathers convention not go along with Mason for a Bill of Rights?

It was certainly not because they were opposed to civil liberties, but because the rest of the Founding Fathers realized that they could accomplish the same goal by the structure of government, by dividing power by the three branches of government horizontally so no branch had too much power, but equally by dividing power vertically between the Federal and State level. So no level of government had too much power; you could accomplish the same goal of protection of individual freedoms.

The issue at the Constitutional Convention was that of power. As the States met and then ratified this document, the issue of power was still there. We, of course, know of course that two States, North Carolina and Rhode Island, did not ratify the document until after the country was established. But five States, Virginia, Massachusetts, New York, Maryland and

South Carolina, sent specific amendments that should be added to the document.

Foremost in each of those State’s amendments was the concept of sovereignty or the ability of States to make decisions. Their goal and their concepts were incorporated in the 10th Amendment to the Constitution, which put in written form the unnamed structure that the Founding Fathers had established in the Constitution.

As one of our Justices on the Supreme Court said, the Constitution protects us from our own best intentions. It divides power among sovereigns, among branches of government, precisely so that we may resist the temptation to concentrate power in one location as the expedient solution to the crisis of the day.

For a century and a half, this Nation basically honored that concept. In the last half century, though, we have stretched the idea significantly. Starting with the progressive era at the early 1900s, it was President Wilson who called this concept the separation of powers political witchcraft. He said that separating powers into hidden corners prevented us from consolidating powers to be used.

In the early 1900s, the politicians and the philosophers who believed this did not do so because they misunderstood the Constitution, but because they understood it and did not like the fact that it prevented them from doing what they said were marvelous things.

We, today, still have this issue of power before us. For the last couple of years we have debated on this floor the idea whether it is better to consolidate power in Washington with the ultimate goal of uniformity or to hold fast to the idea that States should be allowed to have alternative ideas and that our ultimate goal should be creativity.

The 10th Amendment is not just about smaller government. It’s about more effective government, what works best for people and the idea that not all programs have to be evolved from Washington. They also have their idea because the 10th Amendment talks power for States and individuals. In a concept that many of us on this floor can never get, there are some problems that don’t need a solution by government at all.

The issue is creativity, efficiency, and justice. The issue is can those best be resolved.

We still have this question of power that we are dealing with today, and I would hope that we would reject the revisionist idea and, instead, go along and support the Founding Fathers. For both the constitutional structure and the 10th Amendment meant that our Founding Fathers were inspired to get it right.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

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

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

THE FREEDOM TO . . .

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, there are more than a dozen countries in this world that restrict freedom of religion, including Iran and China. Imagine being told your religion was unacceptable and being carted off to jail for offering a Bible to someone. This is not an unusual occurrence in some countries with state-sponsored religions.

In this country, we have a few sacrosanct words known as "First Amendment to the Constitution" that guarantee no one will be punished for the religion that they choose to follow: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

When a person decides to burn the Koran, the Bible, or any other sacred document in this country, he has the freedom to do so even if the overwhelming majority of us vehemently disagree with his decision. It is difficult for the citizens of some other countries to understand or to tolerate this kind of freedom. Yet it is the bedrock of our democracy.

We have the right to disagree, to ignore, to protest against or to take the matter to court for a ruling, but we do not have the right to determine what another person is to believe. Unfortunately, that kind of freedom challenges other governments and cultures.

The freedoms we hold dear seem uncontrollable to those who would dictate what people wear, worship, and support. For example, some governments think that if their citizens are educated the next thing that will happen is that they will begin to think and ask questions, and that can't be tolerated by those in power. Or they believe that only one religion is true and, therefore, no others can be taught or people might stray from the religion and the religion might falter. In the United States, we have no such fear because our Constitution gives us the confidence and the courage to tolerate diversity.

September 17 is Constitution Day and a time that we should all take to be

grateful for the strength and breadth of our system of government. We should reflect on our freedoms and know that they are protected.

That date was chosen because on September 17, 1787, the Constitutional Convention met for the last time in Philadelphia to sign the document before it was sent to the 13 States to be ratified. The Founding Fathers drew upon the wisdom of the ages to give us a gift that has endured for more than two centuries, the United States Constitution.

The blueprint for our government is not a long document. You can keep a copy in your shirt pocket. I happen to have one here, Mr. Speaker. The basic document is under 5,000 words, but it covers the building blocks for our three equal branches of government: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial arms of government.

The first 10 amendments lay out the rights of every citizen. How many times have you heard the phrase, "I know my rights." Well, we know them because they have been delineated for us in the Bill of Rights.

Winston Churchill famously said in a speech in the House of Commons in 1947: "Many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

Today I issue a challenge to the citizens to read their Constitution on September 17 each year. It will help your understanding of what and who you are in this country, and it will strengthen your values.

In a speech to the Senate in 1850, Henry Clay said: "The Constitution of the United States was made not merely for the generation that then existed, but for posterity, unlimited, undefined, endless, perpetual posterity."

He has been proven correct, Mr. Speaker, and let us all work to protect it and keep it that way.

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WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS

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

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we celebrate the 223rd anniversary of the signing of the United States Constitution. As we do so, I think it is important to consider the humbling legacy bestowed by those who founded this country and the lawmakers who actually did come before us; because each day those of us who are currently holding office, we are so mired in the challenges and complexities of modern public policy, we scurry through these stately, ornate halls, often without so much as a glimpse at

or a thought of the profound history that is depicted around us.

For instance, just steps away, within the interior of the majestic Capitol Dome, is the Rotunda. I spent some time there recently, Mr. Speaker, reflecting on the moments in our Nation's history that gave rise to the gift of liberty we strive to safeguard each day in this body. Inside the Rotunda is a series of paintings that offer rich glimpses into some of these moments, starting with the Landing of Columbus in 1492, the Discovery of the Mississippi by DeSoto in 1541, as well as the Baptism of Pocahontas in 1613. They all depict the opening of a new, mysterious world full of promise and things yet to come.

The painting, the Embarkation of the Pilgrims in 1620, also speaks of opportunity, the anticipation of realizing a dream of freedom. The Declaration of Independence in 1776 follows. The Surrender of General Burgoyne in 1777, and the Surrender of Lord Cornwallis in 1781, as well as George Washington Resigning His Commission in 1783 are all celebrated pieces depicting the first moments of that new Republic.

Possibly the most famous of these paintings is John Trumbull's 12-by-18-foot-large Declaration of Independence. This historical piece of art depicts the presentation of the Declaration to the Second Continental Congress. Standing at the forefront of this painting are Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, and Benjamin Franklin, the authors of the profound document that gave way to the birth to our Nation.

Painstaking care was given to each word in the Declaration, none of which may be more memorable than these: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." You see, the Declaration built upon a theory of natural and universal rights, the consent of the governed, and a right of redress when government was in violation of those essential principles. After setting forth those standards, the Declaration continued with a litany of grievances against King George, which, Mr. Speaker, is a very interesting prospect to reread that part of the Declaration.

And then the Declaration finally concludes by saying, "We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by the Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States . . . And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."