

IRAN CAPTIVE

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I draw the Senate's attention to a troubling situation abroad. By now, many following the news have heard of the name Youcef Nadarkhani. Pastor Youcef is a Christian in Iran who has been sentenced to death for refusing to deny his faith. He was originally arrested in October 2009 while attempting to register his church. He allegedly questioned the Muslim monopoly on the religious instruction of children in the state.

To Iran, his crime is his Christian faith and evangelism, and the punishment is death. For as many problems as we face in America, we are blessed that this is not one of them. The American Center for Law and Justice and other national groups have been diligently working on the case since it was first reported earlier this year. At any moment, Pastor Youcef could be executed without notice to his family or the public. I would like to take this time to add my name to the list of those calling for his immediate, unconditional release.

This past weekend, Iran began to claim that Pastor Youcef's crimes were not of religion but of rape and threats to national security. These new allegations appear to be a new and unfounded attempt to justify his execution. None of these crimes were mentioned in his trial over the past 2 years.

While "religious freedom" may be the law of the land in Iran, it is certainly not the practice. This audience is well aware of the persecution of religious minorities and Christians abroad. We should not forget the plight of religious minorities throughout this region, especially the Coptic Christians in Egypt, Chaldo-Assyrian Christians in Iraq, the dwindling Christian population in the Holy Land, and other religious minorities in the Middle East.

I believe we can and we must do more to advance religious freedom abroad. Earlier this year, in coordination with Congressman FRANK WOLF in the House and my Senate colleague, Mr. LEVIN, I introduced the Near East and South Central Asia Religious Freedom Act. The bill creates a Special Envoy on religious freedom in the State Department to monitor the status of religious minorities in these particularly vulnerable regions. I am sincerely committed to this effort and believe that it is essential to promoting the God-given right to liberty around the world. I am hopeful that the Senate can soon join the House in passing this important legislation.

I ask that other Members of the Senate join me in this call to save Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani's life and condemn Iran's denial of the universal right to religious freedom.

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF THE WASHINGTON PARISH FAIR

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, located on the eastern edge of Louisiana,

Washington Parish plays a central role in celebrating our State's unique culture and history. Every October, residents and leaders of the parish host the annual Washington Parish Fair, which marks its 100th anniversary this month.

This quiet but remarkable parish is known for its agriculture, its scenic rivers, and its thriving workforce, which spans across a number of industries, including paper and timber production. Once the center of the dairy industry, the area boasts a relatively low unemployment rate, with nearly 75 percent of its workforce belonging to the community's private sector.

The parish is also known for its genuine hospitality. Its residents volunteer tirelessly for the annual Washington Parish Fair, which is believed to be the largest fair of its kind in the country. The 5-day event, which began in 1911, now attracts families from all over the State. They spend the weekend enjoying the wide range of activities the fair has to offer—including a livestock show, a rodeo and carnival rides—while taking in the unique Louisiana scenery.

This popular event is a model of the community spirit and a prime example of the cultural and economic advancement that can be achieved when neighbors work together for a common goal. Every year, Washington Parish leaders and residents commit themselves to the success of the event, and I commend them for their efforts to continue such a first-rate Louisiana tradition.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, as September ended, so did Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. While it is important to set aside a month for special attention to this epidemic, we must not forget that childhood obesity is a year-round battle.

The facts about childhood obesity are startling. Obesity rates have more than tripled in the last 30 years. In Ohio, more than 30 percent of children and adolescents are overweight or obese. Our children living with obesity experience lifelong health problems, including type 2 diabetes, heart problems, and bone and joint problems.

Combating childhood obesity might seem like an uphill battle, but with national attention on the issue, we can meet this urgent need. And communities across Ohio and the Nation are doing their part. Public and private partnerships are joining forces to unite in the fight against childhood obesity.

We see it with the U.S. Surgeon General's healthy youth for a healthy future initiative promoting healthy eating and physical activity to the Do Right! Campaign in communities in greater Cincinnati. We see it with Let's Move! events throughout the State, and collaborations between Federal and State governments and local communities, organizations, and individuals.

Last year, the Senate passed landmark child nutrition legislation, the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, to help promote health and reduce childhood obesity. This bill will improve the nutritional quality of school meals through an increase in Federal reimbursement for school lunches. It also establishes national nutrition standards for all foods sold in schools so that vending machine food and snacks in the a la carte line are healthy and nutritious. The Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act will connect more children to healthy, locally grown produce through farm-to-school programs with the dual benefit of making sure children know how their food is grown and supporting Ohio farmers.

Also worth noting is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's, USDA, progress in updating the nutrition standards for school meals so they are in line with current nutrition science. I commend the USDA for its efforts and urge it to finalize these new school lunch rules quickly so that children across the country get the benefit of more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.

I am also proud of the proactive efforts of Ohio hospitals in acknowledging their ability to combat the epidemic of childhood obesity.

The Cleveland Clinic's 5 to Go! Program is a comprehensive childhood wellness program. A partnership with family health centers, hospitals, schools, and neighborhood partners, 5 to Go! is working in Cuyahoga County to keep children healthy by encouraging them to get 1 hour of exercise a day and consume more fruits and vegetables in their meals.

University Hospitals Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital is a national leader in addressing childhood diabetes—one of the more serious side effects of obesity. Through funding awarded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Rainbow is home to the Center of Excellence for Childhood Diabetes, Activity, and Nutrition. Rainbow is holding workshops to educate school nurses on childhood diabetes and hosting events with patients and their family focusing on breakthroughs in treatment and disease management.

By teaming up with the Kohl's Community Youth Fitness Program, Akron Children's Hospital is teaching 8 to 13-year-olds about healthy fitness and eating habits through participation in activities and games.

In Toledo, ProMedica is focusing its attention on community-based nutrition programs. The Fields of Green Program includes everything from hydroponic and community gardens tended to by neighborhood children to a scholarship program for high school students. And, through a partnership with the YMCA and the United Way, the Summer Feeding Program has increased the number of meals served to children under 18 from 1,500 to over 45,000 in only 1 year.

Nationwide Children's in Columbus is an Ohio Healthy Weight Outcome member, one of ten teams selected to participate in the National Health Weight Collaborative. Funded through the Affordable Care Act, the Collaborative's mission is to optimize health outcomes in children by implementing a multilevel obesity prevention and treatment demonstration project in a low-income area. Nationwide and the Ohio Healthy Weight Outcomes Program are implementing the Healthy Neighborhood Healthy Family (HNHF) zone with the goal of reducing the obesity rate in Columbus fifth graders by 10 percent in 5 years.

And Cincinnati Children's Hospital is working with both children and their parents to make simple yet effective dietary changes. The hospital is also working with local school districts to increase children's consumption of fruits and vegetables and replace sugary drinks in school lunches. Additionally, through a partnership with U.S. Bank and the Boys and Girls Club, over 3,000 children participated in Cincinnati Children's kids' marathon—an incremental marathon over an 8-week period that included running as well as nutrition and health education.

September brought an end to Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, but I look forward to continuing to work with schools and hospitals, teachers and parents, and all Ohioans to combat childhood obesity and ensure a healthier future for our Nation's children.

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Mr. President, today I would like to recognize the newest members of the American Academy for Arts and Sciences upon their induction on October 1, 2011, in Cambridge, MA.

The American Academy, which was founded during the American Revolution by John Adams, John Hancock and other notable scholar-patriots, includes some of the world's most notable scientists, scholars, artists, authors and leaders.

Its nonpartisan, independent research has provided us with a significant collection of knowledge in numerous fields of science, humanities, culture and education for more than 200 years.

The 231st class of members must therefore be recognized for their distinguished success in their respective fields, as well as their election to an institution of the world's most celebrated leaders.

On behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the 211 new members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, particularly the 28 inductees from Massachusetts. It is an honor and pleasure to recognize their continuing service and intellectual leadership not only in Massachusetts,

but also nationally and across the world. I wish the Academy good luck and continued success in their future endeavors.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and congratulate the Pennsylvania Avenue African Methodist Episcopal, AME, Zion Church in Baltimore as the congregation celebrates the church's 170th anniversary. Founded on May 31, 1841, Pennsylvania Avenue AME Zion Church has flourished for many decades under the guidance and spiritual leadership of its anointed pastors since it was founded on May 31, 1841.

Records from 1904 reveal that Reverend B.J. Bolding and 200 church members purchased Zion's first building at 1125 Pennsylvania Avenue for \$16,000. Reverend Bolding served for 27 years until Rev. George Marion Edwards became the pastor in May 1931. Twenty-eight years later, on October 4, 1959, Rev. Clinton Rueben Coleman was chosen as Zion's new spiritual leader and served during the tumultuous years of the civil rights movement. Reverend Coleman was responsible for the renovation of the old Zion Church building and started the course toward planning and building a new church building. On May 12, 1972, he was elected to the AME Zion Church's 12-member Board of Bishops, the denomination's 72nd bishop in succession.

In 1972, Rev. Marshall H. Strickland was selected to lead Zion, and the journey continued towards constructing a new church. Three years later, Reverend Strickland led the groundbreaking ceremony at the southwest corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Dolphin Street. On Sunday, April 10, 1977, after 16 years of vision, perseverance, and hard work, a jubilant congregation marched into the new church building. Eleven years later, on May 15, 1988, the mortgage note for the church was burned. On July 31, 1992, Reverend Strickland was elected the 88th bishop in succession in the AME Zion Church.

In September 1992, continuing the legacy of an historic church with great spiritual leaders, the Reverend Dr. Dennis Vernon Proctor was appointed pastor of the Pennsylvania Avenue AME Zion Church. Dr. Proctor's leadership and pastoral abilities, steadfastly applied for over a decade, increased the church's membership to over 1,800 congregants. After 16 years of faithful service to Zion Church, Dr. Proctor was elected the 97th bishop in succession during the Quadrennial Convention in Atlanta, GA, on July 18, 2008.

On September 14, 2008, less than 2 months before our Nation elected its first African American President, the

Right Reverend Warren M. Brown, presiding prelate of the Mid-Atlantic II Episcopal District, announced the current pastor of the Pennsylvania Avenue AME Zion Church, Rev. Lester Agyei McCorn, to a standing-room-only congregation.

Pennsylvania Avenue AME Zion Church, located in Baltimore's Upton community, is committed to providing spiritual leadership and support to help people overcome the political, social, and educational struggles affecting them in the communities that the church serves. It is a Kingdom-focused church, whose legacy continues with a renewed vision to make new disciples, help believers to mature in their faith, and multiply outreach and service ministries.

I encourage all Senators to join me in congratulating Pennsylvania Avenue AME Zion Church on its 170th anniversary and its even brighter future.●

TRIBUTE TO DICK WILKERSON

• Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I would like to recognize the achievements of one of South Carolina's most respected citizens.

Greenville, SC, is the home of Michelin's North American headquarters. One of the largest tire manufacturers in the world, Michelin has had a presence in the state for over thirty years and currently employs nearly 8,000 South Carolinians. Michelin is known for its innovation and the quality of its products. It is also one of the finest corporate citizens we have in South Carolina.

Dick Wilkerson, the current chairman and president of Michelin North America, will retire at the end of 2011 after 31 years with the company, the last 3-plus years in his current role. Upon his retirement, he will become chairman emeritus of Michelin North America, in recognition of his remarkable career and strong and effective leadership during a very difficult economic time.

Under Dick's leadership, Michelin became the largest tire maker in North America by sales and has remained the most profitable tire maker in North America for 7 consecutive years. That is quite an achievement given the tough economic circumstances.

Wilkerson also led the creation of major community programs, including Michelin Development Upstate South Carolina and Michelin Challenge Education.

Michelin Development provides low interest loans and access to our considerable business expertise to create quality sustainable jobs and promote economic growth. To date, investments in Upstate South Carolina total more than \$2 million, 33 loans have been supported, and more than 750 potential jobs have been created inspiring new economic growth.

Michelin Challenge Education focuses on the support of public elementary schools located in close proximity