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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CRAVAACK).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

February 1, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHIP CRAVAACK to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

GOVERNMENT PERSECUTION OF CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, we hear about religious persecution throughout the Third World, but there is an anti-religious movement right here in the United States. The Catholic Church is being persecuted by this government.

Our great country was founded on the principle of religious liberty. This right is in the First Amendment, and

the provisions of the First Amendment are listed first because they are the most important. Yet, the administration is chipping away at this cornerstone of our society by violating the religious liberty of those who hold fast to certain positions of their faith, in particular, those of the Catholic Church.

The Department of Health and Human Services recently announced that religious organizations will be forced to provide their employees with medical insurance that covers free contraceptives and sterilizations.

While houses of worship are exempt, religiously affiliated organizations such as hospitals, universities, and charities are mandated to comply with this government edict. This goes against the basic tenets of the Catholic religion, as well as other faiths, Christian and non-Christian.

The administration believes that it's enough to give religious organizations 1 year's notice to comply with this government oppression. But there will never be enough time for the church to change its core principles.

Timothy Dolan, president of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops and New York archbishop, said it best: "In effect, the President is saying we have a year to figure out how to violate our consciences."

Mr. Speaker, religious principles are not negotiable. They are not to be subject to bullying by any government, especially ours. No government has the legal or moral right to target any religions and make them violate their religious conscience.

The administration is violating two provisions of the First Amendment: the free exercise of religion clause and the establishment of religion clause. The government is prohibiting the free exercise of religion because it is punishing Catholics for exercising their religious beliefs.

Government is also violating the establishment clause by establishing a

government religion, statism, because government is establishing its own moral standard that must be complied with or else. Regardless of where Americans stand on the issues of contraception, sterilization, or the abortion pill, this government oppression should be alarming for those who believe the government should not punish religions or substitute a religious doctrine for citizens. The government should stay out of the business of persecuting religions.

This recent anti-religious mandate is completely unacceptable, but it is only one example in a long line of new government actions that disregard freedom of conscience and religious liberty. This comes on the heels of the administration's denial of a grant to the United States Council of Catholic Bishops to aid victims of human trafficking. Not only have they been awarded this grant in the past, but their application has received the highest quality score.

Mr. Speaker, this money is used to help victims from the scourge of human slavery. But the church was denied this grant because their religious convictions do not provide contraceptives or refer women to abortions. Apparently, under this administration, in order to aid victims, it is necessary for religious groups to violate their religious convictions.

These are only two of the most recent assaults by government, our government, on religious liberty and conscience. As soon as this administration came into office, a proposal was submitted to rescind conscience regulations for medical professionals. Protections for medical professionals who would not violate their conscience by distributing emergency contraceptives was rescinded. This was just a glimpse of what was to come in deliberate disregard for the First Amendment.

This administration's attack on religious liberty is a strike at the core principles of our Nation. Government

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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is putting basic freedoms in jeopardy and bruising the U.S. Constitution. No government should force its citizens to violate their religious beliefs.

Who would have thought that this Nation, founded on religious liberty, would now be engaged in religious persecution against certain citizens and against certain churches?

This ought not to be. But that's just the way it is.

AMERICANS KNOW CONGRESS IS BROKEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, Americans know that Congress is broken, paralyzed by hyperpartisanship, fierce ideology, and unwillingness to respond to widely understood problems with broadly supported solutions.

Why, at a time of growth and increasing diversity in America, does Congress not represent that change?

Well, part of the answer is that's not how we're elected. Increasingly, we come from districts that are not just red or blue, but the colors are brighter, the divisions deeper. How can this be?

The answer is to be found in hallways and back rooms of State capitals all across America right now. After the census every 10 years, the great re-balancing occurs, to adjust legislative districts to changes in populations. Some States will win or lose congressional seats. Every district in the 43 States that have multi-Member districts will see some adjustment to balance out changes in population growth.

But not all voters are equal. Some are more, some are less inclined to support the party in power or to support a particular incumbent.

One thing that politicians can all agree upon is that their district should be safer, their party should be favored. The process of redistricting has been refined to a high art with the computer, very sophisticated survey research, a treasure trove of data on voter behavior. In short, the politicians are hard at work picking their voters in a way that will make it harder for voters, over the next 10 years, to pick their politicians.

Now, Exhibit A is a grotesque district that has been created in the State of North Carolina, District Four, currently represented by our colleague, Congressman DAVID PRICE, that looks like somebody had just taken an egg and thrown it at the blackboard. But this effort, where a 50/50 State that went for Obama, that has a Democratic Senator, a Democratic Governor, and a 7-6 advantage for Democrats in Congress now, has been at work with the Republicans and their legislature to try to turn it into a 10-3 advantage for Republicans going forward after the next election.

But I could have taken an example in Illinois, where there Democrats are

sort of reverse engineering those districts to Democratic advantages.

There is a bright spot for years, and that has been Iowa, where the process has been driven by an independent agency that draws districts without partisan logrolling, and simply is referred to the legislature for an up-or-down vote.

This year, all four districts in Iowa are competitive. One even features two incumbent senior Members of Congress that are running against each other.

□ 1010

There are other bright spots in California and Arizona where voters have determined that there will be independent commissions. There is even some hope in Florida where there are more constraints on the politicians in the redistricting. But make no mistake, it is not just one party losing when another party takes unfair advantage. In truth, everybody loses.

There is less representative behavior in Congress. We have districts drawn without integrity. It is hard to represent people. It is hard for people to understand who is representing them, and it shatters local interests.

Most damaging, I think, is it just reveals a naked power grab that further undermines people's confidence in the political process. We shouldn't have to wait decades for reform at the State level. We saw in Arizona where Governor Brewer tried to fire the head of the independent redistricting commission because the commission produced some districts that were fair and competitive, not tilted partisan.

These reforms can actually be sabotaged. I'm proposing H.R. 3846 to establish a national independent redistricting commission headed by Statespeople, if you will, people who are appointed by legislative leadership like retired judges or former Presidents. These people would oversee a professional agency like they have in Iowa to make sure that we have national uniform standards that are fair, maybe even some competitive districts, and stop the political log rolling, to prepare a national set of maps that would be subjected to an up-or-down vote by Congress.

A lot of this seems beyond our control in the political process. This bill is something we could do to make the process better 10 years from now. I urge my colleagues to look at House bill 3846.

CHESTER A. "CHET" FOULKE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HECK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HECK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a great man, Chester A. "Chet" Foulke.

Chet was a member of the Greatest Generation, born on July 19, 1922, and God called him home on December 31, 2011.

Chet grew up in Quakertown, Pennsylvania, during the Great Depression

of the 1930s. The hard times forced him to leave school after the 10th grade and to work in an aircraft plant near Philadelphia before the United States became involved in World War II.

He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in September of 1943 and attended recruit training at Parris Island, South Carolina, and advanced training at Camp Pendleton, California, and Camp Tarawa, Hawaii, in preparation for one of the war's toughest battles, Iwo Jima.

As a demolition expert with Company C of the 5th Engineering Battalion, Chet fought on the front lines for 36 days. "It was an awful battle the way we got slaughtered," he said during a 2006 interview. "Some days you would make it 100 or 200 yards, some days 500 yards." Chet was at Mount Suribachi when the first U.S. flag went up. "I was standing there looking up when that flag went up and tears ran down my face," he said in another interview. "I was just so happy to see that flag that I knew they were not going to push us off or do away with us. I felt so happy."

When the war ended, he was sent to Japan for 7 months of occupational duty before returning to the United States where he received his discharge from the Marine Corps in May of 1946 as a corporal.

He became a Nevadan when he moved to Las Vegas in 1972. In 1986, Chet helped found the Greater Nevada Detachment, No. 186, of the Marine Corps League where he served as commandant from 1992-1995 and then as chaplain for several years thereafter. He was greatly admired by members of the Marine Corps League for his bravery at Iwo Jima and his involvement in the Marine Corps League.

Mr. Foulke is survived by his wife of 29 years, Martha; his daughter, Mary; her husband, Ed; three stepsons, David, William and Jeffery; and several nieces and nephews. He will be greatly missed by all. Semper Fi.

TENETS OF FAITH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I came to this empty Chamber to discuss the issues of jobs and also the unemployment compensation extension, as well as taxes.

As I neared the well, I heard one of our esteemed Members condemning the President for persecuting religion in a very broad and general way and then later more specifically in talking about the Roman Catholic Church. It would seem to me in a place like the United States of America, which was actually formed on the basis of freedom of religion, that such a serious accusation against the President of these United States should not be to an empty Chamber.

This is such a serious allegation that it would seem to me that it requires