

Like many of my Catholic brothers and sisters, I do not believe it is the government's business to target religion and require that its believers violate their conscience and their religious beliefs—or suffer the consequences. I do not believe it is the role of government to persecute religions.

I am proudly and passionately pro-life. But regardless of what your views may be on abortion or contraception, I imagine most Americans would be alarmed to learn of our government chipping away at the First Amendment, mandating its citizens disregard their liberty, convictions, and conscience—or else. This is totally unacceptable. No government should force its citizens to violate their religious beliefs.

I recently joined with a number of my colleagues in urging that the administration reconsider this unprecedented government overreach and violation. But I would go further and encourage the administration to abandon this rule. Abandon this rule and continue to allow these Americans who oppose these services for either moral or religious reasons to live their lives in the way that they see fit and without the fear of punishment.

Bishop Jenky of the Diocese of Peoria concludes his letter by saying:

“This country once fought a revolution to guarantee the freedom, but the time has clearly arrived to strongly assert our fundamental human rights.”

Our religious freedoms are under attack. I was sent here to uphold, protect, and defend the United States Constitution, and I intend to do so.

TRIBUTE TO JOCK MICHAEL SMITH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize and pay tribute to one of our Nation's most distinguished trial lawyers, an avid sports collector, historian, author, and family man, Attorney Jock Michael Smith.

Attorney Smith was a well-respected member of the Alabama bar, and he was known nationally throughout the legal community for his exceptional legal abilities, his legendary courtroom style, civic activism, and passion for equal justice for all. Sadly, Attorney Smith passed away at his home in Montgomery, Alabama, on January 8 at the age of 63.

The story of Jock Michael Smith is not just one of a notable and accomplished attorney. His story is one of hope, beating the odds, and the fearless pursuit of one's dreams. The life and legacy of Jock Smith is an inspiration to us all.

Despite losing his father tragically at a young age and despite being told in high school that he could not be anything more than a sanitary worker, he did not let that deter him. This young boy, son of a widow, single mother of two, was determined to chart his own course.

Inspired by the memory of his father, Jock developed his oratorical and academic gifts. He graduated with honors from Tuskegee University and then matriculated to the University of Notre Dame School of Law on an academic scholarship.

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As a first year law student, Jock founded the Black American Law Students' Association chapter at Notre Dame. He earned his law degree in 1973.

In 1996, Attorney Smith cofounded a partnership with the late renowned attorney, Johnny Cochran. The Cochran Law Firm, as it is known, is actually the law firm of Cochran, Cherry, Givens & Smith. It has 22 offices across this country and continues to be one of the most well-known criminal defense and civil plaintiff law firms in the Nation.

Attorney Smith's remarkable legal career was filled with many record-setting verdicts and settlements. A landmark \$1.6 billion verdict against Southwestern Life Insurance was one of the largest in America's history in 2004. He represented the legacy estates of both Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., and he represented the Negro League Players and civil rights activist Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth.

During his illustrious career, Attorney Smith's hard work and leadership was acknowledged by numerous awards. He was recognized by the Alabama Trial Lawyers Association for his tireless dedication and unwavering commitment. As an author, Jock Smith shared his amazing life story in an autobiography entitled “Climbing Jacob's Ladder: A Trial Lawyer's Journey on Behalf of ‘the Least of These.’”

Media personality and author Tavis Smiley best summed up the gift he gave us by writing down his memoirs: Jock Smith's story is part of America's story. It's part history lesson and part sermon and 100 percent fascinating. He and lawyers like his late partner, Johnny Cochran, are modern-day knights, using their skills to protect both the poor and defenseless. On a personal level, “Climbing Jacob's Ladder,” his book, shows how faith and hard work can bring great success.

Jock Smith was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, and he was the first African American to serve on the board of the President's Advisory Council of the National Wildlife Federation.

Jock Smith was amazing. I know as a young lawyer his life stands as a personal tribute, to me. I am grateful to have known him. I know that I walk in a path that he blazed, and for that, I am eternally grateful to his family. Some of his family members are here with us today in the gallery. He is forever remembered as a remarkable and amazing man. He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Ms. Yvette Smiley-Smith; and his daughter, Janay Smith, who is with us today.

I want to say, in closing, that his life is truly a testament to what is possible

with opportunity—when you take opportunity—and with so many resources. Jock lived life by his favorite quote that he always would say: “Service is the price we pay for the space that we occupy.”

It is with tremendous pride, privilege, and great honor that today I get to recognize the life and legacy of Attorney Jock Smith on the floor of the United States Congress so that all of us can remember that we must pay our fair share for the space that we occupy.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded not to make reference to occupants in the gallery.

CONGRESS IS NOT A CAREER

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

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, we in the House of Representatives need to start restoring the trust that the American people gave when they elected us to this office. Last night, 100 Members voted to give themselves a pay raise. Is that what we're all about? It's not about us enriching ourselves, because I don't believe that's what our Founding Fathers thought.

When I first came to Congress last year, I found out that I had an option to either take the health insurance plan that the Federal Government offered or to go out on my own and do my own thing. And I took the option, even though it cost myself and my family over \$10,000 more. But then we started to look at options with regards to the Federal Employee Retirement System that all Members of Congress are required to be in, and also the Thrift Savings Plan that all Members of Congress are part of, whether they want to be or not—even though it's different for the Senate. The House of Representatives back in the 104th Congress decided that they wanted to take that option away. I think that's wrong. I believe that America is about choices.

I also believe that Congress is not a career. And so when those Members of Congress don't have an option to remove themselves from the Federal Employee Retirement System, as I wanted to, or those Members of Congress that wanted to participate in the Thrift Savings Plan but are told that you, the taxpayers, are going to give us an additional 5 percent of our salary because you like us so much, I asked if I could exempt myself from that. And guess what? We were told we couldn't because those prior to us had made a decision for us now that we couldn't do that, we couldn't do what we think is right for this body.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, it is about doing the right thing. It is about looking back at what our Founding Fathers envisioned for this country. It's about service to this country, not about enriching ourselves on the backs of our fellow countrymen.

On the “60 Minutes” program we saw the insider trading issue that has gone across this Congress. It brings to mind that it is about doing the right thing. And unfortunately, there are those among us that really believe that it’s about enriching ourselves on the backs of those that we’re supposed to serve. There has been a number of bills put forth in regards to stopping insider trading, and so we have put forth a bill to do the same thing. It’s very simple. It just requires that Members of Congress, the President, and the Vice President put their holdings into a qualified blind trust, which means no matter what information they may have they can’t enrich themselves with it because within 30 days of their taking office, they must put it within a blind trust. It takes away all the issues in regards to how do you enforce some of the issues that were talked about in the STOCK Act.

These are noble intentions, but when you make it more difficult to enforce, what you do is you give people loopholes to get around it and skirt around the issue. If you put it into a blind trust, it takes away the ability to skirt around the issue.

Ladies and gentlemen, it’s not about creating more loopholes. It’s about making it simpler to do the right thing here in Congress. When we have the lowest approval rating, I’m shocked. I’m not shocked because we don’t deserve it, I’m shocked because we don’t want to do anything to improve it. As sheriff, I had a 73 percent approval rating. I come to Congress, and I find out that we’re not as respected as we should be. But it’s because of our own hand that we’re not. It’s nobody else’s fault. It’s not the press’ fault. It’s not anybody’s fault. It’s what we do within these Halls. What we do sets the tone for what the American people believe in or what we are supposed to be providing to the American people, and that is a level of trust.

So in two things: A bill that was called Congress is Not a Career Act is sitting out there and also one in regards to blind trusts. Mr. Speaker, I ask that we think about those issues and move forward.

GETTING TO THE TRUTH OF FAST AND FURIOUS

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

Mr. QUAYLE. Mr. Speaker, it has been more than 1 year since the tragic death of U.S. Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry, who was killed using weapons that were purposely walked to deadly drug cartels in Mexico as part of Operation Fast and Furious. Since Agent Terry’s death, the responsible Federal Department, the Justice Department, and its leader, Attorney General Eric Holder, have obfuscated every attempt to get to the bottom of what went wrong with this disastrous operation.

Despite the best efforts of the Justice Department to hide the facts, we now know many disturbing things about Fast and Furious. This ill-conceived operation began in November of 2009. Since that time, the ATF has sanctioned the sale of thousands of weapons to straw purchasers who transported these weapons across the United States’ southern border and into the hands of Mexican criminals.

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The ATF lost track of these weapons until they began turning up at crime scenes in the United States and Mexico. As a result of Justice Department incompetence, the United States actively armed dangerous cartels that have wreaked havoc in Mexico and put our own Federal agents directly in harm’s way. Our hard-won trust and the relationships we’ve built with the Mexican Government as both countries seek to combat the cartels has been severely strained, which has harmed our efforts to get drug-running under control.

Operation Fast and Furious hasn’t just been a failure; it’s been a tragic failure. It is believed that hundreds of Mexicans have lost their lives through the use of these weapons, and at least one U.S. Federal Agent, Brian Terry, has lost his life.

When an operation goes so horribly wrong, it is important to find out why and who was responsible. The Congress has acted on its oversight responsibility; and in doing so, we’ve asked Attorney General Holder directly about the operation. On May 3, 2011, Attorney General Holder testified before the House Judiciary Committee. When asked when he first knew about Operation Fast and Furious, he stated, “I’m not sure of the exact date, but I probably heard about Fast and Furious for the first time over the last few weeks.” However, we now know that weekly memos addressed to the Attorney General, which included briefings on Operation Fast and Furious, began crossing his desk nearly a year before that.

When it became clear that his May 3 testimony was untrue, the Attorney General later revised the timeline in which he claimed to have knowledge of the operation. On November 8, 2011, Attorney General Holder claimed that he had in fact first learned about the operation at the beginning of 2011, which, again, is belied by the fact that he was receiving memos about the operation much earlier than that.

But we now know that even that revised and extended time frame is incorrect. Just days ago, the Justice Department finally released documents, which included a December 14, 2010, email exchange between the Attorney General’s chief of staff and the U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona, stating that the Attorney General had been alerted of the shooting and death of Agent Terry on the day of the shooting.

A troubling picture has emerged of the Holder Justice Department. From

the Attorney General’s own testimony, it would appear that he is either frighteningly unaware of major operations taking place in his own Department or that he did know about Fast and Furious, did nothing to stop it, and refused to take responsibility when it failed.

It has been more than a year since the death of Agent Terry, Mr. Speaker, and we still don’t have the answers the American people deserve and Agent Terry’s family deserves. We know we won’t get these answers from a proper internal investigation from the Justice Department. Far from the Department investigating itself, it has covered up for itself.

A year of delay, denial, and obfuscation is enough. A year of nighttime document dumps full of blacked-out pages and redacted information is enough. A year of senior Justice Department officials pleading the Fifth is enough. It’s time that we get to the bottom of why Fast and Furious happened and restore accountability to the Department of Justice. That’s why I introduced H. Res. 532, which calls on the President to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate Operation Fast and Furious as well as the Attorney General’s role in it.

Without a special prosecutor, the only other way to get to the truth is through impeachment proceedings and the investigations that come with those proceedings. With all of the vital work before this House, it would be far better to avoid the distraction and the cost that impeachment proceedings would bring. I hope the President agrees.

I urge my House colleagues to support this resolution so that we can finally get to the truth and ensure no more innocent lives are lost due to this Attorney General’s failure.

REMEMBERING AMBASSADOR CHARLES PRICE

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, “Praise Silence.” Praise Silence is the very British expression that was used regularly by Ambassador Charles Price when he would stand up after dinner to offer thoughtful, insightful, and humorous remarks. He did it most often at the wonderful home—Sunnylands—of Ambassador Walter and Mrs. Annenberg, and he was one who provided a great deal of inspiration and leadership. I’m very saddened to have had the news, Mr. Speaker, of his passing, but I have to say that he lived a very, very full and active 80 years.

Ambassador Price and I shared a hometown and many mutual friends in Kansas City, and we also shared a great love of California. Mr. Price was someone who was very big physically, he was very big intellectually, and he had a great big heart. I always felt comforted around him because he had that wonderful embrace when he would