

about the Independent Payment Advisory Board is that it will have more power than Congress itself. It will take a two-thirds vote from both bodies to overturn their decisions, and I don't think that Americans are ready to put all of that power in the hands of 15 bureaucrats who may or may not be physicians.

Mr. BENISHEK. Thank you. Let me ask my colleague from Georgia if he has any other comments he'd like to make?

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Well, I thank the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment before we close tonight. The members of the House GOP Doctors Caucus, along with the health care providers that caucus on the Senate side, in the other body, have just recently sent a letter to the American Association of Retired Persons, AARP, the executive director Mr. Barry Rand, asking them and the 35 million seniors that they represent in their advocacy, and of course the definition of a senior for them is anybody who has reached the age of 50, so certainly they can reach a whole lot more seniors, and I'm sure membership is important to them, so we have sent a letter to them reaching out to the organization and asking AARP to meet with the Doctor's Caucuses in the respective bodies in a very bipartisan way to try to save Medicare.

There are things that that organization, which I respect, indeed, I've been a member of, that we agree with, and there are things that we don't agree on. Now, AARP was opposed to what we had in the Republican budget last year, the so-called Paul Ryan budget in regard to how to strengthen, protect, preserve, the Medicare program, not just for our current seniors and recipients of that program, but for our children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, indeed. So we want to ask them to sit down with us and say what they do like. We know what they don't like. I guess they didn't like the mandate of premium support in our budget last year. But Chairman RYAN this year is working very closely in a bipartisan way with Senator WYDEN, the gentleman from Oregon, in regard to this same idea of premium support. But instead of mandating it—and of course it was only mandated for those younger than age 55; everyone else was held harmless—now the idea is to say, Look, let's let everyone choose and decide. It's their option. Do they want to stay on Medicare as we know it, the legacy program, or would they prefer to go to the doctor and the hospital of their choice with their own premium support?

So I just wanted to mention that, and I'm looking forward to having a dialogue with the AARP and the 35 million seniors that they represent.

Back in 2003, my colleagues weren't here then, but I was, and I had an opportunity to vote in favor, as a physician Member, of the Medicare part D, the Prescription Drug Act, and AARP

supported that. And yet our Democratic colleagues on the other side of the aisle, many of them symbolically came to the well and tore up their membership card of the AARP. So we're going to work with them. I think it's very important.

Mr. BENISHEK. I thank the gentleman from Georgia and the gentlemen from Louisiana and Arizona, the gentlewoman from New York, and my colleague from Maryland as well for appearing with me tonight. We've been trying to explain to the Speaker and the American people some of the issues that we have with the President's health care bill that do not solve our problem with health care and why we want to repeal it.

□ 2010

I encourage you all to look further into this issue and become educated so that you can inform yourself and your friends how serious this problem is.

With that, I yield back the remainder of my time.

ASSAULT ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it's wonderful to hear so many of not just colleagues but friends here on the floor discussing what is so important to this Nation—responsibility. And if you want to talk fiscal responsibility, it would certainly seem that the first place to start is with the repeal of ObamaCare. If you want to talk about freedom individually, once again, the best place to start is with repeal of ObamaCare.

There are so many ways the Federal Government has been encroaching into individual liberties and individual freedoms. It begins to get quite scary that we are encroaching on the very things that our original Founders were willing to fight and die for to ensure that we had the freedoms to do, that we would have the freedoms to avoid doing damage to our conscience.

It's so ironic that so many came to this Nation in its earliest days, and then through its history, seeking relief from persecution as Christians. So many groups came here believing that this could be a place, a promised land of sorts, where freedom could be experienced greater than anywhere else in the world. And that dream has been realized.

For far too long in our Nation's history, it was not extended to all men and women. Race and gender were problems. There were problems for some because there was racial and gender bias. But no one in those days ever anticipated we would get to the point in America where we are today, where people of faith who believe with all their heart that certain practices are just wrong in God's eyes would be

forced by their government to commit those acts of wrong.

We know that the President of Notre Dame University, back in 2009, endured a great deal of heat when he brought a man who had fought so hard in Illinois to allow late-term abortions, a man who had fought to prevent people of conscience from being allowed to be counseled on exactly what they would be doing. There were all kinds of efforts in Illinois to deal with the issue of abortion. And he's now President. So there were some that believed that bringing that individual to a Catholic university like Notre Dame and giving an honorary degree and bestowing this honor upon him was not a good idea. Yet the President took a great deal of chance.

Sarah Palin points this out in an op-ed, little piece that she wrote Tuesday, when she said:

Consider Catholicism's most prominent academic leader, the Reverend John Jenkins, president of Notre Dame. Jenkins took a serious risk in sponsoring Obama's 2009 honorary degree and commencement address—which promised a "sensible" approach to the conscience clause. Jenkins now complains, "This is not the kind of 'sensible' approach the President had in mind when he spoke here."

As Sarah Palin notes, "Obama has made Jenkins—and other progressive Catholic allies—look easily duped," because this administration appears to want to wage war on Catholic Christian belief.

It's amazing that someone would take those kinds of positions that the administration currently is, basically a war on religious freedom for Christians.

There is an editorial posted by Mike Brownfield today, entitled, "Morning Bell: ObamaCare's Latest Victim is Religious Freedom." It says:

It has not even been 2 years since ObamaCare was enacted, and already the President's health care law has taken another victim—the religious freedoms Americans hold dear, as reflected by the First Amendment.

The Obama administration recently reaffirmed a rule under ObamaCare that requires many religious employers to provide health care coverage for all FDA-approved contraceptive methods, sterilization procedures, and related education and counseling. On the grounds that certain FDA-approved contraceptive methods can sometimes "cause the demise of embryos both after and before uterine implantation," many groups also believe that the rule forces them to cover abortion.

As the article points out, it's not just Catholics affected by the rule. Leaders from other faith traditions have expressed their concern. This is deeply troubling.

Another article here from The Washington Post, entitled, "Obama Plays His Catholic Allies for Fools," by Michael Gerson, published January 30. He says:

In politics, the timing is often the message. On January 20—3 days before the annual March for Life—the Obama administration announced its final decision that Catholic universities, hospitals, and charities will

be compelled to pay for health insurance that covers sterilization, contraceptives, and abortifacients.

It was bad enough that ObamaCare was going to take away individual freedoms regarding health care. We can take care of those who cannot take care of themselves. But we should not do, as a government, what has been done for far too long—provide incentives for people not to reach their potential, provide incentives for people, in effect, to take the life of an unborn, to make it easier to do that.

As so many have pointed out, if a government can order any individual, all individuals in the country, to purchase a particular product, including health care insurance, there really isn't anything the Federal Government cannot order them to do or to purchase.

□ 2020

And we're seeing that play out now, not merely in the area of just health insurance, but going deeper than that, more problematic, even theological, that the Federal Government can order you not to follow your religious beliefs.

So it's really quite shocking how far we've come. Now, those of us that study the teachings of Jesus know that He told Christians you will suffer for My sake. I didn't deserve to be born in America. I go to places like Afghanistan and Iraq and places where there's so much heartache, places around the world where you see people—in Africa, the places that I've seen so much heartache, so much suffering. We didn't deserve to be born here, but by the grace of God we were. And though we were told by Jesus you will suffer for My sake, for whatever reason we were allowed to grow up free, free from suffering on account of Christian beliefs.

This bubble in time and space that was allowed for generation after generation to be able to follow religious beliefs as Christians without persecution, that time has changed. Now it would seem that as people yell "haters" at Christians, throw things at Christians, fuss on the nightly news how Christians are haters and want everybody to go to hell if they don't believe just like them—what a terrible misinterpretation of Christian faith and beliefs.

An article from The Wall Street Journal talking about the contraception rule, talking about the discussions about it among the political candidates.

People need to understand the Christian faith is under assault, and this administration has stepped up the ante in that assault. And if people, whether they're Christians, Jews, Muslims, whatever faith—Hindu, Buddhists, Atheists—once you see a Federal Government telling Christians you cannot practice what you believe with your whole heart spiritually, you could be next. This ought to stir up not merely Christians. It ought to stir up people of all kinds of faith. Because, again, a

Federal Government that can tell you to buy one product can tell you to buy any others if it has that much power. A Federal Government that tells Christians they cannot actually practice their religious beliefs can tell other religions the same thing.

We've just about come 360. This gift we've been given, we've been blessed with more freedoms in this country than any country in the history of the world. It doesn't take all that much study of world history to see that. It doesn't take all that much traveling around the world to see that. As I've traveled the world, going back to my days as an exchange student in 1973 to the Soviet Union, you develop a love for people all over the world. It's ironic when people call you a xenophobe and have no idea how many people you love with all your heart—Africa, Asia, Europe, around the world, different places.

And as one West African told me when I was visiting there, You have to understand, we were so excited when you elected a black President, but now we've seen America growing weak. And you must let the people in Washington know that unless America stays strong, we will suffer. You're our protectors. Without you staying strong, we don't have hope of having the freedoms we have right now. America's strength and America's standing for freedom and liberty don't just affect the people in America.

I jotted some notes inspired by a pastor's comments decades ago. It says: Start thinking about what we have seen in this country. First they said you can't have prayer in school, but most people didn't speak out because they would just pray somewhere else. Then they said you couldn't publicly post the Ten Commandments because people might be tempted to read them; and if they read them, they might be tempted to follow them and live moral lives. But most people didn't speak out because they knew where to find the Ten Commandments if they decided they wanted to have that kind of moral code.

They said you couldn't use a cross for a headstone, even for soldiers who died in the Christian faith in Jesus Christ, believing what Jesus said that "greater love hath no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But not enough people have spoken out, because the soldiers are gone and they can't respond, so maybe it doesn't really matter.

I had a judge tell students, recent history, they could not have the freedom of speech to say what was in their hearts if it included horrible verboten words like prayer, invocation, benediction, but worst of all, God, prayer, amen, bow our heads, join in prayer. And most people didn't speak out because that was somewhere else, a judge somewhere else, not ours. Some judges said you couldn't say God in the pledge in a public place. It seems more judges have said that in more recent history.

Fortunately, it was struck down, but they're still saying it. And not enough people are speaking out because it's some other judge. Maybe an appellate court will strike it down. I hope so.

Now we're being told by some if you want to hire someone, unless you're hiring a minister, you can't hire someone with the same religious spiritual faith that you have. Not enough people speaking out because they think surely that won't apply to me, at least not for a while. We're being told if you know in your heart that killing the most innocent among us, the infant unborn, if you believe that's killing, it's murder, it's wrong, well, we're the Federal Government and you have to forget your religious beliefs. We're going to tell you what you can or can't believe and tell you what you can or can't do. You have to go ahead and pay, in tax money or in health insurance money, for someone else to kill an unborn child.

□ 2030

And we have hospitals, doctors, nurses, health care providers being told, you may know in your Christian heart that it's wrong personally to participate in the taking of an innocent life, like an infant unborn, but if you want to stay in the health care business you're probably going to have to do it anyway. We're the Federal Government, and we'll dictate not only what you may believe or not believe, but what you may put into practice and not put into practice.

And there are some in our government telling military chaplains, even priests, preachers, you may believe in your spirit, in your heart, in your soul that marriage is between a man and a woman, that Nature's God intended the perfect biological fit to produce a combination of a sperm and an egg. And some want to tell them you've got to set aside your religious beliefs and do what we, the Federal Government tell you, and marry whoever we tell you to marry.

You believe Romans 1? Forget it. Tear it out of your Bible because we're the Federal Government. We have a right to tell you what you can or can't believe.

Some say it's okay to force Catholics to violate their Christian consciences and their religious beliefs because our Federal Government has the power to tell them what to do. Not enough people are crying out. I guess they figure, well, I'm not really Catholic, or maybe I'm Catholic but surely they wouldn't try to tell me what to do in violation of my Christian spiritual beliefs.

But if the government can order, with the full power of Federal law enforcement, anyone to violate their Christian beliefs, we have come full circle. And the prayers of generations, the work of churches throughout our history—first, to even have a revolution based on freedom, based on the liberty that they knew God gave us, where over a third of the signers of the Declaration of Independence weren't

just Christians, they were ordained Christian ministers. But they believed in freedom so strongly that they were willing to fight and die for the spiritual freedom of all people in this country.

And a Constitution was put together and followed by a Bill of Rights, and it said what it meant, but it took a long time for it to be applied across racial bounds. It should have been clear. It's not a living, breathing document, but it says what it means, and it means that all people should have those rights under the Bill of Rights, that we were all created equal in God's eyes. The Founders believed that.

The churches were the heart and soul of the abolitionist movement to do away with that horrible evil called slavery. People like John Quincy Adams, 16, 17 years down the hall, Statuary Hall, after he was defeated for a second term as President, beseeching, preaching against the evils of slavery, inspired by what he knew from William Wilberforce as a Christian in the United Kingdom doing the same thing before him.

Abraham Lincoln, inspired by that overlapping time with John Quincy Adams, down the hall, because of his Christian beliefs and faith. If anybody doubts his belief, what motivated that man, go read the second inaugural address on the inside of the north wall of the Lincoln Memorial, as he tried to make sense, as a Christian, spiritually, about all the injustice and wrongs and death and suffering in America.

The movement for women's equality involved women of great faith. The civil rights movement, the greatest saint of the movement was a man who was an ordained Christian minister, who knew in his heart what Jesus had done for him, and he wanted all people to have liberty equally together, and be judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin.

And now, it appears, war is being waged like never before on people of biblical Christian beliefs. You wonder what some of the Founders had to say. Samuel Adams was one of the strongest Christians alive during the Revolution. He was inspirational.

"How strangely will the tools of a tyrant pervert the plain meaning of words!" Samuel Adams, that devout, strong Christian said, his wonderful quote inspired by his faith.

And he said:

If you love wealth better than liberty, the tranquility of servitude than the animating contest of freedom, go from us in peace. We seek not your counsel nor your arms. Crouch down and lick the hands that feed you. May your chains sit lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that you were our countrymen.

These are people of faith who believed in liberty that started this place. And to have courts saying you can't say the word "God" in invocation, benediction—we start every day with a prayer in this Chamber, and have for centuries.

But we go back and finish with this. The speech of Benjamin Franklin that we have from his own handwriting. So what he said, 1787, late June, 1787, when nearly 5 weeks had gone by and they'd accomplished virtually nothing, and he pointed out that they had accomplished virtually nothing, that they had more "nos" than "ayes" on virtually every vote.

And he went on to say:

In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our understandings? In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room.

That was Independence Hall. This great, brilliant man, who most of us were taught was a Deist, went on to say:

Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered.

That's not a Deist.

All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending providence in our favor.

I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men.

Now, the judges in this country, there are those who would say, he shouldn't be able to give that speech. He just mentioned the "G" word. Yet, it was what inspired people, these kind of speeches.

He said:

And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it possible an empire could rise without His aid?

We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that "except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it." I also firmly believe, without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in our political building no better than the Builders of Babel: We shall be confounded by our local partial interests and we ourselves shall become a by-word down through the ages.

He went on to say he believed they should start every day with prayer.

He was followed by Randolph from Virginia, who basically pointed out that here we are at the end of June, we are about to celebrate our anniversary, let's all go to church together, hear a sermon together, which they did, the reformed Calvinist Lutheran Church. They all went to church and heard a sermon together. They came back in a new spirit, and gave us the Constitution, and gave us the Bill of Rights after that.

How in the world can a Federal Government that came from those roots begin to declare war on Christians, and Catholic Christians now? Beware, beware. The Federal Government that can declare war on Catholic Christian faith may be after your faith next.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 588. An act to redesignate the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge as the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 40 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, February 3, 2012, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

4801. A letter from the Acting Director, Policy Issuances Division, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Classes of Poultry [Docket No.: FSIS-2007-0048] (RIN: 0583-AC83) received January 3, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4802. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Lists of Regions Classified With Respect to Certain Animal Diseases and States Approved To Receive Certain Imported Horses [Docket No.: APHIS-2009-0035] (RIN: 0579-AD05) received January 10, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4803. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — *Bacillus subtilis* strain CX-9060; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2010-0104; FRL-9330-9] received January 11, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4804. A letter from the Chairman and President, Export-Import Bank, transmitting a report on transactions involving U.S. exports to Hong Kong pursuant to Section 2(b)(3) of the Export-Import Bank Act of 1945, as amended; to the Committee on Financial Services.

4805. A letter from the General Counsel, Federal Housing Finance Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Federal Home Loan Bank Housing Goals: Mortgage Reporting Amendments (RIN: 2590-AA48) received January 3, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

4806. A letter from the Executive Secretary, National Labor Relations Board, transmitting the Board's final rule — Representation-Case Procedures (RIN: 3142-AA08) received January 3, 2012, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

4807. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy,