

Mr. Speaker, Richard "Dick" Abbey has been an outstanding attorney in Sonoma County for 40 years. He is respected and held in high esteem by his peers, which is reflected in this honor he has received from the Sonoma County Bar Association. It is therefore appropriate that we honor him today.

ON THE PASSING OF
CONGRESSMAN IKE SKELTON

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 30, 2013

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, my sincere condolences go out to the family and loved ones of my dear friend and colleague, Congressman Ike Skelton, a man whose contributions to this country reflected his devotion to service and his love for this nation.

Ike's passing is one that hits close to home as I reflect on the 34 years he spent in Congress, representing the state of Missouri, and building his reputation as an expert in military defense. As Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Ike showed a great concern for those who fought to defend, and was recognized by the U S Navy Memorial Foundation for his support of the navy and military during his years in Congress. Offering words of advice, and showing a genuine sense of care for humanity, Ike was a mentor and a friend, advocating for those who dedicated their lives to serve their community and this country.

To lose yet another leader who embodied the spirit of selflessness and compassion towards his work and the people he served, is deeply saddening. Although words cannot help to ease the loss we bear, may we all take comfort in knowing that Congressman Skelton lived a life that will forever be remembered in our hearts.

INTRODUCTION OF THE BIPARTISAN STUDENT AND FAMILY TAX SIMPLIFICATION ACT

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 30, 2013

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, education is key to the economic well-being of our citizens and our democracy. Today, I am pleased to join my colleague, DIANE BLACK from Tennessee, in introducing the Student and Family Tax Simplification Act. This bipartisan bill simplifies our tax code and dramatically strengthens our investment in students and their families, expanding aid for the lowest-income students.

Tax-based aid represents more than half of all non-loan federal aid, playing an important role in promoting college affordability, access, and completion. As partners in the Ways and Means Education and Family Benefits Tax Working Group, Congressman BLACK and I heard from dozens of experts about the need to improve education tax benefits. There was surprising agreement among politically-diverse stakeholders about the problems of and promising reforms to tax-based education benefits. The Student and Family Tax Simplification Act

is a bipartisan effort to implement stakeholder recommendations for reform.

Education tax experts described current education tax benefits as complex and poorly targeted. The greatest agreement centered on creating one credit for current education costs to improve the simplicity, awareness, and use of tax benefits. Stakeholders highlighted that the complexity of multiple benefits makes it difficult for taxpayers to understand whether they qualify for a benefit and which benefit best meets their needs. Indeed, a study by the Government Accountability Office showed that 1.5 million tax filers who qualified for either the Tuition and Fees Deduction or the Lifetime Learning Credit in 2009 did not claim the credit or deduction; another 237,000 did not claim optimal benefits. To improve the effectiveness of the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC), both conservative and progressive stakeholders urged policymakers to target benefits to low- and moderate-income taxpayers whose college enrollment and persistence decisions are more sensitive to cost.

The Student and Family Tax Simplification Act simplifies education benefits by consolidating the Hope Tax Credit, the Tuition and Fees Deduction, and the Lifetime Learning Credit into the AOTC, creating a single credit for current educational expenses. The bill also extends the AOTC permanently rather than allowing it to expire in 2017 and preserves the value of the credit over time by adjusting for inflation starting in 2018, an important provision given that college expenses have risen much quicker than inflation for many years.

In addition, the bill creates an improved, more robust education tax benefit for low-income students in multiple ways. It adopts the upper phase-out limits for the Hope tax credit adjusted for inflation, which focuses aid on families whose incomes are in the bottom 80% of income distribution. The bill also doubles the current phase-out range for single and joint filers to create a more gradual phase-out of the benefit and to reduce the effective marginal tax rate associated with the phase-out. These changes phase-out the credit for single tax filers between \$43,000 to \$63,000 (\$86,000 to \$126,000 for joint tax filers).

The bill expands aid to low-income students by increasing the amount of credit available and removing obstacles to claiming the credit. This bill increases the maximum refundable credit from \$1,000 to \$1,500. It also changes the process of awarding the credit from covering a proportion of total eligible expenses to covering the first qualified expenses. Currently, a family would have to have \$4,000 in expenses to claim the \$1,000 refundable credit; under the new bill, low-income families could claim the full \$1,500 refundable credit after only \$1,500 in eligible expenses, greatly enhancing the effectiveness of the credit for low-income families.

The bill also allows students to combine Pell grants and AOTC to address unmet financial need. Due to poor coordination between Pell grants and the tax code, an estimated 1 million college students with unmet financial need do not receive any benefit from the AOTC, with the vast majority of these students attending low-cost institutions such as community colleges. The bill improves coordination between the AOTC and Pell without double counting the same expenses as well as excludes Pell grants from taxation to simplify compliance.

In closing, the Student and Family Tax Simplification Act will help streamline education tax benefits, making it easier for students and families to understand and take advantage of education tax benefits. Further, it will substantially increase federal assistance for education for the lowest-income students and families, improving the affordability of higher education.

HONORING JO ANN GORA

HON. LUKE MESSER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 30, 2013

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ball State University President Jo Ann Gora. After serving as President of Ball State for 10 years, President Gora announced she will be retiring from the position in June of 2014.

After serving as Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Old Dominion University and then as Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts, Boston, Jo Ann Gora became the fourteenth President of Ball State in 2004. She is the first woman to serve as president of a public university in the history of the state of Indiana.

President Gora's dynamic leadership brought transformative improvements to the Ball State community. During her tenure as president, Ball State University undertook massive renovation and construction projects dramatically transforming the campus. The University raised more philanthropic funds than in the history of the institution. President Gora also oversaw the raising of admissions standards, and numerous academic programs achieved national rankings and recognition under her leadership.

I ask the entire 6th Congressional District to join me in honoring President Jo Ann Gora for her service as the president of Ball State University. I am confident she will bring the same tenacity and leadership to the next chapter of her life.

CELEBRATING THE WORK OF
TEMPLE MAYOR DANNY DUNN

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 30, 2013

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the work of Temple Mayor Danny Dunn. This eighth generation Texan honors his home state's illustrious past yet looks forward to its even brighter future.

Founded as a railroad construction camp in the 1880s, Temple quickly became home to hospitals, industry, and higher education. Over the years, the Temple area became an ideal place for military personnel to move to for their retirement.

A native son of Temple, Danny got his love of public service as a young boy attending civic events when others were playing flag football. His dreams of becoming Temple's Mayor came true in 2012 and he's made the most of his time in office. He's focused his energies on building and improving his hometown through strategic growth and development, while maintaining Temple's current infrastructure.

As a licensed Texas real estate broker, Danny knows the importance of making sure Temple offers the best of small town living with the best of big city amenities. Danny relies on an extensive network of community activists, ranging from former mayors, Rotary Club members, and faith leaders, to guide him on how to best work for Temple.

Mayor Danny Dunn is lucky enough to know you don't have to leave home to know that's where you belong. I join the people of Temple who are glad he's stayed and is working to making his city a great place to live.

"ANTI-CHRISTIAN TERROR IS EVERYONE'S CONCERN"

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 30, 2013

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to call my colleagues' attention to a recent op-ed written by Steven Nasatir, president of the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. "Anti-Christian Terror is Everyone's Concern," (The Washington Post, October 24, 2013) is a call to end religious persecution, and I join Mr. Nasatir in his demand for that action.

All of us who believe in the need for tolerance should be concerned about the attacks on Christian minorities around the world. Passage of H.R. 301, bipartisan legislation to create a Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia, is one important step we can take.

I want to thank Steve Nasatir for his leadership in the fight for religious and human rights and for this article, which reminds us that we each have a responsibility to speak out when we see persecution and work to end it.

ANTI-CHRISTIAN TERROR IS EVERYONE'S CONCERN

An Egyptian woman mourns during the funeral of several Copt Christians who were killed in Warrag's Virgin Mary church in Cairo, Egypt, Monday, Oct. 21, 2013. Egypt's Christians were stunned Monday by a drive-by shooting in which masked gunmen sprayed a wedding party outside a Cairo church with automatic weapons fire, killing several, including two young girls, in an attack that raised fears of a nascent insurgency by extremists after the military's ouster of the president and a crackdown on Islamists.

The persecution of any religious minority anywhere by anyone is an evil injustice. It requires all persons of conscience to speak out and, when possible, take action.

The upcoming 75th anniversary of Kristallnacht makes this an auspicious time to raise awareness about the contemporary violence targeting religious minorities and their places of worship. Of particular concern are attacks against Christian minorities that have occurred with alarming frequency from Syria to Egypt, from Iraq to Pakistan, and from Kenya to Sudan.

November 9 marks 75 years since the pogrom against Jews committed by mobs throughout the Nazi Reich. Often called Kristallnacht, or the "Night of Broken Glass," when rioters killed or injured hundreds of Jews; burned over 1,000 synagogues; destroyed 7,000 Jewish-owned shops and businesses; vandalized cemeteries and schools, and; sent 30,000 Jews to German concentra-

tion camps. It marked a turning point in the escalating campaign of persecution culminating in the Holocaust.

These events, seared into Jewish collective memory, make us doubly aware—and duty bound—to raise our voices when the deadly brew of religious bigotry and wanton violence are mixed.

Today in Syria, a once thriving Christian population—a community nearly as ancient as that country's once great Jewish community—has been depopulated by 25 percent, according to an estimate the Patriarch Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch Gregorios III Laham shared with the BBC.

In September, The Associated Press reported that Syrian Christians in Maaloula—a community dating to the birth of Christianity and that still speaks Aramaic—were driven out or forcibly converted to Islam by rebels aligned with al-Qaeda.

"It is chaos, it is violence, it is blood, it is death. Life has been paralyzed. We have lost everything," said Archbishop Theophile Georges Kassab of Homs.

In Egypt, some supporters of ousted President Mohammed Morsi last summer unleashed their rage against that nation's Christians, a historic community constituting 20 percent of the country's population. Mobs burned dozens of Christian schools, convents, monasteries, institutions, and churches of any, and all Christian denominations. And just days ago, gunmen on a motorcycle opened fire outside a Coptic Christian church during a wedding, murdering four, including an 8-year-old girl.

"It never happened before in history that such a big number of churches were attacked on one day," Bishop Thomas, a Coptic Orthodox bishop in Assiut told Al Jazeera. "We normally used to have attacks once a month or so."

As Kristallnacht teaches, the burning of houses of worship can be a red alert that worse is yet to come. September saw the horrific Taliban bombing of Anglican worshippers in Pakistan, which took 85 lives, and, according to accounts shared by witnesses, the targeting for murder of Kenyan Christians—deliberately separated from others in a chilling reminder of Nazi "selections"—by al Shabaab terrorists in a Nairobi shopping mall.

Attacks like these have contributed to a decline in the Christian population in the Middle East and North Africa from 9.5 percent to 3.8 percent of the total population from 1910 to 2010, according to a Pew Forum report on Global Christianity.

Tellingly, Israel is the only Middle East country where the Christian population has grown in the last half century, from 34,000 to 158,000, in large measure, according to many observers, because of the religious freedoms enjoyed there.

As a Jew, I'm proud of the status of religious minorities in the Jewish state. As an American, I'm especially proud to live in a society where people of different faiths (and no faith) share the values of tolerance and coexistence. Despite isolated though sometimes deadly instances of religiously-inspired terror during the past few decades, ours is a nation where no Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, or person of any other faith must live in fear because of who they are.

It is time to sound the alarm about the religious persecutions of Christians and others. Let us raise our voices, and call on our elected representatives to take action. People of all faiths should support passage of H.R. 301, legislation that would direct our President to appoint a State Department Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia.

The bill will facilitate U.S. government responses to human rights violations, combat acts of religious intolerance and incitement targeting religious minorities, and help address the needs of religious minorities.

Further, we must demand that international institutions designed to protect human rights, especially the United Nations, must actually do so without prejudice.

For people of conscience, for people of all faiths, now is not the time to be silent.

INTRODUCING A RESOLUTION IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE BAHAMAS

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 30, 2013

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the independence of The Bahamas, which took place on July 10, 2013.

The proud history and rich culture of the Bahamian people date back centuries, having evolved amid significant influences from foreign settlers and traders who were drawn to their islands' beauty, resources, and strategic location. The very islands were inhabited as early as 300 to 400 AD, and settled by the Lucayan Indians from 900 AD to 1500 AD. In 1492, Christopher Columbus made landfall in the New World on San Salvador and, within 25 years, about 40,000 natives were sent to work in the mines of Hispaniola.

British settlement began in 1648 with the arrival of English Puritans led by Captain William Sayle, known as "Eleutheran Adventurers," who sought religious freedom. The capital of The Bahamas, Nassau, was established around 1670 as a commercial port, and experienced several decades of conflict between Spanish, French, and British military forces, as well as privateers and pirates. By 1718, the King of England appointed Captain Woodes Rogers to serve as the first Royal Governor and restore order in The Bahamas, now a crown colony.

Following the American War of Independence, the British issued land grants to American Loyalists who went into exile in The Bahamas. With them they brought slaves and forced the Spanish to retreat from the region. Today, the majority of Bahamians trace back their roots to the thousands of West Africans who were enslaved and brought to the islands in order to work on cotton plantations by those loyal to the British Crown. When Britain abolished its slave trade in 1807, thousands of liberated Africans from foreign slave ships were resettled as free persons in The Bahamas. During the early 19th century, hundreds of American slaves and Black Seminoles escaped from Florida and settled primarily on Andros Island in The Bahamas.

Bahamians were granted self-rule in 1964, and became members of the Commonwealth of Nations in 1969. In December 1972, the Government of The Bahamas, headed by Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Lynden Pindling and the Opposition headed by Sir Kendal Isaacs, led a delegation to London to discuss the Independence Constitution. Less than a year later, on July 10, 1973, The Bahamas became a free and sovereign country, ending