

A few days ago I was given a ticket for driving without proper ID. Today I am limiting my driving as much as I possibly can. What you need to understand is that we have been living in Miami for the past 17 years and have been running our family business in Miami for the past eight years.

If I don't have the freedom to drive around, I am afraid that our family business will suffer to the point that we as a family will not be able to sustain ourselves.

Story 9: I came to the United States 17 years ago. I applied for political asylum and was denied. Without realizing it, I had a deportation order and I was very scared. I have a young child and am wishing for comprehensive immigration reform for the single moms, for the moms that have young children, because it makes me scared to leave my child. I'm hoping for immigration reform for all the women out there that work as housekeepers, maids, etc., and also for folks with deportation orders that have small children and can't leave them. This is the best place for them, and they can't go back. I'm hoping it will help all of us too. Thank you very much.

Story 10: I've been an American citizen for more than 20 years. I became one in Chicago. There are so many things that we are hearing every day dealing with immigrants and the manner in which immigrants are abused because they're farmers and unfortunately undocumented. We hear about the suffering of these poor people who are my race too. It's an explosion from both political parties—Democrats and Republicans. Immigrants have been abused constantly since when I was young. Now I'm 74 years old. The suffering these people have gone and are going through is inhumane. What they're doing to my people is criminal. That's why I'm fully in favor of them becoming citizens as soon as possible. Thank you very much.

Story 11: I live in Lakeland, Florida. I'm Mexican, and I have lived in here for over 23 years. My four children are citizens, and I have my house paid for 14 years. My problem is immigration. I worked many years as a farm worker, but one day I looked for work in construction. After starting construction work, the boss told us that we have to give fingerprints. But what happened? A week later they called me to come back because something had come up. I went back and they told me "Just wait here. Something went wrong." Then came two police officers to interview me. They said, "I want to see the tattoos you have." I told them, "I have no tattoos, sir." They were confusing me with someone else and there began my problem. I was in jail for six days. Immigration takes its inmates to Tampa around 6:00 a.m. There, I set a bail of \$1,500, and I was let go. But my problem is still pending. And again, I am looking for a better job. Now I have a deportation order for May 7, and if nobody helps me I'll be deported. So I ask the Senator Marco Rubio and Congressman Dennis Ross please say yes to immigration reform, no more for me but for thousands of undocumented families who are here. I do not want to see them go through the same problem I'm having. Thank you very much.

Update: He received a stay of removal from Immigration and Customs Enforcement. He applied for a work permit and driver's license after receiving the notification. The fear of being separated from his family has been lifted, at least temporarily.

Story 12: I agree to the legalizing 11 million illegal immigrants. They have the right to remain in this country because many have brought their families, their children have grown up here, and they already have Amer-

ican ways. Take my case, for example—I came to this country for education and for a better life for my family. I went without seeing my daughter for years, but once I became a resident I was able to request her. It is for this reason that I agree that illegal immigrants and their families should receive their documents and live more peacefully. Living anxiously and not having status is horrible. I support all people of good will to resolve their immigration status.

Story 13: I'm Mexican. I came to the U.S. eight years ago following my husband. He has lived here for 25 years. We have three children, two living in Mexico and one living with us here in the U.S. Although not born here, he does not know any country other than this one. Since I arrived here, I have served as a volunteer at my son's school. I know all the work that teachers do in Mexico because I worked as a teacher for 20 years. I have 20 years of experience, but here for lack of papers, I had to work as a maid. I want immigration reform to pass.

Story 14: I say yes to citizenship and residence. My mom is a person of 72 years. She must have psychiatric treatment because of her depression, which is caused by the fact that one of my brothers, who is 45, cannot be a resident, even though he has lived here for more than 10 years. The reform [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals] is only for young people. Then I have another brother who is a citizen and has been diagnosed with colon cancer. For these reasons we need my brother to stay with us. He is the only one that does not have papers. I think there should be a reform as soon as possible.

Story 15: I say yes to citizenship. I came here in 2001 with my tourist visa and my daughter. She came on the same visa with me. She grew up here during the past 12 years, but she is now back in Ecuador. My driver's license expired in 2006, so now I am frustrated because I cannot drive. I am a very good-hearted person and have a lot of creativity. I have been working with Amway, and I pay my taxes. I would like to go out and drive and have clients. I have been very obedient. I have not driven. Instead, I have my bike and I go by buses. My daughter was so frustrated that she went back to Ecuador two years ago. She loves this country as I love this country. We help people so I am prepared to help people in very good ways.

GIVING THANKS FOR AMERICA'S "FIRST FREEDOM"

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2013

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I submit for the RECORD remarks I delivered yesterday at America's Table Thanksgiving Luncheon hosted by the American Jewish Committee:

I would like to begin by thanking AJC for the invitation to join you at the annual "America's Table Thanksgiving Luncheon" the theme of which is religious freedom.

In 1620 a hearty band of Pilgrims set sail for the New World in the face of tremendous peril and uncertainty such that they might be able to live, act and worship according to the dictates of their conscience.

The traditional first Thanksgiving feast celebrated at Plymouth was a time for the Pilgrims who had survived the journey by sea and the harsh winter that followed to give thanks for the bountiful harvest and

recognize the hand of Divine Providence that had guided them to this point.

I read with great interest recently that this year, for the first time since 1888, Thanksgiving and the first full day of Hanukkah fall on the same day.

There are of course deep thematic commonalities between the two holidays—both grounded in triumph over religious oppression.

But even as we celebrate the American experience in this regard, I am reminded anew that religious freedom remains an elusive hope for too many. As I reflect on the privilege of living in America I am cognizant of the responsibility that comes with that to help those around the world who are oppressed or persecuted.

Martin Luther King Jr. famously said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." Dr. King's statement is so poignant. In times of trouble, the silence of an enemy is expected, but the silence of a friend is devastating.

I am concerned that this nation, which has always been a friend to the oppressed, the marginalized and the forgotten is at risk of sidelining this "first freedom" and failing to speak out when it comes under attack.

Arguably religious freedom has never been more under assault than it is today.

Looking to the Middle East there is often societal and communal violence and repression against religious communities which specifically targets religious minorities. Too often the governments of these lands foster an atmosphere of intolerance or in some cases such as Iran, outright criminality as it relates to different faith traditions like the Baha'is. Tragically, since 1979, the Iranian government has killed more than 200 Baha'i leaders and dismissed over 10,000 from government and university jobs.

The dangerous realities facing religious minorities have been exasperated by the so-called Arab Spring—a Spring which has devolved into Winter for many of the most vulnerable in these societies.

In February I travelled to the Middle East—specifically to Lebanon and Egypt. One of the main purposes of the trip was to spend time with the Syrian Christian community—a community with ancient roots dating back to the 1st century. I wanted to hear firsthand from Syrian Christians about their concerns and to put this issue in the larger context of an imperiled Christian community in the broader Middle East, specifically in Egypt and Iraq.

In my meetings with Coptic Christians and other minorities in Egypt they spoke of being increasingly marginalized with the ascendancy of the Muslim Brotherhood. While Morsi has since been removed from power, the situation in Egypt today remains fluid. However, this much is clear: Attacks against Coptic Christians have escalated and they are feeling threatened in the land they have inhabited for centuries.

The issues I've just outlined must be viewed not simply as today's news but rather through the lens of history. A phrase not often heard outside the majority Muslim world is "First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people." The "Saturday people" are, of course, the Jewish people.

Except for Israel, their once vibrant communities in countries throughout the region are now decimated. In 1948 the Jewish population of Iraq was roughly 150,000; today no more than 4 remain . . . some reports indicate there may actually be just one Jewish person left in Iraq. In Egypt, the Jewish population was once as many as 80,000; now roughly 20 remain.

Consider this observation by author and adjunct fellow at the Center for Religious Freedom, Lela Gilbert, who recently wrote in the Huffington Post: "Between 1948 and 1970, between 80,000 and 100,000 Jews were expelled from Egypt—their properties and funds confiscated, their passports seized and destroyed. They left, stateless, with little more than the shirts on their backs to show for centuries of Egyptian citizenship. . . ."

One of my last meetings in Egypt last February was with 86-year-old Carmen Weinstein, the president of the Jewish Community of Cairo (JCC). She was born and raised in Egypt and had lived her entire life there. She led a small community of mostly elderly Jewish women in Cairo, who with their sister community in Alexandria, represent Egypt's remaining Jews.

There are 12 synagogues left in Cairo. Some, along with a landmark synagogue in Alexandria, have been refurbished by the government of Egypt and/or U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and have received protection as cultural and religious landmarks—many have not.

Further, the 900 year old Bassatine Jewish Cemetery is half overrun with squatters and sewage. Ms. Weinstein sought to preserve these historic landmarks as well as the patrimony records of the Egyptian Jewish community.

I am aware of the good work of AJC in establishing a fund for the maintenance and preservation of Jewish cultural, religious and historical landmarks, including cemeteries, in Egypt.

Not long after my return to the U.S., Ms. Weinstein passed away and is now buried in the very cemetery she sought to protect. Meanwhile, with the fall of Hosni Mubarak, Coptic Christians, numbering roughly 8-10 million, are leaving in droves in the face of increased repression, persecution and violence.

Similarly, Iraq's Christian population has fallen from as many as 1.4 million in 2003 to roughly 500,000 today. There are roughly 60 Christian churches in the entire country, down from more than 300 as recently as 2003.

Of course other, much smaller but no less vulnerable, religious minorities have also suffered greatly in Iraq.

Over the span of a few decades, the Middle East, with the exception of Israel, has virtually been emptied of its Jewish community. In my conversations with Syrian Christian refugees, Lebanese Christians and Coptic Christians in Egypt, a resounding theme emerged: a similar fate may await the "Sunday People."

While it remains to be seen whether the historic exodus of Christians from the region will prove to be as dramatic as what has already happened to the Jewish community, it is without question devastating, as it threatens to erase Christianity, and in fact Judaism in many respects, from its very roots.

Consider Iraq. With the exception of Israel, the Bible contains more references to the cities, regions and nations of ancient Iraq than any other country. The patriarch Abraham came from a city in Iraq called Ur. Isaac's bride, Rebekah, came from northwest Iraq.

Jacob spent 20 years in Iraq, and his sons (the 12 tribes of Israel) were born in northwest Iraq. A remarkable spiritual revival as told in the book of Jonah occurred in Nineveh. The events of the book of Esther took place in Iraq as did the account of Daniel in the Lion's Den. Furthermore, many of Iraq's Christians still speak Aramaic the language of Jesus.

In Egypt, some 2,000 years ago, Mary, Joseph and Jesus sought refuge in this land from the murderous aims of King Herod. Egypt's Coptic community traces its origins

to the apostle Mark. If the Middle East is effectively emptied of the Christian faith, this will have grave geopolitical implications.

But rather than being met with urgency, vision or creativity, our government's response has been anemic and at times outright baffling especially to the communities most impacted by the changing Middle East landscape.

In conversation after conversation Coptic Christians, reformers, secularist, women and others have told me that the U.S. was perceived as the largest supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood-led government. Further, there was a widely held perception that the U.S. was either disengaged or simply uninterested in advocating for religious freedom and other basic human rights.

While the situation is grim in the Middle East—it is hardly an anomaly. People of faith are under assault elsewhere in the world.

The Chinese government maintains a brutal system of labor camps. Common criminals languish behind bars with people of faith and Nobel laureates who dare to question the regime's authority. A February 2013 Christianity Today piece reported that "China's Christians felt a noticeable rise in persecution in 2012 as the Communist government began the first of a three-phase plan to eradicate unregistered house churches, a new report says." Currently every one of the approximately 25 underground bishops of the Catholic Church is either in jail, under house arrest, under strict surveillance, or in hiding.

The government is an equal opportunity persecutor of people of faith. Over the last two years, over 100 peace-loving Tibetans have set themselves aflame in desperation at the abuses suffered by their people.

The government of Vietnam continues to suppress political dissent and severely limit freedom of expression, association, and public assembly.

In Pakistan, Ahmadi Muslims are prohibited from voting and their graves are desecrated.

In Europe, Anti-Semitism is on the ascent.

A November 8 New York Times article reported, "Fear of rising anti-Semitism in Europe has prompted nearly a third of European Jews to consider emigration because they do not feel safe in their home country, according to a detailed survey of Jewish perceptions released Friday by a European Union agency that monitors discrimination and other violations of basic rights." The survey referenced was released on the 75th anniversary of Kristallnacht violence against Jews in Nazi Germany.

In a piece which ran in the Miami Herald last fall, AJC's Miami director poignantly wrote, "World War II and the destruction of European Jewry taught us that anti-Semitism not only kills Jews, but also poisons and ultimately destroys the society that harbors it. People of good will said, 'Never again,' instituted courses on the Holocaust, and countered the image of the defenseless Jew by supporting the sovereign and democratic state of Israel. Yet today, seven decades after the Nazi death camps became operational, that lesson seems to be already forgotten in much of Europe, where small and defenseless Jewish communities face a renewed surge of anti-Semitism. This Jew-hatred expresses itself in xenophobic politics; physical attacks and intimidation; and interference with basic elements of Jewish religious practice."

This is troubling on a host of levels. For as history has shown us, if the Jews of a country were free to practice their faith, one could be reasonably confident that tolerance and freedom were possible for others.

The Jewish people have characteristically been the canaries in the coal mine—litmus indicators of the state of freedom for all.

In light of these realities, it is clear that religious freedom is under assault globally. Last September the Pew Research Center released a startling study which found that "three-quarters of the world's approximately 7 billion people live in countries with high government restrictions on religion or high social hostilities involving religion, up from 70% a year earlier."

It is clear that the United States must do more to speak for those whose voices have been silenced. Frankly, the Obama administration in country after country has consistently sidelined human rights and religious freedom.

In China we were told early on by Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton that human rights issues in China "can't interfere with the global economic crisis, the global climate change crisis, and the security crisis."

In Sudan the administration actively working to undermine congressional attempts to isolate indicted war criminal and architect of genocide, Omar Bashir. Meanwhile, this Spring, the administration rewarded a notorious Sudanese government official, accused of torturing enemies and seeking to block U.N. peacekeepers in Darfur, with an invitation to Washington for high-level meetings.

In Vietnam, the Obama administration, like the administration before it, has ignored bipartisan Congressional calls to place the government on the State Department's list of the most egregious religious freedom violators, despite crackdowns on people of faith, preferring instead a policy defined simply by trade.

In fact the administration has failed to designate any countries of particular concern, as it is required to do by law, since 2011.

The list goes on.

Turning back again to the Middle East: I have authored bipartisan legislation with Congresswoman Anna Eshoo which would create a special envoy position at the State Department charged with advocating for religious minorities in the Middle East and South Central Asia—specifically focusing on many of the countries I've mentioned here today.

The legislation overwhelmingly passed the House earlier this Fall and is languishing in the Senate in part due to State Department opposition to virtually identical legislation last year.

I am under no illusions that a special envoy holds the key to the survival or even thriving of these ancient faith communities. But to do nothing is not an option. And that seems to be precisely what this administration aims to do.

Not only has it stood in the way of the envoy legislation, key positions within the foreign policy apparatus charged with prioritizing these issues have suffered extended vacancies and individual political prisoner cases are rarely raised in public thereby sending a clear message to tyrants and oppressors the world over that there is little price to pay for violating the first freedom.

While I will continue to press for swift Senate action on the special envoy legislation, I leave you with a charge.

I am increasingly convinced that the discussion (or lack thereof) among government leaders and opinion makers on this issue of religious persecution, is simply a downstream manifestation of what is happening in the broader culture, and specifically in the faith community domestically.

When people of faith in this country are concerned about and advocate for people of faith who are besieged around the world, the government tends to act.

Consider the shining example of Cold War advocacy by the American Jewish community which championed the plight of Soviet Jewry with remarkable effect.

Could such passion be galvanized once again?

I'll close with the inspiring words of one of America's greatest presidents, Abraham Lincoln.

Speaking to a nation torn apart by bloody civil war, he still saw the importance of giving thanks, and in 1863 set apart the last Thursday of November for such a celebration declaring:

"We are prone to forget the Source from which [the blessings of fruitful years and healthful skies] come. . . . No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God. . . ."

While each of us may hail from varied backgrounds and beliefs, we know as Americans that religious freedom is our birthright—a gracious gift of the Most High God not to be denied by any man or government.

As we gather today and later next week with family and friends let us pause for a moment and give thanks for our first freedom while not forgetting those for whom this gracious gift is denied.

HONORING JOHN D. SLATER, SR. FOR HIS COURAGEOUS SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II

HON. BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2013

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding World War II service of Private John D. Slater, Sr.

Mr. Slater was born in 1919, just a year after the close of the First World War. He grew up in a country ravaged by the Great Depression and marked by segregation and Jim Crow. Mr. Slater lived in some of the deepest parts of the South, picking cotton as early as five years old.

When war broke out in Europe and reached our doorstep in the Pacific, Mr. Slater was drafted into the Army to serve and protect our country. He served in the 43rd Quartermaster Company and the 2nd Army.

Mr. Slater's company crossed the Rhine River on temporary bridges during heavy shelling, facing fierce opposition at every turn. By war's end, Mr. Slater had served in France, Belgium and Holland.

At one point, Mr. Slater was separated from his company behind enemy lines for three months before being found 1,000 miles from their destination point. In 1946, he was honorably discharged after four years in the Army.

Today, at 94 years old, Mr. Slater is one of only three remaining African Americans who fought in the Battle of the Bulge. During this, the last-gasp effort of the German army, the allied forces bent, but held and won the day—and the war. Mr. Slater was not only a witness to a defining moment in the world's history, he helped shape it.

After the war, Mr. Slater blazed his own trail, working for roughly 30 years with American Motors, starting in 1949, and opening Slater's Barbecue in Waukegan, Illinois, in the district I represent, in 1957. On weekends, for 40 years, he would cook his famous foot-longs and ribs, serving a gracious and eager community.

Mr. Slater has been a devoted husband and father and a pillar of the community for decades. Mr. Speaker, it is my great honor to recognize John D. Slater, Sr. for his service to our country and his impact in the community.

IN RECOGNITION OF MR. BLAIR MAHONEY

HON. PATRICK MEEHAN

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2013

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleagues Mr. GERLACH and Mr. PITTS to recognize Mr. Blair Mahoney for his distinguished leadership as Executive Director of the Chester County Conference & Visitors Bureau (CVB), and to congratulate him on his retirement.

For the past five years, Mr. Mahoney has helped make Chester County a destination for visitors from across the Commonwealth and the nation. He instituted strong leadership, sound fiscal planning, a historic office renovation and relocation, and an award-winning branding campaign. Through these efforts, Mr. Mahoney helped communicate Chester County's cultural, natural, and historic treasures to many and draw new visitors and economic development to our region.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize Blair Mahoney for his excellent service to the Chester County community and wish him well in his retirement. He takes with him the gratitude and respect of his staff, Board of Directors, peers and the people of Chester County.

SHARING STORIES IN SUPPORT OF COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

HON. JOE GARCIA

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2013

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Speaker, the following are stories of individuals affected by our nation's broken immigration system:

Story 1: I came to this country in 1980 with the desire that all immigrants have—to seek better opportunities. I worked very hard to make my way in this country. I had the opportunity to apply for residency, thanks to the amnesty by President Ronald Reagan and the laws of this country. I presented the evidence required by the immigration process and my request was approved, giving me the temporary residence and my social security number.

After two years, I had to change from temporary residence to permanent residence, so I just had to request the change of status at any immigration office. I even was able to travel to Ecuador, and Immigration stamped my passport. Then, because my process was done in New Jersey but I had moved to Miami for personal reasons, in 1990 I went to the Immigration office in Miami. Since then, I have been subjected to negligence by Immigration. Instead of giving me the permanent residence, they just put a sticker to validate my temporary residence for one year more. That happened again the following year, and the third consecutive year after that. Then, they didn't want to give me the residency, because they said that LULAC cases in

Miami had been fraudulent, to which I responded that actually my case had been in New Jersey. They said that I had to bring my case from New Jersey to Miami, which took three more years. After that, I started wondering what was wrong with my case. They always responded to me with endless excuses: a fire took place at an immigration office and a lot of information was damaged, paperwork became too backed up when they had to put all the information of all cases in a computer system, elections were taking place, I needed to complete and return another form and get fingerprinted. I completed and returned the form, then I was fingerprinted and had to wait more. I trusted the agents of this country and the laws, so I waited and waited. They asked me to fill out another form and so on and on. I sent three forms and fingerprints but nothing happened.

Then the attacks on September 11, 2001, happened, which made things worse. There was no news at all. An executive order by President George Bush was released, ordering that immigration documents should be given to people who got Reagan's reform. I presented it and nothing happened. I called two or three times every month asking about my case and nothing happened. I was told that the process took up to six months, but I already had spent two years waiting and nothing. In 2005, I found out about a brain tumor through my medical exams. I received surgery and after that I couldn't work so I lived in a critical economic situation. I lost everything I had. That same year, there was another executive order request to resolve immigration cases because of the many complaints from victims of the immigration service. I sent documentation by mail to the correct address and on time, and they rejected it three times. I found an honest lawyer that took the case (pro bono, because of my financial situation), and from there I had legal representation. We sent copies of the pages with the LULAC law, and we always got negative responses, so we filed appeals but received again negative responses. They asked me for proofs that were impossible to find after 23 years, but nevertheless I was able to find some. All of this just to make me lose the hope of solving my case.

In the last response not only did they deny my case, but also they took away my temporary residence. I demand my permanent residency and a path to citizenship without more delay, because I have tried for over 24 years with my residency, in the name of God, Jehovah, and the signed and executed laws of this country. Don't allow injustice to win in this country. You are politicians first for this country.

Story 2: Alex came here when he was very young. He's from Honduras. Honduras is a very poor country. His family is very poor, but he speaks fairly fluent English. He came here to get a better life. There's no work in Honduras and very high crime. He came here when he was probably 17 or 18 years old. He hitched rides on trains, travelling on boxcars with only the clothes he had and no money. So, he basically crossed three countries, I believe Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico. When he got to this country, of course he came here illegally, but he ended up in Virginia and he then went to Knoxville, Tennessee. During the time he was in Virginia and Tennessee, he was greatly exploited by people who had him working for them. He was all alone. He had no relatives and did not know anyone here in the United States. He met a girl, who was maybe four or five years older than him. She already had one child by a man from Honduras. She and Alex hooked up together