

Unfortunately, we are failing to address these threats in the House of Representatives. The Republican majority of the House has refused to acknowledge the overwhelming scientific evidence that the planet's climate is changing, and that human activity is a major contributor to this change.

THANKS TO THE MINNESOTA OVARIAN CANCER ALLIANCE

(Mr. PAULSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month.

This past weekend, I joined neighbors to help kick off the annual Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance Walk and Run. Each year, thousands come out to this event in Edina Park to raise awareness of and education on ovarian cancer, to raise funds for research, and to give support and hope to local women and their families that are touched by this devastating disease.

In 2013 alone, the American Cancer Society estimates that about 22,000 new cases of ovarian cancer will be diagnosed, and 14,000 women will die of ovarian cancer in the United States.

This last March, I met with a group of doctors and nurses from every major health system in the Twin Cities to discuss cancer care and prevention, and I'm pleased to cosponsor legislation that ensures that cancer patients get the care they need.

Mr. Speaker, the powerful stories of hope that I heard this weekend are just a fraction of what we see in our community as we work on our shared goal of making cancer a thing of the past.

LOCAL ISSUES IMPACTING MANY AMERICANS

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, in the midst of serious discussions on America's next step forward on issues involving Syria, I rise simply to talk about local issues and issues impacting many Americans. One of them has to do with foster care and the situation of foster care in my own State, one dealing with children who've aged out in the city of Houston, and there are no facilities for them to be able to utilize, except for a few, like Little Audrey's, which is under siege, and which we're trying to draw the attention of the community to, to be able to help those children or young people that have no place to go, and then to provide more counselors for foster care children so they have a lifeline while they're in the foster care system.

Finally, some good news: I want to salute the Zion Ministries, the church that I joined yesterday, where they received their marker of historic preser-

vation in the Fourth Ward, Freedmen's Town area.

In our local communities, good things are happening and challenges are happening, and I hope that, as we look at these hard decisions, we'll be able to work with our communities as well on some of the important issues they face.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained in a classified security briefing on Syria and missed H.R. 2052, the Global Investment in American Jobs Act of 2013, as amended. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

On H.R. 2844, the Federal Communications Commission Consolidation Reporting Act, I would have voted "aye," and on the Journal vote, I would have voted "aye."

THE CONGRESSIONAL PRAYER CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. FORBES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the subject of our Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to come to the floor tonight to discuss our first freedom, religious liberty, as we recognize the 226th anniversary of the signing of our Constitution on September 17, Constitution Day.

I'm hosting this special order as founder and cochairman of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, a bipartisan group of more than 90 Members of the House of Representatives dedicated to protecting religious freedom in America and preserving our Nation's rich spiritual heritage.

I cochair this caucus with my good friend, Mr. MIKE MCINTYRE, a Democratic Member from North Carolina, who, unfortunately, cannot be with us this evening.

Faith and religious freedom are not party-line issues. Members of the Congressional Prayer Caucus gather each week in the United States Capitol to pray for our Nation. We leave political labels at the door, and we join in prayer for one another and our country.

On September 17, our Nation will mark the 226th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution in Independence Hall, Philadelphia. The Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, was soon to follow.

Religious freedom is the very first thing named in the First Amendment. It is our first freedom, and it's a fundamental human right.

But as President Ronald Reagan so accurately observed, freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. Our freedoms are fragile, and how quickly we forget their importance.

An annual survey by the Newseum Institute's First Amendment Center revealed that only 24 percent of Americans are aware that religious freedom is a First Amendment right. We are forgetting our first freedom. It is this amnesia that results in the subjugation of the fundamental right of religious freedom.

Just last month, a justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court recognized that their decision to uphold fines against a wedding photographer who declined to photograph a same-sex wedding meant that the photographer is now "compelled by law to compromise the very religious beliefs that inspire" her life.

But the justice called this trampling of religious freedom "the price of citizenship."

The price of citizenship? No. Religious freedom is the very thing the Pilgrims sought when they landed in Plymouth and struggled to survive in a new and unknown world.

Religious freedom was so important to our Founding Fathers that it was the first freedom they named as bearing protection from the government. It's not the price of citizenship; it is the hallmark of the American spirit of freedom.

The American people recognize that the New Mexico Supreme Court's decision is wrong. A recent Rasmussen poll revealed that 85 percent of Americans believe that a wedding photographer who has a deeply held religious belief about marriage has a right to decline to photograph a same-sex ceremony.

Even still, we see weekly reminders that religious freedom is being trampled in the name of tolerance. The Supreme Court's decision in *United States v. Windsor* has given validation to the basely false argument that the only reason anyone has to support traditional marriage is bigotry. We've forgotten President Obama's observation in 2012 that there are people of goodwill on both sides of the marriage debate.

Over the last few months alone, we've seen so many injustices, like the Oregon bakery that's been forced to close its doors because of the visceral hate mail, threats and boycotts they received simply for living their lives according to their faith.

As some workers protest for higher wages, we see businesses like Hobby Lobby that pay their full-time workers significantly more than minimum wage fighting for the ability to keep their doors open and their workers employed because they dare to operate their business according to the dictates of their conscience.

We see an attack on the integrity of the military chaplaincy, an institution

that exists to support the free exercise of religion for our brave servicemembers as they leave home and family behind to enter harsh and foreign environments.

And we see servicemembers like Senior Master Sergeant Monk fighting to maintain their careers in the military because they dare to hold a traditional view of marriage.

In Iran, Pastor Abedini languishes in the notorious Evin prison because of his Christian faith. He's an American citizen who has been wrongly sentenced to 8 years in prison because he dared to hold a certain religious belief, torn from his wife and two young children.

As we approach the 1-year anniversary of his incarceration, we need to make sure that we realize that his fight for freedom is a reminder of how important it is that we remain a beacon for the fundamental right of religious freedom and the ability to live your life openly and freely on the basis of your convictions. We must defend Pastor Abedini and advocate for his immediate release to the safety of his family.

As we honor Constitution Day, let us remember the fundamental right of religious freedom enshrined in the First Amendment. Members of the Prayer Caucus have not forgotten our first freedom. We stand ready to guard and protect it.

I'm proud to partner with my good friend, Mr. MCINTYRE, in leading this extraordinary group of Members known as the Congressional Prayer Caucus.

I'm so pleased to be joined this evening by my colleagues who are working to protect religious freedom in America and around the world, and at this time I'd like to yield to my good friend, Mr. TIM WALBERG from Michigan.

Mr. WALBERG. I thank my friend from Virginia and, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on an issue of ultimate importance tonight, the First Amendment liberties.

□ 1945

We go back to those brave men whose shoulders we stand upon, and here in the Chamber today, people like Jonathan Witherspoon, who said:

A republic once equally poised, must either preserve its virtue or lose its liberty.

Congressman FORBES, we are standing for that virtue today. We are standing for that virtue in a country that, sadly, has walked away from accepting it out of hand. And assuming that there will be differences—there will be theological differences, there will be religious differences—America was known from its inception as a place where we could be free to have those foundational principles.

Benjamin Franklin himself said:

This will be the best security for maintaining our liberties. A Nation of well-informed men who have been taught to know and prize the rights which God has given them cannot be enslaved. It is in the religion of ignorance that tyranny begins.

And so I went to some statements that were made in the constitutions of our States—specifically, those States that were our 13 colonies—to look at what our Framers and Founders, those back in the States that said we want a Federal Government, but we want a Federal Government that comes under the control of the States. What did they say about religion and those First Amendment liberties? I picked out three. I picked them out related to the highest offices of our land.

The first was New York. Our Attorney General, Eric Holder, was born, raised, and educated in New York. In its constitution, New York State says:

The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed in this State to all humankind.

That was New York.

I went then to the State of Delaware, the State of our Vice President. And in that State, the preamble to the constitution starts out by saying:

Through Divine goodness, all people have by nature the rights of worshiping and serving their Creator according to the dictates of their consciences.

That's Delaware.

And so then ultimately I went to the last State that I looked at. And I went to that because our President comes from Illinois. But that wasn't one of the 13 colonies, my friend from Virginia will inform me. So I went to Massachusetts, where he was educated at Harvard Law School. Article II in that constitution says:

It is the right as well as the duty of all men and society, publicly, and at stated seasons to worship the Supreme Being, the great Creator and Preserver of the universe. And no subject shall be hurt, molested, or restrained in his person, liberty, or estate, for worshiping God in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience.

Mr. Speaker, I would say those are the foundational principles that led to the adoption of our Constitution and, ultimately, the First Amendment. And so a danger comes when we come to areas like prayer, where we have a municipality like Greece, New York, that is fighting in the case *Greece v. Gallo* way for the opportunity to continue their tradition of opening with prayer.

Patrick Henry said:

An appeal to arms and the God of hosts is all that is left us.

An appeal. Isn't that a prayer? An appeal to God?

An appeal to arms and the God of hosts is all that is left to us. But we shall not fight our battle alone. There is a just God that presides over the destinies of nations. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone. Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?

And then he appeals to God again. A prayer:

Forbid it, almighty God. I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death.

So today we come to a situation in our country where we have people who are saying, basically, the same thing:

give me liberty or give me death. Give me the opportunity to pray. Give me the opportunity to worship without Big Government collapsing on me.

Mr. Speaker, there are enemies of our freedoms. And they have somehow caught it right.

Joseph Stalin said:

America is like a healthy body and its resistance is threefold: its patriotism, its morality, its spiritual life. If we can undermine these three areas, America will collapse from within.

He's right: we are collapsing, to our detriment and to those who yearn for freedom.

I end with this. A patriot, a President, a believer in prayer, a believer in the First Amendment. President Eisenhower stated in 1954:

Atheism substitutes men for the Supreme Creator and this leads inevitably to domination and dictatorship.

He went on to say:

We must jealously guard our foundation in faith. For on it rests the ability of the American individual to live and thrive in this blessed land and to be able to help other less fortunate people to achieve freedom and individual opportunity. These we take for granted, but to others they are often only a wistful dream. In God we trust, our motto. Often have we heard the words of this wonderful American motto. Let us make sure that familiarity has not made them meaningless for us. We carry the torch of freedom as a sacred trust for all mankind.

And then President Eisenhower concluded:

We do not believe that God intended the light that He created to be put out by men.

I thank my friend for allowing me these statements tonight. And may we stand firmly to the point that ultimately our First Amendment liberties—and even more than that—the God-blessed opportunities that come from His truth will be applauded in this land.

Mr. FORBES. I thank the gentleman from Michigan for his great leadership on these First Amendment rights and for his words tonight.

We have another great leader on First Amendment rights, Mr. Speaker, and that's DOUG LAMBORN for Colorado.

DOUG, it's a pleasure to have you tonight. I would love to yield to you for any comments you might have.

Mr. LAMBORN. I want to thank my friend and colleague, Representative RANDY FORBES of Virginia, for his leadership in this vital area of religious liberty and for putting this time together.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of our constitutionally granted right to religious liberty and in support of our military. I am grateful for our Nation's military, and I feel privileged to represent thousands of men and women in uniform who serve at the five military installations in my district. Our military is made up of brave, peace-loving men and women of all faiths serving to protect our freedom and our way of life. But there is a growing and troubling pattern of religious discrimination against our men and women in arms.

Earlier this year, an Army Reserve training brief listed Catholics, Evangelical Christians, Sunni Muslims and some Jews as “religious extremists,” along with groups like al Qaeda, Hamas, and the KKK. Also, in July of this year, a Christian chaplain was ordered to remove a religious column he had written which simply detailed the history of the phrase:

There are no atheists in foxholes.

Furthermore, in drafting religious freedom policies and regulations, officials within the Pentagon have consulted with radical atheists who once characterized Christians as “monsters who terrorize their fellow Americans who are die-hard enemies of the United States Constitution.” This same radical atheist is calling on the Pentagon to prosecute military chaplains who share their faith with servicemembers, claiming that even speaking about your Christian faith amounts to “unconstitutional religious proselytizing and oppression.”

Mr. Speaker, this is an affront to our civil liberties and demeaning to this Nation that has always believed in the First Amendment freedom of self-expression. Religious freedom is an integral part of America’s greatness and has been a pillar of our Nation from the very beginning. We must remain firmly committed to defending religious freedom.

Mr. FORBES. I thank the gentleman for his hard work in this area and for being with us tonight.

We heard Mr. WALBERG mention Patrick Henry; and from the State that Patrick Henry came from is my good friend, ROB WITTMAN.

ROB, thank you for being here and your fight in all this.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Representative FORBES. I want to thank you for your leadership in the Congressional Prayer Caucus and for taking the time to make sure we got together today to recognize the importance of today’s date and the efforts by our forefathers to make sure that we have those liberties and freedoms to make sure that we can freely practice our religious beliefs here.

I’m pleased to be here as a member of our Prayer Caucus and join with my other colleagues on the Prayer Caucus to honor Constitution Day and the religious freedoms of all our citizens.

September 17, 2013, marks the 226th anniversary of the signing of the greatest governing document the world has ever known: our Constitution. Religious freedom is the very first freedom protected in the First Amendment. And just as Chairman FORBES has spoken of, it was really a discussion that took place years ago in Virginia.

Governor Patrick Henry, there in the church at St. John’s in Richmond, got up and spoke about the importance of the individual liberties and freedoms and the importance to make sure that we as a Nation had a Constitution that preserved those. As you know, he led that fight to make sure that James

Madison, the author of the Constitution, provided in the Constitution just those individual liberties and freedoms. In fact, I think a lot of folks don’t know he actually voted against ratifying the Constitution originally because it did not contain those basic individual liberties and freedoms, and it was his work that made sure that we enjoyed those individual liberties and freedoms today, based on our Constitution.

It was that First Amendment that read:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

In today’s world, there are far too many obstacles for many of our citizens to truly practice what is promised in the First Amendment. There are challenges to religious symbols. Religious freedom for members of our military is under attack.

Air Force Senior Master Sergeant Phillip Monk was recently dismissed from his position and reassigned after he refused to voice his opinion when his commanding officer asked him if he could agree with her belief that openly voicing a religious or moral opposition to same-sex marriage is discrimination. He stood by his beliefs and paid the price professionally for that.

Religious liberties are threatened, for many, each and every day.

The Commonwealth of Virginia, as has been so eloquently stated, has a direct tie to the First Amendment. I stated Governor Patrick Henry’s efforts there; but also Thomas Jefferson was very, very adamant and passionate about preserving those religious freedoms.

The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom was authored by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison in 1779, and it states:

No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

Thomas Jefferson, the second President of the United States, and one of our Nation’s Founding Fathers, understood the need for protecting our natural rights, those provided to us by our Creator, those protected by our government, all of which were more important to him than any other element of what he espoused in the creation of our government. And we know that none meant more to him or to our Nation than the freedom of religion. The statute declares that compulsory religion is wrong, that no religion should be forced on an individual, and that the freedom of religion is a natural right.

□ 2000

The statute’s doctrine and principles have inspired individuals throughout

the Commonwealth and across our Nation.

Thomas Jefferson requested that three of his greatest accomplishments be listed on his epitaph. Freedom of religion was so important to him that the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom was listed along with the founding of the University of Virginia and the writing of the United States Declaration of Independence as his greatest lifetime achievements. Thomas Jefferson believed deeply in that freedom of religion and wanted to make sure that it was something that our Nation continued to espouse today, and it was his moral foundation.

The statute ultimately facilitated the path to complete religious freedom in the United States. As we know, the discussions that took place took place based upon that Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom. That was eventually included in the First Amendment to our Constitution.

It is our duty to ensure that the Congress continues to protect our First Amendment freedoms for now and for future generations. And I want to thank all of my colleagues in the Congressional Prayer Caucus to make sure that we remember each and every day as we are here the practice of religious freedom, and to make sure that we understand that our projection of that freedom is what makes us the great Nation that we are today.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. WITTMAN, I thank you for your dedication to First Amendment rights and to our military.

One of the deep thinkers that we have in this area in all forms of policy, especially as it comes to First Amendment liberties, is the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD).

Mr. LANKFORD, we are delighted to have you tonight, and I would love to hear some of your thoughts on this.

Mr. LANKFORD. It is absolutely my honor to have the chance to be here as well to be able to speak out on the issue that was critical in the foundation of our own Constitution and of our Nation as a whole, and that is the right to believe.

We in America have this unique thing, the right to believe or the right to not have a belief at all; but if you believe, to also have the right to actually live what you believe. It is this unique American freedom that people around the world sometimes stare at with awe because they are bound to have a certain set of beliefs to be in that country, but not so with us in America. You can have a belief, not have a belief; but if you have one, you may live your faith.

Coptic Christians in Egypt would love to be able to live their faith and not live in fear right now. The Baha’i in Iran would love to be able to live out their faith and not live in fear right now. The Christians in Syria would love to be able to live out their faith and not live in fear. And the multiple religions that try to practice in countries like China and Vietnam and other

places that constantly live in fear because of their own faith would love to have that. But not so in America. Whether you be a Member of Congress, whether you be an individual in the administration, whether you be any person walking down the streets of America, you have the right to be able to live out your faith, and it is essential for us. It's a great value that we share, but it is essential that we also continue to protect. And on days like today, it is ironic that we are discussing again this unique value to say: Can we still live out our faith as Americans?

Let me just give you a couple of examples where the challenge has been put to the test recently. It wasn't but a couple of years ago that the Obama administration challenged the Missouri Synod Church on whether that church and Hosanna-Tabor could choose their own minister or whether they would be fought from the outside, that the government could step into the church and say, No, we have to help be a part of selecting who the minister is. That was argued all the way until it got to the Supreme Court, where they lost 9-0, and the Supreme Court reaffirmed again that a church has the right to select their own minister.

It is ironic that we are dealing with a great business that employs thousands upon thousands of people around the country, called Hobby Lobby, that the founders of that company are Christians, they live out their faith—they practiced their faith from when they were a craft/framing shop in the garage of the family, and they continue to practice that business the exact same way now—to say: Can they live out their faith?

They are currently facing a set of fines right now where the administration has stepped in to say, if you provide health care insurance that we choose, you're fine; if you don't provide any insurance at all, I'm going to fine you \$2,000; but if you provide insurance that doesn't meet the administration's religious belief, you will be fined, as a company, \$36,500 per employee.

Let me run that past you again. In a country where you are free to live out your faith, if this particular company chooses not to provide insurance that violates their faith and it doesn't follow up with the administration's policy, they will be fined \$36,500 per employee per year. And so they changed their insurance to meet the faith of the administration. It's not right. We are a place where we cannot only have a belief in a label, but also choose to live out that label. That's important for us as a Nation.

Two things that I wanted to be able to encourage us as well. One is that students, on September 25—just a few days from now—will stand at flag poles around this Nation. They will gather early in the morning before other kids even get up and stand at a flag pole for an annual celebration called "See You at the Pole," where students will gather to pray. It's not a demonstration; it's not a declaration. It is just stu-

dents doing publicly what they do privately every single day, and that's pray for our Nation. They can do that because of our freedom.

Today, I remember three Oklahomans that 2 years ago lost their life in Afghanistan. They are heroes. They were individuals that were protecting the freedom of people they had never met and protecting our Nation. Jane Horton, one of the widows, not long after her husband, Chris, was killed in Afghanistan, dropped by my office and got a chance to visit with me. We talked for a long time, and she handed me a tie that her husband had. I chose to wear it today, 2 years after he was killed, so that we would not forget those who stand for our freedom and that we will not forget what they have done for us and our Nation.

Mr. FORBES. Thank you, Mr. LANKFORD, and for your great work on this subject.

Probably no one has defended the rights of our military and their First Amendment rights and the rights of our chaplains more than the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. FLEMING).

Mr. FLEMING, thank you for your efforts in that and for being here tonight. We would love to hear your thoughts on this very special amendment and right for Americans.

Mr. FLEMING. I would like to thank my good friend from Virginia for having this Special Order this evening and the leadership that the gentleman has provided in this area with the Prayer Caucus and so many other things, both on Armed Services and outside of Armed Services, in that realm.

Mr. Speaker, I am greatly inspired and moved this evening with the speeches that I've heard talking about religious liberty and all of the things that we are struggling with right now with religious liberty.

Religious freedom is at the center of who we are as Americans. With foresight and clarity, the Founding Fathers enshrined religious freedom as a First Amendment right. Quote: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"—the First Amendment.

Despite these undisputed facts, time and again we have witnessed a whittling away of this freedom. The passage of the President's signature legislation, ObamaCare, ushered in a new wave of government oppression for businesses, religious organizations, faith-based schools, charities, and hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned this evening that with ObamaCare and with many other things that we're seeing on the religious front, on the military front, that Washington and this administration is actually substituting its religious beliefs for our own; a very dangerous precedent.

What have we talked about? ObamaCare. You know, we discuss ObamaCare and all the problems, the cost and the rationing board and all of these things, but what's left out of that discussion are some very, very important points.

ObamaCare's HHS mandate requires that all insurance plans cover various items and services that are in direct conflict with deeply held religious beliefs or moral convictions. Three groups are singled out for this:

Number one is health care providers themselves, who in many cases will be forced to participate in certain techniques, certain types of treatment that are against their deeply held religious beliefs, such as abortion, such as getting abortion pills—what we call abortifacients—sterilization procedures, and such as that.

Another important group is religious institutions. The Catholic Church has, for many decades—really, centuries—gone about the work of the Lord to provide health care to individuals but will be required, under the HHS mandates, to actually provide certain procedures, such as sterilization and birth control pills, that are against their deeply held beliefs. Regardless of whether you agree with that or not is beside the point. According to the First Amendment, the church and its institutions should be allowed to do what is right by their own personal religious beliefs.

The third group is private businesses. You have already heard about Hobby Lobby and many others who, because of the HHS mandate, will have to provide coverage through insurance for certain things, which may include abortions, and yet that's against their own deeply held religious beliefs—and suffering fines of tens of thousands of dollars per episode and per day for having done so. That is not right under the First Amendment.

There are 67 cases and over 200 plaintiffs that have filed suit against the administration to protect the First Amendment right to religious freedom. They are working their way through the courts.

Tyndale House, a Christian publishing company, well known for their production of the Bible, as well as family-owned and operated business Fresh Unlimited, Inc., a fresh produce processing and packing company in Ohio, and Beckwith Electric, a Florida-based electric company, are among the 37 for-profit companies seeking relief from the HHS mandate.

Hospitals, charities, Catholic dioceses, and religious colleges, including Louisiana College in my own State, are at various stages of defending their first freedom against the administration's constitutional HHS mandate.

Instead of supporting publishers, grocers, electricians, doctors, nurses, teachers, and professors, ObamaCare strips away the ability for these individuals to live their lives in a manner consistent with their religious beliefs.

This administration has relentlessly lambasted the religious freedom of hardworking Americans, threatening ruinous fines for noncompliance. And again, companies such as Hobby Lobby,

a well-known arts and crafts store that started out just as one single store, faced crippling fines for their religious beliefs.

Congressman FORTENBERRY, Congresswoman BLACK, and myself have put together a compendium of conscience protections through legislation. We've attempted many times to get this up for a vote and passed through the House and through the Senate that would block many of these HHS mandates that come down from ObamaCare. So far we have not gotten the support from the other side of the aisle to get this done, but we will continue until this is completed.

Then, finally, military religious freedom. We know that the military oftentimes is a microcosm of what happens in the demographics across America. And today, religious freedom is under tremendous pressure. We have situations where military members can no longer put a Bible out on their desk, that somehow that's offending someone and that's breaking a statute or a law.

You heard the recent case of Master Sergeant Monk, who, because he wouldn't champion something that was against his religious beliefs—closely held and taught by his own church—is now facing potential court-martial for speaking out against that. The list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker, of what's happening, and it's very recent.

This is not your father's military. This is not really the military you were in even 5 years ago. This is a new military in which religious freedom is being pushed away and substituting Washington's morality, Washington's faith—this administration's faith—instead.

So with that, I do want to thank my colleagues who are here tonight talking about the important things. What could be more important than religious freedoms? I think many would say that's the foundation, the basic foundation upon which this Nation was created and why many people have immigrated over the centuries here and many people even today continue to immigrate to the United States because of its religious freedom.

Let's hold this dear. Let's not let go of the First Amendment, the ability to not only believe what you choose to believe in religion, but also to speak out and express as well, even to take action. All of these are fundamental and very important.

So with that, I thank you again, Mr. FORBES, for the opportunity.

Mr. FORBES. Dr. FLEMING, we thank you for your expertise in both the health care area and the military, and thanks for fighting this fight so well.

One of the truly great champions on religious freedom issues has been the chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution. He was actually selected as Christian Statesman of the Year because he truly practices what he preaches, and we are delighted to have with us the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS) tonight.

Mr. FRANKS, it's good to have you here, and we would love to hear your comments.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, tonight, as we talk about religious freedom, it is especially appropriate that this group is led by one Congressman RANDY FORBES.

Mr. Speaker, I came into Congress approximately 11 years ago, and Mr. FORBES has been a prescient and noble voice among us during that time. I truly believe that as long as there are men like RANDY FORBES in Congress that America will continue to be a great and hopeful Nation.

□ 2015

Mr. FORBES understands the importance of religious freedom. He understands that religious freedom is truly the cornerstone of all other freedoms.

I want to make sort of a layman's analysis of a quote sometime back from a great English statesman. He said:

Out of deep dark bondage arises great faith. And that faith leads to great courage. And courage leads ultimately to freedom. And freedom leads to abundance. And abundance leads to apathy. And apathy leads to dependence. And dependence leads back to bondage.

That has been the litany so often of great countries down through the ages, Mr. Speaker. I would just suggest to you tonight that there is a solution to breaking that pattern. That is for us to hold, as we are trying to do this evening, to the great foundations of religious freedom. Because, as we so clearly see in the insights of this great English statesman, that faith oftentimes is the precursor to all other freedoms. It is vitally important that we protect it, and to fail to do so is to imperil our entire Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that's exactly where we are in many places today. I want to give one special example tonight:

Saeed Abedini is a United States citizen who has been imprisoned in Iran for exercising his Christian faith in a manner that is both legal and protected under Iranian law and international law.

A few days ago, the 36th branch of the Tehran Court of Appeals confirmed Saeed Abedini's prison sentence and he is expected to serve the rest of the 8-year sentence in a hostile Iranian prison.

The following statement is by Naghme Abedini, his wife and a resident of Idaho, in reaction to the news that Iran had upheld her husband's prison sentence. She said:

When I learned that the Iranian Appeals Court confirmed Saeed's 8-year imprisonment I was heartbroken. As tears streamed down my face, I pondered how I could crush the child-like hope with this news as my children tightly closed their eyes and prayed in hope and expectation for their daddy's swift return.

Discouragement and disappointment washed over me. I was discouraged that after a year of travel and numerous media inter-

views, I felt no closer to Saeed's release. I am also disappointed that the leader of my country, a country founded on religious freedom, has been awkwardly silent when an American citizen is wasting away in an Iranian prison.

For an entire year, my husband has faced threats and abuse daily by radicals in Evin Prison for refusing to deny his Christian faith. And still, President Obama has never spoken a word about him. I am grateful for congressional pressure, but I do hope that as a Nation we realize that if we do not collectively speak out against injustice it will only be a matter of time before all our children will have to face what my children are facing today.

Mr. Speaker, the American people would be outraged to truly know that the Obama administration has responded with deafening silence when an American father, husband, pastor, and an American citizen, Mr. Speaker, was thrown into a harsh prison under an oppressive regime for having the nerve to practice his Christian faith. The Obama administration should be utterly ashamed of its disgusting failure to speak out on behalf of Saeed Abedini and his precious family. No wonder the oppressive Iranian regime holds the Obama administration in such total derision as it arrogantly proceeds to build nuclear weapons with which to threaten the peace and security of the entire free world.

I hope that the American people will hold the Obama administration accountable for its absolutely criminal silence in the face of such heartless injustice forced upon this beloved American pastor, his innocent family, and so many others.

Mr. Speaker, on September 26, Saeed Abedini will have served in Iran's harsh Evin Prison for an entire year. The appeal that Saeed Abedini just lost was his last hope of being released under a heartless and unjust Iranian judicial system that still demands that he serve his 8-year sentence. Now, Saeed's wife, Naghme, is faced with "crushing the child-like hope" she speaks of of her two young children who have patiently "prayed in hope and expectation for their daddy's swift return," and telling them that it will be a very long time before they see their daddy again.

Mr. Speaker, when I hear the words of Naghme Abedini and I roll them over in my mind and I think of my own two little children at home, I am at once heartbroken for the Abedini family and enraged at the lackadaisical attitude and silence of President Obama.

Iran has demonstrated an utter disregard for fundamental religious freedom by continuing to unjustly hold Pastor Abedini, an American citizen, Mr. Speaker—an American citizen—in a hellish Iranian prison for practicing his faith.

Iran's tyrannical attempts to, in the words of Ronald Reagan, "stifle the freedom and muzzle the self-expression of the people" have again been exposed to the world after the imprisonment of this beloved American pastor, who at

the time was working to build an orphanage in Iran when he was imprisoned.

Mr. Speaker, Martin Luther King once said: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," and Pastor Abedini's case has starkly shown the far-reaching implications of even a single instance of oppressing religious freedom.

By relentlessly refusing to forget this noble and gentle man, Pastor Saeed Abedini, we are upholding the sacred principle of international religious freedom as a "first freedom" that, Mr. Speaker, is fundamental to all of humanity.

Mr. FORBES. Congressman FRANKS, we thank you for speaking out for this great pastor whose big sin was that he loved children who did not have parents and he loved his faith and his God. We just thank you for doing that.

Our next speaker is someone who has been recognized for a lot of things—his fight on the Judiciary Committee—but tonight he's here to share and to stand up for First Amendment rights for religious freedom, LOUIE GOHMERT from Texas.

Congressman GOHMERT, thank you for being here.

Mr. GOHMERT. Thank you, my dear friend, RANDY FORBES, for all that you do on behalf of religious freedom. I know it is not merely Christian freedom, but it is religious freedom, and it is under attack. When we look at what the Constitution says, I know it has already been read, but so often we forget the first word. We just blow right past the first word of the First Amendment, and that is that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Why was it that they singled out Congress, because they mentioned States in some of the other amendments. In the 10th Amendment, anything that is not prohibited to the States, that power is reserved to the States and the people.

So why is it that they singled out Congress? It is because this was intended for Congress and not for the States. Because the people that voted for these amendments knew that every one of the States had some laws that dealt with some aspect of Christianity, whether it was the oath that was required to be taken, or in some cases, a belief in Jesus Christ. There were all kinds of State and local university laws that had to do with religion, and that, if you wanted to be part of this, you had to believe this way.

It was supposed to be a restriction on Congress. We've gotten so far afield from that now we think that we are not allowed to even bring up a hymn here in Congress. Whereas, my friend RANDY FORBES knows, and TRENT FRANKS—you all know, right down the hall the man who coined the phrase "separation of church and State," Thomas Jefferson, as President came to church every Sunday he was in Washington, and on some occasions he brought the Marine band to play the

hymns. It was the biggest church in Washington for much of the 1800s right down the hall in what was the House Chamber back then.

Now look at what has happened. We see these incursions on the freedom of belief, and Christians are persecuted and forced to endure the slams and the arrows that should never be endured. Like SEAL Team 6, for example, those heroic members that were put in harm's way in a situation they should never have been put in in Afghanistan, after SEAL Team 6 was outed as the one that took out Osama bin Laden. You can see the DVD, a recording of the Ramp Ceremony. They have an imam come up in his language and do a Muslim prayer over the American flag-draped caskets, and we know some of those guys were devout Christians. He says a prayer that when you get the interpretation, basically it condemns them to hell, that they will never defeat the Muslims, the followers of Allah.

It turns out today we see persecution after persecution of Christians. When you look at the underpinnings of this Nation, it was Christians. About a third of the people that signed the Declaration of Independence were ordained Christian ministers.

If you look at what drove Lincoln, it was coming closer and closer to a walk with God. Some of the most powerful Christian messages ever delivered include the second inaugural address of Lincoln. Why? Because the Christian faith that he heard John Quincy Adams right down the hall talk about drove him to come back into politics and to get back involved to try to eliminate slavery. He knew that it was difficult for God to bless America when we were treating brothers and sisters by putting them in chains and bondage.

The next big step toward true Christian brotherhood and sisterhood in America came from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. What was he? He was an ordained Christian minister. And now within 50 years it has become only acceptable to persecute Christians. This administration and so many have taken a stand—yes, it is an outrage that poisonous gas was used by anyone in the Middle East, but you don't hear the administration or others talking enough, including us in Congress, about the persecution of Christians.

One article here says "Syrian Rebels to Christians: Flee or Die," an article by Bob Unruh, who used to be with the AP. He talks about the report. Over and over Christians were told, you either denounce your Christianity or die, and we've done nothing about it. That was written in June.

We have an article September 9. The village of Maaloula has been taken over by Syrian rebels associated with al Qaeda, who have stormed the Christian center and offered local Christians a choice—conversion or death—as they screamed "Allah Akbar."

Well, there is too much persecution of Christianity. That was never supposed to be the case. That was what so many said would be the salvation of

our little experiment in democracy. It is time to stand for freedom of religion, not freedom to persecute Christians from Washington.

I appreciate my friend very much for yielding.

Mr. FORBES. I thank the gentleman from Texas for his words.

The Wall Street Journal has recently written a big article about our next speaker, about how hard he works for constituents, but tonight he's here to work for the First Amendment and for freedom of religion. That is STEVE PEARCE from New Mexico.

Mr. PEARCE. I thank the gentleman from Virginia for leading this discussion.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

Now, what would be in the minds of the people who wrote those words? It would do well to look at where they came from. They came from countries where kings ruled. The kings could tell you what church you had to be in. They could tell you what you had to believe, what you had to profess. If it conflicted with what you said, they had the ultimate power over you. And so they came here to establish a new government. They wanted this Constitution, this contract with the people and the government that said the government cannot bridge certain lines. And the establishment of religion and the free practice thereof were protected.

The gentleman from Virginia mentioned early in his comments, there was a young couple in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the State that I represent. She had a way with cameras and started a little in-home photography business. Elaine Huguenin and her husband, Jonathan, just wanted to give expression. But they also wanted to defend their rights to believe what they did, so they made a pact between themselves that they would do nothing that compromised their faith, their religious beliefs. The Constitution protects that.

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Very soon after establishing their business, they had an inquiry from a gay couple, asking that they photograph their vows. The young couple in the photography studio refused and were surprised when they were taken before the New Mexico Human Rights Commission. They were equally surprised when that commission found they had no rights of religion in this country. The New Mexico Human Rights Commission said that you are guilty of violating a different law, one that did not comport with the Constitution. They fined them \$6,000. The young couple appealed to the New Mexico appeals courts, and just recently, the New Mexico Court of Appeals found also that they were in violation—a court of appeals in this country ignorant of what the Constitution protects.

It's exactly these kinds of things that our Founding Fathers were alarmed about—commissions that would show up and tell you what you had to believe, what you had to profess. Catholics are afraid they're going to have to provide contraceptives from a government of the same mind. Doctors who are opposed to abortion fear that this government is going to tell them what they must do in violation of their consciences.

Are we, the American people, supposed to stand by? I think not. I think it's time for us all—not just Congress, not just your Representatives, but all—to raise their voices and speak out against a government that is too strong and that has forgotten its limitations written into that Constitution, especially under the First Amendment—protecting our free exercise of religion. Speak with us. Stand up and speak with us.

Mr. FORBES. I thank the gentleman for his words tonight.

My dear friend from Virginia, Congressman GRIFFITH, we are glad to have you with us tonight for your comments.

Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia. I am so glad to be with you this evening.

So many people in Washington and in other parts of the country believe that it was the intent of the Founding Fathers to bleach from our society our religious beliefs, and you have heard others speak this evening that that is not the case. In particular, I would like to share with you, in the short time that we have remaining, the words of Thomas Jefferson from that famous letter to the Danbury, Connecticut, Baptists, because everybody focuses on one phrase and not the entire letter.

He opens with salutations to the Danbury, Connecticut, Baptists, and then begins the meat of the letter:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between church and State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the Nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.

Now, the next paragraph—the closing paragraph—of the letter is very instructive because the man who some now say wanted to bleach religion out ends the letter as President of the United States as follows:

I reciprocate your kind prayers for the protection and blessing of the common Father and Creator of man, and tender you for yourselves and your religious association, assurances of my high respect and esteem.

Obviously, it was never his intent to bleach out of our society religion, and

the Statute for Religious Freedom today still stands on the wall of the House of Delegates where you and I both served.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, we thank you for the time tonight.

Over your head stands the phrase “In God We Trust.” A few years ago, when they opened the Visitors Center, they tried to take that phrase out of it. Members of the Prayer Caucus came here and stood, and because of that it's now written and engraved in the walls over there. We believe that, if you can engrave it there and if you can engrave it here, we can engrave it once again in the hearts of the people in this country.

I want to thank you for the time that you've allowed us today. I want to thank the majority leader for yielding us this time. I want to thank our Founders for giving us this great right of freedom of religion, and my prayer and our prayer tonight is that the American people will be wise enough to keep it.

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

THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS—AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEBER of Texas). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 days to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. JEFFRIES. It is an honor and a privilege, Mr. Speaker, to once again have this opportunity to stand here on the floor of the House of Representatives and to anchor the CBC Special Order where, for the next 60 minutes, members of the Congressional Black Caucus have an opportunity to speak directly to the American people on an issue of great significance to us, which is the future of the organized labor movement and how that relates to the economic viability of the African American community and to America as a whole.

Now, today, we've all just returned from the August recess. We are here back at the Capitol, and of course we're in the midst of a very robust period of deliberation as it relates to the administration's request for us to grant authorization for this country to strike militarily against Syria for what appears to be the use of chemical weapons, which is in violation of international law, against the Syrian people. That debate will play itself out over the next few days and, perhaps, even the next few weeks; but while we

undertake that solemn obligation to make the best decision for this country and for our constituents as it relates to such a critical issue of war and peace and possible military engagement, we also have a similar responsibility to deal with the domestic issues that continue to impact our constituents as well as the American people.

We know that we are still in the midst of a very sluggish economic recovery and that the American worker has fallen behind relative to the position that that worker was in coming out of World War II and through the sixties and the seventies, into the eighties and the nineties. This is a matter of urgent concern to the members of the Congressional Black Caucus, and it should be a matter of urgent concern to everyone who is a Member of this august body. Part of the deterioration of the American worker, I believe, empirically can be shown to be directly related to the deterioration of unionized membership here in this great country. So we will explore those topics.

We are a week removed from the Labor Day celebration, and we are also a few weeks removed from the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, a march that was projected as one both for jobs and for freedom. We often focus on the civil rights aspect of the march—and it produced some tremendous pieces of legislation—but the March on Washington was also about jobs and economic opportunity, and it was put together with the significant assistance of the organized labor movement here in America.

I've been joined by several distinguished colleagues, Members of the House of Representatives, but also of members of the class of 2012—this wonderful freshman class. I believe the first speaker will be the distinguished gentleman—my good friend from the other side of the Hudson River, the always nattily dressed—Representative Donald Payne, Jr.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from New York for that kind introduction and for his consistent leadership on the CBC's Special Order hours. Tonight's topic is “African Americans and the Labor Movement.” It is an American story.

Historically, union members have played a critical role in the civil rights struggles of the past, and the involvement continues today. When Dr. Martin Luther King was jailed for civil disobedience, it was unions and union members who came to the legal and financial aid of Dr. King. African American workers have played a pivotal role in strengthening our unions and our economy. The path to the middle class for African Americans has always been through union jobs. What we see is an erosion of that dream. People's ways of life—what they're used to, the levels at which they're used to living—are eroding. It is because there is an attack on organized labor in this country, for there are forces within this Nation