

are controlled by violent thugs. These thugs often assault women and children in exchange for water. Often this water is dirty and leads to sickness and disease.

This is unimaginable for many Americans, but a reality for 780 million people on Earth who do not have access to clean water. We can fix this. That is why Congressman EARL BLUMENAUER and I have introduced the Water for the World Act. This bill uses existing taxpayer money to more effectively make clean water available to those who need it, such as digging wells in villages in Africa. According to the World Bank, for every dollar spent, at least \$4 is returned in saved health care costs and increased economic productivity.

We have it in our power to help people have clean water. It is something America can and should do. No one should be assaulted when they try to get water. It is 2013. It is time to turn on the faucet and make water universal for little girls like this.

And that's just the way it is.

OBAMACARE

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the President's claim that Americans can keep the plans they know and like, to me, always appeared somewhat misinformed, if not insincere.

First of all, the law was designed to completely restructure America's health care system. Some, if not millions, of Americans were bound to lose their plans.

Plain and simple, the law was designed to have a large majority of Americans give up their health care coverage, pay higher premiums, or face a tax increase. In fact, if millions of Americans did not lose their coverage, the health insurance exchanges would be full of high-risk consumers, without healthier populations subsidizing those plans.

The President's broken promises are concerning, especially for our States dealing with this growing mess.

"This bandage may provide temporary relief," stated the insurance commissioner in my home State of Pennsylvania in response to the President's cancellation fix. However, "Pennsylvania will continue to see additional cancellations, rate increases, and significant problems due to Affordable Care Act-driven changes in the insurance marketplace."

Mr. Speaker, the American people deserve better.

AFGHANISTAN

(Ms. LEE of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, as most of us joined family and friends

over Thanksgiving week last week, 2,500 Afghan elders voted on a security agreement that could potentially leave thousands of United States troops in Afghanistan for at least another decade.

If the Afghan people are having a say in continued American troops in that country, at the very least this Congress should also debate and vote on any such agreement.

The war in Afghanistan has just entered its 13th year, and the need to bring our troops home remains urgent. President Karzai has recently suggested that he sees no potential security benefit from an ongoing United States security mission. I couldn't agree more, and the American people have long understood that there is no military solution in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, especially at a time now when rising income inequality and harmful sequester cuts are hurting families and communities here at home, we need to get our priorities in order and stop spending good money after bad in Afghanistan.

We have known for years of the rampant waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan, including bags of cash from the CIA being handed over in suit cases and plastic bags to corrupt Afghan government officials.

Enough is enough.

We need to end the corruption and end this war.

A BAD DEAL

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

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, the President has offered Iran what he describes as a "very limited, temporary, reversible sanctions relief." In this case, limited means \$20 billion in sanctions relief.

What was the world promised for the \$20 billion gift to the Iranian regime? A promise that Iran would pause, not dismantle, its nuclear weapons program for 6 months while we betray our allies and compromise Israel's ability to defend itself.

Let me tell you what this deal is like. It is like going to an auto mechanic you can't trust to fix an oil leak on your car. The mechanic says it will take 6 months to fix the leak and charges you \$1,000 up front. When you come back 6 months later, you will find that not only is the leak not fixed, but your car was stripped down and sold for parts.

As we speak, Iranian centrifuges are continuing to spin, continuing to enrich uranium, and continuing to threaten the safety of the United States and our allies.

Whether it is at your local auto shop or at the nuclear negotiating table, the American people know when they are getting a bad deal.

US-31 RIBBON CUTTING

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

Mr. ROKITA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the opening of the Kokomo section of the new US-31 corridor.

Indiana is called the "crossroads of America," and for great reason. With numerous interstates and highways crisscrossing our State and intersecting in Indianapolis, our geographic position and transportation network have made logistics and manufacturing critical components of our economy in America.

With that in mind, last week I had the privilege of attending the ribbon cutting of the new US-31 Kokomo corridor.

When the final Hamilton County section opens to traffic in 2015, a total of 32 stoplights will have been removed from US-31 between Indianapolis and South Bend, saving drivers a half hour of travel time.

The Indiana Department of Transportation also deserves great credit for completing this project nearly 2 years ahead of schedule and, so far, 40 percent below the projected budget. Washington bureaucrats could learn a lot from that efficiency.

I commend and congratulate all of the individuals, elected officials, and business and community groups involved in bringing the Kokomo corridor US-31 from the drawing board to reality.

MONUMENTS MEN

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

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest untold stories from World War II is a story of the brave men and women known as the Monuments Men.

This special military unit was tasked with helping to locate works of art confiscated by the Nazis and return them to their rightful owners. The Monuments Men, and women, were able to locate, preserve, and return almost 5 million cultural items, including many of the world's great works of art.

Today, there are only five surviving members, four men and one woman, of the Monuments Men. I believe the veterans who participated in these daring missions are certainly worthy and deserving of the recognition of Congress' highest expression of appreciation. That is why I am honored today to introduce legislation recognizing these heroes with a Congressional Gold Medal.

While we can never say thank you enough, I believe the Congressional Gold Medal is a worthy token of appreciation from a grateful Nation to Members of the Greatest Generation.

WHEN ALL OPPRESSION SHALL CEASE

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

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, a profound 3-hour debate took place in the House of Commons on the persecution of Christians globally. Multiple British parliamentarians argued with great passion and persuasion that this is the human rights issue of our day and one which demands great attention on the part of the British Government, and the West more broadly.

In some respect, it is a sad commentary that such a conversation was remarkable, and yet it was. When was the last time this body, this Congress, let alone this administration or the State Department, spent even a fraction of that time talking about the thousands of people of faith who daily face discrimination, persecution, violence, and even death simply because of their most deeply held beliefs?

It is worth noting that several weeks earlier the House of Commons had a debate on the persecution of Christians, specifically in the Middle East. There was an overwhelming number of speakers, too many more than the allotted time. This week's debate starts to satisfy that interest.

In comparison, we have before us relatively modest legislation that has languished in the Senate for two consecutive Congresses now which would create a special envoy within the U.S. Department of State charged with advocating for vulnerable religious minorities in the Middle East and east Central Asia. How do we explain the utter lack of urgency on the part of our own government to address an epic exodus, that of Christianity from its very birthplace?

The House of Commons debate is timely, not simply because of the magnitude and pervasiveness of the problem, but also because millions of professing Christians around the world have just embarked on the Advent season in anticipation of celebrating the birth of Jesus, a birth marked by its humble beginnings in a small Middle Eastern town called Bethlehem.

Yet, as British member of Parliament, Sir Tony Baldry, noted with a sad irony:

There is now practically no country—from Morocco to Pakistan—in which Christians can freely practice their religion.

He continued:

There is a severe danger, as we start to celebrate the feast of Christmas in this country, that all Christianity will be almost completely erased from the traditional Middle East Holy Land of the Bible. Joseph would not now be advised to take Mary to Egypt to avoid the dangers of Herod, because Jesus would just not be safe there today.

To follow on Sir Baldry's line of thinking, the patriarch Abraham would

also have a difficult time surviving in Iraq having come from Ur, which is now Nasiriyah. Jonah would be hard pressed to make it to Nineveh, and Paul could scarcely travel the road to Damascus in Syria.

The debate in the House of Commons began with a staggering statistic, namely, that one Christian is killed every 11 minutes somewhere on Earth for their faith.

While the focus of the House of Commons' debate was on persecuted Christians, several MPs noted that whether or not you are a person of faith, all should be concerned by this troubling trend. Ultimately, freedom of religion and belief is a bellwether for other cherished freedoms. Where this "first freedom" is compromised, the whole of human rights is under assault.

□ 1400

In country after country, freedom of religion is indeed compromised, and Christians, to borrow a phrase from history, are in the eye of the "gathering storm."

This is perhaps no more true than in the Middle East. Here we see governmental, societal, and communal violence and repression against religious communities which specifically targets religious minorities, including Christians.

These realities 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, foremost among them, ancient Christian communities.

With the fall of Hosni Mubarak, Coptic Christians, numbering roughly 8 to 10 million, are leaving in droves in the face of increased repression, persecution, and violence. They were increasingly marginalized with the ascendancy of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Of course, recent events in Egypt indicate a rejection, in part, of the Brotherhood's approach, but the situation is fluid, and news reports indicate that Islamists are taking advantage of the unrest to target Coptic Christians.

Similarly, Iraq's Christian population has plummeted. Churches have now been targeted, believers kidnapped for ransom, and families threatened with violence if they stay.

During the debate in the House of Commons, Canon Andrew White, famously dubbed the "Vicar of Baghdad" as he oversees the only Anglican Church in Iraq, was quoted as saying that Christians "are frightened even to walk to church because they might come under attack. All the churches are targets."

He went on to say, "We used to have 1.5 million Christians. Now we have probably only 200,000 left. There are more Iraqi Christians," he said, "in Chicago than there are here."

That is amazing. And this body, this Congress, this administration, silent.

The issues I have just outlined must be viewed not simply as today's news but, rather, through the lens of his-

tory. A phrase not often heard outside of 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, the once vibrant communities and countries throughout the region are now decimated. In 1948, the Jewish population of Iraq was roughly 150,000. Today, no more than four individuals remain. In Egypt, the Jewish population was once as many as 80,000. Now roughly 20 remain. It appears a similar fate may await the ancient Christian community in these same lands.

If the Middle East is effectively emptied of the Christian faith, this will have great geopolitical and, I would argue, spiritual 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.

Multiple other countries were mentioned during the House of Commons debate, including, but not limited to, China, Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

And keep in mind, the Obama administration has not pushed Iran for the release of Pastor Saeed Abedini. He sits in prison, his life is endangered, and this administration is silent.

It was rightly noted, with some degree of irony, that, despite the blood spilt in Afghanistan by British and American forces alike, not a single church—not a single church—remains in that nation.

One member of Parliament, Rehman Chishti, focused on the nation of Pakistan, where he was born. He said:

I come from a Muslim background. My father was an imam. When I saw the topic was persecution of Christians in the 21st century, I knew that it was absolutely right and proper to have a debate on that subject. It is important for the world to realize that persecution goes on.

He continued, and I quote:

The Blasphemy law is at the root of much suffering and persecution of Christians in Pakistan.

And then he specifically mentioned the case of Asia Bibi, a Christian mother of six, who, for years, has languished in prison and faces the death penalty for her alleged crimes.

Do you ever hear her name mentioned on the floor of the House? Do you ever hear her name mentioned at the State Department briefings? Do you ever hear her name mentioned at the White House? Does anyone even know who she is? Does anyone even care?

She faces death, the death penalty, for her alleged crimes.

Too often, when confronted with these types of cases, the State Department offers unsatisfactory assurances that they "raised the issue" during private bilateral discussions, that is, if they raised it at all. Or perhaps the Department issues a bland statement