

space for senior citizens at the recently renovated T.E. Harman Center and opened the first phase of the Sugar Land Memorial Park. These are just a few of the accomplishments Browne has achieved during his 35 year career in parks and recreation management.

On behalf of all residents of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, it's an honor to recognize Browne's commitment to the Sugar Land community. Congratulations Mr. Browne, on earning this recognition for your valued work and thank you for helping to create a community that the Sugar Land residents are proud to call home.

240 UNION

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud 240 Union for achieving 25 years of outstanding membership in the West Chamber serving Jefferson County.

Membership in a Chamber of Commerce comes with commitment, dedication and contribution to community. Chamber members are leaders in the community mentoring other businesses, creating positive environments for business to thrive. The West Chamber serving Jefferson County is a strong and vibrant organization today due to members like 240 Union.

I extend my deepest congratulations to 240 Union for 25 years of leadership and inspiration you provide in our community. I look forward to many more years of your service.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on January 20, 2009, the day President Obama took office, the national debt was \$10,626,877,048,913.08.

Today, it is \$17,411,178,036,656.28. We've added \$6,784,300,987,743.20 to our debt in 5 years. This is over \$6.7 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

REGARDING THE KHOJALY TRAGEDY

HON. VIRGINIA FOXX

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, since declaring its independence from the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has been a reliable friend and valuable ally of the United States. For this reason, it seems appropriate for Congress to commemorate the victims of the Khojaly tragedy as the Azerbaijani people mark the anniversary of this event.

Since the early 1990s, Azerbaijan has been involved in a conflict with its neighbor to the West, Armenia. The Khojaly tragedy was the single worst day in this conflict, resulting in hundreds of lives lost, families devastated, and the town destroyed. Given our deepening ties with Azerbaijan, it is important for Americans to remember this event.

A cease-fire was negotiated in 1994, but the conflict remains unresolved. I remain confident a resolution will be found. The United States is serving as a co-chair to the Minsk Group, along with France and Russia. Together these three nations are working to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

The anniversary of this horrible tragedy is an appropriate time to honor the victims of these atrocities and reflect on the need for all parties to work together to bring a swift end to this conflict. I urge my colleagues to join me in standing with Azerbaijanis as they commemorate this tragedy.

CONGRATULATING PASTOR H. LEE JORDAN, JR. ON HIS FOURTH PASTORAL ANNIVERSARY AND HONORING HIM FOR OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

HON. BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor my good friend, Pastor H. Lee Jordan, Jr. on the occasion of his fourth Pastoral Anniversary with Greater Faith Church—Baptist (GFC) in Waukegan, Illinois, part of the district I represent.

Pastor Jordan assumed leadership of the GFC in January 2010, and since then, he has built upon the church's already outstanding legacy. Pastor Jordan's dedication and passion fill the community with joy, spreading a message of faith, integrity and community action.

In words and deeds, Pastor Jordan encourages his congregation to give back and enrich the community. Throughout his four years in Waukegan, Pastor Jordan has become a central figure in the community and an important voice of hope.

A spirited and inquisitive soul, Pastor Jordan consistently stresses the importance of never settling, of constantly seeking spiritual and personal growth. Anything is possible with the right attitude, and Pastor Jordan demonstrates to all the power of this message.

Pastor Jordan's example reaches far beyond his stirring sermons and moving songs. A husband, father, community leader and musician, he sets a daily example for his congregation and community.

In my visits to GFC, I have been moved by Pastor Jordan's passion, care and joy. His vision and discipline to follow that vision are rare and remarkably valuable to his congregation and community.

Pastor Jordan's commitment to his congregation and to Waukegan inspires everyone around him. Our communities are stronger with passionate, dedicated and visionary leaders like Pastor Jordan. I congratulate him on four years with GFC and thank him for his outstanding work.

HONORING 2013 "MR. AMIGO" MARIANA SEOANE GARCÍA

HON. FILEMON VELA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Charro Days Fiesta and commend the 2013 "Mr. Amigo," recently chosen by the Mr. Amigo Association of Brownsville, TX, and Matamoros, Tamaulipas, in Mexico.

Mariana Seoane García has been selected as the 2013 "Mr. Amigo." A multi-talented Mexican actress, model, and singer, her style and charisma have won the hearts and minds of audiences across the world. In addition to her work as a performer, Ms. Seoane García has given back to her community, for example by participating in Univision's Teletón USA (USA Telethon) to raise money for children's healthcare. She is a wonderful choice to represent the spirit of friendship.

Beginning in 1964, the "Mr. Amigo" award is an annual tribute to an outstanding Mexican citizen who has made a lasting contribution during the previous year to international solidarity and goodwill. "Mr. Amigo" acts as an ambassador between the United States and Mexico and presides over the annual Charro Days Fiesta.

Charro Days dates back to 1937, when the citizens of Brownsville organized the event in the midst of the Great Depression to celebrate the cultural heritage shared between Brownsville and its sister city, Matamoros, Tamaulipas, across the border in Mexico. The first Charro Days celebration featured a parade with horse-drawn floats and participants dressed in traditional Mexican costumes reminiscent of charros, or Mexican cowboys.

From these humble beginnings, Charro Days has evolved into a multi-day event which includes dances, fiestas, a children's parade, and the Grand International Parade drawing an estimated 50,000 participants annually from Texas and Mexico.

The 77th annual Charro Days celebration commenced on February 23rd, with a grito, or celebratory yell. Later this week, the Mayor of Brownsville and the Mayor of Matamoros will meet at the Gateway International Bridge and extend their hands across the border to symbolize the friendship between the two cities.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to honor the Charro Days Fiesta and for joining me in recognizing the importance of this annual celebration which continues to strengthen the relationship between Brownsville and Matamoros, as well as the United States and Mexico.

THE WORLDWIDE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, I chaired a subcommittee hearing on the persecution of Christians worldwide, a topic which has been neglected by our media and world leaders—including those in the United States.

The focus on anti-Christian persecution was not meant to minimize the suffering of other religious minorities who are imprisoned or killed for their beliefs: as the poet John Donne wrote, "Any man's death doth diminish me."

We stand for human dignity and respect for life from the womb to the tomb, and the subcommittee has and will continue to highlight the suffering of religious minorities around the globe, be they Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan, Ba'hai in Iran, Buddhists in occupied Tibet, Yazidis in Iraq or the Muslim Rohingya people in Burma.

Christians, however, remain the most persecuted religious group the world over, and thus deserve the special attention that the hearing gave them. As one of the hearing witnesses, the distinguished journalist John Allen has written: "Christians today indisputably are the most persecuted religious body on the planet, and too often their martyrs suffer in silence."

Researchers from the Pew Center have documented incidents of harassment of religious groups worldwide—a term defined as including "physical assaults; arrests and detentions; desecration of holy sites; and discrimination against religious groups in employment, education and housing"—and has concluded that Christians are the single most harassed group today. In the year 2012, Pew reports, Christians were harassed in 110 countries around the world.

This is particularly true in the Middle East where, as one of those heard from, Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, has said, "flagrant and widespread persecution of Christians rages. . . even as we meet."

Archbishop Chullikatt was the papal nuncio to Iraq, where we have seen repeated violent assaults on Christians, such as the October 31, 2010 assault upon Our Lady of Deliverance Syrian Catholic Cathedral in Baghdad in which 58 people were killed and another 70 wounded. Attacks such as this have led the Christian population of Iraq—whose roots date back to the time of the Apostles—to dwindle from 1.4 million in 1987 prior to the first Gulf War, to as little as 150,000 today, according to some estimates. Much of this exodus has occurred during a time in which our country invested heavily in blood and treasure in seeking to help Iraqis build a democracy. As we witness the black flag of al-Qaeda again fly over cities such as Fallujah, which we had won at the cost of so much American blood, we wonder how it is that for Christians in Iraq, life appears to be worse now than it was under the vicious dictator Saddam Hussein.

If we turn to Egypt, we see a Christian population which dates back to the Apostle St. Mark also being oppressed. At a hearing we had last December 10—Human Rights Day—we heard how churches have been subjected to mob attacks and burned. For example, in April of 2012, St. Mark's Cathedral, seat of the Coptic Pope, was attacked by 30–40 Muslim youths. While dozens of Copts were sheltering inside, security forces joined the mob. Rather than dispersing the crowd, they participated in the all-night attack or stood idly by as rocks, gasoline bombs, and gas canisters were lobbed into the iconic cathedral.

Likewise, last year the subcommittee held a hearing on persecution of religious minorities in Syria. Syria had been a place of relative tolerance for religious minorities in the Middle East, including groups like the Mandeans, who

trace their roots to the time of John the Baptist and whom they still revere.

It is this connection with the past which has helped bring radical Islamists to Syria, where not only do they seek to overthrow a violent dictator—Bashar al-Assad, but also seek to eradicate Christianity from the land.

Last September, members of al-Nusra, an al-Qaeda linked group, attacked the town of Malula. Why this is significant is because Malula is a living link with the time of Christ, a Christian village in Syria where Aramaic, the language of Jesus, is still spoken. It is for this reason that Malula was targeted—in the words of one of those attacking this small village whose way of life had remained largely unchanged over the centuries, the Mujahadeen are seeking to "conquer the capital of the Crusaders." Such is the perspective of one whose vision has been distorted by hatred.

But it is not just in the Middle East where we see the persecution of Christians.

I would like to recall one story of one man I met, first in Jos, Nigeria, and then in Washington when we held a hearing on the terror group, Boko Haram last October. It was in the face of this one man that I was able to witness the face of the persecuted Church, which indeed is also the face of Christ.

Habila Adamu is a businessman from Yobe State in northern Nigeria. On the night of November 28, 2012, masked gunmen armed with AK-47 entered his home. They told his wife to leave, as they were here to "do the work of Allah."

The questioning began.

"Are you a policeman?"

"No."

"Are you a Nigerian soldier?"

"No."

"Are you a Christian?"

"Yes."

They then asked him why he has not accepted Islam, when he has heard the message of Muhammad.

He replied that "I am a Christian. We are also preaching the gospel of the true God to you and to other people who do not yet know God."

They then asked, "Habla, Are you ready to die as a Christian?"

"I am ready to die as a Christian."

They asked him again, "Are you ready to die as a Christian?"

He replied, "I am ready. . ." And before he had closed his mouth, a bullet ripped through him.

You can see the exit point of the wound in the photo before you. . .

How many of us, who profess Christ, would have been able to stare martyrdom in the face and refuse to renounce Christ?

Habila Adamu, by the grace of God, survived. The term "hero" is one thrown around loosely these days, but he is a hero of his faith.

And there are many more like him. We heard stories from around the world, where Christians are under attack simply for the beliefs they profess. We heard witnesses discuss persecution in places such as Burma, Vietnam, Eritrea, even in this hemisphere.

According to some estimates, China is on track to become the largest Christian nation in the world, though numbers are hard to pin down, because most of these Christians remain underground and cannot worship freely.

As US Commission on International Freedom Commissioner Elliott Abrams points out,

independent Protestants and Catholics continue to face persecution for refusing to affiliate with government-approved religious groups. Protestant "house church" groups that refuse to join the state-approved Protestant religious organization are deemed illegal and experience harassment, fines, detentions, and imprisonment. Approximately 900 Protestants were detained in the past year for conducting public worship activities. Seven Protestant leaders also were imprisoned for terms exceeding one year. The Chinese Government issued a directive to "eradicate" unregistered Protestant churches over the next ten years, including through force. Police have embraced the plan, raiding meetings, seeking to break up large churches that previously operated openly, and detaining religious leaders.

The Chinese Government continues to appoint Bishops without Vatican approval and place them in leadership positions, setting back Vatican-Beijing relations. Dozens of Catholic clergy, including three Bishops, remain in detention, in home confinement, under surveillance, or disappeared. Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin, the Auxiliary Bishop of Shanghai, has been missing since he publicly announced his resignation from the state-approved Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association in June 2012. Bishop James Su Zhimin, arrested in 1996 while participating in a religious procession and convicted of QUOTE "unregistered religious activity"—in other words for remaining loyal to the Catholic Church, and not the State-authorized Church. Bishop Su has not been heard of since his arrest, and the Chinese government has repeatedly rebuffed inquiries as to his condition.

In Vietnam, to name one of these countries, churches are forced to register, and worship outside of State-authorized churches is forbidden. Christian ethnic minorities, such as the Hmong and Montagnard, are allowed to exist in uneasy tension with the governing authorities, knowing that the heavy hand of the state could stop their worship at any time. Vietnam's Catholics, both clergy and laity, fill Vietnam's jails as prisoners of conscience, for calling the government to account to a higher law than that of arbitrary dictates. The attack on a Catholic funeral procession in the village of Con Dau in 2010 resulted in more than 100 villagers injured, 62 arrested, five tortured, and at least three deaths; this should remind one of the brutality that Christians in Vietnam face.

And I mention Vietnam because now, in secrecy, negotiations are being held over the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Vietnam seeks entry, and if we focus on the utility and profits of increased trade without holding Vietnam to account for its human rights record, we miss an opportunity to better the lives of those who are beaten, imprisoned and even killed for their faith.

HONORING BROWNSVILLE LEADERS BOB AND RACHEL TORRES

HON. FILEMON VELA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commend two outstanding individuals who have dedicated more than 50 years to the communities of Brownsville, Texas and