

has been a very productive session for this Congress, and this particular bill I think is noteworthy.

It is a little bit of a shame we are actually here in the early stages of the Drug Enforcement Agency's efforts to control the distribution and abuse of controlled substances. They issued a very blanket type of rule that, unfortunately, scooped up veterinary medicine and animals. We have been able to avoid this issue for many, many years. It is one of those where for the last 100–150 years veterinarians have gone out to the farms and ranches—nowadays, even within the cities, going home to home with mobile veterinary clinics—making sure those patients got the care with the appropriate medication that they deserve to be treated humanely.

DEA, in its exuberance, unfortunately, was unwilling to grant a waiver, a commonsense waiver, administratively, and forced Congressman YOHO and myself to go to a statutory change—lots of taxpayer money, lots of time by the committees. But it, unfortunately, is necessary. The good news I think for America is that common sense does prevail a lot of times in this great Congress. As alluded to, they have over 185 cosponsors of this legislation, the Veterinary Medicine Mobility Act, allowing veterinarians simply to do what they have done before, which is carry controlled substances safely to treat, dispense, and protect their patients in the field.

I think America would wonder why we are here. I think America is glad we are here, making sure that their pets, their livestock, get the care and treatment they need so they can have safe food and fiber and take care of the pets that they love and live with on a daily basis.

I am not going to go into the bill itself. I think Mr. PITTS did an excellent job of outlining things, as did Mr. GREEN.

I want to make sure I recognize a few folks that have been critical in the role here getting this to the floor. First and foremost, my good friend and colleague, TED YOHO from Florida, and his right-hand man, Larry Calhoun, did a yeoman's job making sure this was a good bipartisan effort; Chairman GOODLATTE and his staff for their unwavering support throughout the process; Chairman LUCAS and Ranking Member PETERSON were invaluable—as a matter of fact, I think we had all but four members of the Agriculture Committee sign on, Republican, Democrat, city, rural; this is a great bill—Senators MORAN and KING for their efforts on the Senate side; Chairman UPTON and Ranking Member WAXMAN on the Energy and Commerce Committee.

And finally, I extend my personal gratitude and a very special thank you to Dr. Ashley Morgan at the American Veterinary Medical Association for her tireless efforts through several years' worth of time to make sure that this bill actually got to the floor and got

the vote that our animal friends actually deserve and, frankly, on behalf of all veterinarians in this great country.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, we have no other speakers, and we are prepared to close.

I urge passage of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to ask all of the Members to support this commonsense bill that is on behalf of the life and safety of our animal patients and the safety of our food supply.

I urge bipartisan support, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1528, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2014

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4653) to reauthorize the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4653

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2014”.

SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT AND COMPOSITION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 201 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6431) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: “, which shall be an independent Federal Government advisory body”.

(b) SELECTION.—Subparagraph (A) of section 201(b)(2) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6431(b)(2)) is amended by inserting at the end the following new sentence: “The Commission as a whole shall also have expertise on the variety of faiths practiced around the world.”.

(c) MEMBERSHIP.—Subsection (b)(3) of section 201 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6431) is amended by striking “The appointments required by paragraph (1) shall be made not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.” and inserting the following: “An appointment required by subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1) should be made within 90 days of a vacancy on the Commission.”.

(d) VACANCIES.—Subsection (g) of section 201 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6431) is amended by striking the second sentence.

SEC. 3. TRAINING FOR FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS.

Subsection (a) of section 708 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (22 U.S.C. 4028) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), (A) by striking “and the director” and inserting “the director”; and

(B) inserting “and members of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom,” after “Training Center,”; and

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by striking “and the various” and inserting “the various”; and

(B) by inserting “, the relationship between religious freedom and security, and the role of religious freedom in United States foreign policy” after “violations of religious freedom”.

SEC. 4. COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 204 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6432b) is amended in the second sentence, by inserting “voting” after “nine”.

(b) COMPENSATION.—Subsection (b) of section 204 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6432b) is amended by inserting “voting members of the” after “The”.

(c) SECURITY CLEARANCES.—Subsection (e) of section 204 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6432b) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “The Department of State is encouraged to allow Commissioners and Commission staff with the appropriate security clearance access to classified information, in order to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of their positions.”.

(d) APPLICATION OF ANTIDISCRIMINATION LAWS.—Subsection (g) of section 204 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6432b) is amended by inserting “, including discrimination on the basis of religion” after “employment discrimination”.

SEC. 5. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND DISCLOSURE.

Paragraph (2) of section 208(d)(2) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6435a(d)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

“(H) Intern, fellowship, and volunteer programs that are primarily of educational benefit to the intern, fellow, or volunteer. Sponsoring private parties may provide compensation and benefits to interns, fellows, and volunteers, provided that no conflict of interest arises. The number, duration, and funding source of any such internship, fellowship, or volunteer programs shall be described in the annual financial report required by subsection (e).”.

SEC. 6. EXTENSION AND TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.

The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a) of section 207 (22 U.S.C. 6435), by striking “2014” and inserting “2019”; and

(2) in section 209 (22 U.S.C. 6436), by striking “September 30, 2014” and inserting “September 30, 2019”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 4653 demonstrates—again, introduced by our distinguished friend and

colleague FRANK WOLF—the strong bipartisan support that exists for religious freedom, with nearly an equal number of Republican and Democrat cosponsors of the legislation.

□ 1545

I believe this makes a powerful statement in a world where we see the rights of religious minorities and conscientious objectors being trampled upon in countries where intolerant ideologies, be they of a sectarian or secular nature, seek to crush moral and spiritual thought and conscience.

The headlines, indeed, are filled with examples in country after country in the world. A 27-year-old mother in Sudan was imprisoned and faced a death sentence in Sudan because, under shari'a law, she was considered an apostate as the child of a Muslim father, even though the only religion she herself had ever practiced was Christianity. To this day, Meriam Ibrahim remains unable to leave Sudan.

Anti-Semitism, pervasive and lethal in the Middle East, has spread like a cancer in many parts of Europe, and has resurfaced in Ukraine with a series of shocking and violent attacks following the ouster of former Prime Minister Yanukovich.

In communist dictatorships such as China, religious believers are imprisoned, tortured, and even executed for attempting to practice their faith. In China today, there is a pernicious, escalating war on believers, made worse by the wanton brutality of the regime's ubiquitous secret police. In North Korea, the situation couldn't be more dire, with Christians in particular subject to what human rights observers have termed genocide, dying by the tens of thousands from starvation and torture in concentration camps for daring to hold true to their consciences—that innermost sanctuary of the individual.

Tragically, many countries of the world are a long way from achieving the human right of religious freedom recognized by article 18 of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Mr. Speaker, in 1998, with great legislative skill, commitment, and driving passion, Chairman FRANK WOLF pushed a somewhat supportive Congress but highly reluctant White House into enacting a singularly important human rights law: the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

For the first time ever, FRANK WOLF's law made the protection and promotion of religious freedom a serious priority in U.S. foreign policy by creating an Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom; by establishing the Office of International Religious Freedom at the Department of State, which, among other duties, compiles the International Religious Freedom Reports on every country in the world; and by crafting the independent-minded U.S. Commission on International

Religious Freedom, the subject of today's reauthorization.

Importantly, FRANK WOLF's landmark law also created a system for naming and taking action against Countries of Particular Concern, or CPCs. History has shown that when the U.S. elevates religious freedom—and that priority is conveyed to Countries of Particular Concern—conditions often change for the better, prisoners of conscience gain their freedom, and progress is made in the free, or at least a freer, exercise of religious liberty.

According to the Commission, three themes guide the nine Commissioners' discussions on priority countries with serious violations of religious freedom: state-sponsored hostility to and repression of religion; state-sponsored extremist ideology and education; and state failure to prevent and punish religious freedom violations—or, a sense of impunity. Several of the CPC countries that systematically violate religious freedom fall into all three of those categories.

Mr. Speaker, when an administration, be it Republican or Democrat, demotes or trivializes religious freedom to a minor talking point, human rights-abusing nations construe such indifference as license to harass, abuse and exploit persons of faith.

Since its founding, the International Religious Freedom Commission has issued 15 annual reports and 14 special reports covering 76 countries. Of these, the Commission has identified 16 of these as countries that ought to be designated as Countries of Particular Concern.

I would also point out the Commission has acted as a true watchdog, recommending with incisive commentary—and I read their reports, as I know FRANK WOLF and many other Members in this Chamber read them—twice as many countries as CPCs than the State Department has designated as Countries of Particular Concern.

Our hope is that the State Department will say other diplomatic concerns need to be subordinated and just call it the way it is. If a designation is warranted, then name them a Country of Particular Concern and begin a robust intervention to try to get that nation to mitigate and, hopefully, end such egregious practices.

This includes the Commission's list of eight nations that are not on the list currently. One is Vietnam, which is an egregious violator of the rights of religious minorities. The Commission always calls it like it is and pulls no punches.

I would hope—and I would add this parenthetically—that when Members travel, they ought to look up on the Commission Web site and read what the country they are going to visit has said and done about religious freedom violations. Read the country specific report on it, and bring it up with your interlocutors in the country you are going to.

It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that while the CPC designations remain, the

penalties associated with the designations have now essentially lapsed. The last designations by the Obama administration were in 2011, and as 2 years have passed, the sanctions directly linked to the International Religious Freedom Act's sanctions authority have expired. This failure to implement our law on religious freedom sends a deeply troubling message to violators of this fundamental human right. It is thus more important than ever that we in Congress speak with a clear and loud voice today.

Two-and-a-half years ago, after passing with strong bipartisan support in the House, reauthorization of the Commission got bogged down in the Senate. Eventually, through the tenacity of Chairman WOLF, holds were lifted and the bill passed and was signed into law. We hope that the Senate will move swiftly to passage.

Mr. Speaker, let me also point out that in the House there has been tremendous cooperation on both sides of the aisle. This is, as I said at the outset, a truly bipartisan piece of legislation. We have had excellent input from the Commission itself throughout this process, including testimony from then-Chairman Dr. Robert George of Princeton University, who attended my hearing on May 22 and laid out in long, and very, I think, precise detail what needs to be done to combat the religious intolerance that exists today.

I would point out parenthetically that on July 1, Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett was elected as the new Chairman. Dr. George is now the Vice Chairman.

I would also point out that at my hearing members from the religious minority communities—Muslim, Baha'i, Christian, and Jewish—spoke out about the importance of the work of the Commission in countries like Iran, Pakistan, and China, helping to shine a bright light on the serious abuses that take place in all three countries. Of course, they raised other concerns as well.

Therefore, I ask all of our colleagues to join us in supporting this fine bipartisan piece of legislation, sending a very important message to the world that the United States of America deeply values religious liberty, and that it should continue to be a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4653, legislation that reauthorizes the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

I would like to begin by commending Representative FRANK WOLF, the author of this important legislation, along with Representative CHRIS SMITH, for their leadership on international religious freedom issues and for their hard work on this bill.

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights States that:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to . . . manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.

Yet, every day religious communities around the world are subject to escalating violence, persecution, and discrimination.

In Sudan, a woman just faced a trial for apostasy, and was initially sentenced to death. China has banned fasting during Ramadan in Muslim-majority areas. In Nigeria, Christians and Muslim communities live in fear of the fanatical terrorist group Boko Haram. In Iran, the regime continues to persecute members of the Baha'i faith.

These and the many other examples of religious intolerance around the world are unacceptable. In keeping with our values, the United States has a responsibility to speak out against violations of religious freedom wherever they might occur.

USCIRF's work to defend religious freedom ranges from conducting research and publishing reports and analysis for public consumption, to offering advice and guidance to lawmakers on religious freedom violations around the world.

I believe religious freedom is a cornerstone of a strong democracy. And democracies, especially the United States, have a responsibility to support religious freedom around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 4653, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF), the author of this legislation and the man that pushed this bill to enactment, the prime author of the International Religious Freedom Act, the chairman of the Commerce, Justice Appropriations Subcommittee, and also the cochair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking Speaker BOEHNER, Majority Leader CANTOR, and their staff for prioritizing House consideration of this important reauthorization, as well as House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman ED ROYCE and Congressman CHRIS SMITH for shepherding this legislation through the committee process.

I will say publicly what I said many times privately: no person that I have served with in 34 years has done more for human rights and religious freedom than Congressman CHRIS SMITH. He is my hero. When I see the giants that I have served with in my 34 years, and when you go abroad, whether it be in Boko Haram territory in Nigeria or in China, no one has a greater reputation for speaking out for the voiceless than Congressman SMITH. So I appreciate CHRIS' efforts at moving this thing quickly.

I also want to thank Elyse Anderson from my staff, who has done incredible work on this.

From the start, this bill has enjoyed, as Mr. SMITH said, strong bipartisan support, including the cosponsorship of Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL. I want to thank Mr. ENGEL also for his strong support on these issues over the years.

The broad support for this bill is fitting for an issue so central to America's own grand experiment in self-governance—the protection of religious freedom—which is often referred to as America's "first freedom."

Sadly, one need only pick up the newspaper today to see how religious freedom is under assault globally.

The terrorist Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, is gaining territory in Iraq and before our eyes is threatening the very existence of ancient faith communities in the region, including the centuries-old Christian community.

Tens of thousands of Iraqi Christians have fled Mosul and the surrounding region in what the Christian Science Monitor recently characterized as a "cataclysmic restructuring of an area that was home to some of the earliest Christians."

In addition to the crisis in Iraq, religious minorities are marginalized and imperiled in Egypt and Syria. The government of Vietnam severely restricts religious activities of all faiths, as does the government of China; and religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyya Muslims face governmental and social harassment in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia. Countries that we give aid and support to, though the Ahmadiyyas in Pakistan cannot even vote.

These persecuted individuals and communities look to the U.S. above all others to champion their cause and to raise their plight with repressive governments.

In May, I introduced H.R. 4653, the bipartisan legislation before us today, which reauthorizes the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom for 5 years.

First created in 1998 through the International Religious Freedom Act, it is an independent, bipartisan Federal Government Commission that monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad, reviews the facts and circumstances of religious freedom violation based on international standards, and makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress. Without this Commission, there would be nobody around to point out what is taking place to these groups.

□ 1600

Since its inception, the Commission has been an invaluable watchdog for global religious freedom conditions. The Commission has been a voice for the imprisoned Baha'i leader who is languishing unjustly behind bars in Iran. Many Baha'is are behind bars in Iran, and if it weren't for the Commission, no one would know.

The Commission has been a voice of the fearful Iraqi nun who is uncertain if there is a future for her in the land of her birth. More Biblical activity took place in Iraq than in any other country in the world, other than in Israel. Abraham is from Iraq. Ezekiel is buried in Iraq. Daniel is from Iraq, as are Jonah and Nineveh. Without the Commission, there would be nobody speaking out for the Iraqi nun, who is fearful of her life and is fearful of the future for her church.

The Commission has been a voice of the Buddhist monk, who has watched with horror as more than 130 of his fellow Tibetans have set themselves aflame in desperation at the abuses they have suffered at the hands of the Chinese Government. If it were not for this Commission, nobody would know how the Buddhists are being persecuted in Tibet.

In short, the Commission has been and, with passage of this legislation, will continue to be the voice of the marginalized, oppressed, and persecuted people who dare to worship according to the dictates of their consciences.

The Commission can be relied upon to consistently give the unvarnished truth, as Mr. SMITH said, about the true state of religious freedom in countries around the globe, whether they are strategic allies or adversaries. The Commission is also unhindered by the bureaucratic morass that so often stymies the State Department during both Republican and Democratic administrations alike.

Given the state of religious freedom abroad today, the sobering reality is that the Commission's voice is needed more now than ever before. A vote for this legislation is a vote for America's first freedom. With that, I urge its unanimous passage.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I have no more speakers, so I encourage all of my colleagues to support H.R. 4653.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

To conclude, I want to thank Chairman WOLF again for, authoring the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998. What we reauthorize today is just one part of it, and that is the International Religious Freedom Commission.

For the record, the Commission is comprised of nine Commissioners, plus the Ambassador at Large. As of July 1, the current Chairman is Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, Dr. Robert George is Vice Chairman; Dr. James Zogby is Vice Chairman; and Dr. Zuhdi Jasser and Mary Ann Glendon are Commissioners.

Dean Eric Schwartz—who, as we all know, used to work up on the Hill as a staffer on the Democrat side and who went on to work in the NSC and work on refugee policies—is also a Commissioner, as are Daniel Mark, Father Thomas Reese, and Hannah Rosenthal—who acted as—as point person in

combating anti-Semitism. They work at their own expense. These are very, very dedicated individuals and their work is supported by a highly professional staff.

Again, I would ask Members to read their reports. They are among the best reports that have been produced anywhere in Washington. They are accurately posting what is going on, and then they go into great depth as to what some of the remedies ought to be.

I want to thank, again, Chairman WOLF for his extraordinary leadership for 34 years as a Member of Congress in combating all forms of human rights abuse, especially religious persecution. This is just another manifestation of his extraordinary leadership.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on this bill.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, I rise in strong support to H.R. 4653, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2014.

I support this bipartisan legislation which reauthorizes the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) for five years.

First created in 1998, USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan Federal government commission that monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad, reviews the facts and circumstances of religious freedom violations based on international standards and makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress.

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to have religious freedom then it is important that we protect it. Everywhere we look, the choice of worship is being challenged.

For example, we are reminded that significant threats to religious freedom persist across the globe.

In Iraq the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is gaining territory in Iraq and threatening the very existence of ancient faith communities in the region.

In addition to the crisis in Iraq, religious minorities are marginalized and imperiled in Egypt and Syria; the government of Vietnam severely restricts religious activities of all faiths, as does the government of China; and religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyya Muslims face governmental and social harassment in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia.

Since its inception, USCIRF has been an invaluable watchdog for global religious freedom conditions.

USCIRF commissioners are routinely called upon to testify before Congress and provide expert policy recommendations on how to most effectively advance this fundamental human right in U.S. foreign policy.

Religious freedom is America's first freedom, part of its history and identity as a nation. It also is a core human right recognized by international law and treaty; a necessary component of U.S. foreign policy and America's commitment to defending democracy and freedom globally; and a vital element of national security, critical to ensuring a more peaceful, prosperous, and stable world.

USCIRF champions this issue both at home and abroad and its voice is needed as much today as it has ever been.

I urge you to join me in cosponsoring this bipartisan legislation to reauthorize USCIRF.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4653, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SUSPENSION OF EXIT PERMITS

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 588) concerning the suspension of exit permit issuance by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for adopted Congolese children seeking to depart the country with their adoptive parents, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 588

Whereas according to UNICEF, over 4,000,000 orphans are estimated to be living in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

Whereas the United States has made significant financial investments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, providing an estimated \$758,102,000 in development, humanitarian, and security assistance, including peacekeeping activities, in fiscal year 2013;

Whereas cyclical and violent conflict has plagued the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the mid-1990s;

Whereas, according to the United States Department of State, the policy of the Administration toward the Democratic Republic of the Congo is "focused on helping the country become a nation that . . . provides for the basic needs of its citizens";

Whereas the United Nations has recognized a child's right to a family as a basic human right worthy of protection;

Whereas adoption, both domestic and international, is widely recognized as an important child protection tool and an integral part of child welfare best practices around the world, along with family reunification and prevention of abandonment;

Whereas, on September 27, 2013, the Congolese Ministry of Interior and Security, General Direction of Migration, informed the United States Embassy in Kinshasa that effective September 25, 2013, they had suspended issuance of exit permits to adopted Congolese children seeking to depart the country with their adoptive parents, affecting hundreds of children;

Whereas there are American families with finalized adoptions in the Democratic Repub-

lic of the Congo and the necessary legal paperwork and visas ready to travel home with these children but are currently unable to do so; and

Whereas on December 19, 2013, the Congolese Minister of Justice, Minister of Interior and Security, and the General Direction of Migration confirmed to members of the United States Department of State that the current suspension on the issuance of exit permits continues: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) affirms that all children deserve a safe, loving, and permanent family;

(2) recognizes the importance of ensuring that international adoptions of all children are conducted in an ethical and transparent manner;

(3) expresses concern over the increasing number of new adoption cases that have been opened and the impact on children and families of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's suspension of exit permits; and

(4) respectfully requests that the Congolese Government—

(A) resume issuing exit permits for all children that have been adopted, and continue processing adoptions that are already underway;

(B) expedite the processing of those adoptions which involve medically fragile children; and

(C) encourages continued dialogue and cooperation between the United States Department of State and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to improve the intercountry adoption process and ensure the welfare of all children adopted from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I speak in strong support of the Peterson resolution, H. Res. 588, concerning the suspension of exit permit issuance by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for adopted Congolese children seeking to depart the country with their adoptive parents.

Last year, the Democratic Republic of the Congo suspended the issuance of exit permits for Congolese children who were adopted by foreign parents, impacting hundreds of U.S. families.

The suspension means that Congolese children adopted by American parents cannot leave the country to go to their new homes, even though the parents have been officially declared the legal guardians under Congolese law. What is more, despite the exit permit suspension, Congolese courts have continued processing new adoptions, leading to a further backlog of adopted children who are unable to leave the country.

It is estimated that over 900 American families are caught up in varying degrees and stages of this adoption limbo—breaking many, many hearts. This is a deplorable situation for these children and for their distraught families. The DRC has not offered a clear