

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Speaker laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, May 26, 2016.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER RYAN: I, Luis V. Gutiérrez, am submitting my resignation from the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence effective immediately.

It has been a privilege and honor to have served the last three Congresses on this Committee, whose work and service is absolutely vital to the security of the United States and whose oversight over the Department of Defense and the intelligence community safeguards the civil liberties and safety of all Americans.

Stepping down from the Committee will allow me to commit more time and energy to other priority issues of my constituents, as well as allow another one of our colleagues the opportunity to serve on this important Committee. Serving on the Intelligence Committee has been one of my greatest honors while in Congress and I am deeply grateful to have had the chance to serve in this capacity.

Sincerely,

LUIS V. GUTIÉRREZ,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted. There was no objection.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. RUSSELL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. RUSSELL. Madam Speaker, since December 15, 1791, nearly 225 years, our Congress has operated under the constitutional requirement to do the following. Amendment 1 of the Bill of Rights to the Constitution of the United States of America:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or the press; or the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

I am saddened, Madam Speaker, that, in our current day, the greatest assault on the free exercise of religion is being perpetuated, seemingly, by those most responsible to protect it: those who are sworn to uphold the law.

Worse still, we see our Armed Forces, whose singular purpose is to support and defend the Constitution, now perpetually being used as the vehicle to subvert the very document that they risked their lives to defend.

In a recent example, we have seen executive guidance with regard to religious corporations, religious associations, religious educational institutions, and religious societies placed in jeopardy.

More than 2,000 Federal Government contracts a year are awarded to religious organizations and contractors that provide essential services in many vital programs. Now many of these services are being impacted due to conflicting, ambiguous executive guidance.

Here are some examples:

Chaplain services. Multiple organizations provide chaplains and related services to the military and other government agencies.

□ 1200

Chaplains have faced significant religious liberty challenges in pursuing contracts with religious education directories, youth ministers, musicians, and other religious service providers who adhere to the teachings of their particular faith. Without protecting free exercise of religion, chaplains have been forced to hire people that work directly against their teachings, tenets, and faith. This is a clear violation of the First Amendment.

Here is another example: refugee service providers. The vast majority of refugee and suffering vulnerable population relief is done by religious service organizations. I have worked with many on battlefields in my time as a career soldier.

Because of bad agency guidance, now these organizations are facing mounting liability related to their performance under grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements. Sadly, when these organizations cannot partner with the government, the relief of human suffering just goes away, seldom being replaced.

The groups under assault are often the best—if not the only—organizations able to offer the assistance they perform, doing invaluable work to relieve the suffering, aid the returning combat warrior, assist in the rehabilitation of substance abuse for those not adjusting well, and many other such services that have been going on for many decades.

To curtail the blatant discrimination against these groups, I offered a simple amendment to protect them under existing law which passed in the National Defense Authorization, and that existing law upheld is the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act.

You would have thought I had killed someone's mother. Instead of upholding the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, we have now seen this body continue its assault on faith in America. It is not enough to level accusations of injustice by some. They will not be satisfied until their assaults of intolerance on people of faith in this country has produced an elimination of God in public life in America.

We are accused of hatred, called out as shameful on this floor, and enjoined to use the whole Constitution to support an opposing view that embodies behavior, mores, and outcomes that not only violate our conscience, but have been prohibited under the laws of nature and nature's God.

In the last 50 years, we have seen the Constitution used by these ideologues to kill American children in the womb, eliminate family structure, elevate behavior over belief, redefine marriage, and assault into silence and inaction any who may oppose them. Not satisfied, we see them without rest on their quest to eliminate free exercise of faith in the United States.

Do we really want a Nation without God?

They would call it progress, yet our conscience knows differently. The Apostle Paul explains why when he said this:

For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.

Therefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature, rather than the Creator.

The Creator, our Nation has always been anchored in the Creator, from its inception throughout our history. God has been the foundation of our Republic as seen in the sweeping lines of the Declaration of Independence, when it drove our Founders to proclaim "the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation."

"We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

That life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness could not be realized without God in our Republic. George Washington spoke for all Americans in his first inaugural address, that "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than . . . the United States."

Our Nation's survival and prosperity in the future were understood to be dependent upon faith. When Washington left office in the most remarkable, peaceful transfer of power the world had seen, he warned of a future that somehow supposed that we could have order and prosperity without faith. In his last address to the Nation, he declared:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to the political prosperity, religion and

morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that men claim the tribute of patriotism, who would subvert the great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them. And let us with caution indulge in the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion.

None of the Founders of this country believed that a governmental connection to religion was an evil in itself. They opposed the establishment of a national religion because it could prohibit the free exercise of faith but that faith would and should be freely exercised. This same foundational belief extended to a prohibition of a national press so that it could express freely, so people could speak and assemble freely, and that their grievance would not only become known, but redressed. This was embodied in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights.

The Framers of our Constitution understood that restriction on religious conduct should not be from application of general laws but, rather, should be applied to those laws that target religion. Laws that “substantially burden” religion, even if they are generally applicable, must be justified as the “least restrictive means” of achieving a “compelling interest.”

The same day the Bill of Rights was introduced, July 13, 1787, this Congress also introduced the Northwest Ordinance that laid guidelines and instruction on new territory acquired for a future United States.

Article 3 of that Ordinance stated: “Religion, and morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged.”

“Forever be encouraged.” Some in this body today, Madam Speaker, would believe forever stops in 2016 and should have stopped much sooner. They claim that Congress grants these unalienable rights and uses the powers of the government, without the consent of the governed, to regulate and diminish faith and eliminate it from public life.

In 1798, in response to the claim that Congress could regulate First Amendment freedoms without abridging them, James Madison condemned it saying: the liberty of conscience and the freedom the press were completely exempted from all congressional authority whatever.

Every constitution of our Thirteen Original States, and all thereafter following their example, understood this and embodied such language in their State constitutions, which survive today.

New York, article I, section 3: “The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed in this State to all humankind.”

New Hampshire, article 5: “Every individual has a natural and unalienable right to worship God according to the

dictates of his own conscience, and reason; and no subject shall be hurt, molested, or restrained, in his person, liberty, or estate, for worshipping God in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience; or for his religious profession, sentiments, or persuasion.”

Vermont, article 3: “That all persons have a natural and unalienable right, to worship Almighty God, according to the dictates of their own consciences and understandings, as in their opinion shall be regulated by the word of God; and that no person ought to, or of right can be compelled to attend any religious worship, or erect or support any place of worship, or maintain any minister, contrary to the dictates of conscience, nor can any person be justly deprived or abridged of any civil right as a citizen, on account of religious sentiments, or peculiar mode of religious worship; and that no authority can, or ought to be vested in, or assumed by, any power whatever, that shall in any case interfere with, or in any manner control the rights of conscience, in the free exercise of religious worship.”

Massachusetts, part 1, articles II and III: “It is the right as well as the duty of all men in 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 worshipping God in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience; or for his religious profession or sentiments . . . As the happiness of a people, and the good order and preservation of civil government, essentially depend upon piety, religion and morality; and as these cannot be generally diffused through a community, but by the institution of the public worship of God, and of public instructions in piety, religion and morality.”

Connecticut, article I, section 3: “The exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination, shall be free to all persons in the state.”

Rhode Island, article I, section 3: “Whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free; and all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness; and whereas a principal object to our venerable ancestors, in their migration to this country and their settlement of this state, was, as they expressed it, to hold forth a lively experiment that a flourishing civil state may stand and be maintained with full liberty and religious concerns; we, therefore, declare that no person shall be compelled to frequent or to support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatever, except in fulfillment of such person's voluntary contract; nor enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in any body or goods; nor disqualified from

holding office; nor otherwise suffer on account of such person's religious belief; and that every person shall be free to worship God according to the dictates of such person's conscience, and to profess and by argument to maintain such person's opinion in matters of religion; and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect the civil capacity of any person.”

Pennsylvania, article 1, sections 3 and 4:

“All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences; no man can of right be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship or to maintain any ministry against his consent; no human authority can, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience, and no preference shall ever be given by any law to any religious establishments or modes of worship . . . No person who acknowledges the being of a God and a future state of rewards and punishments shall, on account of his religious sentiments, be disqualified to hold any office or place of trust or profit under this Commonwealth.”

□ 1215

New Jersey: Article 1, sections 3-5: “No person shall be deprived of the inestimable privilege of worshipping Almighty God in a manner agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience; nor under any pretense whatever be compelled to attend any place of worship contrary to his faith and judgement; nor shall any person be obliged to pay tithes, taxes, or other rates for building or repairing any church or churches, place or places of worship, or for the maintenance of any minister or ministry, contrary to what he believes to be right or has deliberately and voluntarily engaged to perform.

“There shall be no establishment of one religious sect in preference to another; no religious or racial test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust.

“No person shall be denied the enjoyment of any civil or military right, nor be discriminated against in the exercise of any civil or military right, nor be segregated in the militia or in the public schools, because of religious principles . . .”

North Carolina: Article 1, section 13: “All persons have a natural and inalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences, and no human authority shall, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience.”

Maryland: Article 36: “That as it is the duty of every man to worship God in such manner as he thinks most acceptable to Him, all persons are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty; wherefore, no person ought by any law to be molested in his person or estate, on account of his religious persuasion, or profession, or for

his religious practice . . . nor shall any person, otherwise competent, be deemed incompetent as a witness, or juror, on account of his religious belief; provided, he believes in the existence of God, and that under His dispensation such person will be held morally accountable for his acts, and be rewarded or punished therefor either in this world or in the world to come."

Virginia: Article 1, sections 11 and 16: "That religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and, therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other . . . all men shall be free to profess and by argument to maintain their opinions in matters of religion, and the same shall in nowise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities . . . it shall be left free to every person to select his religious instructor, and to make his support such private contract as he shall please."

South Carolina: Article 1, section 2: "The general assembly shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ."

Last among them, the State of Georgia: Article 1, section 1, paragraph 4: "No inhabitant of this state shall be molested in person or property or be prohibited from holding any public office or trust on account of religious opinions."

These constitutions are still in effect in each of these States today. All speak of the exceptions on maintaining the peace and safety of each State.

Forever—forever—be encouraged. That is the way it was phrased. Is that where we stand today? Shall religious freedom, the hallmark of Columbia's shores, continue to be forever encouraged or do we who are so humbly honored to serve in these Chambers now just step aside and see the indispensable supports of religion and morality knocked from under our foundation?

Madam Speaker, I cannot be silent. Since I was 18 years of age, I have pledged to support and defend the Constitution of this great Republic. I have been moved by conscience and dictates to speak out against the coercion of people of faith who are being discriminated against because they merely hold to the laws of nature and nature's God.

Our institutions, once based on the Creator of life, have now appointed themselves to usurp the authority of God, who is the author of life, marriage, and family. The most elemental sovereign unit, our families, has been destroyed by our foolish decisions.

We are told instead by those of us sworn to uphold the law that murder is not murder, marriage is not marriage, and family is not family. We have allowed constitutional constructs to kill a child and call it a choice.

We have seen discreet behaviors and private sexual preferences promoted to public display while what is constitutionally guaranteed to be able to express—religion—is now being publicly prohibited. This Nation, at its highest level, has taken a position against God.

Is it possible, if that be the case, that we can form a more perfect union? Can we establish justice absent the giver of law? Can domestic tranquility be ensured that when we abandon His precepts? Can we provide for a common defense absent a mighty fortress and an unflinching bulwark?

How do we promote the general welfare when every American is unanchored, adrift to do what seems right in his own eyes? Do we suppose that we can secure the blessings of liberty without Him? Can those of our posterity expect to obtain His blessing without acknowledging His existence?

So, Madam Speaker, like our forebears, I cannot be silent. My faith directs that I act with love and civility in a gentlemanly manner. As a warrior on battlefields, I have seen the worst that human beings have to offer.

But my optimism is secured by eternal hope and everlasting truth. My conscience speaks to God's eternal Being. So I am without excuse. His love and mercy cannot be separated from those that answer His call.

I take solace in the words of Christ when He encourages: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Like the Founders of our Nation and Framers of our great Constitution, I speak with many as a Representative in this august body "with a firm reliance on the protections of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

So, Madam Speaker, I will stand with Joshua when he said: "And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

I stand with the Apostle Paul when he said: "Putting away falsehood, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

So I ask America: Who will stand with me?

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia). Under the

Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it is inspiring to hear my friend, Mr. RUSSELL, speak such inspiring words. It is interesting that the book from which he kept quoting is the best-seller book of all time and also happens to be the most quoted book in U.S. history here in both the House and the Senate.

There was a time when most legislators felt it was helpful in getting legislation passed if they had a verse of Scripture from the Bible that supported their position.

Then we arrive at the point today where, if someone in Congress makes the statement in quoting Jesus Himself when He discussed marriage and divorce and was asked about it, that He, God, made male and female. Haven't you read? Don't you understand He created male and female?

So you would have to believe, if you supported the agenda that was exhibited today, that Jesus didn't know what He was talking about because God not only created male and female, He created a lot of question marks, like the cartoon that somebody did of a doctor holding a newborn and the mother asks, "What did I have?" and the doctor says, "The baby hasn't decided yet."

We have come so far. We thought we had advanced so far. Yet, as Solomon said: "There is nothing new under the sun." I know Justice Ginsburg was talking about same-sex marriage when she said: Well, we just know so much more now than we used to know.

In some ways—but in the nature of human nature, things haven't changed. Things from 3,000 years ago, just as Abraham Lincoln said in quoting Scripture in his second inaugural, are just as true today as they were 3,000 years ago or 2,000 years ago. It is why Lincoln quoted them.

But when we get to the place as a Nation that truth is not important, everything is relative, and there is no absolute, unqualified, black-and-white justice or injustice, then our prisons fill up.

You have more people committing suicide than ever. You have more people using drugs and trying to escape by using drugs. You have all kinds of problems in schools and in society. Things are turned upside down because a society loses its way, says there is no absolutes and everything is relative.

But as C.S. Lewis pointed out, what led him from being an atheist to believing in God was in poking fun at Christians and saying: Why don't you just admit it. Wouldn't it just be easier to admit that there cannot be a just God when there is so much injustice in the world?

After doing that for years, this brilliant man finally realized: If there were no just God, if there were no absolute-in-the-universe standard of justice and injustice, right and wrong, if that