

Our criminal law comes from old England. And in old England, if you committed a crime—the king owned everything. If you killed one of his serf, you killed the king's serf. That was the murder that took place. If you shot a deer, you shot the king's deer. If you stole something, it was a violation against the crown.

And we transferred the criminal law into America, and the State has replaced the crown. So when you commit a crime, that crime is committed against the State as if you had killed one of the king's deer, but it doesn't consider the victim hardly at all. We are doing a little better in recent years, but this allows the crime victims to have a recourse, Mr. Speaker. And I think we will hear a lot about this provision in the sanctuary cities law as this moves over to the Senate.

I think we made a lot of progress today. It has been a good day to do honor to the lives of Sarah Root, a beautiful young lady whose mother is here in this Capital City today and speaking and testifying and doing radio and meetings.

And one day I hope we hunt down Eswin Mejia, the killer of this beautiful young woman. And one day I hope we have the relationship with his home country where they will hunt him down and extradite him to the United States of America. That is, of course, a law we need to have in a civilized world.

And Kate Steinle, I thank not only Matt Salmon for bringing this forward, but Bill O'Reilly and the President of the United States.

Something this President has done is he asked the family members of the victims of criminal aliens in America to step up on the stage with him around the campaign trail over and over again. One would think that they were props for a campaign. That kind of criticism flowed out. But here is what he has really done: he illuminated the pain that they went through over and over again. When he came back to Iowa on a "thank you" tour, he had some of the crime victims there. He brought them up on the stage. You can tell by the look in his eye that they moved him.

He has said the thing that moved him the most in the entire campaign were the families who had an illegal kill their daughter, their son, their family member. That moved him the most. He has done honor to that.

He has asked that we bring this legislation to the floor. We have done so. We have passed it out of the House.

And the President, yesterday, met with a dozen or so of these families at the White House. He will continue to push this legislation till it becomes law. And I expect at the bill signing ceremony, these families will be invited back to the White House and they will get a closure on the pain that they are going through this day.

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

□ 1845

HONORING WILBERT AUSTIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FLORES) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FLORES. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to honor Reverend Wilbert Austin of Waco, Texas, who passed away on June 19, 2017.

Wilbert grew up poor in a small shack in the southern part of Waco in a racially segregated area called Sandtown. His father was a day laborer who picked cotton for a living, while his mother was a laundress and cafe worker. Wilbert used to play by the old rendering plant that was next to the cemetery in Sandtown.

Even in their poverty, Wilbert's parents were able to raise five children. His meager upbringing is something that would shape him for the rest of his life and molded him into a great servant.

During his life, Wilbert worked many jobs, including working for a glass bottle manufacturer, Owens-Illinois, and as a leader of the local chapter of the NAACP. During his time at the NAACP, he was known for advocating for civil rights in Waco. Always seeking to make Waco a better place, he would often make sure that children and families had a safe area to play and enjoy by keeping out drug dealers, doing so on a face-to-face basis, if needed.

Wilbert was a passionate advocate for his Christian faith and decided to share his faith in the pulpit. He became a pastor of Moody's Peaceful Rest Baptist Church, where he would serve for 38 years. He was known to his congregation and around Waco as someone with a servant's heart. Wilbert would mow lawns for the elderly and collect gift cards at Christmas to distribute to needy families.

In 1974, Wilbert led an effort to change local city government, and that made him an important part of Waco's history.

In the 1950s, the city had adopted an at-large district after an African-American individual nearly won a city council seat. As a result of his tireless and dedicated efforts, Waco dropped the at-large system and divided its city into five districts, with each district having a single elected representative. His perseverance changed the at-large system because it did not fairly represent the electoral choices of the African-American areas of Waco.

Though he never believed he would run for city council, Wilbert's desire to serve eventually led him to campaign for a seat. Wilbert showed great perseverance as he ran for city council five times, ultimately winning a seat in 2006.

He went on to serve as the councilman for District One for 11 years before

having to step down earlier this year due to declining health. Today's Waco is a diverse and inclusive city because of his community service.

Wilbert was also a devoted and loving husband to his late wife of 50 years, Annie Pearl Austin, who passed away from breast cancer in 2012. Annie was supportive of her husband's efforts to help Waco and would often tell her children: "No matter what or why he's out in the public, always love your dad and support him." They were blessed with 5 children, and they were the grandparents to 10 grandchildren.

During the last years of his life, Wilbert fought a battle with cancer that he ultimately lost. Throughout his battle, he never lost sight of where he was going. In a farewell address at his retirement party, Wilbert stated: "I'm all packed up. When you hear of my passing, don't grieve for me. I'm just another soldier going home to be with the Lord."

Mr. Speaker, Wilbert Austin worked tirelessly to better our central Texas community and did so by serving his congregation, his community, reducing crime, and serving in elected office.

He is loved by our community and certainly left an enduring impression on the greater Waco area. He will forever be remembered as a community leader, pastor, civil rights activist, servant, husband, father, grandfather, and friend.

My wife, Gina, and I offer our deepest and heartfelt condolences to the Austin family. We also lift up the family and friends of Wilbert in our prayers.

I have requested that a United States flag be flown over the United States Capitol to honor the life and legacy of Reverend Wilbert Austin.

As I close today, I urge all Americans to continue praying for our country during these difficult times, for our military men and women who protect us from external threats, and for our first responders who protect us here at home.

HONORING GENERAL JOE HANOVER

Mr. FLORES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor General Joe Hanover of Woodway, Texas, who passed away on May 22, 2017.

Joe was born in McGregor, Texas, on February 10, 1918. He grew up in a farming community and attended grade school in Wheelock before graduating from Franklin High School in 1938.

Wheelock was a special place to Joe because it is where he met the love of his life, Lucille, in the first grade.

During his high school years in Franklin, Joe became interested in engineering, an interest that would guide much of the rest of his life. Upon graduation from high school, Joe went to Texas A&M University in College Station, where he would go on to earn a bachelor of civil engineering degree in 1940. In 1941, he married Lucille and started his engineering career by working for the Texas Highway Department in Hearne.

World War II interrupted Joe's early career and family life, as he was called

into Active Duty in 1941. He was commissioned into the U.S. Army 10 months prior to Pearl Harbor and still carried his original orders to report to Camp Wallace, Texas, until the day he passed away.

During his service in World War II, George served in the European theater, notably in Belgium and France. He served in the 54th Coastal Artillery, a division that had 3,000 African-American soldiers in it.

At the conclusion of the war, Joe was given command of a German prisoner of war camp in Marseilles, France. In an interview with the local newspaper, Joe was quoted as saying: "I started as a commander of Black soldiers, fighting against the world's greatest racist, Adolph Hitler, and finished as the commander of a prison holding German soldiers who had tried to carry out Hitler's plans."

Joe's enlistment lasted 5 years, and he was given orders to go home in February 1946. He also joined the Army Reserve, from which he retired in 1971 with the rank of brigadier general. When he returned to the United States, he went back to work for the Texas Highway Department, embarking on a career that would last for more than 35 years.

Joe worked on numerous projects throughout the State and is best known in College Station for overseeing the completion of the University Drive overpass. On the 50-year anniversary of the opening of that structure, the City of College Station declared March 21 of each year going forward to be Joe Hanover Day.

Texas A&M played a large role in Joe's life, and he was known for his great love of the university. He regularly attended Fightin' Texas Aggie sporting events, especially baseball and football games. When recounting the best days of his life, Joe would routinely tell you that the day he married Lucille and the day he was baptized were the two greatest days of his life.

Mr. Speaker, Joe Hanover fought in service of our country and worked tirelessly to better the Bryan-College Station area. He is loved by our community and certainly left an enduring impression on the Brazos Valley. He will be forever remembered as a hero, community leader, husband, and friend.

My wife, Gina, and I offer our deepest and heartfelt condolences to the Hanover family. We also lift up the family and friends of Joe Hanover in our prayers.

I requested that a United States flag be flown over the Capitol to honor the life and legacy of General Joe Hanover.

As I close today, I urge all Americans to continue praying for our country during these difficult times, for our military men and women who protect us from external threats, and for our first responders who protect us here at home.

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

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 30 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, tonight I want to talk about persecution, worldwide, of people of the Christian faith. We don't hear much about Christian persecution through world media, and I think it is important that Americans understand that persecution of minority religious groups throughout the world continues, and especially continues against Christians.

Each month, Mr. Speaker, 332 Christians are killed, 214 churches are destroyed, and 772 forms of violence are committed against Christians. Once again, every month, 332 Christians are killed, 214 churches are destroyed, and 772 forms of violence are committed against individuals of the Christian faith.

In 2013, Christians faced persecution in 102 out of 190 countries. For the second year in a row, Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the entire world.

In 2016, 90,000 Christians were killed for their faith worldwide. In 2016, roughly 600 million people were prevented from practicing their faith through intimidation, forced conversions, bodily harm, or even death. Many Christians are brutally murdered simply for their belief in Jesus.

Oppression is not limited to Christians worldwide. Religious minorities throughout the world are restricted in their practices or persecuted for their beliefs. Eighty-two countries, worldwide, require people in minority religious groups in that country to register with the government, while 99 countries restrict their practicing of religion.

Here are the top 10 Christian persecution countries in the world.

It is no surprise that North Korea is number one on the hit list that wants to punish and persecute Christians. Little Kim takes delight in torturing people, especially people of religious beliefs, including Christians. Christians are often sent to prison camps for just owning a Bible. Those Bibles are smuggled in through other countries, but generally they come from South Korea.

Approximately 80,000 to 120,000 are imprisoned in labor camps for their religious beliefs. That is 80,000 to 120,000 people are in prison camps, labor camps, because of their religion in little Kim's dictatorship of North Korea.

So, number one is North Korea. I will give you the other nine, Mr. Speaker.

Somalia is number two; number three is Afghanistan; Pakistan is number four; Sudan is number five. Of the 10 worst countries for Christian persecution, number six, no surprise, is Syria. Iraq is number seven; Iran is number eight; Yemen is number nine; and Eritrea is number 10 of the top 10 countries that persecute Christians for simply believing in the Christian faith.

The Pew Research Council says 95 percent of the countries in the Middle East and North Africa have instances of government harassment or use of force against religious groups; 75 percent had instances of government harassment against even Muslims, people that believe differently than the government faith.

In Asia, there has been an uptick in persecution by governments in Islamic extremism. Christians in this region are targeted by national religious movements—the Muslim, the Hindu, and the Buddhist—in countries like Pakistan, India, and Myanmar. Christians around the world routinely face blasphemy laws for simply speaking about their faith.

A country that I haven't mentioned yet is Communist Vietnam. Yes, Mr. Speaker, whether we leave off that phrase Communist Vietnam, they are still a communist country, an atheistic country. New laws led by the government punish anyone who dares to practice their religion or speak out against the authoritarian regime.

New laws are being used to crack down on citizens' basic human right of the right to believe and practice their religion. New rounds of arrests this year are proof.

Human Rights Watch says 110 people are prisoners of conscience or imprisoned in harsh conditions after unfair trials. These prisoners are not criminals, but the government thinks they are criminals because they practice their religion. They are advocates for human rights and social justice. They are pastors and priests. They are in jail for believing in the Almighty. Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh has been in prison in Vietnam since 2011.

□ 1900

Mr. Speaker, I might add here that prisons in Vietnam haven't changed much over the years. It is still a Communist country, and when you go to jail in Vietnam, you are in a prison like no other. Those prisons still exist, and they house people because the government puts people of Christian faith in jail.

Pastor Nguyen has been tortured and beaten. He has no contact with his family. They give him food, and they make fun of him because in the food they give him, they break up glass and put the glass in that food.

He is being held in solitary confinement, and all because he took a stand for Christianity and he told officials—and he told officials from the United States—about his treatment in jail. The security officials not only give him physical torture, they give him mental torture as well.

His wife has also suffered for her faith. Last year, she was beaten and jailed while peacefully campaigning for religious freedom.

You see, Mr. Speaker, when they go out in Vietnam and advocate the human right of religious freedom, the Government of Vietnam persecutes