HONORING ELLEN DUNLAP

HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2020

Mr. McGOVERN. Madam Speaker, it is a great honor to rise today in recognition of Ellen Dunlap of West Boylston, Massachusetts, who is stepping down as President of the American Antiquarian Society after 28 extraordinary years in that position.

America's history, Madam Speaker, is our greatest natural resource. It speaks to us across the years and serves as a source of great inspiration and hope for people across this country. It is an acknowledgement of America's triumphs and our imperfections; a reminder of who we are and who we're called to be.

Ellen is the President of the American Antiquarian Society—a remarkable institution in Worcester, Massachusetts founded by Revolutionary War patriot and printer Isaiah Thomas in 1812 and dedicated to preserving our treasured history. The Society serves as an incomparable resource for scholars and historians and a preeminent and comprehensive depository of American history and culture that is unparalleled in size and scope.

As President—the first woman to hold that post, by the way—Ellen has spent her career not only preserving our past, but bringing it to life in a way that truly excites others. Ellen's work and leadership are extraordinary, she has the incredible talent and vision to clarify and animate history so that all of us can better understand and learn from our collective past. She has worked tirelessly to open up the Society's extraordinary archives to a wider audience, including teachers, scholars, artists, and writers. Under her leadership, the Society undertook a massive effort to digitizing their collections. Ellen also spearheaded the construction of a major expansion and renovation of the Society's home at Antiquarian Hall, and has sought to engage the Worcester community in new and exciting ways like free public programs and partnerships with cultural groups.

Ellen has chaired the board of the Worcester Cultural Coalition and the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, and she has advised many prestigious institutions such as the Library of Congress and George Washington's Mount Vernon. Ellen's vision and leadership earned the American Antiquarian Society a National Humanities Medal from President Barack Obama in 2013.

Madam Speaker, there is so much more I could say about how grateful I am that Ellen has devoted her life to preserving our American story and how lucky we are that the American Antiquarian Society calls Worcester home. But let me end on a personal note to say that Ellen is a treasured friend and a wonderful person, I'm grateful that I've had the privilege of getting to know and work with her, and I know she will continue to give back to our community in the years ahead.

On behalf of the United States Congress, the people of Massachusetts' Second Congressional District, and all the people who will benefit from her incredible work for generations to come, it is my great honor and privilege to recognize Ellen Dunlap and to thank her for her remarkable service to our community, our commonwealth, and our country.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DAN NEWHOUSE

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2020

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Madam Speaker, I regrettably missed a roll call vote as indicated below. Had I been present, I would have voted NAY on Roll Call No. 240.

HONORING NILS BACKSTROM AS IOWAN OF THE WEEK

HON. CYNTHIA AXNE

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2020

Mrs. AXNE. Madam Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in recognizing an Iowan who embodies the value of a strong work ethic and the dedication it takes to learn a trade. Earlier this month we celebrated National Apprenticeship Week to highlight the impact and value of apprenticeship programs across the United States. To continue that celebration, I am proud to name Nils Backstrom, a union carpenter in Iowa with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, as our Iowan of the Week for the week of November 20th.

Leaders in the Carpenters Training Program have described Nils as a pillar of what it means to be an active apprentice in their program. He's always the first to volunteer for projects and has been a member of the Apprenticeship Committee since its inception. From the day Nils arrived at training, he has pushed both himself and the instructional team to be the very best at what they do.

The benefits of apprenticeship programs cannot be overstated. They supply Iowa businesses with well-trained employees to get tough jobs done well and on time, and folks like Nils are the backbone of these programs. These professionals are instilled with both the technical skills required of the job and leadership capacity that is so highly sought after. Apprentices complete 7,000 hours of on-the-job training and more than 640 hours of classroom learning.

Supplying a pipeline of highly skilled employees for the future is a critical role apprenticeship programs play in not just Iowa but nationally as well. Ensuring vital industries like information technology, healthcare, building trades, and advanced manufacturing are filled with the right people is crucial for building our future. What's more, the work is rewarding and Iowans in these positions make a good living for their families. The Department of Labor has shown that Registered Apprenticeships have a 94 percent job placement rate at the conclusion of the program—with a highly competitive salary.

The importance of protecting and enhancing our workforce by supporting these apprenticeship programs should be an issue we can all get behind. Nils Backstrom is one of many hundreds of thousands of skilled apprentices across the nation. His spirit and drive, and that of his colleagues, are needed to build towards a better future for all individuals.

I'm grateful to Nils and his fellow apprentices for their dedication to their trade and their contributions to growing our state. We need more individuals like him to join the trade and fill highly in-demand, skilled positions available right here in Iowa. I ask the House to join me in honoring Nils Backstrom as Iowan of the Week.

SUPPORTING H. RES. 823—CONDEMNING OF IRAN'S STATE-SPONSORED PERSECUTION OF ITS BAHA'I MINORITY

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2020

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, I'm elated to announce that earlier this week my colleagues and I were able to unanimously pass H. Res. 823, which condemns Iran's state-sponsored religious persecution of its Baha'i minority. Iran has gone too long depriving its citizens the most fundamental of human rights, and I'm proud that we were able to call out Iran and hold them accountable for their atrocities against their own people.

I firmly believe that it is our duty in Congress to stand up to this tyrannical regime, and I have been committed to that cause since I first came to the House of Representatives. One of my first ever bills in Congress, the Iran Human Rights Act of 2007, focused on improving the respect for fundamental human rights of the people of Iran. It specifically recognized the plight and suffering of the Baha'i minority and that they face significant discrimination, including imprisonment, harassment, and intimidation.

The Iranian state's treatment of the Baha'i people is deplorable, and the fact it is motivated simply because of their faith is wholly unacceptable. Religious freedom is an issue that personally touches me, as I have had family and friends who have been victims of religious persecution. This makes me especially conscious of the incredible importance of ensuring that religious freedom is respected around the globe. Religious freedom is a fundamental human right outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all people deserve a government that will respect their rights.

Our darkest moments as a human race have come during times when those who knew better stood silently, making excuses for passivity and allowing injustice and persecution to reign. While I celebrate the passage of H. Res. 823, I recognize there is more we can do. As Co-Chair of the International Religious Freedom Caucus and member of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's Executive Committee, I stand with the Baha'i people against the injustices wrought against them by the Iranian government, and I call upon the United States and the international community to continue pressuring Iran to cease the persecution of its religious minorities and its violations of basic human rights. The Baha'i people deserve no less.