

care and a full market basket update for hospitals. Over 120 of my colleagues joined me in that effort.

I urge my colleagues to continue to back this provision in the final version of the bill and show support for our hospitals by its passage.

IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 253

(Mr. BLUMENAUER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today on the suspension calendar H.R. 253, the Two Floods bill, is an opportunity to reauthorize and reform America's flood insurance program. It is a great opportunity to build on the legacy of the late Hale Boggs from Louisiana who helped create the program because he understood how important it was to a State like his.

The bill passed out of the Committee on Financial Services with a unanimous vote, broad support from bankers, realtors, environmentalists. With the help of the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER), we assure that the special needs of flood-prone areas are met, that we help people move their homes out of harm's way, that there is more assistance for the States with the biggest problems, and it will reduce the premium pressure, saving money for 4½ million policyholders. Last, but by no means least, these reforms will ultimately mean significant savings in disaster relief costs for the Federal Government.

One percent of the property should not require 25 percent of the loss costs for the entire country. This Bill is a win-win for the economy, for people moved out of harm's way, and for the environment. I urge my colleagues to carefully consider it as it comes forward later today.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S TRIP TO GREAT BRITAIN

(Mr. MCDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, King George II's return to Great Britain reminds me of the return of Richard the Lionheart from the Crusades. The President is coming back to England. He says he is going to meet with the families of the bereaved from 9/11. Apparently, he does not know that 400 people have died in the United States in their service in Iraq. He has never seen fit to meet with them.

In less than 1 year, we have lost more people in Iraq than we lost in 3 years in the Vietnam War. But the President has a secret plan he is now revealing. His secret plan is that he is going to declare victory and have the troops out by June 1.

Mr. Speaker, this President is leading us over the cliff with no respect for the people that he has put in harm's way. He ought to come up to Walter

Reed and visit the wounded and then go out and visit some of the families that have lost people in Iraq. To do less than that is to ignore the sacrifice they have made.

MEDICARE: INDIGENT CARE

(Mr. PEARCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 1.

One of the important provisions in this bill is reimbursement for States and counties that are required to treat illegal immigrants through the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act. This unfunded mandate is breaking the hospitals in my district.

As a border State, we constantly incur costs on our counties that are mandated by the Federal Government but never reimbursed. By Federal law, hospitals must treat any person, regardless of citizenship, in need of medical attention. If the person is a United States citizen, Medicare or Medicaid pays for the treatment, but there is no reimbursement for illegal immigrants. Border hospitals are caving under these costs of providing care daily for illegal immigrants who have no insurance and no ability to pay.

For example, Luna County in my district is often expected to pay for Mexican citizens to be picked up at the border, taken to a hospital and treated, and then returned to the border. Taxpayers are footing the bill for indigent care. This provision ensures that counties and States will receive the money in return for the services the Federal Government requires them to provide.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, over the next couple of days, in a very rushed and possibly confused effort, this body will bring to the floor a Medicare bill. When we talk to our seniors across the Nation, they believe that this is in response to their desire to have a real, guaranteed Medicare prescription drug benefit. But, Mr. Speaker, what has happened was a closed-door conference with no participation of Democrats, and I want to be convinced that we have something that will help all of our seniors. We have got privatization of Medicare, vouchers for Medicare, big money for pharmaceutical companies, and no guaranteed prescription drug benefit.

President Johnson went out on a limb in 1965 with hardly any Republican support and gave a lifespans to our seniors that they could never imagine. Shame on this body. Shame on the other body if they take this oppor-

tunity to destroy Medicare as we know it and as it can be a better entity for all. Let us get to work as a bipartisan House, two Chambers, producing something that really means a vital lifeline to our seniors.

H.R. 1 CONFERENCE REPORT AND THE AARP

(Ms. WOOLSEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my profound disappointment with the squandered opportunity we have right now, an opportunity to provide our seniors with the prescription drug coverage they need and they deserve.

But I am just as concerned about the decision made by AARP, the American Association of Retired People, to endorse these misguided policies. I have long been proud of my membership in AARP, but now they have sold out seniors. Now I understand why AARP no longer stands for American Association of Retired People. Perhaps they would like to be known as the American Association of the Republican Party. They no longer represent retirees. They are more concerned about the interests of large drug companies.

I want no part of an organization that is willing to sacrifice its principles for short-term political gain or favors from the majority party, and neither do more than 65 of my colleagues. Today we will surrender our AARP membership, and I urge all of my colleagues who truly care about the needs of seniors to do the same.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAW). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE REGARDING COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP OF UNIFIED BUDDHIST CHURCH OF VIETNAM

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 427) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding the courageous leadership of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and the urgent need for religious freedom and related human rights in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 427

Whereas Buddhism has a 2,000-year tradition in Vietnam and the Unified Buddhist

Church of Vietnam (UBCV) is an heir to this tradition;

Whereas the Government of Vietnam in 1981 declared the UBCV, one of the largest religious denominations in the country, illegal, confiscated its temples, and persecuted its clergy for refusing to join the state-sponsored Buddhist organizations;

Whereas the Government of Vietnam has often imprisoned UBCV clergy and subjected them to other forms of persecution; the Patriarch of the UBCV, the 85-year-old Most Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, has been detained and restrained for more than 2 decades in isolated areas of Vietnam;

Whereas the Vietnamese Government has held the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, the Executive President of the UBCV and his deputy, the Venerable Thich Tue Sy, in various forms of detention since 1977;

Whereas the Very Venerable Thich Thien Minh, Supreme Counselor of the UBCV, was tortured to death in a reeducation camp in 1978;

Whereas many other leading UBCV figures, including Thich Thien Hanh, Thich Phuoc An, Thich Dong Tho, Thich Vien Dinh, Thich Thai Hoa, Thich Nguyen Ly, Thich Thanh Huyen, Thich Khong Tanh, Thich Phuoc Vien, Thich Hai Tang, Thich Dong Tho, Thich Nguyen Vuong, Thich Chi Mau, Thich Chi Thang, and Thich Thanh Quang have been detained, harassed, and under tight surveillance;

Whereas several members of the UBCV have fled to Cambodia to escape religious repression and harassment;

Whereas Pham Van Tuong, formerly known as Thich Tri Luc, disappeared from Cambodia in July 2002 after being given refugee status by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and has since been discovered to be in custody in Vietnam, where he is reportedly charged with the vague crime of "fleeing abroad or defecting overseas with the intent to oppose the people's administration," which carries a possible sentence of life imprisonment;

Whereas Vietnam has acceded to international covenants and treaties that prohibit the forced repatriation of UNHCR-recognized refugees;

Whereas Vietnam has acceded to international covenants and treaties that protect the right to faith, belief, and practice;

Whereas Vietnam's constitution protects the right of religious belief;

Whereas in a show of religious tolerance, the Vietnamese Government in April 2003 allowed the Most Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, the Fourth Supreme Patriarch of the UBCV, to receive urgent medical care in Hanoi;

Whereas at that time, Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai met with Venerable Thich Huyen Quang and assured him that his and Venerable Thich Quang Do's detention were mistakes by local officials and that he hoped they would extend Buddhist forgiveness toward past actions of the government;

Whereas in June 2003, the Vietnamese Government ended the detention order against Venerable Thich Quang Do, the Executive President of the UBCV;

Whereas in September and October 2003, the UBCV held a meeting in Nguyen Thieu Pagoda in Binh Dinh province to discuss church affairs, choose a new leadership which had been vacant for a decade, and verify Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai's promise of a new era of understanding and respect;

Whereas Vietnamese authorities attempted to disrupt these gatherings by restricting the travel of monks from other provinces and then intimidating those attending;

Whereas on October 8, 2003, Vietnamese authorities initiated a tense standoff following the meeting, where police stopped a vehicle carrying the UBCV's new leadership and subsequently detained the eleven passengers;

Whereas Venerables Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do were taken to their respective pagodas where they have been effectively isolated and detained; four senior monks, the Venerable Thich Tue Sy, Thich Thanh Huyen, Thich Nguyen Ly, and the UBCV Supreme Patriarch's personal assistant, Venerable Thich Dong Tho, were immediately sentenced to 24 months of administrative detention by written orders of the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee, and three others, the Venerables Thich Thien Hanh, Thich Thai Hoa, and Thich Nguyen Vuong to 24 months administrative detention by "oral" orders from various local authorities, in protest of which the Venerable Thich Thien Hanh initiated a hunger strike on October 19, 2003;

Whereas according to reports by the United States State Department, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, and the European Union, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam systematically limits the right of religious organizations to choose their own clergy;

Whereas according to these same reports, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam uses house arrest and long prison sentences to punish individuals for practicing their faith, as evidenced also by the jail sentences handed down to Father Nguyen Van Ly, his three relatives, Montagnard and Hmong Protestants, Cao Dai, and Hoa Hao Buddhists;

Whereas during the 107th Congress the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2833, the Vietnam Human Rights Act, on September 6, 2001, which noted the persecutions faced by various members of the UBCV over the past 25 years; and

Whereas because of systematic, egregious, and ongoing abuses of religious freedom, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended that the President of the United States designate Vietnam as a "country of particular concern" under the provisions of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) congratulates the new leadership of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam;

(2) urges the Government of Vietnam to respect the right of all independent religious organizations to meet, worship, operate, and practice their faith in accordance with Vietnam's own constitution and international covenants to which Vietnam is a signatory;

(3) urges the Government of Vietnam to restore freedom to all Vietnamese citizens imprisoned or under house arrest for practicing their faith or for advocating freedom of religion, especially the Most Venerable Thich Huyen Quang and the Very Venerable Thich Quang Do;

(4) is committed to promoting religious freedom in Vietnam, and, in furtherance of this goal, urges the implementation of the recommendations of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom; and

(5) urges the United States Embassy in Vietnam to closely monitor cases of abuse of religious belief and practice, routinely visit detained clergy members, especially those in need of medical care, and report to the Congress on specific measures taken to protect and promote religious freedom in Vietnam.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) and the gentleman

from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

I rise in support of H. Res. 427 regarding the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam. This resolution congratulates the newly appointed leadership of this Buddhist Church and notes the persecutions faced by the church during the past 3 decades and urges the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to comply with its own constitutional and international pledges to protect rights of religious belief and practice.

According to the State Department, the Vietnamese government "continues to maintain broad legal and policy restrictions on religious freedom and to ban and actively discourage participation in what it regards as illegal religious groups, including the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam." The most recent Country Reports on Human Rights Practices notes that religious and organizational activities by Buddhist monks associated with this church are illegal and that all of this Buddhist church's activities outside of private temple worship have been proscribed by the government.

The plight of the Unified Buddhist Church is perhaps most poignantly symbolized by the enforced isolation endured by some of its senior clerics over the past 2½ decades, notwithstanding their advanced age and sometimes frail health. Inspired by their examples of nonviolence and courage, we reaffirm our belief in the rights of all people to worship and to organize their religious communities according to the dictates of conscience, free from state coercion.

At the same time, it is important to note that H. Res. 427 is not merely critical of past transgressions. It is also aspirational. In addition to citing the Constitution of Vietnam, which formally protects religious freedom of belief, it notes certain extremely modest but welcome developments earlier this year.

This past spring the Vietnamese government allowed the Fourth Supreme Patriarch of the Buddhist Church to travel to Hanoi to seek urgent medical care and also ended the long-standing detention ordered against the Venerable Thich Quang Do. During that period the Vietnamese Prime Minister reportedly met with the Supreme Patriarch and made statements that some

hoped would presage an era of increased governmental openness towards the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam.

Unfortunately, those statements have not yet borne practical dividends, and just last month there were indications of a renewed crackdown in the Buddhist leadership, including the return of numerous senior clerics to effective detention. At a time when Vietnam is admittedly undergoing many transformations that are progressive, we urge the government of that nation to trust its citizens with the basic freedoms that they deserve.

I would like to thank the personnel of the United States Department of State and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom who worked with our committee staff and with the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ), the sponsor, to update and refine the language of the original resolution. The text before us is a thoughtful, accurate product that deserves the support of this body.

Mr. Speaker I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise in strong support of this resolution.

□ 1030

Mr. Speaker, I first would like to commend my good friend and colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ) for introducing this important and timely resolution. I would also like to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman HYDE) for moving this legislation to the floor so expeditiously.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution before the House tackles a critically important human rights matter: the continued oppression of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and the lack of religious freedom in that country. For most of the last two millennia, Buddhism flourished in Vietnam. But in 1981, the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam was declared illegal, its temples were confiscated by the government, its clergy was persecuted because they refused to join State-sponsored Buddhist organizations.

Leading figures in the Buddhist Church have been jailed, detained in isolated areas, harassed, and kept under constant surveillance. The Vietnamese government has systematically prevented Buddhist monks from meeting and worshipping as they choose.

The Vietnamese government's campaign of repression against key religious figures and organizations has been strongly criticized by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, an organization which we will be soon commending this morning. Our President has designated Vietnam "as a country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution urges the government of Vietnam to respect

the right of all religious organizations to meet, to worship, to operate, and to practice their faith in accordance with Vietnam's own Constitution and international covenants to which Vietnam is a signatory. We cannot have truly normal relations with Vietnam until the Vietnamese government finally lives up to its obligations to protect religious freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

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

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

Mr. LANTOS. In that case, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ), the author of this resolution.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) for bringing this to the floor, and I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman HYDE).

Mr. Speaker, I represent the largest Vietnamese population outside of Vietnam in the world, in Orange County, California, so I have been following the relationship of the United States and Vietnam for the last 7 years that I have been in the Congress. I rise today to speak on behalf of House Resolution 427, a bipartisan resolution which highlights the courageous leadership of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, which is currently undergoing one of the harshest crackdowns in history, and the urgent need for religious freedom, and for basic human rights in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

This resolution, which I introduced with my colleagues, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN), and the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) is timely, important, and will do a great deal to advance the cause of religious freedom in Vietnam.

Now, many of my colleagues will say, well, LORETTA has opposed trade relations with Vietnam, or there has always been a difficult relationship with Vietnam, and the answer is yes, but that is in the past. This is about the current situation, and the current situation is about religious freedom, or the ability for the Vietnamese people to express their religious beliefs in the way that they want.

Let us remember that the United States was based in part on those people who came to this land to seek their way of respecting and praising their Lord. And, in the same way, that is a basic human right for all people of the world.

Despite the growing bilateral and economic relations that the United States has with Vietnam, the Vietnamese government has continued to blatantly disregard religious freedom in Vietnam. It is a basic right guaran-

teed by the Vietnamese constitution and enshrined in the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Vietnam has both ratified and has pledged to uphold. According to the 2003 report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, the Vietnamese government does not, does not fully support religious freedom. I would like to quote some of the statements from that report.

It says, "The current approach of the U.S. Government to advance religious freedom in Vietnam has failed to yield concrete results. Key religious dissidents have been imprisoned. Others remain under house arrest. In addition, the government has intensified its crackdown on religious minorities in the western provinces and in the Central Highlands."

The report goes on to state that "Therefore, the Commission recommends that the United States Government intensify its leverage to hold the government of Vietnam to its international obligation to protect human rights, including that of religious freedom."

This resolution does just that.

The latest incident, which occurred just this year, the one with the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, the largest religious denomination in that country, was because they held a meeting to elect new leadership, discuss their future, and to verify that the Prime Minister of Vietnam had promised a new era of understanding and respect. In stark contrast to that promise of respect and understanding, the Vietnamese authorities disrupted that meeting, intimidated the people at that meeting, and ultimately arrested most of the leadership.

The Venerables Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do were taken into custody and remain in detainment. Now, one of them is 75 years old. I have met with him in Vietnam. He is not a menace to society. In fact, he was nominated by over 60 Members of Congress in the year 2000 for the Noble Peace Prize. He has about 2 decades worth of arrests from this current government.

These actions are unconscionable but, unfortunately, they are nothing new. The Vietnamese government has routinely used intimidation, harassment, and imprisonment to punish individuals who choose to practice their own faith.

I recently spoke with a high-ranking Vietnamese official regarding the crackdown on the church, and about religious freedom in Vietnam in general, and he said, of course Vietnam supports religious freedom, but he failed to deny that, in fact, they have imprisoned the leadership of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam.

I was informed that if these leaders want to practice their faith, they are more than welcome to do so as members of the State-authorized Buddhist Church. Having the option of joining only one State-sponsored Buddhist

Church is a far cry, in my opinion, of religious freedom. And enduring decades of imprisonment for peacefully practicing one's faith is not religious freedom. Vietnam has a long way to go.

So, in closing, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution. Doing so will not only send a strong message to the Vietnamese government that its actions are not going unnoticed, but it will reinforce the human rights standards that we expect of Vietnam as we move forward in strengthening our bilateral relationship with them.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the gentlewoman from California for her wonderful leadership on this initiative and also that of her colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS).

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS).

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, let me just say it is a pleasure to follow my friend and colleague from California, and I have enjoyed working with her on these issues and the leadership she has given to the human rights issues in Vietnam.

I rise in support of H. Res. 427, a resolution to that congratulates the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam for its courageous leadership and calls for religious freedom and related human rights in Vietnam.

Mr. Speaker, Vietnam's constitution protects the rights of religious belief, and the Vietnamese government has acceded to a number of international treaties to protect the right to faith and practice. Buddhism has a 2,000 year history in Vietnam, and the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam is an important part of this tradition. Yet, in 1981, the Vietnamese government outlawed the UBCV, the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, and has since detained and harassed many of its clergy members and subjected them to other forms of persecution.

Earlier this year, the Vietnamese Prime Minister met with the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, the Supreme Patriarch of the Unified Church of Vietnam, and assured him that previous arrests were mistakes and that the government would respect and honor religious freedom. But despite these promises, the Vietnamese government arrested members this past September after they held a meeting to discuss church matters and elect new leadership.

The punishment by Vietnamese authorities of individuals who practice their religious faith or exert other basic human rights are not uncommon in Vietnam. In addition to the arrests of the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do and other members of the UBCV, the Vietnamese government has imprisoned father Nguyen Huu Le, Dr. Nguyen Dan Que, Father Van Ly and three of his relatives, and many other individuals for practicing their faiths and for promoting human rights in Vietnam.

As the United States continues to establish diplomatic and economic relationships with Vietnam, we have to remember that many of the most basic issues remain unresolved, including the lack of religious freedom and related human rights violations. House Resolution 427 sends a clear signal that we will not tolerate these violations.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the new leadership of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, and I urge my colleagues to vote in support of this bipartisan resolution.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN), a distinguished member of the California delegation.

(Ms. LOFGREN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LOFGREN. I look forward to the day, Mr. Speaker, when we no longer need to introduce resolutions condemning the Vietnamese government for human rights violations.

Unfortunately, I see no sign of change in Vietnam. The Vietnamese government continues to systematically violate the human rights of its citizens through political, cultural, and religious oppression. In fact, it seems that things have gotten worse in recent years, despite our attempts to build Normal Trade Relations with Vietnam.

Just last month, the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam held two peaceful assemblies to discuss church affairs and elect new leadership following promises of a new era of "respect and understanding for religious freedom" by the Vietnamese Prime Minister. In stark contrast to this promise of "respect and understanding," the Vietnamese Security Police intercepted the church leadership. After a tense 10-hour standoff, 11 monks were arrested and placed under administrative detention. The Buddhist Church's Patriarch, Thich Huyen Quang, 86 years old, and his deputy, Noble Peace Prize nominee Thich Quang do, 75 years old, are currently being held in total isolation.

According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, this is pretty much the norm in Vietnam. They say "key religious dissidents have been imprisoned, and others remain in detention or under house arrest." They have reports of 18 Buddhists in prison or under house arrest, and 20 UBCV in detention or reeducation camps.

My colleagues and I have repeatedly sent letters to the Vietnamese government asking them to release prisoners of conscience and to refrain from various forms of political, religious, and cultural oppression. The vast majority of these requests seem to fall on deaf ears, like our recent letter regarding the arrest of the 86-year-old Buddhist leader and his 75-year-old deputy. This is unacceptable.

So today I rise with my colleagues in very strong support of this resolution.

We cannot sit idly by as the Vietnamese government continues to oppress its people while hiding behind the veil of free trade. As long as the people of Vietnam are oppressed, our government cannot relax, even if there are strategic military interests and a strong relationship with Vietnam. Our interests must include human rights and now is the time to act.

The whole world is watching and we will not cease until we see improvements in Vietnam.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to our distinguished colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE).

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support as a cosponsor of this legislation. Of course, the focus here is to spotlight the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and the treatment that it has been receiving at the hands of the government of North Vietnam, that Communist government that now, for over 20 years, for 20 years have been trying to suppress the Buddhist Church, and that church has simply been fighting to practice their religion peacefully.

□ 1045

The difficulties commenced in 1981 when the government declared the Buddhist Church, and this is the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, they declared it illegal. They confiscated the temples of the Buddhist Church. They began persecuting the clergy if that clergy did not join up with Communist organizations, state-sponsored Buddhist organizations.

When I visited Vietnam, I saw firsthand the Communist Party's harassment of those Vietnamese citizens who decided to peacefully set forth dissenting political views, dissenting religious views. I met with several of them who were under house arrest. In particular, the Venerable Thich Quang Do and the Venerable Le Quang Liem. The reason they were under house arrest was simply because they were protesting a rewrite of the holy books, of the Buddhist holy books, holy works. The Communist Party had attempted to slash 80 or 90 percent of those works, and instead resubstitute and rewrite a culture that goes back thousands and thousands of years. And, of course, the laity and the leadership of the church took great umbrage at this and simply asked that they be allowed to practice their religion.

Well, in June of this year when the Vietnamese government ended the detention order against Thich Quang Do, we were all quite hopeful. However, our hopes were quickly dashed when last month the Buddhist Church's meetings were disrupted and the travel of monks was restricted and, again, some were arrested.

Today we are here to say as the United States Congress that we are not satisfied with the state of human rights in Vietnam and that the United States has a strong interest in promoting respect for individual rights

around the world. The U.S. must be a strong advocate of human rights, particularly when basic freedoms are being wantonly abused as they are in Vietnam.

We must continue to shine a light on Vietnam. I urge the passage of this resolution. I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 427, which recognizes the courageous leadership of the Unified Buddhist Church in Vietnam and stresses the urgent need for the government of the Republic of Vietnam to respect religious freedom and basic human rights. I thank the gentleman from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ) for offering it today.

Mr. Speaker, Vietnam's oppression of religious liberty, which is well documented in the State Department Reports on Human Rights and Religious Freedom, as well as by credible human rights organizations, continues to deteriorate. This is a regime with clear non-ambiguous policies designed to control and to repress religion. At its Seventh plenum in January 2003, the Communist Party's Central Committee stepped up its persecution of religious groups issuing a resolution which calls for the establishment of cells of Communist party members within each of Vietnam's six approved religions in order to foil "hostile forces."

Persecution of Buddhists highlighted in this resolution has been particularly harsh. Many leading clergy of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam have been imprisoned including the church's Patriarch, the Most Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, who is now 85 years old and has been detained for the past 21 years.

The government has continually attempted to control the selection of new clergy for the Unified Buddhist Church, restricting the travel of and intimidating monks attending selection meetings. We know that other groups suffer severe religious persecution as well, including the Christian Montagnards in the Central Highlands, Catholics and members of indigenous Vietnamese religions.

One particular case, Mr. Speaker, that has been disturbing, one of many, is that of Father Ly, an outspoken critic of the regime who is currently serving a 10-year sentence for calling on the government for the return of confiscated church properties and respect for religious freedom. Amazingly, his nephews, Nguyen Vu Viet and Nguyen Truc Cuong, and his niece, Nguyen Thi Hoa, recently received prison sentences after a sham trial, after being found guilty of dubious charges of "abusing democracy."

Next week, Mr. Speaker, the Vietnamese government has the chance to set the record straight when their appeal will be heard. They should be released. They have to be released along with Father Ly. And I think this Congress, the House and the Senate, needs to be watching very carefully if our relationship is to progress. We have to see significant and sustained progress on these cases and, of course, those with regards to the Unified Buddhist Church.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress has not been lax in trying to raise these issues, as I know my good friend and colleague Mr. LEACH knows because he has worked so strongly in this area. "I offered The Vietnam Human Rights Act" as an amendment to the State Department bill, which is now pending before the House and Senate. Similar legislation has already passed the House before and hopefully the session, the Vietnam Human Rights Act will become law. This legislation sets up a number of criteria that would seek to move the ball forward with regard to human rights, and in particular, the area of religious freedom.

Again, it is a good resolution that has been offered today and it deserves the honest support of this body.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his profound statement and for his leadership on so many human rights issues as well as the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS).

Mr. Speaker, I would only conclude with the observation that there are very important abstract principles at issue here but they are made concrete by references to individuals which the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) has just done. Individuals matter because it is with the individual that the picture at large can be revealed. So we care about the individuals in this particular instance as well as the principle of the freedom of religion.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I am opposed to this ill-conceived and ill-timed bill. I would like to remind my colleagues that according to our own Constitution, Congress is prohibited from making any law "respecting the establishment of religion or the free exercise thereof." Yet are we not doing that today—albeit in a country some 10,000 miles away? Why on earth are we commending one particular church in Vietnam in the name of "religious freedom"? At the risk of being blunt, what business is the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam of the United States Congress? The answer, of course, is that this legislation is of a much more political than a religious nature: this bill tells the Vietnamese government how it should enforce its own constitution, commits the United States government to promoting religious freedom in Vietnam, and tells the U.S. embassy staff in Vietnam to "closely monitor" religious issues in Vietnam. It is an attempt to meddle in the affairs of Vietnam and force them to adopt the kinds of laws we think they should have. Mr. Speaker, as much as we value our own religious liberty, we must real-

ize that setting the example of the benefits of a society that values such liberty is much more effective than demanding that other countries pass the kinds of laws we want them to pass. The unintended consequences of this otherwise well-meaning legislation is that relations with the Vietnamese government will likely suffer, making it less likely that Vietnam's leaders look favorably upon our own history of religious liberty.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAW). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 427, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

HONORING VICTIMS OF CAMBODIAN GENOCIDE THAT TOOK PLACE FROM APRIL 1975 TO JANUARY 1979

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 83) honoring the victims of the Cambodian genocide that took place from April 1975 to January 1979.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 83

Whereas beginning in April 1975 and ending in January 1979 at least 1,700,000 to 3,000,000 people were deliberately and systematically killed in Cambodia in one of the worst human tragedies of the modern era;

Whereas in 1975, Pol Pot led the Communist guerilla group, the Khmer Rouge, in a large-scale insurgency in Cambodia that resulted in the removal of Cambodians from their homes and into labor camps in an attempt to restructure Khmer society;

Whereas traditional Khmer culture and society were systematically destroyed, including the destruction of temples, schools, hospitals, and other buildings;

Whereas families were separated in an attempt by the Khmer Rouge to prevent family formation, many individuals were punished or killed for education, wealth, or sophistication, and doctors, nurses, clergy, teachers, business owners, artisans, city dwellers, and even those individuals who wore glasses were singled out for execution since they were seen as bourgeois or contaminated with Western influence;

Whereas the Khmer Rouge maintained control by mass public torture, executions, and dismantling of the social order;

Whereas men, women, and children were sent to labor camps and forced to do strenuous farm work and famine and disease became epidemic while medicine and medical care were non-existent;

Whereas after the Khmer Rouge regime was overthrown in 1979 thousands of Cambodians fled on foot to refugee camps in