

with intellectual disabilities enrolled in comprehensive programs on their campus.

Madam Chairman, I have seen firsthand how IDEA has benefited my own son, Alex, who is a student at Lakewood Elementary School in Dallas, Texas. Alex, who is 12 years old, has Downs Syndrome, and he has made significant academic progress and has been provided with many of the same educational opportunities as his peers as a result of IDEA. I know that IDEA will serve as an incredible opportunity for Alex throughout his K-12 education.

However, I also realize that IDEA will not be there to serve his needs after high school. Therefore, I am very pleased to stand here today in recognition of those colleges and universities who are filling the post-IDEA void for so many young Americans. I am proud to offer this amendment that will provide many young adults with intellectual disabilities the ability to access the vital postsecondary programs that lead to a very fulfilling life.

Madam Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. McKEON), the chairman of the committee.

Mr. McKEON. Madam Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding. And I want to thank him for his leadership on this issue. We have worked together on this issue before. I am getting toward the end of my life. I am a lot older than a lot of the people around here. But in my youth, I remember when families that had children with Downs Syndrome used to keep them out of sight. And we have made so much progress. And I have a nephew that has Downs Syndrome, and I see the love that he has brought into their family. He is 12 also. And to think that we have come so far and yet we have an opportunity to go further. And this amendment makes that possible. And I just want to thank the gentleman for his efforts in this, and on behalf of all children with Downs Syndrome to give them the opportunity to go as far as they can, because I think that is something that, again, improves and enhances the bill. And I appreciate the gentleman's efforts.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time, but I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to thank the gentleman for offering this amendment. I think it is an important addition to this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In addition to the chairman's remarks, I would like to add, if I could, that from time to time, my son, Alex, is on the floor of the House of Representatives, and I believe that Alex is a fine representation, as well as the Members of this body, who take time to recognize the individual and special talents that not only Alex possesses as a result of him being a young adult with Downs Syndrome, but also his love that he extends to people. And this body has always gone out of their way to express to Alex and make him feel like he was a part of this body also.

And I would thank the gentleman, both the gentlemen from California, not only for their agreement with this bill today, but also I think it extends the knowledge that this body has with the capacity to understand that thousands of other families that have their own Alex, that they, if their children have the ability to do something when they get out of high school, that there would be a program like this. And so I would like to thank the ranking member and the chairman of our committee.

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

The Acting CHAIRMAN. All time having expired, the question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. McKEON. Madam Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SESSIONS) having assumed the chair, Mrs. MILLER of Michigan, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 609) to amend and extend the Higher Education Act of 1965, had come to no resolution thereon.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER of Michigan). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on the motion 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.

Any record vote on the postponed question will be taken later today.

#### EXPRESSING SENSE OF THE HOUSE REGARDING RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 736) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that legal action in Afghanistan against citizens who have already converted or plan to convert to other religions is deplorable and unjust.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 736

Whereas the United States, at great cost in blood and treasure, helped the people of Afghanistan liberate themselves from the tyranny of the Taliban and adopt free institutions and practices, including respect for rule of law and internationally recognized human rights;

Whereas the preamble of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan affirms that the people of Afghanistan are "for creation of a civil society free of oppression, atrocity, discrimination, and violence and based on the rule of law, social justice, protection of human rights, and dignity, and ensuring the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people";

Whereas Article 7 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan provides that "the state shall observe the United Nations Charter, inter-state agreements, as well as international treaties to which Afghanistan has joined, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," which includes the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion and the freedom to change one's religion or belief;

Whereas Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Afghanistan has acceded, provides that "[e]veryone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion . . . [t]his right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching"; and

Whereas the President of the United States has expressed his concern about the Abdul Rahman apostasy case, stating that "[i]t is deeply troubling that a country we helped liberate would hold a person to account, because they chose a particular religion over another": Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the enforcement of laws against apostasy;

(2) requests the President to continue to work with the Government of Afghanistan to establish better protections for religious minorities, including converts to minority religions, and to enhance human rights protections in Afghanistan; and

(3) calls upon the Government of Afghanistan, and especially President Hamid Karzai, to continue to conform Afghan laws to Afghanistan's international human rights treaty obligations, thereby protecting Afghan citizens who have converted or plan to convert to other religions from prosecution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days 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 Indiana?

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, we come into this Chamber fresh back to work from a March recess period where Members of Congress, like millions of Americans, reeled from a story emerging from our new cherished ally, Afghanistan. It was a story that was deeply disturbing to average Americans, and even using that phrase himself, to the President of the United States of America. It was the story of a man who was facing the death penalty merely for the reason that he had converted from Islam to Christianity, and he was facing prosecution and possible execution in a nation that the American soldiers and the American people had liberated and continue to liberate in Operation Enduring Freedom.

It is about this case that, while it is resolved, still raises profound and important questions that we gather here today and bring this resolution before the Congress.

Madam Speaker, I am also very humbled today by the support of the distinguished chairman of the International Relations Committee, who gave me the privilege of managing the time today on this resolution. There has been no stronger voice for human rights and religious liberty in the world in this Congress throughout his career than Chairman Henry Hyde, and I am honored to stand in his stead today.

I am also deeply humbled by the active participation, both in this debate today and in the development of this resolution, of the ranking member of the House International Relations Committee, a man I have come to deeply admire for his passion for human rights, human dignity and religious freedom and all of the Bill of Rights liberties that we cherish being manifest around the globe, Mr. LANTOS from California. The support of these two giants of this institution, along with the support of a number of our other co-sponsors, highlights the importance of this debate that we undertake today. For while in the case of Abdul Rahman, this man has been freed under circumstances that still remain somewhat opaque to the American public at this hour, while Abdul Rahman has been freed, the freedom of religion is still behind bars in Afghanistan. And so today, Madam Speaker, in H. Res. 736, this Congress, through its Members, and the American people, will condemn in the strongest terms the enforcement of laws against apostasy.

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We will request the President to continue to work with the Government of Afghanistan to establish better protections for religious minorities, including converts to minority religions, and to enhance human rights protections in Afghanistan. And we also will respectfully call on the Government of Afghanistan and especially President Hamid Karzai to continue to conform all Afghan laws at every level to Afghanistan's international human rights treaty obligations, thereby protecting

Afghan citizens who have converted or may plan to convert to other religions from prosecution.

This is an important moment. It is an important dialogue, and I am grateful to have played some small role in it.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise in strong support of this resolution. I would first like to thank my good friend and distinguished colleague, Congressman PENCE of Indiana, for introducing this critically important resolution. This is in line with his longstanding commitment to religious freedom and human rights across the globe.

I would also like to commend my friend and a champion for international religious freedom, HENRY HYDE, chairman of the House International Relations Committee, for joining us in support of this measure.

Madam Speaker, as we have turned on the evening news in recent weeks, we have been riveted by the shocking case of an Afghan citizen, Mr. Abdul Rahman, facing the death penalty for converting to Christianity. Along with my colleagues in Congress and leaders of several NATO countries, I expressed outrage that while soldiers from the United States and other NATO allies are dying in defense of a free Afghanistan, that country's government would be seeking to prosecute an Afghan citizen for acting on his inalienable right as a free human being to choose his own religion. His case was made all the more absurd because he converted well before this new government even existed.

Madam Speaker, tolerance and freedom of worship are the sine qua non of democracy. They are key principles in the protection of human rights, which must be embraced by every democratic, pluralistic government, including the Government of Afghanistan. Indeed, Madam Speaker, the founding of our own Nation and the efforts to create a more free and open society began with members of oppressed religious minorities in Europe yearning to worship as they saw fit.

Afghan authorities resolved this case by claiming that Mr. Rahman was mentally unfit and therefore was unable to stand trial. Unfortunately, this approach is totally unacceptable because what we have here is a generic, long-term problem. It is reasonable to believe that there will be other religious converts in Afghanistan, and it would be unacceptable to assume that they are all mentally unfit and need special treatment.

Madam Speaker, earlier today in a testament to its commitment to international religious freedom, the Government of Italy agreed to grant asylum to Mr. Rahman, and I understand that he has now arrived in Italy. I applaud the Government of Italy for this hu-

manitarian gesture and for their support of international human rights.

But while Mr. Rahman's case may have come to closure, the broader issue remains. Afghanistan must live up to its own constitution which provides for the protection of religious freedom, and it is the duty of the United States, our NATO allies, and the entire international community to help Afghanistan establish better protections for religious minorities, including converts, and to enhance human rights protections for all the citizens of Afghanistan.

The United States and our friends around the globe are not sacrificing hundreds of our soldiers and committing hundreds of billions of dollars of our resources so that Afghanistan could revert to the days of the Taliban.

As the lead Democratic sponsor of this resolution, I strongly urge all of my colleagues in both political parties to support this resolution.

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

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

Madam Speaker, Congressman TOM LANTOS is a tough act to follow, and I am tempted sorely to say amen and yield back. But I will share a few brief observations on H. Res. 736.

I had the honor of traveling as an American Congressman to Afghanistan in December of 2004. Prior to my departure, I was eager to see this newly minted democracy, a democracy won by the bravery of the American soldier and coalition forces, and to meet the people of Afghanistan, to see the good work being done by their people in Kabul and beyond.

During that visit, I had the honor of meeting privately with President Hamid Karzai. He is an affable, approachable, and humble man whom I came to view, as many others have, as the indispensable man of this new, democratic Afghanistan. President Karzai proved his worth again when, as a direct result of his intervention, justice was brought to the case about which we gather today, when Abdul Rahman was released from prison. But while I am relieved that by virtue of President Karzai's personal engagement Abdul Rahman has been freed, religious freedom in Afghanistan is still behind bars.

The American people today have the luxury of looking upon recent events in Afghanistan through the eyes of people far removed from the volatile days of the beginning of our own Republic, and we must be careful what prism we look through when we seek to remove the speck from our neighbor's eye. We are far removed from the events unfolding over 3 years following ratification of the U.S. Constitution, the establishment of protections under our own Bill of Rights.

Unlike the American people today, President Karzai and the people of Afghanistan find themselves at the very beginning of a long and arduous journey of democracy, a democracy within

which I fear the value of religious freedom is still suspect by many and the protections of religious freedom are still vague. And I want to acknowledge that and acknowledge that about which we speak today; we speak with charity to a fledgling democracy that we are anxious to support.

But, Madam Speaker, when the Loya Jirga in Afghanistan approved the constitution, they were explicit in stating, as Mr. LANTOS just observed, basic human rights protections. And as stated in this resolution, the constitution of Afghanistan "affirms that the people of Afghanistan are 'for creation of a civil society free of oppression, atrocity, discrimination, and violence and based on the rule of law, social justice, protection of human rights, and dignity, and ensuring the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people.'" So reads the constitution of Afghanistan.

Article 7 of that same constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan provides "the state shall observe the United Nations Charter, interstate agreements, as well as international treaties to which Afghanistan has joined, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," which does, I might add, Madam Speaker, include the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion and even the freedom to change one's own religion or belief.

Like House Resolution 736 says, today the Congress will call upon the Government of Afghanistan, and especially President Karzai, to continue the good work of conforming Afghanistan's laws to Afghanistan's international human rights treaty obligations, thereby protecting their citizens who have made a decision of conscience, a decision of the heart as between one religion or another, to be free from prosecution.

Madam Speaker, I implore respectfully the people of Afghanistan to continue to work through this difficult issue. It is a process through which our Nation worked for 200 years before our Nation was founded; and our struggle toward a more perfect Union remains the ongoing American struggle. Vigorous debate is important within a democracy, but recognition of fundamental, inalienable rights, especially the right to freedom of conscience and freedom of thought, is the wellspring of every other liberty.

Like many Americans fearful of the dangerous chain of events a case like Abdul Rahman's could unfurl, I see religious freedom as a clear, inalienable right and a right that is key to their success and the successful relationship between our two countries.

Thomas Paine said it well, "That which we obtain too easily we esteem too lightly."

I do not believe that the people of Afghanistan attained democracy too easily, and I do not suggest in this resolution that they take it too lightly. I believe the Afghan people have fought long and hard and at extraordinary personal cost in decades of struggle for

their own freedom and independence. This is why I strongly believe that they should fight even more fervently to protect the rights and freedoms that so many Afghans have died before experiencing.

Madam Speaker, those who die in the cause of freedom never die in vain, for they light the flame of freedom and instill its care to generations that follow. This generation of the people of Afghanistan is a noble generation, a generation of opportunity, and they have a solemn duty of fanning the flame by protecting the fundamental rights of their country like the freedom to believe and practice a religion of one's own choosing.

Madam Speaker, in this resolution, it is my hope that we would not send a message of condemnation but a clear message that, despite the grave concerns the American people have raised, seeking protections for religious minorities, the American people still remain committed to working in partnership and solidarity with President Karzai and the people of Afghanistan as they bring about a more perfect union for their people, a union that reflects the fundamental liberties for which the American soldier and coalition forces fought in tandem with freedom-loving people in Afghanistan to win. And it is in that spirit that we bring this resolution today.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I commend President Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Afghan President Karzai for their quick and decisive action to save the life of Afghani Christian convert Abdul Rahman. I wish to extend my thanks to my fellow Congressmen, fellow Americans and other members of the world community who rose up to demand that the travesty of Abdul Rahman's trial and near certain death for apostasy be stopped. The actions, and the prayers, of millions helped save an innocent man and demonstrate that the world community will not tolerate such offenses against freedom of conscience.

We all dodged a bullet in Afghanistan. But the problem is not just Afghanistan, and the ultimate solution is not simply granting asylum for yet another refugee of conscience. The problem is the increased number, and increasing attempts to enforce, laws and statutes against conversion in many countries of the world, not just Afghanistan. This freedom of thought, conscience and belief is now threatened not only in places like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iraq. It is also threatened in countries such as Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia, where religious pluralism has long been established. It is threatened in countries like Russia and Belarus, where minority religions are denounced as "non-traditional" and suffer harassment and discrimination.

Freedom of religion is founded on the inherent dignity of every individual. It is a right that is not granted at the whim of governments. Freedom of religion does not mean permission for an individual to follow the religion of his ancestors, and no other. It does not mean that only established religions have the right to exist and be practiced freely. It means, rather, that:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right

includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

This is not an "American point of view." This is not a "Western point of view." This is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is fully confirmed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Afghanistan has acceded.

Today's resolution condemns the enforcement of laws against apostasy. I would go further: we must condemn not just the enforcement, but the very existence of such laws. Whether enforced or not, they are an ever present threat to all believers, an ever present reminder that those who believe differently are second class citizens. They are a continuing denial of the principal of individual human dignity and freedom.

And I call upon the President to work not just with the government of Afghanistan to enhance human rights protection and religious freedom, but also with Iraq. Last year I and my colleagues pointed out that the new Iraqi Constitution also contains language which endangers individual freedom, especially religious freedom and the rights of women. The Iraqi Parliament now must adopt crucial implementing legislation for the Constitution. We must ensure that such legislation effectively protects individual freedom and freedom of conscience. Otherwise we may see countless repetitions of the appalling drama that has just been completed in Afghanistan.

I also call upon the President to work with Sri Lanka, whose government has pandered to religious extremists by introducing anticonversion laws. Sri Lanka is a recipient of Millennium Challenge grants, which are premised on progress in democracy and rule of law, not regress.

Finally, I call upon my colleagues to support this important resolution.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER of Michigan). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 736.

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. Madam 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 question will be postponed.

#### MOTION TO INSTRUCT CONFEREES ON H.R. 4297, TAX RELIEF EXTENSION RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I offer a motion to instruct.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Rangel moves that the managers on the part of the House at the conference on