

As the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, I understand personally how important Israel is for all Jews everywhere. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared independence, providing a new safe haven for Holocaust survivors and for Diaspora Jews before and since the Holocaust, who experienced a millennium of anti-Semitism.

In honor of Israeli Independence Day and in recognition of the close relationship between Israel and the United States, we will continue to work with our trusted ally to pursue a secure and peaceful Middle East, assuring liberty, economic prosperity, and security for Israel and its neighbors. While Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran threaten this security with words and missiles, the U.S. Congress stands committed to work towards a secure Israel where all of its citizens can live, prosper, and dream in security.

In its 62 years of nationhood, Israel exemplifies freedom, opportunity, and democratic values. Its unfettered elections, transparent press, and vital economy distinguish it as a leader in the Middle East. It is our closest ally in the region. As such, I welcome the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate its independence and our shared efforts to ensure its safe and secure future.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. BERKLEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KLEIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support House Concurrent Resolution 260 and acknowledge both the sacrifices and the celebrations of the Israeli people on their Independence Day, Yom Ha'atzmaut.

Sixty-two years ago, the founders of the Jewish state gathered together in Tel Aviv to declare: "Exiled from the land of Israel, the Jewish people remain faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and the restoration of their national freedom."

In every turn of Jewish history, expulsion after expulsion, pogrom after pogrom, the vision and the dream of the return to Israel would keep the Jewish people going. It was this hope that fueled the establishment of the state of Israel, and through every battle and every war, the words of the Israeli Proclamation of Independence

continued to hold true. The people of Israel's connection to the land keeps them faithful to the ideals of the state that was established 62 years ago.

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I feel this commitment every time I visit Israel and see the unshakeable dedication to improving the Jewish homeland. Since its founding 62 years ago, Israel has become a modern state, a beacon of democracy, and a hub of technological advancement. And the world has benefited from Israel's contributions.

Israel is the world's largest per capita user of solar water heaters in their homes. Israel will be launching the world's first electric car network throughout the country, reducing their dependence on foreign oil, and serving as a model to the rest of the world. Israel's experience on the front lines of terrorism have allowed them to use their first responder skills when humanitarian crises occur around the world, not just in Israel. Just a few months ago, Israel dispatched a team to Haiti, setting up a field hospital, delivering medical care, and saving lives. They were the first ones on the ground.

Finally, Israel has taken painful steps toward peace, making sacrifices, sometimes unilaterally, toward the goal of reaching an agreement with its Arab neighbors. Israelis live under constant threat from Hamas's barrage of rocket attacks from Gaza, from the dangerous and genocidal words of a dictator in Iran, from a buildup of weapons on its northern border, from a despicable campaign to delegitimize Israel on the international stage.

While the threats against the United States and Israel grow and strengthen, so too must our joint resolve to confront them. I am proud to be a supporter of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. We are stronger together through our friendship. We are safer together through our cooperation. And in this uncertain world, the United States and Israel need each other.

On this Israeli Independence Day, I acknowledge the brave men and women and their families who have sacrificed so much for the Jewish homeland, and I look forward to the day when Israel can celebrate independence in peace and security.

HONORING FIRST LIEUTENANT ROBERT COLLINS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart and a humble spirit that I come today to this People's House, to this floor of the People's House to honor an American hero.

Mr. Speaker, First Lieutenant Robert Collins answered his Nation's call to duty after graduating from West Point Military Academy in 2008. And earlier this month he made the ulti-

mate sacrifice on behalf of his fellow countrymen. Lieutenant Collins was deployed to Iraq only last fall, and was based with his unit in the northern part of the country.

Lieutenant Collins recently wrote that he was working to improve security conditions and the quality of life for the Iraqi people. In this year's national elections in Iraq, his platoon helped provide security for a free and fair election process, and I know that he took great pride in that.

He was a man willing and ready to serve his country. As a dedicated soldier, he wanted to help spread far and wide the same freedom we love and cherish here in the United States. Lieutenant Collins' willingness to help others came as no surprise to anyone who knew him. A native of Tyrone, Georgia, and a graduate of Sandy Creek High School, he was well respected among his peers. In fact, one former classmate wrote that Collins "was compassionate and at the same time had a great sense of humor that could not be matched. Robert would always be there for people when they needed help."

His parents, Deacon and Sharon, are both retired lieutenant colonels. They proudly served our Nation, and they proudly supported their son's decision to serve our country. While we honor Lieutenant Collins, we should also think of Deacon and Sharon. Lieutenant Collins was also blessed to have Nicole, his fiancée, and childhood sweetheart.

Last week Lieutenant Collins came home to Georgia for the last time, and his community came out to honor him. From local veterans to ordinary citizens, the procession route was lined with people waving American flags and paying their great respect to this hero. One gentleman summed it up best when he said, "I am a patriot. Anyone who gives up their life for my freedom, well, this is the least I can do."

Today I stand here to honor First Lieutenant Robert Collins because it was the least I could do. He stood for me and all Americans by serving and sacrificing to our Nation, and he is an American hero. I want to thank him from me and my family and the generations to come. And I also want to thank his loving parents for the sacrifice that they have given to this great Nation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ENGEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ISRAEL'S 62ND INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. CHU) is recognized for 5 minutes.