

This is not a situation where there are not jobs. This is a situation where there are unfilled jobs.

#### INVEST IN DETROIT

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

Mr. CLARKE of Michigan. Madam Speaker, I offer this Congress and this country a simple, yet powerful, way to create new, good-paying manufacturing jobs in the United States, and that's by investing in Detroit, by allowing the tax dollars that Detroiters pay to be invested back in Detroit; invested to help make the streets of Detroit safer, to help improve Detroit schools, to help train Detroiters for jobs, to help rebuild our city.

You see, this type of investment will definitely create jobs in Detroit. But more importantly, Detroit's manufacturing know-how, our trained workforce, investing in Detroit will help put Americans back to work. So by helping put Detroiters back to work, you're going to help put this country back to work.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. EMERSON). 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 incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any record vote on the postponed question will be taken tomorrow.

#### UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REFORM AND REAU- THORIZATION ACT OF 2011

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2867) to reauthorize the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2867

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reform and Reauthorization Act of 2011".

#### SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT AND COMPOSITION.

(a) MEMBERSHIP.—Section 201(b)(1)(B) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6431(b)(1)(B)) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking "Nine" and inserting "five";

(2) in clause (i), by striking "Three members" and inserting "One member";

(3) in clause (i)—

(A) by striking "Three members" and inserting "Two members";

(B) by striking "two of the members" and inserting "one member"; and

(C) by striking "one of the members" and inserting "the other member"; and

(4) in clause (iii)—

(A) by striking "Three members" and inserting "Two members";

(B) by striking "two of the members" and inserting "one member"; and

(C) by striking "one of the members" and inserting "the other member".

(b) TERMS.—Section 201(c) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6431(c)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking the last sentence and inserting the following: "An individual is not eligible to serve more than two consecutive terms as a member of the Commission. Each member serving on the Commission on the date of enactment of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reform and Reauthorization Act of 2011 may be reappointed to not more than one additional consecutive term.";

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by striking "May 15, 2003, through May 14, 2005" and inserting "May 15, 2012, through May 14, 2014";

(B) in subparagraph (B) to read as follows: "(B) PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENTS.—The member of the Commission appointed by the President under subsection (b)(1)(B)(i) shall be appointed to a 1-year term.";

(C) in subparagraph (C)—

(i) by striking "three members" and inserting "two members";

(ii) by striking "the other two appointments" and inserting "the other appointment"; and

(iii) by striking "2-year terms" and inserting "to a 2-year term";

(D) in subparagraph (D)—

(i) by striking "three members" and inserting "two members";

(ii) by striking "the other two appointments" and inserting "the other appointment"; and

(iii) by striking "2-year terms" and inserting "to a 2-year term"; and

(E) in subparagraph (E), by striking "May 15, 2003, and shall end on May 14, 2004" and inserting "May 15, 2012, and shall end on May 14, 2013"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(3) INELIGIBILITY FOR REAPPOINTMENT.—If a member of the Commission attends, by being physically present or by conference call, less than 75 percent of the meetings of the Commission during one of that member's terms on the Commission, the member shall not be eligible for reappointment to the Commission."

(c) ELECTION OF CHAIR.—Section 201(d) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6431(d)) is amended by inserting at the end the following: "No member of the Commission is eligible to be elected as Chair of the Commission for a second, consecutive term."

(d) QUORUM.—Section 201(e) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6431(e)) is amended by striking "Six" and inserting "Four".

(e) APPLICABILITY.—A member of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom who is serving on the Commission on the date of enactment of this Act shall continue to serve on the Commission until the expiration of the current term of the member under the terms and conditions for membership on the Commission as in effect on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act.

#### SEC. 3. APPLICATION OF ANTIDISCRIMINATION LAWS.

Section 204 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6432b) is

amended by inserting after subsection (f) the following new subsection:

"(g) APPLICATION OF ANTIDISCRIMINATION LAWS.—For purposes of providing remedies and procedures to address alleged violations of rights and protections that pertain to employment discrimination, family and medical leave, fair labor standards, employee polygraph protection, worker adjustment and retraining, veterans' employment and reemployment, intimidation or reprisal, protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, occupational safety and health, labor-management relations, and rights and protections that apply to employees whose pay is disbursed by the Secretary of the Senate or the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives, all employees of the Commission shall be treated as employees whose pay is disbursed by the Secretary of the Senate or the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives and the Commission shall be treated as an employing office of the Senate or the House of Representatives."

#### SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

Section 207(a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6435(a)) is amended by striking "for the fiscal year 2003" and inserting "for each of the fiscal years 2012 and 2013".

#### SEC. 5. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND DISCLOSURE.

Section 208 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6435a) is amended—

(1) in subsection (c)(1), by striking "\$100,000" and inserting "\$250,000"; and

(2) in subsection (e), by striking "International Relations" and inserting "Foreign Affairs".

#### SEC. 6. TERMINATION.

Section 209 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6436) is amended by striking "September 30, 2011" and inserting "September 30, 2013".

#### SEC. 7. REPORT ON EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the implementation of this Act and the amendments made by this Act.

(b) CONSULTATION.—The Comptroller General shall consult with the appropriate congressional committees and nongovernmental organizations for purposes of preparing the report.

(c) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The report shall include the following:

(1) A review of the effectiveness of all United States Government programs to promote international religious freedom, including their goals and objectives.

(2) An assessment of the roles and functions of the Office on International Religious Freedom established in section 101(a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6411(a)) and the relationship of the Office to other offices in the Department of State.

(3) A review of the role of the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom appointed under section 101(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6411(b)) and the placement of such position within the Department of State.

(4) A review and assessment of the goals and objectives of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom established under section 201(a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6431(a)).

(5) A comparative analysis of the structure of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom as an independent non-partisan entity in relation to other United States advisory commissions, whether or not such commissions are under the direct authority of Congress.

(6) A review of the relationship between the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, and possible reforms that would improve the ability of both to reach their goals and objectives.

(d) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” has the meaning given the term in section 3 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6402).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, first of all, let me thank ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, the chairwoman of our committee, and HOWARD BERMAN for their fine work in helping to bring this very important legislation to the floor today.

I want to thank especially Congressman FRANK WOLF, the author of this legislation, who is also the author of the original International Religious Freedom Act that was passed back in 1998, against considerable odds, opposition from the Clinton administration, for example, opposition from a number of people on both sides of the aisle. But at the end of the day, that legislation, historic, was signed into law and was signed by President Clinton. So he came around and actually put his signature on that historic legislation.

So I again want to thank Mr. WOLF for his famous leadership. He has been a leader on human rights and on religious freedom in particular for more than 30 years. And that culminated, at least on the religious freedom side, with the enactment of the International Religious Freedom Act.

Madam Speaker, religious freedom, the right to worship and practice one's faith according to the dictates of one's own conscience, is a foundational human right. Not only is it an essential element in our Constitution; it is intrinsic to the human dignity of every man and woman on this Earth and was enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights.

But it is a right denied or curtailed for millions, really billions, according to some estimates, even a majority of

the people living in the world. For Copts in Egypt, for Christians, Buddhists, and Uighurs in China, Montagnards, Evangelical Christians in Central Vietnam, Jews in Baha'i in Iran, many Buddhist monks in Burma and, of course, this rising pernicious tide of anti-Semitism, not just in the Middle East but in many parts of Europe, and even in the United States, the ability to live their faith without threat of persecution is a distant and unrealized promise.

I was pleased to work with Mr. WOLF years ago, as I mentioned, on this legislation. And I actually chaired the hearings on the legislation. And again, there was considerable opposition that was turned around, and at the end of the day this legislation did become law.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was an important part of this effort. It was created as an independent body of experts to review the facts and make policy recommendations from a vantage point outside of our diplomatic corps, where bilateral and other concerns had sometimes resulted in the soft-pedaling of severe ongoing violations of religious freedom around the world.

Even today, when the quality of State Department reporting on religious issues, while it's improved, the commission continues to serve as a critical role and a sounding board and a catalyst. One indicator is the fact that the commission's list of recommended, what is called “countries of particular concern” for severe violations of religious freedom, remains larger than the number actually designated by the State Department. They ought to be the same, but they are not.

Just yesterday, Secretary Clinton rightfully designated the People's Republic of China, Burma, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Uzbekistan as countries of particular concern. But the State Department's list does not add any new countries from last year, and one of the most glaring omissions of all is Vietnam, whose policies have more than earned that badge of shame.

Secretary Clinton did not designate Egypt either, or Iraq, Nigeria, Turkmenistan and Pakistan, as recommended by the commission. So, unfortunately, their recommendations went unheeded. But it does provide an important backdrop and framework to review and to look at what it is that the State Department is doing.

We need, Madam Speaker, this commission more than ever. Already in the Congress, we have had three comprehensive hearings on religious freedom: one in the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in January regarding the religious freedom of minorities in the Middle East; one in the committee that I chair, the Africa Global Health global Human Rights Committee, regarding the prioritization of religious freedom in U.S. foreign policy; and one just last month in the Hel-

sinki Commission on the particular plight of Coptic Christians in Egypt. That hearing brought to light an egregious policy that is acted out in Egypt each and every day, where young Coptic Christians girls, some as young as 14 and 15, are kidnapped. They are forced into Islam, and then they are, at age 18 or thereafter, given in marriage forcibly to an Islamic man.

□ 1240

That is an outrage against women's rights, human rights, and religious freedom as well.

The Commission has been an invaluable resource to Congress as we monitor the protection and promotion of religious freedom around the world and the response of the administration on this very important issue. They have also a resource to governments seeking to remedy religious freedom abuses within their own borders. For instance, in Indonesia, the Commission worked with members of the Indonesian House of Representatives and civil society groups and introduced measures to strengthen provisions in the criminal code regarding attacks on religious gatherings and amend the law governing the building of religious venues.

The Commission also continues to help network human rights and legal advocates in Indonesia and elsewhere around the world working to defend individuals accused of blasphemy and religious minorities facing intimidation and violence from extremist groups. The Commission's work in Indonesia will have practical impact on the exercise of human rights and the preservation of peace in that country.

Other governments have looked to the Commission as a model for their own religious freedom commissions.

The bill before us today includes a number of bipartisan reforms to the Commission authorities and operations to make their work even more effective.

Again, I want to thank Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, the chairwoman, and thank HOWARD BERMAN for their leadership in ensuring the bill came to the floor today and for their support for the bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise in strong support of H.R. 2867, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reform and Reauthorization Act of 2011.

I would like to thank the sponsor of this legislation, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF), who has been a leader on this issue for, as my colleague Mr. SMITH pointed out, well over a decade on the question of international religious freedom.

We're fortunate to live in a country that was founded by religious refugees on principles of tolerance. We strive to adhere to article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right includes freedom to

manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.”

But elsewhere around the globe, religious freedom and human rights are routinely violated. Countless men, women, and children face violence, persecution, and discrimination because of their faith. Violent extremist attacks have taken place in the Middle East and South Asia. The regimes in North Korea and Iran actively repress religious freedom. Apostasy and blasphemy laws have fueled discrimination against religious minorities in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia.

Other religious minorities like Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims, Ahmadis, Baha'is, Assyrian Christians in Iraq, Copts in Egypt face violence and government restrictions. And anti-Semitism is still prevalent around the world.

Just yesterday, Secretary Clinton designated Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan as countries of particular concern that have “engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom.”

While these may be the worst offenders, we have serious concerns about religious freedom in many other countries around the world. More than ever, we need the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to continue its important work.

The bipartisan bill before us today reauthorizes the Commission, also known as USCIRF, which is set to expire at the end of the month. The bill also contains some sensible reforms that will strengthen USCIRF's efforts to monitor and report on the status of freedom of religion abroad. These reforms include the process of selecting the chair, terms of service for members of the Commission, and a GAO study on improving the effectiveness and coordination of all U.S. Government bodies that focus on international religious freedom.

In particular, I would like to thank Mr. WOLF for agreeing to include a provision that clarifies that USCIRF is subject to the same workplace restrictions and civil rights laws as the rest of the Federal Government.

Congress has long provided that the Federal Government, including the executive and legislative branches, is subject to laws intended to keep the American workplace safe and free from discrimination, including the Family and Medical Leave Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, OSHA, and workplace protections for veterans.

However, under current law, it is unclear whether USCIRF's employees could resolve disputes over workplace protections through the procedures designed for executive branch workers or under the procedures that apply to legislative branch employees through the Congressional Accountability Act. This legislation will ensure that all claims will now be resolved under the proce-

dures created by the Congressional Accountability Act. USCIRF supports this clarifying position.

I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, it is a distinct privilege to yield such time as he may consume to the chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, the author of the original International Religious Freedom Act, an historic piece of legislation and today's reauthorization, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF).

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, before I begin, I want to thank Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN; ranking member, Mr. BERMAN; the Human Rights Committee chairman, Mr. SMITH, who's been a champion on all of these issues from the very first day he got in here; and their staffs. The staffs have made all the difference in the world.

I want to particularly thank the chairman's staff, Yleem Poblete and Doug Anderson, for their help, and also the leadership on both sides and my side, and the leadership staff who have really tried to work this and get this thing through. I'm going to say some things that hopefully are not too controversial, but I do want to thank them for getting this thing out and getting it moving because, if it didn't move today, it may very well come to an end.

I rise in support of this critical legislation to reauthorize and reform the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The sad truth, though, Madam Speaker, this bill has been held hostage by the other body—and keep the word “hostage” out there as we think in terms of what this bill would do and what's taking place around the world. And if we do not pass this bill in this form today, the likelihood of this Commission shutting down is very, very high.

I wish I could name—I know the House rule—and I would name the members over there if anyone asks me, but it's being held hostage. Some in the other body are now saying that even these are not the changes that they would like to see to the Commission. And, quite frankly, I believe that some over there and this very administration would not mind seeing this Commission shut its doors.

This was a bipartisan issue for years. Scoop Jackson, the leader, Jackson-Vanik, President Reagan. To my side, Reagan said the words in the Constitution were a covenant to the entire world, not just to the people in Philadelphia in 1787 but to the entire world. And yet religious freedom, often referred to as the first freedom, is central to our American values and should be featured prominently in foreign policy.

But, sadly, the constituency for human rights and religious freedom issues is growing smaller and smaller

in Washington and in this Congress. These issues have become second-class citizens in this Congress and in this town. There are no big law firms downtown. They're representing the Saudis. They're representing the Chinese. They're representing filth and garbage in certain cases, but no one represents human rights and religious freedom.

So there are all the Members who have agonized and pushed and pulled and want to kill this. I'm concerned because as we stand here today and debate, and you've got to know this, Iraqi Christians are being killed. People who speak the same language as Jesus, the Aramaic language, and more biblical activity took place in Iraq than almost any other country other than Israel, they're being killed; and Iraqi women are being forced to do terrible things in order to keep their families.

And there are some who don't want this bill to pass. They never talk about the Iraqi Christians. Yet many of them supported the Iraqi war and yet they say nothing.

The Baha'is in Iran and Egypt are being marginalized, and I never hear a word said.

Chinese Bishops. I can remember Congressman SMITH took Holy Communion from Bishop Su. Bishop Su was arrested and has never been seen since, maybe once being forced into a public security police car and taken away.

□ 1250

Protestant pastors are being arrested today as we speak in China, and yet this doesn't really seem to bother this place. It's almost like, Well, you know, what are we going to do? You know, man does not live by bread alone. These are important issues. Go back to Scoop Jackson. Go back to Ronald Reagan. Go back to the Constitution. Go back to the Declaration of Independence.

Shabaz Bhatti, the Christian minister in the government, was gunned down because of his faith, because he was a Christian. The Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan are being persecuted. They're going through a very, very difficult time. There are the Coptic Christians. I was in Egypt in July, and the Coptic Christians—8.5 million—are going through a very difficult time.

As Mr. SMITH just said, anti-Semitism is running rampant. Anti-Semitism is running rampant in this world, and yet there are some who are trying to kill this Commission, for some reason, over in the other body. We're having such a hard time.

The Buddhists in Tibet, they can't even have a picture of the Dalai Lama. Hu Jintao, who is the current President of China, was the one who cracked down on Tibet and raided all those monasteries, and yet, with this bill, some are just saying, Well, you know, I don't know, and I don't know, and I don't know.

Though this bill is not what we originally planned, the Commission has said they can live with these provisions so that the Commission may remain a reliable voice for the world's persecuted

people. As Mr. SMITH said, there probably is not a time that you do need this Commission more than now. Since the passage of this legislation, religious freedom has been elevated at times in U.S. foreign policy, but it still does not enjoy the preeminence it deserves.

Sadly, a strong U.S. voice on these critical issues has arguably never been more needed. The Commission faces extinction at the end of the month. Members of Congress know, if you knock this bill down, if you want to kill this Commission and if they vote “no,” it will go out of business by the end of this month if the Congress fails to pass it.

Just yesterday, as Mr. SMITH said, the State Department released its annual International Religious Freedom Report. In the report, several challenges to religious freedom were pinpointed. People around the world continue to face violent extremist attacks, apostasy and blasphemy laws, repression, and anti-Semitism. According to a Pew Research Study released in 2009, one-third of all nations, containing 70 percent of the world’s population, severely restrict religious freedom.

I want to thank again Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN and Mr. BERMAN and my good friend Mr. SMITH and their staffs.

I don’t know what we would say to the Christian community around the world and to the Baha’is and to those concerned about anti-Semitism and the Buddhist community in Tibet and the Uyghurs in China if this thing fails to pass. They would say, What’s taking place in Washington? Why is this no longer an issue that this Congress and this administration care about? So I would hope we should pass it. I think we should have a roll call vote. Every Member should stand up and explain what they’re going to do.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN, Ranking Member BERMAN, Human Rights Subcommittee Chairman SMITH, and their staffs for working tirelessly in a bipartisan manner to continue to fight for those who are persecuted for their religious beliefs. I would like to particularly thank the chairman’s staffers, Yleem Poblete and Doug Anderson, for their help. Thank you also to our leadership for bringing this bill to the floor.

I rise in support of this critical legislation to reauthorize and reform the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). The sad truth is that this bill has been held hostage in the other body, and if we do not pass this bill in the form it is in today, the commission will shut down.

Some in the other body are now saying that even these are not the changes they would like to see to the commission, and quite frankly, I believe that some over there and this very administration would not mind if the commission were to shut its doors.

Religious freedom, often referred to as the first freedom, is central to our American values and should be featured prominently in U.S. foreign policy. Sadly, the constituency for human rights and religious freedom issues is growing smaller and smaller in Washington and in Congress. These issues have become second class citizens in this Congress.

I am deeply concerned because, as we stand here and debate this bill, Iraqi Christians are being killed, Baha’is are being marginalized in Iran, Chinese bishops and Protestants pastors sit in jail, Christian and Ahmadi continue to be repressed in Pakistan, Coptic Christians are having a difficult time in Egypt, and anti-Semitism is growing around the world.

Though this bill is not what we originally planned, the commission has said they can live with these provisions so that the commission may remain a reliable voice for the world’s persecuted people.

Recognizing that this critical issue and other human rights related issues are often relegated to the sidelines within the State Department, I authored legislation more than 10 years ago, in 1998, to establish the International Religious Freedom Office at the State Department, headed by an ambassador at-large, and to create the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)—an independent, bipartisan Federal Government commission, charged with monitoring the status of freedom of religion or belief abroad and providing policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress.

Since the passage of this legislation religious freedom has been elevated within U.S. foreign policy. But it still does not enjoy the preeminence it deserves. And sadly, a strong U.S. voice on this critical issue has arguably never been more needed. USCIRF faces extinction at the end of this month if Congress fails to pass the bill before us today and it is not signed into law.

Just yesterday, the State Department released its annual International Religious Freedom Report. In the report, several challenges to religious freedom were pinpointed. People around the world continue to face violent extremist attacks, apostasy and blasphemy laws, repression, and anti-Semitism. According to a Pew Research Study released in December 2009, one-third of all nations, containing 70 percent of the world’s population, severely restrict religious freedom.

This legislation will reauthorize the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom until September 30, 2013. USCIRF, unlike the State Department, is unencumbered by the impulse to maintain good bilateral relations above all else . . . an impulse which sadly can result in critical issues of religious freedom being sidelined in the pursuit of broader foreign policy goals.

USCIRF regularly holds briefings and hearings on and off the Hill and is frequently called upon to provide expert witness testimony to Congress.

Just in the last year the commission has taken a leadership role on a series of key issues. It was quick to recognize the strategic importance and courageous voice of the late Shabaz Bhatti, Pakistan’s federal minister of Minorities Affairs, an outspoken critic of his nation’s draconian blasphemy laws.

During a critical time for the people of Sudan, the USCIRF issued special recommendations on the implementation of the historic Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

It made a series of policy recommendations aimed at preserving and protecting Iraq’s besieged religious minorities.

It has actively worked with dozens of Hill offices on combating the “defamation of religions” resolution before the United Nations.

In short, ensuring that the commission is reauthorized is of paramount importance. In a Constitution Day speech, President Ronald Reagan famously described the United States constitution as “a covenant we have made not only with ourselves, but with all of mankind.”

Passage of this legislation will go a long way in helping us keep that covenant. I urge my colleagues’ support. We must let the world know that the U.S. Congress continues to believe in the importance of protecting the first freedom for every person in this world.

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

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I yield myself the balance of my time.

I just want to again thank Congressman FRANK WOLF, Chairman WOLF, for his eloquence and for his passion for those men and women and children of faith who suffer terrible, terrible injustices around the world, including persecution.

There were two books that got me involved, in all candor, in religious freedom issues—there were two incidents in my first year in Congress in 1981—“Tortured for Christ,” by Richard Wurmbbrand, who was a great evangelical pastor who spent years being tortured by the Securitate in Romania because of his faith. He made an appeal, and he said, Do not sit idly by while men and women of any faith are being tortured and persecuted because of that faith, because it’s not just the individual who suffers; the entire family suffers; and very often they’re incarcerated and tortured as well.

The other was the trip to the Soviet Union with the National Conference on Soviet Jewry in 1982, January. It was 10 days in Moscow and Leningrad, meeting Soviet Jewish refusniks who were persecuted, who were put into psychiatric prisons simply because of their faith.

A couple of years later, Mr. WOLF and I went to Perm Camp 35 in the Ural Mountains. It took years to negotiate our way in. This was in 1987. We met with persecuted Jewish refusniks and Christians and political prisoners who were there simply because of their faith. It was where Natan Sharansky had spent a number of his years incarcerated by the cruel dictatorship of the Soviet Union.

In China today, the believer Christians, Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Buddhists are tortured beyond anyone’s imagination. It’s real. It’s happening today. In Vietnam, there has been a backlash against people of faith ever since they got trading benefits and the bilateral trade agreement and MFN were extended to them, or PNTR. They have done a backlash to men and women of faith that is unprecedented, and ought to be on the CPC list of the International Religious Freedom Commission. I hope people will go to the Web site. Check out this wonderful Commission, which if it is not renewed by the end of this month, goes out of business.

I would call out our Members on the other side of this Capitol, the other

body, to pass this legislation immediately. We ought to be strengthening and significantly expanding it, not doing less than status quo, which is what we're doing today because of some budget concerns that people have. This is the quintessential watchdog agency in this town. It doesn't get the big press, as Mr. WOLF said. It doesn't have the big bucks—no K Street lobbyists—but it is a wonderful and a very important and effective Commission that keeps track of religious persecution globally, that keeps us in line in the House and the Senate and also the State Department. I read their reports. I read them from cover to cover. Please, I would ask the Members of this body to support this legislation and call on our friends in the Senate to do likewise.

I yield back the balance of my time. Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2867, "United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reform and Reauthorization Act of 2011." This legislation mandates the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (Commission) compliance with federal anti-discrimination laws, restricts the Commissioner to two consecutive terms, and requires the Commissioner to attend 75 percent of Commission meetings. H.R. 2867, extends the Commission's sunset date by two years, and appropriates \$4.29 million for FY12 and FY13. In addition, H.R. 2867 requires study to determine the Commission's effectiveness to ensure that the act is being implemented properly.

As a senior Member of the Judiciary and Homeland Security Committees, I understand the importance of protecting the religious rights of men, women, and children throughout the world. By advocating for religious stability, we in turn decrease the likelihood of religious extremism and advance the growth of healthy nations. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom serves as an essential fact finder and impartial advisor on these matters.

The 18th District of Texas is home to many different faiths and religious backgrounds and welcomes a variety of views on religion. This reflects the principles of freedom of religion upon which our nation was founded. The founding fathers understood the importance of freedom of religion and the perils of religious persecution. Respect for the religious practices of others is woven into the very fabric of the United States.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom is an independent, bipartisan commission. The Commissioners are appointed by the President and Congress. The Commission's core mission is to review international violations of religion freedom and make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress. These recommendations impact the lives of millions of people of faith around the world. I believe in the importance of protecting those who are being persecuted based upon their religious beliefs.

According to a Pew Research Study released in December 2009, 198 countries, containing 70 percent of the world's population, severely restrict religious freedom. The study found that 101 governments used force

against religious groups or individuals. Christians and Muslims, who make up more than half of the world's population, were harassed in more countries than other religions, although the study does not reflect the intensity of the persecution. This study was conducted prior to the Arab Spring. Many of the nations with increasing religious restrictions are the very nations that have seen popular uprisings and subsequent crackdowns—among them Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Libya, a clear indication that we need this Commission more than ever.

I firmly believe that the Commission has a positive impact on the lives of millions of people of faith throughout the world, especially at a time when many governments continue to repress religious freedom and persecute persons on the basis of their religion. Such repression only stands to marginalize vulnerable populations, emboldens extremists, fuels sectarian tensions, and robs societies of the moral and charitable contributions of faith communities.

Repression of religious freedom runs contrary to shared universal values and undermines genuine stability. In the words of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton "Religious freedom provides a cornerstone for every healthy society. It empowers faith-based service. It fosters tolerance and respect among different communities. And it allows nations that uphold it to become more stable, secure, and prosperous."

The Commission monitors religious freedom through the lens of international human rights standards, such as those found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Forty-five years ago the nations of the world signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which codified in international law the right to religious freedom. The ICCPR affirmed under Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief 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."

The Commission is not a tool to advance religious beliefs or any specific values. It is focused on addressing the religious climate in each country based upon the ICCPR. By relying on international human rights standards as specified in ICCPR, The Commission guards against any attempts to impose American values on other nations, but rather examines the actions of foreign governments against these universal standards and by their freely undertaken international commitments. This Commission is a vital resource in learning to address conflicts between religious groups, especially in the wake of the Arab Spring.

As the Commission serves to address the violations of religious freedom abroad, Congress is charged with ensuring the Commission itself is in compliance with laws that protect the rights of workers and those they serve. H.R. 2867 reflects the principle that discrimination has no place within our government and will ensure that the commission itself complies with all federal anti-discrimination laws. This is an essential distinction from the current law, which lacks these robust discrimination protections. This legislation further

underscores the importance of this Commission by expending the sunset date of the Commission by 2 years to September 30, 2013. Lastly, the amount of appropriations allotted for the Commission would be amended by striking \$3,000,000 for the fiscal year 2003, to \$4,291,000 for fiscal years 2012 and 2013.

I firmly believe that H.R. 2867 will allow the Commission to continue to address international religious persecution, provide much needed discrimination protections, and will garner the appropriate amount of oversight to ensure that the Commission operates as effectively.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2867, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. 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, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

#### DISAPPROVAL RESOLUTION RELATING TO DEBT LIMIT INCREASE

Mr. REED. Madam Speaker, pursuant to section 3 of House Resolution 392 and as the designee of the majority leader, I have a motion at the desk.

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

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Reed moves that the House proceed to consider the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 77) relating to the disapproval of the President's exercise of authority to increase the debt limit, as submitted under section 3101A of title 31, United States Code, on August 2, 2011.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3101A(c)(3) of title 31, United States Code, the motion is not debatable.

The question is on the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the title of the joint resolution.

The Clerk read the title of the joint resolution.

The text of the joint resolution is as follows:

#### H.J. RES. 77

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Congress disapproves of the President's exercise of authority to increase the debt limit, as exercised pursuant to the certification under section 3101A(a) of title 31, United States Code.*

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3101A(c)(4) of title 31, United States Code, the joint resolution is considered as read, and the previous question is considered as ordered on the joint resolution to its passage