

the fifth anniversary of the signing of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 and urging renewed commitment to eliminating violations of the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion and protecting fundamental human rights.

I want to thank my distinguished colleague from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) for his sponsorship of this resolution.

I agree with the provisions, the whereases in this resolution: whereas religious freedom is an absolute right and all people are entitled to do with their own souls as they choose; whereas the right of freedom of religion is expressed in the declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations and many other organizations; whereas freedom of all individuals to adopt, believe, worship, observe, teach and practice a religion individually or collectively has been explicitly articulated; whereas religious persecution is not confined to a country, a region, or a regime; but whereas all governments should provide and protect religious liberty. I agree with all of those principles, but I feel compelled to point out that this House has not always followed the principles articulated in the resolution.

For example, just a few months ago, this House in the Head Start reauthorization bill, by a very close vote rejected the long-standing principle that teachers could not be fired or denied employment solely because of their religious belief. Instead, we adopted a provision which allows the 8 percent of the Head Start programs which are faith-based to discriminate based on religion, with Federal money, not the church money, but with the Federal money. Ironically, that vote to allow the discrimination came one day after congressional leaders participated in a ceremony praising the 40th anniversary of the March on Washington. Ironic because one of the few articulated purposes and successes of the March on Washington was a prohibition against employment discrimination with Federal money.

Head Start, since inception, has prohibited employment discrimination based on religion, and hopefully the Senate will reject the House action and reaffirm the prohibitions against discrimination with the Federal money.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate the International Religious Freedom Act and condemn religious intolerance, we ought to renew our own commitment to that principle here in the United States and condemn efforts to allow employment discrimination with Federal money based solely on religious beliefs.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS), my good friend and colleague.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, it has now been 5 years since the

International Religious Freedom Act was signed into law, and our view of the world has changed very dramatically since then due to a number of factors, primarily September 11 and the war against terrorism. The fundamental right of religious freedom is one of the very most critical foundations of this Republic.

Mr. Speaker, we must never forget that our Nation was founded by those who fled their country to preserve the inalienable right to religious liberty; and throughout the history of our Nation, people have left their homes in the cover of night to escape to the United States due to the religious persecution in their own countries. Unfortunately, in many places in the world today, the right to choose and practice one's faith is still not protected.

Mr. Speaker, it is so vitally imperative that we as a Nation continue to work to eliminate violations of religious freedom and human rights. One of the most compelling and pressing issues at this moment, and one where we have a great deal of leverage, is our responsibility to help establish true freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. True freedom in those nations is absolutely impossible apart from provisions in their new constitutions that absolutely guarantee full religious freedom for every one of their people.

Our principal efforts in those countries, if we do nothing else, must center on preserving the right of religious freedom for every individual. It is critical, Mr. Speaker, even to the war on terrorism because constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom creates a vital framework for discussion and debate. It has the power to turn the war of weapons into a war of words. May we not forget that critical truth.

Mr. Speaker, Patrick Henry stated it this way. He said, "I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging the future but by the past." He understood the urgency and nature of the battle when he declared, "There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free, if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained, we must fight!"

Mr. Speaker, indeed, we have fought but we now must ask ourselves what it was we were truly fighting for. I believe we fought, as President Bush said, for the "advance of freedom" because "we believe that freedom, the freedom we prize, is not for us alone; it is the right and capacity of all mankind." Guided by the lamp of our own experience of our own Nation, in those words, the President makes the most compelling argument that I can imagine for the United States to renew its commitment to eliminating violations of the right to religious freedom and to protecting fundamental human rights for every human being across the world.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this legislation but want to make it clear that I am not doing so because I oppose religious freedom, as one might falsely conclude from the way this bill is crafted. My concerns with this bill are the same concerns I raise whenever Congress attempts to act in areas in which it has no constitutional authority: under the guise of promoting a laudable cause—religious freedom—this legislation seeks to impose our views of this topic on other sovereign nations. In short, it is yet another example of the U.S. meddling in the affairs of other countries.

Mr. Speaker, as Americans we have a special attachment to the idea of religious freedom. That is the reason many of our ancestors came to this land and fought for independence. But I don't think the way to advance religious freedom around the world is to demand that every country adopt our approach. I believe that so demanding will only engender ill-will toward the United States and, ironically, increased resistance to this idea. People generally do not like being told by foreign countries what to do or how they can worship. I believe the best way we can promote the idea of religious liberty abroad is to serve as a working, living example of the benefits of liberty. The United States has been admired historically in other countries because our system of government demonstrates the economic and other benefits of liberty. That is why other nations seek to emulate the United States, not because we demand that their religious laws conform to our notions of what is acceptable.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, we have no additional requests for time, and I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, we have no further requests for speakers, and I yield back the balance of our time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OSE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 423, 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.

FAIRNESS TO CONTACT LENS CONSUMERS ACT

Mr. BURR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3140) to provide for availability of contact lens prescriptions to patients, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3140

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 "Fairness to Contact Lens Consumers Act".