the religious pluralism of our country as with current practice rather than the appointment of a single individual charged with responsibility for the task. America's religious pluralism is simply too diverse. We can expect one person to represent all of our concerns adequately. Minority religious communities are often the ones most vulnerable to mistreatment and thus especially needed to be included.

2. Automatic Sanctions—The bill's approach to sanctions is overly simplistic. Americans must work in close partnership with people of faith in countries where persecution is occurring. How do they say we and our government can best be helpful? Would sanctions help, or would they hurt the wrong people? Assigning blame exists for perpetuating the problem. Clearly, sanctions should not be ruled out as a means to address religious persecution, but they should not be an automatic or first option.

3. Asylum Provisions—This legislation would change the refugee determination process to give special attention to those being singled out for persecution on the basis of religion. Under current international conventions and U.S. refugee law, there are five grounds for being granted refugee status: persecution on the basis of race, nationality, religion, membership in a particular social group, and political opinion. We do not support singling out religion as being more important than these other forms of persecution. Moreover, over the years, we have not supported the designation of groups as refugees for resettlement, but rather have advocated for a case-by-case review of individual claims.

Obviously, there are people who leave their communities because they are persecuted for their religious faith and those people should find the protection they need—whether in a neighboring country of asylum or in the United States through resettlement. But this is already part of international and national law. Singling out persecution of Christians as somehow being worse than persecution of political dissidents or a particular ethnic group undermines a lot of this international law we have worked so hard to get implemented.

What we advocate is better application of existing law so that all of those claiming persecution get a fair hearing and that the adjudication procedures are both just and humane.

Finally, we believe some measure of humility is required as we act to stop religious persecution outside the United States. This is particularly urgent in light of the communications the NCCC has received from Christians in Egypt, China and other nations who express concern over America's eagerness to impose its political and constitutional ideals on others. As the General Secretary has stated: "Although we cherish the American model of religious liberty and its meaning for us, we recognize that it is not the only model. Some of our most trusted friends in the world of community worship and serve God in state churches. Others see toleration, rather than full freedom, as the touchstone for religious rights. In short, due consideration be given to cultural values and existing religious life, especially on such matters as world missions, proselytizing and areas of permissible regulations."

In summary, we have urged the NCCC and its member communions should consider an idea that has been proposed by members of the United States Senate: the establishment of a Commission on Security and Cooperation in Asia modeled after its European counterpart. Such a commission might be the forum where citizens of the United States can press their legitimate concerns about religious persecution in that region without further aggravating the problem.

In sum, the NCCC maintains its commitment to human rights and religious freedom rise to the level of persecution. Although H.R. 16855.772 have some sections the NCCC could support, other sections (particularly 5 and 7) are highly objectionable. For that reason, the NCCC cannot support H.R. 16855.772 until and unless significant changes are made.

M. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, the Asbury United Methodist Church, founded in 1864, is a functional home of worship with a rich heritage of 161 years in the Washington, DC community, is conducting its 11th annual homecoming September 23 through 28, 1997. Asbury's extraordinary history and contributions warrant praise and honor from this body and I ask that you join me in rendering that honor today.

Asbury United Methodist Church was organized in 1836 when a group led by Eli Nugent left the Foundry Methodist Church to form its own congregation. The first Asbury Church was a white frame building on the same site as the current Asbury Church edifice.

Mr. Speaker, Asbury's growth and history are intricately woven with that of African-American history. The Civil War brought the church to the door of the church body. Asbury opened its doors to provide space for classrooms for the fleeing and newly freed slaves. Operated under the auspices of various freedmen's aid societies, schools and classes helped provide the basic education needed if former slaves were to survive emancipation. These programs continued through the early 1870s.

Asbury's leadership remained in the hands of whites until the time of the emancipation. The Washington Annual Conference was founded in 1864. Asbury's role and leadership as a black congregation was firmly established with the appointment of the first black pastor, Rev. James Harper. Asbury experienced its greatest growth during the Reconstruction era. New organizations and programs were added and by the 1880s the Sunday school and choir received frequent mention in the press. This growth was accompanied by both missionary efforts and doctrinal disputes which led to the formation of other congregations that separated from the main body. These were Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Zion in 1847, Simpson Methodist Episcopal in 1875, and Peoples Congregational in 1891.

Mr. Speaker, with the dynamic leadership of ministers, Rev. J.W.E. Bowen, Rev. I.L. Thom-
**KEEPPING THE ARTS ALIVE IN THE CONEJO**

**HON. BRAD SHERMAN**

**OF CALIFORNIA**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Tuesday, September 16, 1997**

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to rise today to pay tribute to those who preserve the dream of the arts and delivering artistic entertainment to local people of our community. It is therefore with great pleasure that I honor the Twilight Award honorees, Rob O'Neill, Ann Hammerslag, Bob Lewis, Alex Fiore, and our Special Achievement Award recipients, the Medders family, for their dedication to the arts. These individuals have given their souls to promoting the performing arts in our community.

The Twilight Awards ceremony provides the Gold Coast Performing Arts Association an opportunity to honor and thank several individuals each year who, in their own way, have demonstrated their commitment to bringing the arts to the Conejo. The gathering also gives Gold Coast and its subsidiaries, Cabrillo Music Theatre, Santa Susana Repertory Co., Young Artists Ensemble, and the Gold Coast Conservatory a public occasion to display its successes.

Rob O'Neill is a member of a board of directors of the Arts and member of the board of directors for the Cabrillo Music Theatre, the preeminent theater company presenting full seasons of Broadway musicals at the Probst Center for the Performing Arts. As an active member of these associations Rob has dedicated his own musical and production expertise to the production of “Pump Boys and Dinettes” and next year’s musical, “A Little Night Music.” These musicals provide local performers the opportunity to show off their skills and also allow local audiences to enjoy popular musical productions. I thank Rob for his great work.

Ann Hammerslag is commonly known as the brains and heartbeat of the theaters department. She has managed the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza’s business since before the plaza opened. As executive secretary of the theaters department of the city of Thousand Oaks, Ann has the experience and motivation to make the Gold Coast Performing Arts Center the success that it is.

Bob Lewis, the former mayor of Thousand Oaks is now chairman of the Alliance for the Arts. As chairman he oversees the management and growth of an endowment for local arts, and encourages the arts education outreach. His contributions keep arts alive in the Conejo.

Alex Fiore is considered the individual most instrumental in bringing the dream of the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza to reality during his 30-plus years on the city council. Today, Alex guides the arts plaza’s progress from full leadership on the board of governors of the Civic Arts Plaza.

This year, the Twilight Awards gathering presents its fifth annual Special Achievement Award to the Medders family, who represent the highest tenet of volunteerism. Mardy is active on numerous boards of directors, including the Gold Coast Performing Arts Association, Alliance for the Arts, and the New West Symphony Guild. John is a physician and administrator for Kaiser Permanente, who is also active in our community. Their children, Lyndsey, Brian, Emily, and Brett, follow in their mother’s footsteps in assisting in every Gold Coast Performing Arts Center production and event. The Medders family is truly a gift to the arts in the Conejo.

Mr. Speaker, I’m honored and pleased to join me in honoring these individuals for their dedication to the arts in our community. I stand proud to recognize Ann Hammerslag, Alex Fiore, Bob Lewis, Rob O’Neill, and the Medders family for their dedication to the arts. These individuals have given their souls to promoting the performing arts in our community.

**1997 ELLIS ISLAND MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS**

**HON. DAN BURTON**

**OF INDIANA**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Tuesday, September 16, 1997**

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following:

**ELLIS ISLAND, N.Y., MAY 4—Standing on the hallowed grounds of Ellis Island—the portal through which 17 million immigrants entered this country—the American Federation of Teachers and a host of educators and community leaders pay tribute to their fellow Americans who have made significant contributions to the life of this nation, among them President William Jefferson Clinton, NYS Attorney General Dennis Vacco, National Football League Commissioner Paul Tagliabue and Little Caesars Enterprises Chairman Michael Ilitch, today were presented with the coveted Ellis Island Medal of Honor at an emotionally uplifting ceremony.

NECO’s annual medal ceremony and reception on Ellis Island in New York Harbor is the nation’s largest celebration of ethnic pride. This year’s event was dedicated to the memory of Albert Shanker, a 1995 Ellis Island Medal recipient and former President of the American Federation of Teachers and a Vice President of the AFL-CIO.

Representing a rainbow of ethnic origins, this year’s recipients received their award in the shadow of the historic Great Hall, where the first footsteps were taken by the millions of immigrants who entered the U.S. in the latter part of the 19th century.

"Today we honor great ethnic Americans who, through their achievements and contributions, in the spirit of their ethnic origins, have enriched this country and have become role models for future generations," said NECO Chairman William Denis Fugazy.

"In addition, we honor the immigrant experience—great Hall decades ago, and the new immigrants who arrive on American soil seeking opportunity.

Mr. Fugazy added, "It doesn’t matter how you got here or if you already were here. Ellis Island is a symbol of the freedom, diversity and opportunity—ingredients inherent in the fabric of this nation. Although many recipients have no familial ties to Ellis Island, their ancestors share similar histories of struggle and hope for a better life for their children and grandchildren."

Established in 1996 by NECO, the Ellis Island Medals of Honor pay tribute to the ancestors who comprise America’s ethnic heritage. To date, some 700 ethnic American citizens and native Americans have received medals.

NECO is the largest organization of its kind in the world. It represents a coalition of 75 ethnic organizations and whose mandate is to preserve ethnic diversity, promote ethnic and religious equality, tolerance and harmony, and to combat injustice, hatred, and bigotry.

Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipients are selected each year through a national nomination process. Screening committees from NECO’s member organizations select the five nominees, which are then considered by the Board of Directors.

Past Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipients have included several U.S. President, entertainers, entrepreneurs and business executives, such as Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, George Bush, Richard Nixon, George Pataki, Michael Bloomberg, Bob Hope, Michael Douglas, Gloria Estefan, Coretta Scott King, Rosa Parks, Elie Wiesel, Muhammad Ali, Mickey Mantle, General Norman Schwarzkopf, Barbara Walters, Terry Anderson and Dr. Michael DeBakey.

Congratulations to the 1997 Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipients.

Beny Alagia, Israeli, business leader; Manfred Alstadt, German, business leader; Denis Andreuzzi, Italian, business leader; Stuart Appelbaum, Lithuanian/Russian, labor leader; Edward F. Arisco, Italian, business leader; Ralph A. Balzano, Italian, government official; Raphael Baron, Russian business leader; Rehmann, II, German, entrepreneur; William Bolster, English/Irish, media executive; J. Frank Brown, Irish, business leader; Young In Chung, Korean, community leader; William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States; Hon. Nicholas Cofinas, Hellenic, community leader; Joseph M. Cohen, Polish/Russian, business leader; Geneos Pete Cokinos, Greek, oil producer.

Jerry Colangelo, Italian, business leader; Hon. Martin E. Connor, Irish, NYS senator; David R. Daugh, Irish, business leader; Sr. Catherine Crumlish, Irish, business/government leader; Richard E. Dauch, German, manufacturing leader; J. Morton Davis, Hungarian/Polish, business leader/author; Hon. Vincent A. Delorio, Italian, attorney; Ralph Destino, Italian, business leader; George Douris, Hellenic, business/community leader posthumous; Irma B. Elder, Syrian/Mexican, business/community leader; Dr. Saul J. Farber, Lithuanian, physician/educator; Ralph D. Farkas, Israel/Canadian, business leader; Hel- lenic, business leader; Michael C. Finnegan, Esq., Irish, business/government leader; Edward Fregdin, Russian, scientist; Kenneth J. Gorman, Irish, business leader; Salvatore, “Sonny” Grosso, Italian, television & movie producer; Rajat Gupta, Asian Indian, business leader; Marife Hernandez, Hispanic, civic leader; Rev. Theo- dose McMurrough, Irish, business/community leader; president emeritus U. of Notre Dame; Thomas Y. Hobart, Jr., German/Italian, labor leader; Harry G. Hohn, German/Irish, business leader; Hirair Hovnanian, Armenian, business/community leader; Thomas M. Hrick, Slovak, fraternalist; Denis M. Hughes, Irish/Italian, labor leader; Michael Ilitch, Macedonian, business/community leader; Elham Jabir-Shayota, Chaldean, business leader; Caroline R. Jones, African, business leader; Y. Juch, Korean, business/community leader; Charles Kanakis, Jr., MD, Hel- lenic, physician/community leader; Constantine N. Kangles, Esq., Hellenic, attorney; Russian, business leader; John H. Klein, German/Irish, business leader; Herbert V. Kropf, Austrian, business leader; Kamil Kubik, Czech, artist; Andreas C. Kypranides, Cypriot, community leader;