

site to medical education, forging an alliance between the Fresno Family Practice and the Firebaugh-Mendota Health Center. This brought medical students from a variety of west coast medical schools.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I pay tribute to Dr. John H. Blossom. Dr. Blossom's life long dedication and hardwork in the health care arena has allowed other physicians to enter and start their own practice. I ask my Colleagues to join me in wishing Dr. Blossom many years of success.

GRATULACJE, POLISH LEGION OF AMERICAN VETERANS LADIES AUXILIARY

**HON. JAMES A. BARCIA**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 6, 1998*

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a group of people who are the embodiment of the American spirit of volunteering and selfless dedication to others. These people are the members of the Polish Legion of American Veterans Ladies Auxiliary. The objective of this group is to bring moral and material support to hospitalized veterans and aid widows and orphans of the Polish Legion of American Veterans. It is these wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, granddaughters and nieces of honorably discharged Veterans of the Armed Forces, who preserve the eminence and sanctity of American ideals.

On Saturday, August 22, 1998, Michigan will celebrate the Legion's 75th anniversary in Lansing. With members from 66 chapters throughout the nation, in attendance, this event will not only be a time to celebrate, but also a time to reflect. It will be a time in which both members and the community will come together and solemnize 75 years of community service and involvement.

The first chapter of the "Ladies Legion" of the American Veterans of Polish Extraction Association was formed, in Chicago Illinois in September 1920. It wasn't until 1931 that the Polish American Veterans held a Consolidating Convention in Cleveland. It was at that time Ohio formally adopted the name of Polish Legion Of American Veterans, U.S.A. An Auxiliary of the National Ladies Legion was also formally formed. The first official consolidated Ladies National Convention was held in 1932 in Hamtramck, Michigan, represented by 56 delegates from the several states where their membership originated.

Today membership in the Ladies Auxiliary continues to grow and new projects have been implemented. The Auxiliary provides service to U.S.O. centers (Detroit), the Aid to the Blind Program (Illinois), which includes braille flags, books to schools, American essay and poster contests for middle school students, financial aid and scholarships to students and Hospitalized Veterans Wheelchair Olympics, to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, PLAV Ladies Auxiliary has been working tirelessly for 75 years to improve the quality of the lives of others. Their efforts should not go unrewarded. Please join me today in congratulating the Ladies Legion on its 75th anniversary, and hoping they will enjoy countless more years into the future.

BLACK AMERICANS' RIGHT TO VOTE WILL NOT EXPIRE IN 2007

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 6, 1998*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in commemoration of the thirty-third anniversary of the signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. On this day, it is fitting that we take the time to assure Black Americans that they will not lose their right to vote in 2007, contrary to a widespread rumor that has been circulating around the country.

To correct the misunderstanding of the Voting Rights Act, I am introducing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an article that was featured in The New York Amsterdam News (July 16–July 22, 1998).

DON'T PANIC—YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE WILL NOT EXPIRE

(By Charles B. Rangel)

I am writing to address a widespread rumor that in the year 2007, Blacks will lose the right to vote. The recent editorial by Brandy Darling, "Blacks' right to vote ends by the year 2007," is the latest reinforcement of well-intentioned but frightening misinformation. There is no expiration date on African-Americans' voting rights. This right is provided and guaranteed by the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The confusion is due to a misunderstanding of the Voting Rights Act. First enacted in 1965, the law removed the infamous barriers that had been systematically imposed to prevent Blacks from voting for nearly a century, despite the mandate of the 15th Amendment. Among those forbidden practices were the imposition of poll taxes and literacy tests, not to mention the threat of violence.

While some provisions of the Voting Rights Act will expire in the year 2007, the most important protections of African-American voting rights will remain in place. The prohibition against racial discrimination in voting is permanent and is guaranteed in the 15th Amendment. Prohibitions against poll taxes, literacy tests and the like have no expiration date. Technically these protections could be removed by amending the law, but that would provoke a monumental battle.

Certain provisions in the Voting Rights Act will expire in 2007 with serious implications for non-English speaking citizens and for the election of minority office holders.

States or political subdivisions with significant numbers of non-English speaking citizens would no longer be required to provide bilingual services to eligible voters. If not corrected, this could minimize the growing political strength of Hispanics.

The growth in number of minority elected officials could also be affected by the expiring administrative provisions of the act. It includes the requirement for preclearance of election observers. This provision does not guarantee election of minorities. Rather, it prevents jurisdictions with a history of discrimination and racial polarization from manipulating the electoral systems to render the Black vote ineffective.

Although African-Americans were granted the right to vote in 1870 with the passage of the 15th Amendment the legal and illegal measures which many southern states used to prevent Blacks from voting resulted in the exclusion of most African-American citizens from voting for nearly a century. In response, in 1965, Congress passed the first Voting Rights Act.

Generally, the Voting Rights Act was first applied to any stake or political jurisdiction that used tests or other devices as a condition for voter registration. The law was amended by Congress in 1970, 1975, 1982 and 1992 to expand coverage beyond the southern states and to apply to non-English speaking citizens. There is no truth to the claim that the extension of the Voting Rights Act requires ratification by the states. To be renewed, only a vote by Congress is required.

Soon after emancipation from slavery, Blacks earned the right to vote. This victory did not come easily. African-Americans were subjected to fraud, violence (including murder) and other unsavory tactics as a means to stop them from voting. Over the years, Blacks have sacrificed unduly for the right to vote. No one should ever have to experience such threats. That is why it is extremely important for African-Americans to continue to monitor potential threats to their right to vote.

We must be mindful of the fact that most of the gains made over the years have resulted from political activism. On the other hand, many of the losses that we are now experiencing stem from political apathy. In the 1996 presidential election, approximately 51 percent of African-Americans voted. To look at it another way, almost half of the eligible African-Americans voters did not vote in the last presidential election. If there are 40 African-American members in the U.S. Congress using a little over half of the voting power, imagine what can be done if all Black Americans participated in the political process.

Black America is under attack. Affirmative action is being dismantled; Black churches are burning; racial hate crimes are on the rise; public schools are crumbling; and young Black men are filling the jails. These are reasons why we must fight back politically. And the struggle cannot end there. There is a serious need for improvements in education and training, affordable housing and increased job opportunities. Blacks must be prepared to compete in a global technological society.

Although the rumors over the Voting Rights Act are not true, the concern is real. Blacks are not in danger of losing the right to vote. However, the political power of African-Americans is being diluted. There is a need to monitor political threats and to inform the president and Congress of your concerns.

EXECUTION OF BAHAI IN IRAN—PERSECUTION OF MINORITY RELIGIONS CONTINUES

**HON. JOHN EDWARD PORTER**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 6, 1998*

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, it was with cautious hope that we observed last year the election of a "moderate" leader of Iran and the first tentative signs that the government of Iran might be willing to rejoin the community of nations. Iranian President Mohammed Khatami addressed the American people and expressed his dedication to the principles of freedom, justice, and the rule of law for all Iranians. Unfortunately, it appears that Iran's hardliners, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, remain committed to keeping Iran a pariah state and are apparently using Iran's largest religious minority, the Baha'is, to send a rebuke to both the moderates in Iran and to the international community.

On July 21st, the government of Iran executed Mr. Ruhollah Rowhani, a Baha'i man, after having charged him with apostasy—specifically, converting a Muslim to the Baha'i faith. Mr. Rowhani, who had been held incommunicado for ten months, was evidently not accorded basic legal protections such as access to an attorney. His family learned of his execution only after it had taken place and they were notified they had one hour to prepare for his burial.

Since 1979, over 200 Baha'is—mostly elected community leaders—have been executed in Iran, solely on account of their religion. For the past six years, however, none had been executed and the number of Baha'is in custody had been rapidly declining. This apparent lessening of overt persecution, coupled with the new leadership in Iran, had raised hopes that a change in attitude towards the Baha'i and other minority religions might be forthcoming. The execution of Mr. Rowhani dashed those hopes. Currently, 15 Baha'is are being held by the Iranian authorities—four of whom are on death row.

In the days since the killing, the international community has joined forces to condemn this shameful execution and petition for the humane treatment of those Baha'is facing possible death at the hands of the Iranian government. President Clinton and State Department Spokesperson James Rubin have issued strong statements condemning the killing. The German, Australian and Canadian foreign ministries have issued strong denunciations and Representatives of the European Union have made their disapproval and concern known to the Iranian government in very clear terms. The Office of the UN Commissioner for Human Rights has urgently appealed to the Iranian government on behalf of the detained individuals.

For its part, the Iranian judiciary—which is controlled by Khomeini and the hardliners—responded by initially denying the charges were ever filed, denying the execution ever took place, and, incredibly, denying that a man named Ruhollah Rowhani ever existed. The Foreign Ministry later acknowledged that the execution had taken place.

Mr. Speaker, it is tremendously disappointing that the hardline elements of the Iranian government have resumed their assault on the Baha'i community. The hardline leadership continues to deviate far from the norms of civilized behavior by executing a man for nothing more than his faith. I believe that the execution of this innocent man marks a new phase in the ongoing power struggle in Iran between the hardliners and the more moderate elements. Given the fact that the hardliners control the judiciary, it is not insignificant that this execution happened close in time to the conviction of the mayor of Tehran, an ally of President Khatami, and a long-scheduled visit by the European Union troika to discuss normalization of relations. I believe that the Baha'is and others who are at odds with the hardliners will continue to be used as pawns to weaken President Khatami's hand in this power struggle. I urge the hardline elements of Iranian government in the strongest possible terms not to compound this grievous situation by harming the other Baha'is in custody. I also call on President Khatami to give substance to his statements about religious freedom and the rule of law by taking a strong stand against the reactionary clerics who want to

keep Iran isolated from the international community and the modern world.

STATEMENT ON INTRODUCTION OF  
THE NORTHERN MARIANAS DELEGATE ACT

**HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD**

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 6, 1998*

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, today, I introduce the Northern Marianas Delegate Act, to provide for a non-voting Delegate to the House of Representatives to represent the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is the newest and only American territory acquired by the United States in this century. The composition of the CNMI includes the principal islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota as well as other northern islands in the Mariana Island chain. Guam is also located in the Marianas chain and sits as CNMI's closest neighbor in the Pacific and sister American territory. It is befitting that the people of Guam have the honor today to share in the introduction of this bill for our neighbors, and for our brothers and sisters of Chamorro heritage in the Northern Marianas who share Guam's indigenous identity.

The Northern Mariana Islands began its relationship with the United States more than fifty years ago. On the beaches of Saipan and Tinian, American Forces expelled a colonial power that had acquired these islands as part of its larger Pacific empire. In the following years, the seeds of American democracy sprouted a young vibrant American community eager to venture their own path. In 1976, the Northern Mariana Islands entered into a commonwealth arrangement with its American liberators and have since made great strides in developing its unique island community and economy.

This legislation is consistent with recommendations of the Commission of Federal Laws appointed by Presidents Reagan, which recommended a CNMI Delegate in 1985. The Commission outlined three reasons for this recommendation: Fairness, Democratic principles and Practical utility.

Today the American citizens who live in the Northern Marianas contribute and participate in the life of our nation in all the same ways that every other American citizen does in his own community. They pay taxes, serve in the military and work hard for the progress of their communities.

America's experiment with democracy continues to evolve and develop. We seek and pursue a more perfect union. We are a proud nation of free citizens that enjoy elected representation in the federal government. It is unfortunate that our current system dictates that Americans in the fifty states enjoy perfect representation in the forms of Congressional representatives and U.S. Senators, representation of our citizens in the territories and the District of Columbia are by Delegates and a Resident Commissioner who cannot vote on the floor of this House and then there are those American citizens in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands who receive no representation at all.

Citizens of American territories are a unique group. Our constituents are grateful Americans and the citizenry are perhaps more loyal than any other in any state. Per capita, we have more men and women serving in the armed services and protecting our country and our way of life. With fervor, we engage ourselves in the political process. At elections, our voter participation far exceeds the national average. Our citizens are excited about freedom and we work to preserve democratic ideals and strive for equality of opportunities.

It is no different for my Pacific brethren to the North of Guam. They too are committed to the ideals of American democracy and have a long history of developing their island within the American political framework. They chose to have a close and permanent relationship with the United States through a commonwealth arrangement. However, when the CNMI signed a covenant with the U.S., they were denied representation in Congress. Their current non-representation in the U.S. House of Representatives is the least perfect representation of any citizen on American soil. The dedication and loyalty of our American citizens in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands should not be overlooked. They deserve representation in the U.S. House of Representatives. It is an injustice that the American citizens in the CNMI are the only U.S. citizens without representation in the U.S. Congress.

Without appropriate representation, miscommunications and problems arise because there is no one among our membership who stands up to speak for the Americans in the CNMI. There is no one amongst us willing to make the political investment to advocate on behalf of the CNMI on a daily basis. A Delegate for the CNMI will advance their cause and can work to resolve situations and concerns before they snowball into larger issues.

There are those amongst us who may argue that representation is contingent on tax contribution to the Treasury. I do not recall that a deposit into the treasury is a condition for your rights as a citizen.

There are those who will resist entertaining this issue because there are problems in the CNMI that have made its way to the surface and have received national and international attention. They will argue that the CNMI Delegate Act should not be addressed until the concerns are resolved. I disagree.

I believe that the best way to resolve these problems is to throw open the doors of the House and invite a representative of the CNMI to the table of public discussion. Even criminals have the right to representation in a court of law.

Whether a state or a territory, we all have our problems with the federal government. At times, it's on an individual basis with an agency over a Social Security check or a Medicaid payment. Other times it is contradiction between state and federal viewpoints. In one way or the other, as Representatives in the U.S. Congress we become involved or can involve ourselves in the process. It's an advantage for our electorate and a right of American citizenship. We should not leave other citizens behind or alienate them from this process. Perpetual denial of a Delegate for the CNMI is a denial of the basic right to represent oneself in the formation of public policy.

Participation must be extended to all citizens. Our American citizenship has as its