

Like many of my Catholic brothers and sisters, I do not believe it is the government's business to target religion and require that its believers violate their conscience and their religious beliefs—or suffer the consequences. I do not believe it is the role of government to persecute religions.

I am proudly and passionately pro-life. But regardless of what your views may be on abortion or contraception, I imagine most Americans would be alarmed to learn of our government chipping away at the First Amendment, mandating its citizens disregard their liberty, convictions, and conscience—or else. This is totally unacceptable. No government should force its citizens to violate their religious beliefs.

I recently joined with a number of my colleagues in urging that the administration reconsider this unprecedented government overreach and violation. But I would go further and encourage the administration to abandon this rule. Abandon this rule and continue to allow these Americans who oppose these services for either moral or religious reasons to live their lives in the way that they see fit and without the fear of punishment.

Bishop Jenky of the Diocese of Peoria concludes his letter by saying:

“This country once fought a revolution to guarantee the freedom, but the time has clearly arrived to strongly assert our fundamental human rights.”

Our religious freedoms are under attack. I was sent here to uphold, protect, and defend the United States Constitution, and I intend to do so.

TRIBUTE TO JOCK MICHAEL SMITH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize and pay tribute to one of our Nation's most distinguished trial lawyers, an avid sports collector, historian, author, and family man, Attorney Jock Michael Smith.

Attorney Smith was a well-respected member of the Alabama bar, and he was known nationally throughout the legal community for his exceptional legal abilities, his legendary courtroom style, civic activism, and passion for equal justice for all. Sadly, Attorney Smith passed away at his home in Montgomery, Alabama, on January 8 at the age of 63.

The story of Jock Michael Smith is not just one of a notable and accomplished attorney. His story is one of hope, beating the odds, and the fearless pursuit of one's dreams. The life and legacy of Jock Smith is an inspiration to us all.

Despite losing his father tragically at a young age and despite being told in high school that he could not be anything more than a sanitary worker, he did not let that deter him. This young boy, son of a widow, single mother of two, was determined to chart his own course.

Inspired by the memory of his father, Jock developed his oratorical and academic gifts. He graduated with honors from Tuskegee University and then matriculated to the University of Notre Dame School of Law on an academic scholarship.

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As a first year law student, Jock founded the Black American Law Students' Association chapter at Notre Dame. He earned his law degree in 1973.

In 1996, Attorney Smith cofounded a partnership with the late renowned attorney, Johnny Cochran. The Cochran Law Firm, as it is known, is actually the law firm of Cochran, Cherry, Givens & Smith. It has 22 offices across this country and continues to be one of the most well-known criminal defense and civil plaintiff law firms in the Nation.

Attorney Smith's remarkable legal career was filled with many record-setting verdicts and settlements. A landmark \$1.6 billion verdict against Southwestern Life Insurance was one of the largest in America's history in 2004. He represented the legacy estates of both Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., and he represented the Negro League Players and civil rights activist Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth.

During his illustrious career, Attorney Smith's hard work and leadership was acknowledged by numerous awards. He was recognized by the Alabama Trial Lawyers Association for his tireless dedication and unwavering commitment. As an author, Jock Smith shared his amazing life story in an autobiography entitled “Climbing Jacob's Ladder: A Trial Lawyer's Journey on Behalf of ‘the Least of These.’”

Media personality and author Tavis Smiley best summed up the gift he gave us by writing down his memoirs: Jock Smith's story is part of America's story. It's part history lesson and part sermon and 100 percent fascinating. He and lawyers like his late partner, Johnny Cochran, are modern-day knights, using their skills to protect both the poor and defenseless. On a personal level, “Climbing Jacob's Ladder,” his book, shows how faith and hard work can bring great success.

Jock Smith was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, and he was the first African American to serve on the board of the President's Advisory Council of the National Wildlife Federation.

Jock Smith was amazing. I know as a young lawyer his life stands as a personal tribute, to me. I am grateful to have known him. I know that I walk in a path that he blazed, and for that, I am eternally grateful to his family. Some of his family members are here with us today in the gallery. He is forever remembered as a remarkable and amazing man. He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Ms. Yvette Smiley-Smith; and his daughter, Janay Smith, who is with us today.

I want to say, in closing, that his life is truly a testament to what is possible

with opportunity—when you take opportunity—and with so many resources. Jock lived life by his favorite quote that he always would say: “Service is the price we pay for the space that we occupy.”

It is with tremendous pride, privilege, and great honor that today I get to recognize the life and legacy of Attorney Jock Smith on the floor of the United States Congress so that all of us can remember that we must pay our fair share for the space that we occupy.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded not to make reference to occupants in the gallery.

CONGRESS IS NOT A CAREER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. NUGENT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Speaker, we in the House of Representatives need to start restoring the trust that the American people gave when they elected us to this office. Last night, 100 Members voted to give themselves a pay raise. Is that what we're all about? It's not about us enriching ourselves, because I don't believe that's what our Founding Fathers thought.

When I first came to Congress last year, I found out that I had an option to either take the health insurance plan that the Federal Government offered or to go out on my own and do my own thing. And I took the option, even though it cost myself and my family over \$10,000 more. But then we started to look at options with regards to the Federal Employee Retirement System that all Members of Congress are required to be in, and also the Thrift Savings Plan that all Members of Congress are part of, whether they want to be or not—even though it's different for the Senate. The House of Representatives back in the 104th Congress decided that they wanted to take that option away. I think that's wrong. I believe that America is about choices.

I also believe that Congress is not a career. And so when those Members of Congress don't have an option to remove themselves from the Federal Employee Retirement System, as I wanted to, or those Members of Congress that wanted to participate in the Thrift Savings Plan but are told that you, the taxpayers, are going to give us an additional 5 percent of our salary because you like us so much, I asked if I could exempt myself from that. And guess what? We were told we couldn't because those prior to us had made a decision for us now that we couldn't do that, we couldn't do what we think is right for this body.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, it is about doing the right thing. It is about looking back at what our Founding Fathers envisioned for this country. It's about service to this country, not about enriching ourselves on the backs of our fellow countrymen.