

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3230,
PAY OUR GUARD AND RESERVE
ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 30, 2014

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Conference Report on H.R. 3230, the Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act of 2014. I also want to commend Chairman SANDERS, Chairman MILLER, Ranking Member BURR, and Ranking Member MICHAUD for their work on crafting a bipartisan bill that not only provides for our veterans but addresses many of the systemic problems within the Veteran Health Administration.

The final conference agreement provides over \$17 billion in funding for the Department of Veteran Affairs. This includes \$10 billion in funding to allow veterans who live more than 40 miles away from a VA facility, or who have waited more than 30 days for an appointment at a VA medical center, to seek care with an outside provider. In addition, it provides the VA with \$6.5 billion in funding to address its critical shortage of doctors and nurses and to allow the VA to enter into 27 new medical facility leases. By expanding access to care, increasing staffing needs, and authorizing new clinics, this bill is a great first step in tackling many of the ongoing problems that have surfaced at the VA in recent years.

The Conference Report strengthens a number of other programs to help support our veterans and their families. It expands eligibility and provides veterans who experienced military sexual trauma while on inactive duty the opportunity to seek sexual trauma counseling. It also modifies the Post 9/11 GI Bill and allows veterans to receive in-state tuition rates at any public university, if they decide to relocate. Finally, today's legislation extends an important program set to expire later this year to provide housing for veterans struggling with traumatic brain injuries.

I do, however, have reservations about a provision in this bill which gives the VA Secretary broad authority to fire Senior Executive Service (SES) employees even though the VA already has tools to remove SES employees who are rated unsatisfactory. However, I am encouraged that—unlike legislation that passed the House earlier this year—the conference agreement does provide SES employees with an expedited appeals process through a Merit Systems Protection Board.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more important than providing for those who have sacrificed so much for our country. I encourage my colleagues to join me in support of this bill.

IN RECOGNITION OF MARGARET
EDGE CHALFANT

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Margaret Edge Chalfant for a noteworthy career dedicated to the advancement

of the arts. After almost a decade as Executive Director of the Greater Denton Arts Council (GDAC), Ms. Chalfant is retiring from her distinguished service at the helm of the non-profit organization.

Margaret Chalfant's successful leadership at the GDAC began in 2005; in that same year, she was selected to attend the Women's Leadership Summit in Washington, DC. During her GDAC tenure, she has expanded and enhanced its permanent collection, upgraded and updated the physical facilities, and highlighted the importance of the arts through education outreach to students from the elementary level through college. She instituted an After School Arts program for Denton ISD schools, hosted An Artistic Discovery—the 26th Congressional district's annual high school art contest, and collaborated with the University of North Texas and Texas Woman's University to initiate the Getting Started with the Arts program. Throughout her career she has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the arts, as well as engaging in multiple civic activities to benefit the Denton community and the North Texas region.

The sterling reputation of the Greater Denton Arts Council is a reflection of the outstanding administration of Ms. Chalfant, and her professional legacy will continue to benefit the citizens of Denton for years to come. I join her colleagues and the community in commending the Greater Denton Arts Council's Executive Director, Margaret Edge Chalfant, for her outstanding record and extend best wishes upon her retirement. It is my privilege to represent the City of Denton in the U.S. House of Representatives.

RECOGNIZING THE
CHOCTAWHATCHEE CHEER-
LEADERS AS 1A SMALL CO-ED
DIVISION STATE CHAMPIONS

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to congratulate the First Congressional District of Florida's Choctawhatchee Senior High School Indians for winning the 1A Small Co-ed Division State title at the Florida High School Athletic Association Cheerleading State Championship on January 31, 2014 for the third year in a row.

Located in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, Choctawhatchee High School boasts an exceptional cheer squad, led by coaches Shaunice Clay and Hailey Looney. During the preliminaries, the squad ranked 1st out of a total of fourteen squads before claiming victory over Harmony High School and Gulf Breeze High School.

I commend the following young men and women of the squad for both challenging themselves and inspiring their fellow students and youth throughout our community: Jenna Angelos, Jean Bernier, Megan Bradley, Loren Burkett, Olivia Carr, Kacey Childers, Dani Connelly, Alexia Faustinella, Shayla Fish, Tiffany Fought, Zach Given, Anna Greene, Rielly Griggs, Holly King, Kerri Kriech, Amy LeMenager, Rachel Loughney, CJ McDonald, Emily McGaughy, Johnny Mundy, Temple Nichols, Ashley Oliver, Sydney Pattison, Alli-

son Plantz, Storme Rynearson, Emory Shelton, Olivia Sims, Tristin Stevens, Mark Thomas Walker, Shane Wright, and Rachelle Wyatt. Choctawhatchee Senior High School's victory at the Florida High School Athletic Association Cheerleading State Championship is a true testament to the commitment and dedication of all the members of the squad, and it is a great reflection on Fort Walton Beach and the greater Northwest Florida community.

On behalf of the United States Congress, my wife Vicki and I congratulate the Indians for their extraordinary victory and wish them all the best for their continued success.

ON ADDRESSING THE HUMANI-
TARIAN CRISIS ON OUR BORDER

HON. AL GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I support Comprehensive Immigration Reform, which would secure our borders, create a pathway to citizenship, and provides for electronic employment verification. I believe more than ever after having seen the humanitarian consequences of the crisis firsthand, we must act now. Having a broken system that is in dire need of reform only exacerbates the issue.

However, I oppose H.R. 5230, Making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, and for other purposes, and H.R. 5272, To prohibit certain actions with respect to deferred action for aliens not lawfully present in the United States, and for other purposes. These bills do not adequately address the problems in our immigration system or deal with the current influx of unaccompanied minors. These bills will also end protections that have provided relief to millions of people currently living in the U.S.

H.R. 5230 emasculates current anti-trafficking law, meant to protect minors from certain countries and allow them to apply for asylum in this country. The bill provides a fraction of the \$3.7 billion requested by President Obama to address the humanitarian crisis at our border. The bill would likely produce simulated hearings with fast-track adjudication that mimics due process for unaccompanied minors.

H.R. 5272 eviscerates the vital Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which has provided much needed relief for millions of undocumented immigrants who arrived in this country as minors. DACA allows the Department of Homeland Security prosecutorial discretion towards some undocumented immigrants who immigrated to our nation as children not of their own volition.

Mr. Speaker, the humanitarian crisis caused by an influx of unaccompanied minors from mostly Central American countries with staggering crime rates has tested our nation's laws and values. We are a nation of laws but we are also a nation of values. We must treat all individuals, especially minors, in a way that is consistent with our values.

IS ANYBODY LISTENING?

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's USA Today, columnist Kirsten Powers raised an important question,

QUOTE: "Iraq's Christians are begging the world for help. Is anybody listening?" UNQUOTE.

Mr. Speaker, this is the seventh consecutive legislative day that I have come to House floor to ask that same question:

Is anybody listening?

Less than two weeks ago, on July 19, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, more commonly referred to as ISIS, ordered Christians to convert to Islam, pay taxes levied upon non-Muslims, or be killed.

In the region around Mosul—what we know as Nineveh in the Bible—there is not a single Christian left.

Think about that. There is not one Christian left in the ancient heart of Iraqi Christianity. A 2,000-year presence wiped away before our eyes in just a matter of weeks.

Yet President Obama has said nothing.

And Secretary of State Kerry has said nothing.

ISIS has driven people from their homes, taken their cars as they attempted to leave and stripped them of all their money and possessions.

We have heard accounts of ISIS terrorists cutting the fingers of people to steal their wedding rings.

Yet President Obama has said nothing.

And Secretary of State Kerry has said nothing.

Gruesome videos produced by ISIS are appearing on Internet showing beheadings and public displays of dismembered Christians. I couldn't even watch the video to the end; it was that grotesque.

Yet President Obama has said nothing.

And Secretary of State Kerry has said nothing.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power—who made a name for herself denouncing the U.S. and other governments' failure to act in the face of genocide—also has been silent on these genocidal acts.

What Power famously labeled "A Problem from Hell" is now taking place in Iraq on her watch.

Yet she says nothing in her post at the UN in New York.

Perhaps this lack of action should not be surprising given that her boss, President Obama, has said nothing.

President Obama has had multiple opportunities to use his "bully pulpit" to raise global attention to this genocide.

But we have heard NOT ONE WORD on the situation of the Christians being driven out of Iraq.

Let me lay out what has happened in Iraq just in the last six weeks:

All of Christians in Mosul have fled to the north, to Alqosh, Dohuk and other Assyrian villages.

In nearby Qaraqosh, 50,000 Assyrian Christian residents have fled from fighting between ISIS and Kurds.

All Christian institutions in Mosul—all 45 churches monasteries and cemeteries—have

been looted, destroyed, occupied, converted to mosques or shuttered.

All non-Sunni Muslim groups in Mosul—Shabaks, Yazidis and Turkmen—have been targeted by ISIS. Most have fled.

Water and electricity have been cut off by ISIS. The water shortage in the areas surrounding Mosul is now a full-blown crisis.

Mosul is now governed under Sharia law.

Congress is about to adjourn until after Labor Day. If the events of the last two months are any indication, one can only imagine the horrors that await over the next five weeks.

Absent urgent action what more will be on this list?

We cannot continue to sit back and watch these atrocities unfold.

President Obama, Secretary Kerry, Ambassador Power—before you take your summer vacations, you have a moral obligation to speak up.

Martin Luther King said QUOTE: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." UNQUOTE

President Obama, in your lifetime, books will be written on the end of Christianity in the Middle East.

History will acknowledge you and your administration's lack of will to do something—anything.

You have the power and the pulpit to do something before it is too late.

If you continue to do nothing, your silence will remain heavy on your conscious long after you leave office.

Mr. President, there are a number steps you can take right now that would make a difference—steps that don't require new funds or additional congressional action:

ONE. You can sign the bipartisan legislation approved by the House and Senate to create a special envoy to promote religious freedom in the Middle East that has been sitting on your desk this week. It is just waiting for your signature.

You can name someone to fill this post who can immediately deploy to the region to work with the Kurdish and Iraqi governments.

TWO. You can appoint someone in your administration to be the lead person coordinating all of the U.S. government resources necessary to stop this genocide.

THREE. You can publicly thank the Kurdish authorities for protecting the Christians and other religious minorities who have fled ISIS and found refuge in the Kurdish region;

FOUR. You can work with trusted NGO's—like Catholic Relief, Save the Children, UNICEF and others—who are already on the ground trying to help, but need U.S. assistance and leadership to help more people.

You can make sure they have the food, water, housing and medical resources to help the victims of this genocide; and

FIVE: You can direct the Secretary of State and USAID administrator to reprogram existing funds to provide these resources to trusted NGO's on the ground.

Mr. President, those are five simple steps you can do now and over the next five weeks that would make a difference.

All it takes is your interest and your leadership.

This April marked the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda.

One need only look at President Clinton's continued regret for his failure to act to stop

the Rwandan genocide to see how President Obama and his administration will feel years from now for their failure to act.

Last year, Clinton said "If we'd gone in sooner, I believe we could have saved at least a third of the lives that were lost . . . it had an enduring impact on me."

They would do well to recall the words of Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, who said: QUOTE: "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

Mr. Speaker, I close with the words of German Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who stood up to the tyranny and horror of Nazism, and said, QUOTE: "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

It's time to act, while there are still people left to save.

Listen to the words of Psalm 82:3–4:

Defend the weak and the fatherless; Uphold the cause of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; Deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

Also, in the Old Testament in Ecclesiastes 4:1 it says,

"Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed—and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors—and they have no comforter."

Mr. President, I call on you to be on the side of the oppressed Christians.

SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN
SUPPORT FOR THE CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY IN IRAQ

HON. TRENT FRANKS

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, last month, 55 of my colleagues and I sent a priority letter to President Obama urging him to actively prioritize security and humanitarian support for the Christian community in Iraq. We specifically warned him of the dangers and brutality of the terrorist group ISIS in Iraq who are now rampaging across Iraq and terrorizing the vulnerable Christian population.

In the letter, we specifically pointed out to Mr. Obama that QUOTE, "Parts of Syria and Iraq that have previously fallen under the rule of ISIS have witnessed summary execution, beheadings and even crucifixions." And that QUOTE, "Absent immediate action, we will most certainly witness the annihilation of an ancient faith community from the lands they've inhabited for centuries." UNQUOTE

Tragically, Mr. Speaker, President Obama—who once likened ISIS to a junior varsity basketball team—simply ignored us again, as he has done so many times before. And now ISIS, this "junior varsity basketball team", is beheading their way across Iraq and has declared that there would be QUOTE "nothing for [the Christians] but the sword" if they do not convert." Last week, ISIS torched a 1,800-year-old church in Mosul and ruthlessly destroyed the historic tomb of Jonah. Images of ISIS beheadings, crucifixions, rapes, torture and mass execution are all over the Internet and social media. Just this morning, I met with