my colleagues in the House of Representatives might join me in this effort to privatize the USPS so that it will be a responsive, efficient service for all Americans to use in the years to come.

IN TRIBUTE TO THE LATE MARGARET ROACH

HON. PETER DEUTSCH

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 1999

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, the South Florida community has lost a truly great leader. I am saddened that Margaret Blake Roach passed away at the age of 88 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, on July 16, 1999. We mourn the loss of a woman whose legacy will undoubtedly be remembered for years to come.

Margaret Roach was at the forefront of the social justice movement in Broward County for three decades. Well known as the founder and president emeritus of the Urban League of Broward County, Margaret was also the founding member of the Broward/South Palm Beach region of the National Conference for Community and Justice, formerly the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Her leadership was instrumental in the fight for social equality throughout South Florida and, indeed, the entire state of Florida as well.

During her 24 years as an administrator in Broward County Schools and a trustee and former chairperson of the board of trustees in Broward County Schools and a trustee and former chairperson of the board of trustees at Broward Community College, Margaret Roach was very active in various civic matters. Though she retired from the school district in 1975, Margaret continued to work on behalf of children nationwide. She played significant roles in the United Way, Habitat for Humanity, and the Cleveland Clinic. It truly seems that there was no organization that worked for the greater good in Broward County in which Margaret Roach did not play a role.

Mr. Speaker, while Margaret Roach's passing is a tremendous loss for the South Florida community, I can say without hesitation that her memory lives on through the work of the many organizations to which she dedicated her life. Margaret was an extraordinary human being who went above and beyond what she needed to be, because of her sincere desire to help others. For the thousands of lives she has touched, I thank and praise Margaret Blake Roach for her hard work, her leadership, and her compassion for others.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JULIA CARSON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 1999

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, on rollcall 310, I inadvertently voted "no." I intended to be recorded as "yes."

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY PROTECTION ACT OF 1999

HON. SPENCER BACHUS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 1999

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Religious Liberty Protection Act.

First let me commend the gentleman from Florida, Mr. CANADY. As chairman of the subcommittee, Mr. CANADY has established himself as a stalwart in defending the Constitution and our precious right to the free exercise of the religious freedoms.

Mr. Speaker, let us not forget, let us always be mindful, that the very first freedom guaranteed by our forefathers in the Bill of Rights was the right to freely exercise our religious beliefs. When we study history, we quickly recognize that this is neither coincidence nor accident that our forefathers enumerated this as the first constitutional right, for they came to this country seeking the right to freely exercise their religious beliefs. Since our first forefathers arrived on our shores until very recently this freedom has been unquestioned. Today, Americans are united on few things but we almost uniformly agree that our religious liberties should be cherished and protected.

However, sadly, in 1990 the Supreme Court, created by the very Constitution which guarantees our right to religious freedom, began, hopefully unwittingly, what constitutes as no less than an assault on this freedom. Is it not inconceivable that, of all things, of all institutions, our Supreme Court has been at the forefront of denying Americans this cherished right? They did so, in a 5–4 decision, by repealing a long-established legal principle which required the government to prove a compelling state interest before restricting religious liberty. Within a year following this unfortunate decision, Catholic prisoners were denied access to priests or their confessionals were monitored, Jewish prisoners were denied the right to wear yarmulkes, and a Christian church right here in Washington, DC, was ordered to stop feeding the homeless. Congress quickly responded to this breach of protection created by the Supreme Court, and with only three dissenting votes, passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act which restored the historic compelling state interest test. It was quickly signed into law by President Bill Clinton.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court rules this act unconstitutional. I respect the Supreme Court, both the institution and its members. Sadly, their decision, in my opinion, neither respected the jurisdiction that the Constitution conveys to the Congress nor preserved the checks and balances of the Constitution. In a display of legalism which escapes this Member's understanding and to this Member defies common sense, they stated that Congress had the power to enforce the constitutional rights protected by the 14th Amendment, the amendment on which the 1993 act was based, but not the right to "expand them." It is hard to imagine that Congress' pronouncement stating that the first freedom in the Constitution, the free exercise of our religious beliefs which was the catalyst for the very founding of our country should not be swept away without a compelling state interest was somehow an "expansion" of our religious liberties. If a constitutional right can be taken away without compelling reason, on a whim, or with a minimum of justification, it is not in any way a well protected right.

Additionally, it is difficult to imagine that Congress' attempt to protect the first right delineated in the Constitution is somehow prohibited by the Constitution. Not only is it unimaginable, ti is unacceptable. For that reason, this Congress, this day, representing the people of this country, must again act to protect the precious religious freedoms and liberties of those we represent. To do otherwise would allow the Supreme Court, in what this Member perceives to be an arbitrary decision, to set itself up as the sole arbitrator, determinator and protector of our constitutional rights. The basis of our constitutional rights is not the Supreme Court; it is the Constitution. I, for one, firmly believe that the Constitution also gave this body, as the elected representatives of the people, a right, and further an obligation, to protect our constitutional freedoms.

Certainly, is not the right and the obligation to protect our first freedom the right and obligation of all three branches of government? I will never accept the premise, nor should this Congress, that only the Supreme Court is vested with this right and this power. To do so would basically give the Supreme Court alone the power to restrict the very precious rights encompassed in our Constitution without any check or balance. To do so would also surrender our obligation to defend the Constitution, an obligation we swear to uphold upon our election. To defend the Constitution should be our first obligation, not someone else's obligation.

Our forefathers in their wisdom did not give to the Supreme Court alone the power to protect our Constitutional rights and freedoms. They, in fact, gave this obligation and responsibility to all three branches of government. It is not a duty that we should constitutionally avoid. Let us not dodge or shirk this solemn responsibility today. Let us instead, not with three dissenting votes, but unanimously pass the Religious Liberty Protection Act.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LYNN N. RIVERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 1999

Ms. RIVERS. Mr. Speaker, the following is a list of votes that I missed because I had to return to Michigan due to a family emergency. Had I been present, I would have voted as follows:

Rollcall No. 281—McGovern amendment—"yes."

Rollcall No. 282—Sanders amendment—"yes."

Rollcall No. 283—Coburn amendment—"yes."

Rollcall No. 284—Sanders amendment—"yes."

Rollcall No. 285—Sanders amendment—"yes."