

jungle of taxation and complexity that they found themselves. So what they determined was that the place to be taxed would be where the receiver receives that particular call, and the taxing authority would be limited to that. That way, there would not be a proliferation of taxing authorities, nor of taxing acts on any part of the taxing community.

So we come to this moment ready to present a bill to the Congress that has been prepared for us by the goodwill of the wireless industry people and the taxing authorities who wanted to solve the situation without too much trouble.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation. I will not burden the House with a duplicate description of the legislation. The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS), the distinguished chairman of the subcommittee, has given us a very accurate and adequate description of what this legislation does.

We are dealing today with a complex interstate taxation issue, and we are dealing with it the right way. Industry and State and local governments have worked together for the last 2 years to formulate an intelligent and fair way to manage the taxation of wireless telecommunications dealing with such complex issues as sourcing, nexus, and the place of a customer's primary use.

All this work analysis and cooperation will ensure the calls which may be made in one jurisdiction but which are received in or passed through several others are not confronted with a thicket of taxing jurisdictions. It will simplify the process of tax collection without imposing any new taxes, all of this to the benefit of consumers, of the industry, and of taxing jurisdictions.

I hope we can take a lesson from the way in which this complex taxation issue has been handled and perhaps apply it to the Internet tax issue which, so far, has not been handled in this way but has been overly politicized with a result that none of the critical issues in that area have been resolved and may not be resolved for some time to come.

It is regrettable that the Internet tax bill was marked up in committee and voted on the floor at the behest of the leadership before a hearing was held. I am almost embarrassed to note that we only held our first hearing on the subject after that floor vote. Shooting first and asking questions later is no way to help foster a stable economic environment for the new economy.

By very complete contrast, the development of this legislation has been a model of cooperation and bipartisanship. Majority and minority staff worked with the States, with local gov-

ernments, and with industry to perfect the bill introduced by the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman HYDE), the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman GEKAS), the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), and myself.

I support this legislation, and I commend all of those who came together to make it a product that will be a credit to this Congress. I hope that the cooperation, common sense, and consensus which has shaped this legislation will have a positive influence on the Internet tax issue as we deal with that in the future.

Regardless, this is a good and a worthy bill. It has the support of State and local government as well as of the industry. It has been introduced by the bipartisan leadership of the Committee on the Judiciary and of the subcommittee, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to lend my support to this eminently sensible piece of legislation. Due to the mobile nature of cellular telecommunications, traditional methods of assessing and collecting sales and use tax on them do not work well. Because the tax on a cellular telephone call now varies depending on where the customer was located when it was initiated, each individual call must be tracked and matched up with a taxing jurisdiction. This makes it difficult for the cellular service provider to calculate the tax, and difficult for the state and local governments to monitor compliance. It also causes a customer's state and local tax assessment to change from month to month, depending on where the customer has traveled.

H.R. 4391 will provide customers with simpler billing for their wireless telephone calls, while preserving state and local authority to tax wireless services. It will reduce the chances that a wireless call might be taxed by more than one jurisdiction, and will simplify and reduce the costs of tax administration, both for the carrier and for the taxing authority. This should in turn lower the cost of wireless telecommunications services to the consumer.

I want to congratulate the wireless telecommunications industry and state and local governments for having found a mutually agreeable solution to this problem. I know that they have worked long and hard on this project over at least the last two years.

I also want to commend my colleague from Mississippi, CHIP PICKERING, for his leadership on this issue. Had it not been for his initiative in identifying this proposal as a worthy response to the growing complexities posed by taxing mobile telecommunications, we would not be here today. He has labored tirelessly—and successfully—to gain consensus on the bill and has worked closely with our committee to perfect the work which we have before us.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I have no requests for time, so I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUYKENDALL). The question is on the

motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4391, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read:

“A bill to amend title 4 of the United States Code to establish sourcing requirements for State and local taxation of mobile telecommunication services.”.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS OF CERTAIN SYRIAN NATIONALS

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4681) to provide for the adjustment of status of certain Syrian nationals, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4681

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds as follows:

(1) President Bush and President Clinton successively conducted successful negotiations with the Government of Syria to bring about the release of members of the Syrian Jewish population and their immigration to the United States.

(2) In order to accommodate the Syrian Government, the United States was required to admit these aliens by first granting them temporary nonimmigrant visas and subsequently granting them asylum, rather than admitting them as refugees (as is ordinarily done when the United States grants refuge to members of a persecuted alien minority group).

(3) The asylee status of these aliens has resulted in a long and unnecessary delay in their adjustment to lawful permanent resident status that would not have been encountered had they been admitted as refugees.

(4) This delay has impaired these aliens' ability to work in their chosen professions, travel freely, and apply for naturalization.

(5) The Attorney General should act without further delay to grant lawful permanent resident status to these aliens in accordance with section 2.

SEC. 2. ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS OF CERTAIN SYRIAN NATIONALS.

(a) ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS.—Subject to subsection (c), the Attorney General shall adjust the status of an alien described in subsection (b) to that of an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence, if the alien—

(1) applies for adjustment of status under this section not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act or applied for adjustment of status under the Immigration and Nationality Act before the date of the enactment of this Act;

(2) has been physically present in the United States for at least one year after being granted asylum;

(3) is not firmly resettled in any foreign country; and

(4) is admissible as an immigrant under the Immigration and Nationality Act at the

time of examination for adjustment of such alien.

(b) ALIENS ELIGIBLE FOR ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS.—The benefits provided by subsection (a) shall apply to any alien—

(1) who—

(A) is a Jewish national of Syria;

(B) arrived in the United States after December 31, 1991, after being permitted by the Syrian Government to depart from Syria; and

(C) is physically present in the United States at the time of filing the application described in subsection (a)(1); or

(2) who is the spouse, child, or unmarried son or daughter of an alien described in paragraph (1).

(c) NUMERICAL LIMITATION.—The total number of aliens whose status may be adjusted under this section may not exceed 2,000.

(d) RECORD OF PERMANENT RESIDENCE.—Upon approval of an application for adjustment of status under this section, the Attorney General shall establish a record of the alien's admission for lawful permanent residence as of the date one year before the date of the approval of the application.

(e) AVAILABILITY OF ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW.—The Attorney General shall provide to applicants for adjustment of status under subsection (a) the same right to, and procedures for, administrative review as are provided to applicants for adjustment of status under section 209(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1159(b)).

(f) NO OFFSET IN NUMBER OF VISAS AVAILABLE.—Whenever an alien is granted the status of having been lawfully admitted for permanent residence pursuant to this section, the Secretary of State shall not be required to reduce the number of immigrant visas authorized to be issued under any provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

(g) APPLICATION OF IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT PROVISIONS.—The definitions contained in the Immigration and Nationality Act shall apply in the administration of this section. The fact that an alien may be eligible to be granted the status of having been lawfully admitted for permanent residence under this section shall not preclude the alien from seeking such status under any other provision of law for which the alien may be eligible.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4681, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in 1992, the Bush Administration successfully negotiated with Syria to secure the release of persecuted Syrian Jews. To accommodate the Syrian Government, the U.S. was forced to admit the refugees on temporary visas and grant them asylum, rather than admitting them as refugees.

This arrangement resulted in long delays in adjustment to lawful permanent resident status, which in turn has impaired their ability to work in their chosen professions, travel freely, and apply for naturalization.

H.R. 4681, which ends this delay, was introduced by the gentleman from New York, my friend and colleague RICK LAZIO.

Congressman LAZIO'S attention to the welfare of this once-persecuted community is admirable, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO), and I ask unanimous consent that he be permitted to control the time for the balance of the debate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS), the chairman of the relevant subcommittee, for his leadership in allowing this bill to come to the floor, a bill that is of great importance in terms of both the sense of American justice and worldwide justice.

I also want to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER) for his assistance in making sure that we got this bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, can one imagine a country where the Jewish community lives in an atmosphere of oppression and repression? Can one imagine a nation whose absolute ruler keeps his entire Jewish population in servitude and in slavery?

Mr. Speaker, I know we are here to discuss the question of Jews who have sought asylum in the United States from Syrian tyranny and terror, but I would like for a moment to mention a case from an earlier era, a case that applies timeless lessons that can be applied to the matter that we are discussing here today.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the analogies between these two cases are instructive. The parallels are profound. The similarities are significant. Mr. Speaker, some 3,000 years ago, another Jewish community was held in bondage in a place called Egypt. Just as the Israelites were held hostage for years by Pharaoh, for years, the Syrian Jewish community served as a bargaining chip in a game of high stakes yet again. Pharaoh marshalled his army and marched and pursued, determined to enslave the Israelites again.

When the Syrian dictator Assad finally decided to let Syria's Jews leave for freedom, he imposed a condition on their departure, a condition that would continue to limit the lives of these Jews in their new home. Assad demanded that these Syrian Jews be allowed into the United States as asylum seekers rather than refugees. Assad made this demand for a reason. He was

aware that the United States immigration law makes it far more difficult for those who are asylum status to become American citizens.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, the Jews who fled Syrian persecution to the United States exist in legal limbo today. Many of them have no green cards. Many of them cannot pursue their chosen professions because they live in an immigration no-man's land that is neither here nor there.

Mr. Speaker, just as the Pharaoh's spite and malice made him pursue the fleeing Israelites, Assad's animosity propelled the long arm of interference that prevents these Jewish asylum seekers from integrating into America's society.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we all know what happened to Pharaoh and his army. Now we have an opportunity to enact the legislative equivalent of the closing of the Red Sea. Let us wash away the last bonds of slavery imposed on these Syrian Jews by an unfair and unjust dictator. Let us allow the Syrian Jews who have sought refuge in America to taste fully fruits of freedom.

Mr. Speaker, the Talmud teaches us that whoever saves one life, he has saved the entire world. Mr. Speaker, we have saved these Syrian Jews from threats of violence, imprisonment, and torture. We saved these Jewish asylum seekers from the bitter servitude that was their lot in their native land. But, Mr. Speaker, the task is not complete. As long as these Jews are denied an equal chance for citizenship, they will not truly have been brought to freedom.

Mr. Speaker, we began this task, we brought these Jewish asylum seekers from a regime of oppression into the promised land of liberty. Let us finish the job and pass this bill. This bill will allow them to become the active participants in the American dream that all Americans wish for.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) for his great work on this bill. I also want to particularly thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims.

I had originally offered a form of this bill in committee during the debate on the H-1B reform legislation, and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH) was kind in offering to help us make this issue a reality in some other form. I am glad that we are here on the floor to finally act on this.

Mr. Speaker, passage of this bill today will finally begin to bring closure for a group of Syrian Americans who have been persecuted for over 50 years.

In 1944, after Syria gained its independence from France, several of the

first acts taken by the fledgling government were designed to persecute Syria's small 2,500-year-old Jewish minority. Jewish immigration to Palestine was prohibited. The teaching of Hebrew was severely restricted. Boycotts were ordered against Jewish businesses. When the partition of Israel was declared in 1947, mobs in Aleppo attacked the Syrian Jewish community; over 200 homes were destroyed. Scores of Jews were slaughtered and synagogues were literally torched. Thousands of Jews illegally fled Syria to go to Israel.

In the years since 1947, the Jews' situation in Syria worsened. They were not permitted to emigrate. Jews who did temporarily leave the country were forced to post an onerous monetary deposit and literally to leave family members behind so as to assure their return. In the past, Syrian secret police engaged in 24-hour-a-day surveillance of the Jewish quarter in Damascus. They kept a file on every Jewish person, monitored all contacts between Jews and foreigners, and read the mail and tapped the phones of Syrian Jews.

Members of the Syrian Jewish community have been arrested on the mere suspicion of their intention to leave that country. They have been imprisoned without trial and tortured.

In 1992, the Bush administration made a diplomatic breakthrough in their negotiations with the late President Assad. Syrian leaders agreed to let Jews leave the country without the large deposit. Syria also allowed several complete Jewish families to leave the country. He still would not let Syrian Jews emigrate to Israel, but most of them went to the next best place, Brooklyn, New York, my district, and the district of the gentlemen from New York, Mr. NADLER and Mr. OWENS.

Brooklyn is now the home to over 25,000 Syrian Jews. The names of the Brooklyn neighborhoods that they came to were chanted in the shoals in Syria when this deal was announced.

Since the diplomatic breakthrough of almost 10 years ago, these Syrians have come to Brooklyn by the thousands and established themselves as model citizens. They are really part of the American dream.

But there is a problem that survives to this day and a problem that we seek to resolve with this legislation. Assad would not let these departures be labeled emigration in any way. He needed to save face. He forced the Jews to buy round trip plane tickets, and the INS agreed, our INS agreed as part of this deal to admit these Jews as tourists. They were then granted asylum. As asylee tourists, Syria's Jews received temporary non-immigrant visas. Usually, when the United States admits members of a persecuted alien minority, it admits them as refugees.

□ 1030

This is the critical difference under U.S. immigration law. It is very dif-

ficult for asylees to become permanent residents, and without permanent resident status, Brooklyn's Jews from Syria have been unable to travel freely, to apply for full citizenship, and to work in their chosen professions.

If Syrian Jews had been admitted as refugees, as is often the case from other countries, as they certainly would be by any sense of the word, they would likely be full citizens today. Instead, thousands of them reside in a form of immigration limbo. They have escaped Assad's persecution, but most of them have been unable to become permanent U.S. residents.

This bill changes that. It directs the Attorney General to adjust the status of these Syrian Jews to that of lawful permanent residents. Passage of this bill will signal the House's intention to close this awful chapter in Jewish persecution history. And when the President signs H.R. 4681 into law, these thousands of Syrian families will finally be able to fully participate in American life, a privilege they should have had years and years ago.

One final note to my colleagues. The recent passage of President Assad in Syria has brought with it a good deal of revisionist history. While we are taught not to speak ill of the dead, we have to remember that with Assad's passing, we also have to close a chapter in what has been the improper way that these emigres have been treated.

I want to commend the sponsors of this legislation, and I urge all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this historic bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

There are two other sponsors of the bill that I wanted to recognize for their hard work. One is the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FRANKS) and the other is a tireless advocate, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

I just wanted to emphasize with a personal story, Mr. Speaker, the cruelty and the injustice of the current status of Syrian Jews and talk about a person who has the potential to make a great difference in our society.

Joseph Durzieh. Joseph was a brilliant medical student at the University of Damascus, one of the handful of Jews allowed to pursue a higher education in Syria. And just for an aside, Mr. Speaker, I would note that it was not so long ago that Jews were not permitted to hold a government position or to work in a bank in Syria. There was that level of bias and discrimination.

Joseph came to America in 1992 and immediately proceeded to pass his United States medical equivalency exams with flying colors. He completed his internship in New York and now is working in a State University of New York fellowship program in Brooklyn.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Durzieh is a well-respected physician. He is highly esteemed by his fellow doctors. He is highly valued by his employers. He is highly beloved by his patients. Yet because he has been unable to obtain a green card, he cannot obtain a license to practice medicine in America. When his fellowship expires next year, Dr. Durzieh will have no choice but to leave the medical field.

Mr. Speaker, if that were to happen, we will all be the poorer for it. We will all be the poorer if because of an emigration law technicality the people of New York are deprived of the services of a gifted physician. We will all be the poorer if because of the vindictiveness of a Syrian regime we do not allow Dr. Joseph Durzieh to use his talents as a healer.

Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity here to see that justice is done, to ensure that the taste of freedom that all others enjoy are enjoyed by Syrian Jews. I urge the House to strongly, strongly support this measure.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER).

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill, and let me begin by expressing my appreciation to the leadership of the Committee on the Judiciary for rushing this bill to the floor, this simple and just bill.

This bill was introduced by the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO), the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FRANKS), the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), and myself on June 15, less than a month ago, and here it is on the floor. Lightning speed, as legislation goes. As I said, I want to express my appreciation to the committee leadership for that.

Mr. Speaker, we are dealing here with the result of the tyrannical conduct of the Syrian government, which for generations held the Jewish population, the small Jewish population of Syria, hostage to its tyranny. Even today the Jews and the Kurds are the only minorities in Syria not allowed by law to participate in the political system, and the Jews are the only minority in Syria whose passports and identity cards must note their religious affiliation.

In 1992, as was said before, as a result of negotiations by the President, President Assad of Syria agreed to let those Syrian Jews emigrate to the United States so long as they pretended they were not emigrating. So instead of being classified as refugees, because we agreed, the United States Government, to play along with Assad to let him save face, they came here as tourists, on tourist visas, and were then granted

political asylum. Because of that, they are not granted the same right as other refugees and the same ability to regularize their status and eventually become United States citizens.

The United States should not subordinate our justice system and our naturalization system to the tyranny of Syria. This simple bill asks a simple thing: Change the status of this small group of people, and the bill is capped at 3,000, change the status of this small group of people, in effect to refugees, as they really were and are, give them the same rights and stop kowtowing 8 years later to the whim of the Syrian dictator.

It is a just bill, it is a good bill, and it is a simple bill. It rights an injustice, and it will be of great benefit to a number of people, albeit a small number of people; but justice demands its passage. I urge all my colleagues to vote for the bill.

Again, I thank the leadership of the Committee on the Judiciary, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS), and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) for helping speed this bill to where it is today.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS), the distinguished subcommittee chairman.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I want to, by way of wrap-up, to pay tribute to the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) for the expedited procedure, to which the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER) alluded in his remarks, about how swiftly and accurately this bill was brought to the floor at this juncture.

Witness what the gentleman from New York was able to do. A bill that came out of committee came to the floor under the auspices of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH), who was not able to be here today, and the committee was not able to act as such, so there was a recruitment of the chairman of the Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law to appear on the floor and to then recruit the gentleman from the minority side to be able to come to the floor and to give a history of the situation that brought us to this juncture.

All of this was done in a short period of time. And with much eloquence the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO), the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER), and the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER) explained the situation to us, and we are now well poised to proceed with enactment of this bill.

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to commend the leadership, particularly that of the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH).

Lest we too dramatically rewrite the history of this bill, let us remember that this first came to the full Committee on the Judiciary, as my good friend from Pennsylvania just recognized, in the form of an amendment that was offered on the H-1B bill, where the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH) was kind enough to object to its passage at that time but offered to see that it was handled expeditiously. And I too want to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAZIO) for taking up the cause on the Republican side.

Let us not forget that these are real people in Brooklyn who are awaiting simple justice. I have to tell my colleagues that they are, in many ways, the classic American immigrant group, in that they came here fleeing persecution. When they came here, they built synagogues on Ocean Parkway, they built yeshivas, they started businesses. Some of the clothing that we wear today was made by members of the Syrian Jewish community who have become such leaders in the apparel profession, among others. And they have, all that time, been tourists. Under the law, they have been tourists. They have been the longest present tourists in the history of the United States, arguably. They are the only tourist visas that the INS could tell me they have ever issued that had no end date.

What we are saying is, their days as tourists are over. They are no longer visiting the United States. We have always known them to be American citizens at heart, and now they are American citizens on paper as well.

I too am deeply gratified that we are reaching this point. We are hopeful that the other body will act quickly on this. I have received assurances that the President will sign this bill and, hopefully, the next cheers we will hear are not for the freedom of those persecuted Syrian Jews, but the citizenship of those formerly persecuted American Syrian Jews.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me finally thank the distinguished chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), for allowing this bill to come to the floor with this expedited procedure and for lending a willing ear, frankly, to our efforts to see that justice is done. Thanks also to the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH), for his outstanding assistance in this matter.

And let us not forget the fine staff of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims, and of the full committee, Jim Wilon in particular, for their excellent assistance. All these people have come together for a common reason, to make sure that we have an opportunity here in the House to express our desire to

integrate Syrian Jews into American society and to achieve a measure of justice.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask for the passage of this bill.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4681, a bill to provide for the adjustment of status of certain Syrian nationals.

When Syria gained its independence from France in 1944, it engaged in acts of persecution against its small Jewish population. This involved such things as a prohibition against Jewish emigration to Palestine; a restriction on the teaching of Hebrew; and boycotts against Jewish businesses.

Jews who have left the country have been forced to post an onerous monetary deposit, and have had to leave family members behind so as to assure their return. Also, the Syrian secret police have harassed them. This has included a 24-hour-a-day surveillance of the Jewish quarter in Damascus and other steps to monitor the behavior of the Jews.

When the partition of Israel was declared in 1947, mobs in Aleppo attacked the Syrian Jewish community destroying more than 200 homes, killing many Jews, and torching synagogues.

Relief finally came in the 1990's, when the Bush and later the Clinton Administration made arrangements for 25,000 Jews to come to the United States. These Syrian Jews settled in Brooklyn New York. Although this was a tremendous breakthrough, the Syrian government imposed an undesirable condition on permission to leave Syria. The Jews were required to enter the United States as non-immigrant visitors and then to seek asylum instead of coming here as refugees.

The asylum applications were granted, but this did not lead to permanent resident status in the United States for many of them. Only a limited number of asylees can become permanent residents of the United States each year. Most of the Syrian Jews therefore have been unable to become permanent U.S. residents. This is completely unacceptable for people who have suffered the way the Syrian Jews have suffered and who have been given refuge in our country. They should be allowed to become lawful permanent residents of the United States.

H.R. 4681 would direct the Attorney General to adjust the status of these Syrian Jews to that of lawful permanent residents without regard to the numerical limitations that prevent this from happening under current law. This would make it possible for the Syrian Jews to finally make their stay in the United States a permanent one and to be able to participate fully in American life.

I am happy to support this legislation, Mr. Speaker, but I do have some reservations, not about what we are doing here, but what we are not doing. There are a group of immigrants who will still be locked out, and who still will not have relief. I am speaking of the "late amnesty" applicants and the immigrants who are asking for parity relief under the NACARA law of 1997.

In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act authorized the legalization of undocumented immigrants who could prove that they had been living in the United States since January 1, 1982.

Unfortunately, the Immigration and Naturalization Service ("INS") promulgated a rule that denied legalization to the immigrants in this group who had briefly left the country. INS then refused to accept applications from people who had violated this rule. But by the time the INS had agreed to modify the rule, the 12-month application period had ended and hundreds of thousands of people who could have established eligibility for legalization had been turned away.

I have introduced a bill, H.R. 4172, the Legal Amnesty Restoration Act of 2000, that would change the date of registry to 1986, which would give amnesty to any immigrant who has entered the United States before 1986. This legislation has the full support of the Clinton Administration.

The purpose of the NACARA parity is to offer the same opportunity for permanent residence to Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Haitians as was offered to Nicaraguans and Cubans in the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act of 1997. If this amendment is adopted, eligible nationals of these countries would receive treatment equivalent to that granted to the Nicaraguans and Cubans under the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act of 1997 (NACARA).

This action would allow certain nationals of Nicaragua and Cuba, and their qualified dependents, to have their immigration status adjusted to lawful permanent residence. Eligibility for this relief requires, among other things, continuous physical presence in the United States since December 1, 1995.

I support H.R. 4681, but I also hope that we can bring relief to others who are so desperately deserving of it and in dire need as well.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, today we have the opportunity to provide relief for 2,000 Syrian Jews, who have been residing in the United States for almost a decade. I commend our colleague from New York, Mr. LAZIO, for his dedication to these displaced people in bringing H.R. 4681 to the floor, today.

In 1992, after years of negotiations between the United States and Syria, President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker reached an agreement which allowed Syria's beleaguered Jewish population to seek asylum in the United States. However, as a condition of this accord, the Syrian Government demanded that the United States grant these Syrian Jews temporary non-immigrant visas that led to asylum status.

The Syrian government's demand forced the U.S. to deviate from its standard practice in which persecuted alien minorities are granted refugee status that can lead to naturalization.

As a result of this legal technicality, the Syrian Jews who sought refuge in the United States have encountered substantial difficulties in their quest for U.S. citizenship. The resulting delays have inhibited the ability of these Jews of Syrian origin to work in their chosen professions, travel freely and pursue the same quality life in the United States enjoyed by all Americans.

These individuals have become dedicated members of their communities. I am confident that granting lawful permanent resident status to the Syrian Jews will be a great benefit to both their community and our nation.

Accordingly, I urge all my colleagues in the House to Support H.R. 4681.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend Representative LAZIO, Representative WEINER, and the rest of the co-sponsors for their leadership on this important issue. The Syrian Jewish community experienced many years of persecution at the hands of the Syrian government. For decades, the Syrian Jewish community lived in fear of the secret police. They were barred from buying property, they had travel restrictions placed on them, and they could not work in government or at banks. Now, the U.S. Congress has the ability to ease the suffering of this community.

In 1992, through the efforts of President Bush and the State Department, Hafez Al-Assad agreed to end harsh travel restrictions against the Jewish community of his country. However, he did not want them to come to America as refugees. Instead, this persecuted community came to the U.S. on tourist visas. Because they came on visas, they were effectively blocked from applying for permanent residency in the U.S.

Several professions, such as the medical field, require this status in order to work. Like so many who come to the U.S., these people only wanted the opportunity to contribute to society and work in their chosen professions. I am glad that the U.S. Congress is finally correcting this unfair situation and putting these brave people on the road to citizenship and allowing them to realize their full potential as so many refugees and immigrants have before them.

It is time that the Syrian Jews are granted full access the American dream. I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, this bill is extremely important for a number of reasons. Jews in Syria were persecuted and discriminated against for decades. Because of discrimination and oppression, it was important for these Jews to leave Syria, and for the United States to help pursue this effort.

In general, people who are granted refugee visas to come to the U.S. from other nations are able to apply for permanent residence status after one year.

Unfortunately, although negotiations with the U.S. did eventually lead President Assad to allow Syrian Jews to leave Syria pursuant to an April 1992 Order, he only allowed them to come to the U.S. on tourist visas. Subsequently, these Jews were granted asylum. However, only 10,000 people that have been granted asylum may adjust their status to permanent residents each year. In recent years, many more than 10,000 people have sought permanent residence status.

As a result, many Syrian Jews have been seeking permanent resident status for many years. Without this status, the Syrian Jewish asylees are unable to seek and change employment readily, obtain a medical license, or apply for U.S. citizenship through the naturalization process.

The legislation before us today would require the Attorney General to adjust the status of the Syrian Jews who emigrated to the United States pursuant to Assad's 1992 Order to that of permanent resident. This legislation is critical to ensure that these people can come to enjoy the full benefits of living in the

United States—free from persecution and discrimination.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUYKENDALL). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4681, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AIMEE'S LAW

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 894) to encourage States to incarcerate individuals convicted of murder, rape, or child molestation, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 894

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE

This Act may be cited as "Aimee's Law".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) DANGEROUS SEXUAL OFFENSE.—The term "dangerous sexual offense" means sexual abuse or sexually explicit conduct committed by an individual who has attained the age of 18 years against an individual who has not attained the age of 14 years.

(2) MURDER.—The term "murder" has the meaning given the term under applicable State law.

(3) RAPE.—The term "rape" has the meaning given the term under applicable State law.

(4) SEXUAL ABUSE.—The term "sexual abuse" has the meaning given the term under applicable State law.

(5) SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONDUCT.—The term "sexually explicit conduct" has the meaning given the term under applicable State law.

SEC. 3. REIMBURSEMENT TO STATES FOR CRIMES COMMITTED BY CERTAIN RELEASED FELONS.

(a) PENALTY.—

(1) SINGLE STATE.—In any case in which a State convicts an individual of murder, rape, or a dangerous sexual offense, who has a prior conviction for any 1 of those offenses in a State described in paragraph (3), the Attorney General shall transfer an amount equal to the costs of incarceration, prosecution, and apprehension of that individual, from Federal law enforcement assistance funds that have been allocated to but not distributed to the State that convicted the individual of the prior offense, to the State account that collects Federal law enforcement assistance funds of the State that convicted that individual of the subsequent offense.

(2) MULTIPLE STATES.—In any case in which a State convicts an individual of murder, rape, or a dangerous sexual offense, who has a prior conviction for any 1 or more of those offenses in more than 1 other State described in paragraph (3), the Attorney General shall transfer an amount equal to the costs of incarceration, prosecution, and apprehension