June 11, 2009

I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 529 and with deep regret that this measure is necessary. I am saddened deeply by the tragic events that took place yesterday at the United States Holocaust Museum. Especially upsetting was the loss of Mr. Stephen Tyrone Johns, who loyally served and protected those visiting the Holocaust Museum for six years. Mr. Johns was known as a warm, friendly individual who was well-respected by his colleagues. My sincerest condolences and my most heartfelt prayers are with his family and friends, whose lives have been devastated so unfairly.

While yesterday's violence appears to have been the act of single individual, similar actions rooted in hatred and intolerance are not unknown to our society or our local communities. I am distressed by a recent report from the Anti-Defamation League, which indicated that my own state of New Jersey experiences the highest number of anti-Semitic incidents in the country. The persistence of these unacceptable acts throughout our nation indicates that the sinister notions of anti-Semitism, racism, and intolerance continue to plague our society. The Holocaust Museum stands as a testament to the tragedy and suffering that can occur when hatred goes unchallenged and turns to violence. It is also a place to reflect upon tremendous bravery and heroism. Yesterday's events, and the sacrifices made by Mr. Johns and his loved ones, are a profound reminder that we cannot be complacent. We must remain vigilant against prejudice and work together to promote peace and tolerance in our hometowns, across the nation, and around the world.