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## *House of Representatives*

### Honoring Rep. Joseph R. Pitts

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, it is hard to imagine a Congress without the incomparable JOE PITTS—a remarkable and highly accomplished lawmaker, a distinguished statesman, a man of principle and bedrock moral conviction and a Christian, who faithfully seeks to do God’s will on Earth as it is in Heaven no matter the cost, no matter the sacrifice, no matter the hardship.

As I think some of my colleagues know—particularly those who know him well—JOE was born in Kentucky into a family of strong Christian faith, a faith that has been passed on to his own three children; Carol, Karen, and Daniel.

JOE’s father was an Army chaplain during World War II, serving in the South Pacific after the war. The elder Pitts returned to the Philippines with his wife and children to serve as a missionary in a war-ravaged country. It was there that JOE saw the after effects of war; and that so profoundly affected him, he developed a heart there for human rights and a commitment to a strong national defense.

After high school, JOE attended Asbury College in Kentucky, as my friend and colleague earlier pointed out. He met Virginia—Ginny, as we know her— a wonderful lady. My wife Marie and I and JOE and Ginny have traveled

and have been together many times. She is just a wonderful wife of a half a century. Again, they not only have three children but a number of grandchildren as well.

JOE taught math, science, English, and physical education, as well as coached basketball. He served 5 ½ years in the United States Air Force, including three tours in Vietnam. He was the EW officer, electronic warfare officer, on a B–52 and completed 116 combat missions and earned the Air Medal with five oak leaf clusters.

Here in Washington, JOE has worked hard helping political prisoners, including people like Saeed Abedini and other Christian and non-Christian— Jewish and other religious and political prisoners around the world.

He has been tenacious in promoting prayer breakfasts all around the world so that members of parliaments and congresses from many countries would know the blessings of fellowship and prayer and being in touch with God.

He even traveled to Mongolia for the first prayer breakfast in the late 1990s. JOE leads an ambassadors’ prayer breakfast fellowship at the Cedars, right nearby in northern Virginia. I have had the privilege to join him for those breakfasts

on occasions. It is a time for ambassadors to get together from all over the world—different regions meeting at different times, sometimes many from many regions—to break bread, to talk about the Scriptures with some emphasis on policy but mostly about how God does minister to us, how forgiving He is, and how all of us are in need of reconciliation. And JOE PITTS is there leading that fellowship and has been doing it for decades.

JOE has been a leader in the fight against ongoing human rights abuses in Western Sahara and elsewhere. He is co-chair of the Lantos Human Rights Commission. And in Congress, of course, we know he has served in a number of key leadership positions, including his current position as chairman of the Health Subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce Committee, obviously working on so many important issues on diseases and disabilities. Top officials from the healthcare system present themselves before his committee for his review and oversight. He has been a problem-solver—he and his staff, working across the aisle to try to find solutions to these often vexing issues of health care.

On the greatest human rights issue of our time—protecting unborn babies and their mothers from the violence of abortion—JOE PITTS has not only saved countless precious lives and fostered reconciliation and hope for post-abortive women, but he has also been an extraordinary inspiration to all of us in Congress.

The way he comports himself. He never gets angry. He deals with the issue in a way that reaches out to people who may have a different view in the hopes that they will see the wisdom of protecting the innocent and most vulnerable.

JOE has been a leader on every prolife congressional policy—bills, amendments, administrative actions—since he won his seat in Congress in 1996. We are grateful for his powerful voice and vote on ending the hideous method called partial birth abortion; enacting multiple annual abortion funding bans; proscribing sex selection abortion, which is the

ultimate violation of women's rights to say: you are susceptible to killing because you happen to be female; protecting pain-capable unborn children as well as born-alive infants; and enforcing the conscience rights of pro-life Americans has been remarkable. His leadership

Had the Senate adopted the Housepassed Pitts-Stupak amendment, ObamaCare, with all of its egregious flaws, would have at least been abortion-free.

JOE PITTS has been the greatest friend and ally of persons with disabilities, including his robust defense of Terri Schiavo.

His service in the Pennsylvania General Assembly from 1973–1997, including his chairmanship of the powerful Appropriations Committee, to which he was elected by his peers, was filled with accomplishments, including his bold leadership in enacting the Abortion Control Act.

Someday future generations will look back on America's culture of death and wonder how and why a seemingly enlightened society, so blessed with civil rights protections, wealth, educational opportunities, information, medical breakthroughs, a free press, and a strong and diverse faith community could have allowed 60 million unborn children to be killed by abortion.

When the day comes and legal protections for the weak and the most vulnerable are restored, I believe future generations of Americans will remember and celebrate the tenacious heroes, the human rights heroes of today, people like Henry Hyde, compassionate women like Mother Teresa, and JOE PITTS, who persevered, prayed, and worked tenaciously on behalf of the least of these.

St. Francis once famously said: Always preach the gospel, and when necessary, use words.

By his example, by his perpetual radiating of Christ—just look at his eyes; there is kindness and compassion and empathy in JOE PITTS' eyes—he has inspired all of us to strive to do

His will on Earth, as it is in Heaven. And it is a distinct privilege and honor to be known as one of JOE PITTS' friends.

