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House of Representatives

RECOGNIZING THE FLUSHING
REMONSTRANCE AS THE
FOUNDATION OF RELIGIOUS
LIBERTY IN AMERICA

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 5, 2000

Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the significance of a document that was fundamental to shaping the United States as a land of liberties. I am not speaking about the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution. The document I want to recognize is the Flushing Remonstrance, which was written nearly 120 years before the Declaration of Independence.

For 300 years the Flushing Remonstrance, the first recorded defense of religious freedom in the New World, was locked in a vault in Albany, New York. The Remonstrance is believed by historians to be the first Declaration of Independence and a forerunner of the First Amendment.

As a result of the efforts of the *Queens Courier*, an award-winning community weekly newspaper, the historic document was brought to Queens for viewing at the Flushing Library. The initiative was

spearheaded by David Oats, a historian and special projects editor of the newspaper.

Now that the public display at the library is ending, I am working with the *Courier* and community groups to seek permanent custody of this document.

The saga of the document began more than 340 years ago when a group of about 30 freeholders in Flushing held a town meeting to discuss Governor Peter Stuyvesant's restrictions on Quakers because they were not members of the Dutch Reformed Church. The Flushing Remonstrance laid the groundwork of this early colony in America, which is located in what is now Flushing, in my Congressional District of Queens, New York.

I have informed the State that the best argument for moving the document to Flushing is its very name, Flushing Remonstrance. It has lain dormant for years. I will continue to urge the State of New York to permanently relocate the Flushing Remonstrance in its rightful place.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the *Queens Courier* and the Queens Library for its campaign to bring the Flushing Remonstrance to Queens permanently.