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House of Representatives

HONORING ZETA BETA TAU FRATERNITY AND ROGER WILLIAMS DAY

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN
OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday March 22, 2000

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, today I applaud Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity, my brotherhood, for celebrating the life of Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, and a strong supporter of religious and political liberty.

In 1631, clergyman Roger Williams, left England, a land where he was dubbed a nonconformist and was persecuted for his religious beliefs, and came to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in America. Along with him came his wife and great wind of change, idealism and freedom. He would be called a troublemaker, because he believed that the royal charter did not justify taking land that belonged to the Native Americans and declared that people should not be punished for religious differences. In 1664, he published his most famous work, 'The Bloody Tenent of Persecution', which upheld his argument for the separation of church and state. In 1657, as president of the Rhode Island colony, he fought to provide refuge for Quakers who had been banished from other colonies, even though he disagreed with their religious teachings.

Today, as a member of Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity, I join my brotherhood in remembering and recognizing Roger Williams as an early champion of democracy and religious freedom. As we struggle against religious intolerance throughout our world, we should look to men, such as Roger Williams, who stood for freedom, in a world of persecution. I am proud to be a member of the distinguished brotherhood of Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity, a organization of young men who are dedicating this day to the principles of tolerance, understanding, and brotherly love, by remembering Roger Williams.

