

RESOLUTION 69

Condemning the Disrespectful Behavior of Rep. Joe Wilson

Submitted by the Executive Council
Referred to the Legislation and Policy Committee

WHEN PRESIDENT OBAMA addressed a joint session of Congress Wednesday night, U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) stood up and shouted, "You lie!" Congressman Wilson's behavior was disrespectful, uncivil, unacceptable and contemptible. It brought shame not only on the congressman himself, but on the institution of the House of Representatives. It was also a violation of House rules, which require members to "refrain from speaking disrespectfully of the President."

Congressman Wilson's behavior was indefensible under any circumstances, but it was all the more galling that his accusation was not even well-founded. The congressman was upset by President Obama's assertion that "our reform efforts would [not] insure illegal immigrants." Yet Section 246 of the House health reform bill, H.R. 3200, titled "No Federal Payment for Undocumented Aliens," states that "Nothing in this subtitle shall allow federal payments for affordability credits on behalf of individuals who are not lawfully present in the United States."

Any president of the United States is entitled to a certain amount of respect, and we believe this particular president of the United States commands more respect than most. It is appalling, and an indication of how degraded our civil discourse has become, that there should be any disagreement whatsoever with the proposition that the president of the United States is entitled to a minimum amount of respect from members of Congress.

Ironically, it was President Obama in his health care address who made the insightful observation that "when facts and reason are thrown overboard and only timidity passes for wisdom, and we can no longer even engage in a civil conversation with each other over the things that truly matter, at that point we don't merely lose our capacity to solve big challenges, we lose something essential about ourselves."