Madame Speaker.

Today I rise to recognize the 117th anniversary of the opening of Ellis Island. Originally opened on January 1, 1892, the island remains a part of American history and our culture. Together with the Statue of Liberty, these places represent what it means to be an American.

During the attacks of September 11, 2001 these symbols stood as a reminder and a warning that we will prevail against those who wish us harm. So great are these symbols that visitors from here and abroad visit them every day. Yet the Statue of Liberty crown is still closed to visitors. I am happy that both President-Elect Obama and Interior Secretary Designate Salazar support fully opening up the crown. I am optimistic that we will again allow Americans and foreign visitors to peer out from the crown and to think about what it means to be an American.

I yield back.