In March, Rep. Eric Cantor, R-7th, joined the annual Congressional Civil Rights Pilgrimage to Alabama. Cantor, the House majority leader, became the highest-ranking Republican to participate in the event, which commemorates the marches in Selma.

National Journal magazine reported that Cantor locked arms with Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer and held hands with Rep. John Lewis, a Democrat from Georgia and a hero of the civil rights movement. Cantor spoke of reconciliation during an address at the Alabama Capitol in Montgomery.

The spirit did not end when the pilgrims returned to resume congressional business. On Wednesday, the House voted to award the victims of the Birmingham bombings with the Congressional Gold Medal. Fifty years ago, an explosion tore through Birmingham’s 16th Street Baptist Church. Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Denise McNair died in the inferno. The Gold Medal reminds all Americans that throughout history, freedom has been bought with the blood of innocents. Cantor and his colleagues discussed the Birmingham atrocity during their shared march. He followed through.

And as citizens behold the camaraderie on display with the Alabama pilgrimage and with the awarding of the Gold Medal, they hope that politicians in both parties will learn how they can overcome today’s lesser obstacles.