

nominate a person of the century, for the outgoing 20th century. Many such people were selected, including Time magazine's choice of Albert Einstein. Writing for the New York Times, columnist Charles Krauthammer presented an eloquent defense of his nominee, Winston Churchill, without whom, he argued, Britain would have eventually sought a separate peace with Nazi Germany, drastically altering history. Many other distinguished journalists and pundits offered their own choices for this honorable position.

H. Con. Res. 282 takes a different approach to this nomination. Instead of presenting an individual for the award, it makes a collective nomination in declaring the American G.I. to be the best choice for person of the 20th century. Mr. Speaker, I can think of no better choice for this honor.

In the past century, no group of people have given more of themselves in the cause of defending freedom and liberty than the American people. Twice this century the American citizen-soldier left his family and occupation to take up arms in defending freedom on the continent of Europe.

The arrival of the first members of the American expeditionary force served as a vital morale boost to their exhausted British and French counterparts on the western front in 1917. Later, more than 2 million American soldiers arrived in France to check the last desperate offensive of the Kaiser's army and eventually broke the back of imperial Germany's war effort. Without the contributions of the American G.I. the western allies surely would have fallen to the German offensive of 1918 and the U-boat campaign against the British shipping lifeline.

Twenty-five years later, the American G.I. led the first western counteroffensive against Nazi Germany and took on imperial Japan almost single-handedly. Beginning in North Africa, American soldiers rolled back the German war machine, through Algeria, Sicily, the Italian peninsula and later from Normandy to Paris to Germany itself. In the Pacific, American Marines launched a two-pronged island-hopping campaign from springboards in Hawaii and Australia, supported by our Nation's Air Force, against Imperial Japanese forces, culminating in the bitter hard fought conquest of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Backed by an industrial base with overwhelming production capacity, the American G.I. liberated Europe from the grip of Nazi totalitarianism and the Pacific from Imperial Japanese tyranny.

The American G.I. spent the second half of the 20th century defending freedom from Communist aggression, in Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and in the Far East. While many during the cold war questioned American defense of nations with little or no democratic government in practice, history has vindicated the cold war American G.I. through today's examples of South Korea, Taiwan and most Latin American countries, where democracy is both alive and well.

Mr. Speaker, the world would indeed be a much different place today, were it not for the contributions of the millions of courageous American citizen-soldiers, who, when called upon by their country, selflessly put aside their personal interests and stepped forward to defend freedom and democracy. While we have not done it alone, the American contribution has almost always meant the difference in ultimate victory for the United States and her allies.

Accordingly, I strongly support this as befitting legislation, and strongly urge my colleagues to support its passage.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I cannot support H. Con. Res. 282. I take a back seat to no one in my support, appreciation, and admiration for the individuals who served our Nation in the military over the course of the 20th century. I would support a resolution which recognized their contributions, although I would far prefer a more tangible showing of appreciation, such as fulfilling the promises of health care made to those who served.

I cannot support this resolution, however, for several reasons.

First, it seems to me that the House has enough business on its plate fulfilling its responsibilities under Article I of the Constitution and need not enter into an interesting but purely theoretical debate fostered by a magazine topic.

Secondly, if we were to offer an opinion on the "Person of the Century," it should actually be a person, not a class or category of persons. Words have meaning, and as we alter or stretch those meanings, we may well encourage inaccuracy or stretching of the truth. We have had enough of that recently.

I also believe that we should not diminish the importance of the individual human being. The contributions to world history by American service men and women were accomplished by individuals. A man or woman is brave; an organization or class of persons is not. We should not diminish the importance of what a brave individual can do by redefining "person" to mean an entire category of persons.

The key question to ask in assessing "Person of the Century" is how would things have been different without him or her. I have my personal view on who that should be, but my views are better argued in a magazine article rather than on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NETHERCUTT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 282, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□

HONORING MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES AND FEDERAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES WHO SERVED NATION DURING VIETNAM ERA AND FAMILIES OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES OR REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR OR WERE INJURED DURING THAT ERA

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 228) honoring the members of the

Armed Forces and Federal civilian employees who served the Nation during the Vietnam era and the families of those individuals who lost their lives or remain unaccounted for or were injured during that era in Southeast Asia or elsewhere in the world in defense of United States national security interests.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 228

Whereas the United States Armed Forces conducted military operations in Southeast Asia during the period (known as the "Vietnam era") from February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975:

Whereas during the Vietnam era more than 3,403,000 American military personnel served in the Republic of Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia in support of United States military operations in Vietnam, while millions more provided for the Nation's defense in other parts of the world;

Whereas during the Vietnam era untold numbers of civilian personnel of the United States Government also served in support of United States operations in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the world;

Whereas May 7, 2000, marks the 25th anniversary of the closing of the period known as the Vietnam era; and

Whereas that date would be an appropriate occasion to recognize and express appreciation for the individuals who served the Nation in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the world during the Vietnam era: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) honors the service and sacrifice of the members of the Armed Forces and Federal civilian employees who during the Vietnam era served the Nation in the Republic of Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia or otherwise served in support of United States operations in Vietnam and in support of United States national security interests throughout the world;

(2) recognizes and honors the sacrifice of the families of those individuals referred to in paragraph (1) who lost their lives or remain unaccounted for or were injured during that era, in Southeast Asia or elsewhere in the world, in defense of United States national security interests; and

(3) encourages the American people, through appropriate ceremonies and activities, to recognize the service and sacrifice of those individuals.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. KUYKENDALL) and the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. KUYKENDALL).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 228.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 228 to recognize and honor members of the Armed Forces and civilian employees

who served this Nation during the Vietnam era and the families of those individuals who lost their lives, remain unaccounted for, or were injured during the Vietnam war.

Twenty-five years ago, we ended our involvement in the Vietnam War. And unlike World War II or Korea, our objectives for being in the conflicts in Southeast Asia were not very clear. Why were we there? What forces of evil or wrongdoing compelled the potential sacrifice of American lives? What national security or economic interests of the United States were at stake?

Our involvement in Vietnam sparked tremendous domestic controversy, largely because we could not answer those questions. Our soldiers came home without fanfare or ticker-tape parades or their hero's welcome we have historically showered on returning veterans. Our veterans became an easy target for those who questioned our participation in Vietnam; and, as a country, we turned our backs on them.

As a Nation, we struggle to find solutions to world issues that do not require military force. However, when needed, the young men and women of this Nation answer our call to service.

□ 1500

We must never again let the popularity of any war effort be the measure of when we honor our veterans' service. I will say that again. We must never again let the popularity of any war effort be the measure of when we honor our veterans' service. We cannot rewrite our past, but we can correct those mistakes by acknowledging the service of our Vietnam veterans, military and civilian.

Let me quote Dan Mauro, a Vietnam veteran, to reintroduce my colleagues to our Vietnam patriots. In Dan's words, our Vietnam veterans "are men and women. We are dead or alive, whole or maimed, sane or haunted. We grew from our experiences or we were destroyed by them or we struggle to find some place in between. We lived through hell or we had a pleasant, if scary, adventure. We were Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Red Cross and civilians of all sorts. Some of us enlisted to fight for God and country, and some were drafted. Some were gung-ho, and some went kicking and screaming.

"Like veterans of all wars, we lived a tad bit—or a great bit—closer to death than most people like to think about. If Vietnam vets differ from others, perhaps it is primarily in the fact that many of us never saw the enemy or recognized him or her. We heard gunfire and mortar fire but rarely looked into enemy eyes. Those who did, like folks who encounter close combat anywhere and anytime, are often haunted for life by those eyes, those sounds, those electric fears that ran between ourselves, our enemies and the likelihood of death for one of us. Or we get hard, calloused, tough. All in a day's work."

We recognized the heroism of those who lost their lives in Vietnam with

the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1993. Today, with 2.5 million visitors annually, this memorial is the most visited place in the Nation's capital. This memorial is a fitting tribute to the men and women who served in Vietnam. The wall has helped family members and friends say a final farewell. It has helped others come to terms with their Vietnam service. It has taught a generation about the heroism of those who lost their lives in Vietnam.

It is time now to embrace the service of all our Vietnam veterans, those who lived, those who died, those still missing, and all of us whose lives were unalterably changed by the experience. It is for this reason that House Concurrent Resolution 228 is so important.

May 7, 2000, marks the 25th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam era. House Concurrent Resolution 228 marks this historic anniversary by honoring the duty, courage, service and love of family and country demonstrated by the 2.7 million Americans who served in Vietnam. Let this resolution also stand as notice to those who serve us now, in places like the Balkans, Korea, and the Persian Gulf and for the next generations of patriots: America will stand by you and will praise your service, bravery, and commitment.

I am proud to have served my country in Vietnam and am honored to be recognized as a veteran of that war. Today, I am deeply privileged to salute all who served, lost their lives, were injured or are still missing in Southeast Asia by supporting this resolution. I thank my colleague, the gentleman from California, for his service in Vietnam and his efforts to acknowledge the contributions of Vietnam veterans and their families. I urge my colleagues in Congress and people across the Nation to recognize the contributions of these heroes.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. KUYKENDALL) for bringing House Concurrent Resolution 228 to the floor today. This resolution allows Congress and the American people to commemorate the service of the men and women who served in both uniformed and civilian roles during the Vietnam era. On May 7, 2000, our Nation will observe the 25th anniversary of the end of that era. This resolution's genesis are the veterans that I have the honor of representing who live today at the California veterans home in Yountville in my district. I thank all of them and, in particular, John Schmucker, Tom Sarciapone, Sam Hollis, Jr., Robert Moak, and the other members of the Allied Council of the Yountville veterans home for their generous suggestion for honoring Vietnam-era service members and Federal civilian workers.

Like so many others before us, my generation was called to arms. Most of

us responded, notwithstanding the controversy and the turmoil the Vietnam War caused. Seventy-nine of our current House colleagues and 16 Senators served, and several served with extraordinary bravery and courage. The images of Vietnam are still vivid in our individual and collective memories. But what is most surprising is the passage of time since our service.

As I mentioned, May 7 will mark the 25th anniversary of the departure of the last U.S. servicemen from Vietnam, a departure that closed the Vietnam era and for many of us an important chapter in our lives. Between 1961 and 1975, more than 3.4 million Americans served in the armed services in Vietnam and throughout Southeast Asia. Elsewhere in the world, other U.S. forces stood as sentinels. Whether it was along the 38th parallel, at Checkpoint Charlie, the DEW line, Diego Garcia, or patrolling undetected under the world's oceans, U.S. servicemen and women ensured the peace.

The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs estimate that more than 9.2 million active duty, reserve, and guard personnel protected U.S. national security interests throughout the world during the Vietnam era. Untold millions of Federal civilian workers also contributed to our Nation's defense at a time tensions were growing between world superpowers. On the eve of this anniversary, we pause to commemorate their service and their sacrifice as well.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution commemorates the sacrifice of every individual who served our Nation during that period called the Vietnam Era. As important, the resolution expresses appreciation to the families of those who died, remain unaccounted for, or who were injured during the course of their service during this era. While it is defined in the statute by specific dates, until the last of our missing service members is found or accounted for, the Vietnam era will never be completely closed.

I again thank the majority leader, the Democratic leader, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPENCE), the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER), the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) for their help in making sure this resolution came to the floor at this particular time. I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. KUYKENDALL) for his leadership and urge the support of House Concurrent Resolution 228.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS).

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. KUYKENDALL) for introducing this and the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON) for their support of this issue as well. As a Vietnam veteran and former fighter pilot, I stand in this well honored and privileged to speak out in support of this issue.

As my colleagues said, it was just 25 years ago that the Vietnam era officially ended with the infamous fall of Saigon. Although many Americans have turned away from this sad chapter in our national history, this country cannot and it will not turn away from those young men and women who wrote that history with their blood, their pain, and their heroic sacrifices. I am proud, as I said, to join my fellow veterans of the Vietnam War and the rest of our country in honoring the service and the sacrifice of all these men and women wearing our Nation's uniform during that very trying time. Let us not forget to honor the families, those who sacrificed with the parent, the child, the brother or a sister off in a distant land defending their Nation, defending our freedom. Some are still in pain with loved ones still missing and unaccounted for but never forgotten.

Honoring these men and women is the least we can do as we start a new millennium, as we start a new era. But one thing is and always will be certain: our need for the types of men and women like these brave soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in Vietnam. We need types that are as dedicated and selfless as those who were sacrificing their lives in Vietnam for us.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and thanks I urge all my colleagues to support this issue. I urge unanimous passage of this humble recognition and fitting commemoration of our fellow citizens, Vietnam-era veterans and their families.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. I wish to pay special commendation to my friend and my colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON), for introducing this resolution. I might also note, besides being a very active member of our committee, he was a member of the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam and served his country well and with dedication during the Vietnam era and during that conflict. I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. KUYKENDALL) for his strong support of this resolution.

Although it may not seem it, 25 years have elapsed since the United States military forces fought in Vietnam. While not everyone may agree that the United States should have participated in the conflict, the matter is we did. More important, hundreds of thousands

of patriotic Americans gave their lives or were wounded while serving this country. Still others remain unaccounted for. It is only fitting that we recognize their sacrifice on behalf of our great Nation.

This resolution honors the service of the military members and civilians who served during the Vietnam era and also recognizes and honors the families who suffered during this conflict. The heroism and sacrifices made by these individuals deserve to be recognized, and this resolution takes that step.

In these days when we consider how best to improve access to health care for our service members and our military retirees, we must not forget that our efforts are really aimed at fulfilling a commitment to servicemen and women who served not just in Vietnam but also in the Second World War and Korea and the Persian Gulf and elsewhere around the globe. We owe them for their service and for the promises our government made to them. We cannot and must not let them down regarding the very serious issue of health care.

Mr. Speaker, our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and civilians who served in Vietnam did their duty to protect our freedom and gave hope to the oppressed people of that country. As we approach the 25th anniversary of the Vietnam conflict, it is wholly appropriate that we commend the service and sacrifice of those who served. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The newspaper back in my district had a front page story this weekend with many pictures in the body of it talking about the Vietnam War's 25th anniversary. For each group of people that served in whatever time period you were in, you cannot help but have your memories come flooding back when you see these newspaper stories, seeing it now with the hindsight of history. It is much different than the day we lived it, when we were serving in that particular capacity.

It is great today as a Member of Congress to be able to recognize on the Vietnam War's 25th anniversary the service of those men and women who served with the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON) and myself in that Southeast Asian conflict. Today, I now have a daughter who serves, and I now recognize what my parents must have thought when they put me on a plane for several trips to Asia. It is a different feeling and yet it is the same feeling you get whether you are doing it today or you were doing it 25 years ago or 25 years before that. That is the reason we have these recognitions, because a Nation that ever forgets to recognize that service has taken one step down a path we do not want to be on.

I would like to encourage everybody, today in this resolution, to recognize Vietnam veterans. Just a few minutes ago, we recognized G.I.'s for the 20th century.

□ 1515

But everybody should look around and say "thank you" to that uncle or that grandfather or that son or daughter or brother or sister that you saw serve in the military.

I was proud of my service. All of us that served were proud of our service, and today Congress has a chance in this resolution to recognize on the 25th anniversary the service of veterans, both military and civilian, who served in Southeast Asia. I urge the passage of this resolution.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 228, a bill to recognize and honor the sacrifice and service of those members of our Nation's Armed Forces and their civilian defense counterparts who served during the Vietnam era. I urge my colleagues to join in supporting this worthy legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Vietnam war was neither a popular nor a fully supported conflict among the American public, for a large number of reasons. The remote location of the fighting, the apparent hesitancy of two successive administrations to seek a decisive victory, the deterioration, over time, of the United States' established commitment to fighting communism in southeast Asia, and the gradual increasing unpopularity of the war among the Nation's youth all contributed to the eventual withdrawal of United States forces from South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. A similar, but not quite as severe outcome had occurred in the earlier Korean conflict.

While the returning G.I.'s from the Korean war had encountered indifference from the American population, those returning from Vietnam were often met with outright hostility. Moreover, it took more than a decade for proper recognition, in the form of a national memorial, to be provided for our Vietnam veterans.

There are still a number of unresolved issues from the Vietnam war. Chief among these is the POW/MIA issue. There still remain over 2,000 unaccounted for servicemembers from the conflict in southeast Asia. Regrettably, in recent years, many have sought to downplay the need for the fullest possible accounting of those missing personnel in pursuit of the establishment of commercial interests in southeast Asia. May this resolution be of some solace to the families and loved ones of our missing and POW's that there are many of us in the Congress committed to a full and final accounting of our missing.

It bears noting that for today's generation entering college, the Vietnam war is as distant as World War II was to the baby boomer generation. It is my hope that this resolution will help to preserve the memory of the dedicated service and ultimate sacrifice made by the members of our Armed Forces who chose to serve their Nation at a time when military service was decidedly unpopular.

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 228. This Resolution honors the sacrifice that so many Americans gave during the Vietnam conflict.

There is no way that any American can view the Vietnam Wall without their heart becoming heavy with both pride and sadness. Although this war caused so many different views from so many different people, the one thing that we all can and should agree upon is the honor of the service of those who served in Vietnam.

They served with the same commitment to honor, duty, and country as every American has in wars past. They served during a particularly difficult time in our history. But despite the times, they never wavered from their devotion to duty. Their actions speak volumes about their character when you consider that the average age of the American service person in Vietnam was 19.

Anyone who has read the letters from home between service members and their families know the tremendous toll that the war took on both. We must never forget their sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, there are still open wounds of the heart that have not healed yet. That is because there is the unresolved cases of our missing MIAs and POWs. Our families can not be at peace until we know the whereabouts of their loved ones' remains. Our government must take every action necessary to resolve these cases as soon as possible.

In sum, Mr. Speaker, today I offer praise and respect to all the Americans, both military and civilian that served in Vietnam. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NETHERCUTT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. KUYKENDALL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 228.

The question was taken.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□

FREEDOM TO E-FILE ACT

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 777) to require the Department of Agriculture to establish an electronic filing and retrieval system to enable the public to file all required paperwork electronically with the Department and to have access to public information on farm programs, quarterly trade, economic, and production reports, and other similar information, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 777

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Freedom to E-File Act".

SEC. 2. ELECTRONIC FILING AND RETRIEVAL.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNET-BASED SYSTEM.—The Secretary of Agriculture shall establish an electronic filing and retrieval

system that uses the telecommunications medium known as the Internet to enable farmers and other persons—

(1) to file electronically all paperwork required by the agencies of the Department of Agriculture specified in subsection (b); and

(2) to have access electronically to information, readily available to the public in published form, regarding farm programs, quarterly trade, economic, and production reports, price and supply information, and other similar information related to production agriculture.

(b) COVERED AGENCIES.—Subsection (a) shall apply to the following agencies of the Department of Agriculture:

- (1) The Farm Service Agency.
- (2) The Risk Management Agency.
- (3) The Natural Resources Conservation Service.

(4) The rural development components of the Department included in the Secretary's service center initiative regarding State and field office collocation implemented pursuant to section 215 of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6915).

(c) TIME-TABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall—

(1) to the maximum extent practicable, complete the establishment of the electronic filing and retrieval system required by subsection (a) to the extent necessary to permit the electronic information access required by paragraph (2) of such subsection;

(2) initiate implementation of the electronic filing required by paragraph (1) of such subsection by allowing farmers and other persons to download forms from the Internet and submit completed forms via facsimile, mail, or related means; and

(3) modify forms used by the agencies specified in subsection (b) into a more user-friendly format, with self-help guidance materials.

(d) INTEROPERABILITY.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall ensure that the agencies specified in subsection (b)—

(1) use computer hardware and software that is compatible among the agencies and will operate in a common computing environment; and

(2) develop common Internet user-interface locations and applications to consolidate the agencies' news, information, and program materials.

(e) COMPLETION OF IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall complete the establishment of the electronic filing and retrieval system required by subsection (a) to permit the electronic filing required by paragraph (1) of such subsection.

(f) PROGRESS REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report describing the progress made toward establishing the electronic filing and retrieval system required by subsection (a).

SEC. 3. AVAILABILITY OF AGENCY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FUNDS.

(a) RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—From funds made available for each agency of the Department of Agriculture specified in section 2(b) for information technology or information resource management, the Secretary of Agriculture shall reserve an amount equal to not more than the following:

- (1) For fiscal year 2001, \$3,000,000.
- (2) For each subsequent fiscal year, \$2,000,000.

(b) TIME FOR RESERVATION.—The Secretary shall notify Congress of the amount to be reserved under subsection (a) for a fiscal year not later than December 1 of that fiscal year.

(c) USE OF FUNDS.—Funds reserved under subsection (a) shall be used to establish the

electronic filing and retrieval system required by section 2(a). Once the system is established and operational, reserved amounts shall be used for maintenance and improvement of the system.

(d) RETURN OF FUNDS.—Funds reserved under subsection (a) and unobligated at the end of the fiscal year shall be returned to the agency from which the funds were reserved, and such funds shall remain available until expended.

SEC. 4. CONFIDENTIALITY.

In carrying out this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture—

(1) may not make available any information over the Internet that would otherwise not be available for release under section 552 or 552a of title 5, United States Code; and

(2) shall ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that the confidentiality of persons is maintained.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE).

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the Freedom to E-File Act, introduced by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LAHOOD), requires the United States Department of Agriculture to establish an electronic filing and retrieval system to enable the public to file with the Department all required paperwork electronically. In doing so, the act would allow producers, farmers, and rural America to have access to information on farm programs, quarterly trade, economic and production reports and other similar information. The bill of the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LAHOOD) allows farmers to do business with the Department of Agriculture over the Internet.

The rapidly evolving e-commerce economy of the 21st century continues to assert itself as the future of worldwide commerce. Like any business today, farmers are using computers and the Internet for a variety of purposes, including financial management systems and market information. It is becoming increasingly important to ensure that all segments of our economy are technologically efficient.

Currently, the United States Department of Agriculture operates in a progressively antiquated computer environment. The continued use of such a system threatens to disable producers and farmers from access to a maturing information technology market. Rural Americans face the very real potential of being left behind in this era of sweeping technological advances. It is vital to empower producers and farmers by providing them with the technological tools to do business via the Internet with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The continued absence of a viable common computing environment at the Department will result in the failure to assist the very constituency it is obliged to serve. The Freedom to E-