

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, so I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 434.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those voting have responded in the affirmative.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. 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 question will be postponed.

HONORING MUHAMMAD ALI ON HIS 65TH BIRTHDAY

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 58) to honor Muhammad Ali, global humanitarian, on the occasion of his 65th birthday and to extend best wishes to him and his family.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 58

Whereas Muhammad Ali is a retired American boxer;

Whereas Ali was born in Louisville, Kentucky, on January 17, 1942, and was named Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr. after his father, Cassius Marcellus Clay, Sr., (who was named for the 19th century abolitionist and politician Cassius Clay);

Whereas Ali later changed his name after joining the Nation of Islam and subsequently converted to Sunni Islam in 1975;

Whereas in 1999, Ali was crowned "Sportsman of the Century" by Sports Illustrated, won the World Heavyweight Boxing Championship 3 times, and won the North American Boxing Federation championship and an Olympic gold medal;

Whereas on September 13, 1999, Ali was named "Kentucky Athlete of the Century" by the Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame in ceremonies at the Galt House East;

Whereas Ali received the Presidential Medal of Freedom at a White House ceremony on November 9, 2005, and the prestigious "Otto Hahn peace medal in Gold" of the United Nations Association of Germany in Berlin on December 17, 2005, for his work with the United States civil rights movement and the United Nations;

Whereas since he retired from boxing, Ali has devoted himself to humanitarian endeavors around the globe;

Whereas Ali is a devout Sunni Muslim and travels the world over, working for hunger and poverty relief, supporting education efforts of all kinds, promoting adoption, and encouraging people to respect and better understand one another;

Whereas it is estimated that Ali has helped to provide more than 22,000,000 meals to feed the hungry and travels, on average, more than 200 days per year;

Whereas through his perseverance and the support of thousands Ali has continued his legacy of humanity through the establishment of the Muhammad Ali Center in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky;

Whereas on November 19, 2005, Ali's 19th wedding anniversary, the \$60,000,000 non-

profit Muhammad Ali Center opened in downtown Louisville, Kentucky, displaying his boxing memorabilia, the center focuses on core themes of peace, social responsibility, respect, and personal growth;

Whereas the Ali Center is much more than a place that tells the story of one man's journey, the Ali Center reaches beyond its physical walls to fulfill its mission: to preserve and share the legacy and ideals of Muhammad Ali, to promote respect, hope, and understanding, and to inspire adults and children everywhere to be as great as they can be;

Whereas the onsite visitor experience incorporates as organizing elements, 6 prevailing core values of Ali's life: respect, confidence, conviction, dedication, giving, and spirituality;

Whereas these theme-based pavilions all feature dramatic media presentations and interactive exhibits that help illustrate the "hows" of Ali's life: how he found the courage, the dedication, and the discipline to become who he is today, how he found the conviction to stand up for what he believed, and how he turned his passion for excellence in the ring to a passion for peace on the world stage;

Whereas like Muhammad Ali himself, the Muhammad Ali Center focuses on what brings individuals together, not what sets them apart and is a "global gathering place" where people can come—both online and in person—to learn, share, celebrate our commonalities as human beings, and formulate ways of advancing humanity today and in the future;

Whereas the Muhammad Ali Center's educational goals include various delivery methods and incorporate a wide range of topics, from respect, diversity, and personal discovery to empowerment and conflict resolution; and

Whereas ultimately, the Muhammad Ali Center's goal is to make a profoundly significant contribution to the global society: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives honors Muhammad Ali, global humanitarian, on the occasion of his 65th birthday and extends best wishes to him and his family.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield such time as she may consume to the author of H. Res. 58, the gentlewoman from the great State of Indiana (Ms. CARSON).

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the honorable gentleman from the State of Illinois for yielding, and to the Speaker, thank you very much for giving us this time to give honor where honor is due.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 65th birthday of a great American,

the greatest of all time, and world humanitarian, Muhammad Ali.

Quite frankly, as a little girl growing up, I didn't pay too much attention to the boxing arena of this great country. I just knew that men got in a ring with some gloves on and pounded each other, and whoever pounded the most won the title.

Ali, like me, was born in Louisville, Kentucky. He was named Cassius Marcellus Clay after his father, who was named for the 19th century abolitionist and politician, Cassius Clay. Ali later changed his name after joining the Nation of Islam and subsequently converted to Sunni Islam in 1975.

I remember as a younger person how awful I thought it was that this country would permit the stripping of a title so dutifully earned, the Heavyweight Boxing Championship of the World.

Though Ali won the gold medal at the Rome Olympics in 1960, at the time the experts didn't think much of his boxing skills. Ali surprised the experts and won the world heavyweight title against Sonny Liston in 1964. He won the world heavyweight boxing championship three times.

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However, Ali proved to be a freedom fighter as well, protesting within his rights as an American citizen the Vietnam War and his draft by the government to serve in that war. I remember thinking Ali said, I am not mad at nobody and I am not going over to fight a war.

The government prosecuted him for draft dodging, and the boxing commission took away his license. He was inactive from March 22, 1967, to October 26, 1970, idle for 3½ years at the peak of his career.

In 1971, the Supreme Court ruled that the government had acted improperly, but Ali bore the commissions no ill will, even though he was a Sunni Muslim and he reminded you of Christ being crucified on the cross and saying I will forgive them no matter what they do.

Ali, like Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi of India and another great American, Martin Luther King, bore no bitterness against those that sought to oppress him and deny him the freedom to pursue happiness, even though the Constitution says the government shall not deprive based on race or religion against our citizens.

Since his retirement from boxing, Ali has devoted himself to humanitarian endeavors around the globe.

He is a devout Sunni Muslim and travels the world over, lending his name and presence to hunger and poverty relief, supporting education efforts of all kinds, promoting adoption and encouraging people to respect and better understand one another.

It is estimated that he has helped to provide more than 22 million meals to feed the hungry around the world.

Ali received a Presidential Medal of Freedom at a White House ceremony in November 2005.

The Ali Center reaches beyond its physical walls to fulfill its mission: to preserve and share the legacy and ideals of Muhammad Ali, to promote respect, hope and understanding, and to inspire adults and children everywhere to be as great as they can be.

True greatness transcends the artificial boundaries of geography, gender, and race. True greatness rests in the hearts of men and women who believe in world peace and the humanity of every individual.

How prophetic of a young Muhammad Ali when he declared, "I am the greatest of all time."

Mr. Speaker, I would urge the House to support H. Res. 58 and honor the 65th birthday of this great American. Happy birthday, Muhammad Ali.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I might consume.

I rise in support of the resolution to honor Muhammad Ali on his 65th birthday. I can think of few people more deserving of this honor. Yes, he is the only three-time heavyweight champion of the world, as well as an Olympic gold medalist. Yes, he was crowned Athlete of the Century by Sports Illustrated, but Muhammad Ali is so much more than a boxer. He is a man who literally taught us another way to talk and think about sports and about life.

We had never heard athletes put their work to rhyme before Ali vowed to "float like a butterfly and sting like a bee." We had never seen an athlete so adept at the promotional aspects of his sport. Today we remember the names of his fights, the Rumble in the Jungle, the Thrilla in Manila, as much as the fights themselves.

And when his career in the ring ended, we had never seen an athlete who moved so seamlessly, so dramatically, so thoroughly to put his fame to work for the public good. It was after he had hung up the gloves, remember, that Time magazine declared his the most recognizable face on Earth.

He earned that sobriquet through his tireless struggles against hunger and poverty, he is said to have helped provide more than the 22 million meals for the hungry, through his support for education, adoption and efforts to urge young people of diverse backgrounds to grow in their understanding of one another.

Today, he continues his work for the betterment of all humanity through the Muhammad Ali Center in the downtown area of his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky. He continues to promote that which brings people together as opposed to that which pulls them apart. He continues to teach the lessons that made him great. His center is organized around the six core values of respect, confidence, conviction, dedication, giving and spirituality.

In his younger days, he revolutionized boxing with hands so fast they could deliver punches not even visible to the naked eye. Since then, he has revolutionized the role of retired athlete, leading by example, showing oth-

ers how to put their fame and fortune to good use.

For these reasons, I urge all Members to support this resolution for this most deserving American.

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure now to yield such time as he might consume to the distinguished gentleman from Louisville, Kentucky (Mr. YARMUTH), the home of Muhammad Ali.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois, and I want to also thank the gentlewoman from Indiana for allowing me to become a sponsor on this important resolution, also a fellow native.

Mr. Speaker, boxing gloves are a symbol of fighting for sport; but these gloves, because of the man who once wore them, symbolize so much more: fighting for justice, fighting for equality, and fighting for one's convictions.

My home district of Louisville, Kentucky, is known for a lot of things; and when you say the greatest, and particularly the greatest of all time, there is no question who you are talking about.

Larger than life now and one of the most recognizable icons throughout the world, it is easy to forget that long before he took his place as the best, and, as he would tell you the prettiest, boxer the world has ever known, there was a young, loud-mouthed speedster named Cassius Marcellus Clay, who despite his slight frame and humble beginnings, had an overpowering cockiness that immediately let you know that, whether or not he was destined for greatness, he was absolutely consumed by the quest. That flare inspired a lore that traveled quickly throughout our hometown.

In track and field, they say he won the mile easily and regularly, each time wearing steel-toed boots and running the second half backward.

They say on his way to Central High School each day he would race the school bus, being sure to stop at every traffic light lest he gain an unfair advantage over the school bus.

And when he finally began to shake up the world, winning Olympic gold at the age of 18, they say Cassius Clay furiously flung his medal into the Ohio River after his newly attained hero status did nothing to alter his second-class status in the racist South.

Whether or not these tales are the stuff of legend, the integrity of the message holds true. He was the fastest, most dedicated, most confident we had ever seen. Yet even after he had defeated the invincible giant and became the heavyweight champion of the world, he constantly felt the pain of prejudice and the heartache of racial hate. He turned down the opportunity to merely escape the situation, instead determined to change it.

He introduced dazzling quick footwork that even today has never been seen in a heavyweight and lightning

left jabs that sent opponent after opponent falling to the mat. But he felt that his was a higher calling, and he chose controversy over comfort.

He became Muhammad Ali, and he used his success and fame to speak passionately and eloquently against injustice, racism, crime, illiteracy and poverty, touching and inspiring millions around the world.

As he was just approaching his prime fighting years, he was faced with a choice, betray his opposition to war and fight in Vietnam or sacrifice his career and face 5 years in jail. Twenty-five-year-old Muhammad Ali remained firm and was stripped of the title he had defended brilliantly for more than 2 years.

He had been knocked down, but he would not accept defeat. For more than 3 years, the former champ defended his name and appealed the decision, while simultaneously touring the country and world speaking tirelessly in the name of peace, justice and equality, now champion in a whole new realm.

With his peak fighting years behind him, a unanimous Supreme Court finally overruled previous decisions, granting Ali his conscientious objector status, and affording him the return that most of us thought would never happen.

What followed was not merely a comeback but an epic resurgence that featured the Fight of the Century, the Thrilla in Manila, and the Rumble in the Jungle. Ali recaptured the title by reinventing his style with the rope-a-dope in 1974, and in 1978 took the belt an unprecedented third time.

In the last two decades, Muhammad Ali has battled the effects of Parkinson's disease, and while the disease has proven a worthy adversary, it is simply not possible to defeat the man who once remarked, "I oughta be a postage stamp. That's the only way I'll ever get licked." Since his diagnosis, he has appeared at countless events to combat illiteracy, poverty, and disease. He famously lit the Olympic torch in Atlanta, was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and was an honorary captain for the Louisville Cardinals in their Orange Bowl victory this year.

His mind remains sharp and his spirit strong. He is a hero. He is among the greatest icons the world has ever known, and I urge you to join me in commemorating his contributions to this country and the world on his 65th birthday.

I leave you with the words of the poet and Godfather of Rap, Muhammad Ali:

To make America the Greatest is my goal,
So I beat the Russian and I beat the Pole.

And for the USA won the medal of gold,
Italians said, "You're greater than the
Cassius of old."

We like your name,
We like your game.

So make Rome your home if you will.
I said, I appreciate your hospitality,

But the USA is my country still.

'Cause they're waiting to welcome me in
Louisville.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my distinguished colleague from the State of Texas (Mr. PAUL).

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding this time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 58. I saw Muhammad Ali as a man of great courage, and I admired him for this, not because of the courage that it took to get in a ring and fight men bigger than he, but because of his stance in 1967.

In 1967, he was 25 years old. He was the heavyweight champion of the world, and for religious beliefs, he practiced what Martin Luther King made popular, civil disobedience, because he disagreed with the war. I thought his comments were rather astute at the time and were not complex, but he merely said, I have no quarrel with the Viet-Cong. He said the Viet-Cong never called him a name, and because of his religious convictions, he said he did not want to serve in the military. He stood firm, a man of principle, and I really admired this as a quality.

He is known, of course, for his athletic skills and his humanitarian concerns, and these are rightly mentioned in a resolution like this. But I do want to emphasize this because, to me, it was so important and had such impact, in reality, what Muhammad Ali did eventually led to getting rid of the draft, and yet we as a people and we as a Congress still do not have the conviction that Muhammad Ali had, because we still have the selective service; we say, let us not draft now, but when the conditions are right, we will bring back the draft and bring back those same problems that we had in the 1960s.

I see what Muhammad Ali did as being very great. He deserves this recognition, but we should also praise him for being a man of principle and willing to give up his title for 3 years at the age of 25 at the prime of his career. How many of us give up something to stand on principle? He was a man of principle. He believed it and he stood firm, so even those who may disagree with his position may say at least he stood up for what he believed in. He suffered the consequences and fortunately was eventually vindicated.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I do not believe we are going to have any additional speakers so I am going to yield myself such time as I might consume and close for our side.

Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate the 65th birthday of Muhammad Ali. Ali's charisma, confidence and skills not only transformed boxing but the entire sporting world.

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His unmistakable one-liners and his quick left jab enamored the public to

the point that Ali said, "I wish people would love everybody else the way they love me. It would be a better world."

Born on January 17, 1942 in Louisville, Kentucky, he started to train at the age of 12 and earned Amateur Athletic Union and Golden Gloves titles as an amateur. Then known by his birth name, Cassius Clay, Jr., he became an Olympic gold medalist and was renowned for his strong right hand and his dancing feet. He went on to fight professionally and revived boxing at an age when it was plagued by mob control.

The three-time heavyweight champion was part of many legendary fights, including opponents Sonny Liston, George Frazier, and George Foreman. Ali used an unorthodox style on which he relied on quickness to dodge punches and to fool challengers rather than holding his hands high to defend his face. Ali's mix of poetic movement and powerful blows in the ring carried over to the comments he made outside. His knack for creating rhymes on the fly and his powerful paradoxes quoted to reporters made him a magnet for the media. He once said, "My way of joking is to tell the truth. That is the funniest joke in the world." Ali made no qualms about what he did or how good he was. He was backed up in his claims and holds wins over seven fellow International Boxing Hall of Fame inductees.

In the early 1980s, Ali was diagnosed with pugilistic Parkinson's disease, which forced him into retirement. After his retirement and despite his ailment, Ali has been committed to many philanthropic efforts to reduce poverty and hunger, to promote adoption, and to encourage cultural awareness. Ali was named Sportsman of the Century in 1999 by Sports Illustrated and is considered to be a modern legend by many.

So, Mr. Speaker, Ali was indeed the greatest, but he did leave Louisville and eventually moved to Chicago, which is the greatest city, and so I was fortunate as an individual to get to know him and to get to know him well. As a matter of fact, you could always count on Ali to be present at community events, banquets, it didn't matter, local schools, playgrounds where kids were.

He was a real ambassador for the Nation of Islam and was very involved in his religious beliefs. A great man of integrity. As a matter of fact, people would often meet at his home for community meetings and gatherings and people would just stop by. He lived in what we call the Hyde Park community. And so he was indeed the greatest. He had no difficulty sharing himself with others.

So I commend Representative CARSON for introducing this legislation and urge its passage.

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

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 58, which honors Muhammad Ali on the occasion of his 65th birthday. Muhammad Ali, who transformed the sport of boxing with his unparalleled physical gifts, social commentary, and poetry, is one of the world's most beloved athletes. Muhammad Ali has been a fixture on the world stage since the 1960, when he won the gold medal at the 1960 Olympics in Tokyo. He would go on to win such legendary bouts as "The Rumble in the Jungle" against George Foreman, and "The Thrilla in Manila" against "Smoking Joe" Frazier.

Since his retirement in 1981, Muhammad Ali has engaged in many humanitarian endeavors, including a 1990 journey to Iraq to negotiate the release of 15 hostages. Muhammad Ali may be out of the ring but interest in him has not waned, 3 billion television viewers around the world watched him light the torch that opened the Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996. In 1984 Ali was stricken with Parkinson's disease. However true to form, Ali has not let his illness stop him from being free to do what he wants.

Never has a sports figure inspired so many people in so many different ways. Ali has shown that a sport can be more than entertainment; it can also be a cultural event with the power to change social values. Muhammad Ali is one of the most recognized sportsmen of all time. His legacy is one that inspires both in the ring and through his humanitarian work.

Outside of the ring Ali was a tremendously important figure and ally in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Ali refused to fight in the Vietnam War due to his religion and because he said, "Ain't no Viet Cong done nothing to me." He has won countless awards for his humanitarian efforts, including the Medal of Freedom. If anyone is deserving of the accolades that are bestowed on him, Muhammad Ali is certainly that person.

The Muhammad Ali International Centre opened in Ali's home town of Louisville, Kentucky in November 2005. The Centre holds exhibits and provides learning initiatives. It was established to represent and promote the values by which Muhammad Ali has lived his life: confidence, dedication, respect, compassion, charity, and spirituality. It is hoped that the Centre will provide those that visit the enlightenment and ability to become the greatest they can be. Ali's wife Lonnie said of the initiative: "the Muhammad Ali Centre is all about searching for common ground and establishing peace."

On behalf of the citizens of the State of Texas and my constituents of the 18th congressional district I would like to join my colleagues in honoring Muhammad Ali, a global humanitarian, on the occasion of his 65th birthday and extend best wishes to him and his family. Muhammad Ali reminds us all that "learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all."

Happy Birthday, champ! As you often said after your many victories, you are the "Greatest of all time!"

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the life

of activist and humanitarian Muhammad Ali on his 65th birthday. Muhammad Ali is not only recognized for his boxing career but also for his dedication to reaching out to lesser developed countries. His involvement in social causes, diplomacy and politics has served as a shining example of courage, strength and dignity.

Muhammad Ali was once one of the world's greatest and most flamboyant boxers, and during the course of his long career, he also became known as an eloquent statesman for peace, as well as, a generous man who devoted much of his considerable earnings to charity.

Born Cassius Clay in Louisville, Kentucky in 1942, Ali learned at a very young age that determination and dedication would take him to greater places. After winning the gold medal in the 1960 Olympics, Muhammad Ali became actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement with Malcolm X. At a time when race and politics permeated the public stage, Ali represented a well known figure not afraid to speak his mind and fight against oppression imposed by Jim Crow. Never had a sport figure encouraged so many people to fight against social oppression.

After he retired from boxing he continued working to better the lives of others through his involvement with the Jimmy Carter Campaign in 1980. Through his humanitarian work Ali has founded WORLD, the World Organization for Right, Liberty, and Dignity, and the Ali Center. WORLD, an organization that fights for human rights against exploitation and slavery, and the Ali Center serve as international and cultural centers to explore the greatness and the drive that lies within all of us and to inspire everyone to pursue their highest potential.

In spite of the fact that Muhammad Ali has been suffering from Parkinson's disease in the past two decades, he still remains an advocate of children and war victims. Inspiring millions has been an arduous work in progress till this day for Muhammad Ali. He continues to be a leader and revolutionary to this day.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 58, honoring a good friend, Muhammad Ali, on the occasion of his 65th birthday and to extend best wishes to him and his family. The Gentlelady from Indiana [Ms. CARSON] is to be commended for bringing this resolution to the House in celebration of an icon of sportsmanship, fortitude, perseverance, and peace.

On November 20, 2005, I was honored to have given remarks during the grand opening of the Muhammad Ali Center in downtown Louisville. This educational and cultural center was established to give visitors a glimpse of Ali's life and experiences and to help inspire them to pursue their dreams by applying their maximum potential.

Ali is many things to many people: a world champion, an Olympian, an innovator, a world-class father, husband, and friend. In his 21 years of boxing, he won 56 fights out of 61 and is the first boxer to win the heavyweight championship three times. He achieved the incredible feat of winning an Olympic gold medal in the 1960 games at the age of 18.

However, his legendary charisma, charm, and genius did not stop in the ring or at press conferences. What makes him a true pioneer is the fact that he was principled enough to say no to the Vietnam War. The words he

spoke in refusing the draft made a stark social commentary during that time and taught America a valuable way of thinking. Those words taught us that war should always be a last resort and that before we over-commit ourselves elsewhere, we must fix the problems that exist right at home. This philosophy has tremendous relevance to us today in the context of the War in Iraq. Many Americans feel that we should re-align our priorities to address problems at home instead of fighting a war in Iraq.

I wish Muhammad Ali a very happy birthday. For his outstanding contributions to sports and sportsmanship and for the lessons on peace and conviction to principles that he gave the world, I sincerely thank him. His legacy and record of achievement have earned him the title of "the Greatest of All Time." I support this resolution.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support the passage of H. Res. 58 and yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 58.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those voting have responded in the affirmative.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. 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 question will be postponed.

REPEALING CERTAIN LAWS PERTAINING TO THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 57) to repeal certain sections of the Act of May 26, 1936, pertaining to the Virgin Islands.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 57

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

SECTION 1. REPEAL OF CERTAIN LAWS PERTAINING TO THE VIRGIN ISLANDS.

(a) REPEAL.—Sections 1 through 6 of the Act of May 26, 1936, (Chapter 450; 49 Stat. 1372-1373; 48 U.S.C. 1401-1401e) are repealed.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall be deemed to have taken effect on July 22, 1954.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) and the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. FORTUÑO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands?

There was no objection.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 57, legislation to repeal an outdated Federal law which limits the authority of the Virgin Islands to assess and collect property taxes. Both the U.S. Senate and the House passed identical legislation in the waning hours of the last Congress but ran out of time before completing the process.

Mr. Speaker, it remains critical that we pass this bill and have it enacted into law as soon as possible in order to prevent some of my constituents from facing the very real risk of losing their homes because the Virgin Islands Government could not provide them protections from sky-high property tax bills because of that 1936 statute. It was enacted to address the tax policies of the Danish era in the Virgin Islands. It was generally thought to have been repealed by the enactment of the Revised Organic Act of 1954, which created a comprehensive system of local government with sufficient legislative powers to resolve local property tax issues without the need for Federal intervention.

The bill before us became necessary because 3 years ago the Third Circuit Court of Appeals revived the 1936 statute and struck down a local statute capping the amount of any increase in the assessment of residential real property and, therefore, any increase in the property tax owed in any assessment period.

If the 1936 law is not now repealed by the Congress, the government of the Virgin Islands will not have the authority to limit such increases by capping assessments or similar methods commonly used by other jurisdictions. Indeed, the revived 1936 statute may have the anomalous result of pricing land and homeownership beyond the reach of many Virgin Islanders. That statute has long outlived its usefulness and now interferes with the Virgin Islands' ability to perform an essential governmental function.

The assessment and collection of real property taxes is fundamentally a local government issue with no Federal impact. No other State, territorial, or local government is subject to such Federal restrictions. The Revised Organic Act of 1954, as amended, confers upon the people of the Virgin Islands full powers of self-government; the 1936 statute is an anachronism that needs to be repealed.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague, the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico (Mr. FORTUÑO), for his support, and to thank Chairman RAHALL and Ranking Member YOUNG for helping us to bring this bill to the floor so quickly.

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

Mr. FORTUÑO. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support passage of H.R. 57,