of centennial years as occasions to celebrate. In 1976, for example, the country joyfully celebrated the bicentennial anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. On this centennial, we recall that 100 years ago, the United States defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War and, as a result, acquired Puerto Rico as a possession.

It is a bittersweet anniversary for many of the 3.8 million U.S. citizens living in Puerto Rico. Make no mistake. The people of Puerto Rico are proud to be citizens of the United States, and they have affirmed, repeatedly, their desire to be an integral part of this great Nation.

In the poll booth, 95 percent of them have voted continuously for strengthening their rights of U.S. citizenship. And on the battlefield, in every war the country has engaged in during this century, Puerto Ricans have pledged their commitment to the Nation and its democratic ideals with their lives.

There is one regret. Despite a progression from military rule to a federally appointed civil government in 1900, the granting of U.S. citizenship by statute in 1917 and the adoption of a constitution for local self-government in 1952, Puerto Rico continues to be an unincorporated territory of the United States, or as it is called in international forums, a colony.

The residents of Puerto Rico are subject to the authority and plenary powers of Congress under the territory clause of the U.S. Constitution. We may not vote in presidential elections, and we have no voting representation in Congress.

The economic, social, and political affairs of the people of Puerto Rico, in great measure, are controlled and influenced by government which is in no way accountable to them. In 1898, Puerto Rico became a colony of the United States; a century later, it remains a U.S. colony. Puerto Rico has a dubious distinction of being the longest standing colony of over 1 million inhabitants in the whole world.

Only the Congress has the power to end this chapter of colonialism. Only Congress has the authority to create the opportunity for the full exercise of self-determination by the people of Puerto Rico.

□ 1245

And Congress alone bears the political responsibility and the moral imperative to act.

H.R. 856, the United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act is status neutral. It does not promote, endorse or advocate one political choice over another. Instead, it seeks to create Constitutionally-sound and Congressionally approved definitions of political status options for the residents of Puerto Rico; it proposes a timetable for referendums on status and it makes provisions, should they prove necessary, for a smooth transition to and the implementation of a new political status.

For nearly five decades, the Commonwealth status has been misrepresented to the voters of Puerto Rico. In 1950, when the Congress passed the Puerto Rico Federal Relations Act, which authorized the people of Puerto Rico to draw up a constitution and reorganize a local self-government, the intent was to establish a provisional government until the issue of status was resolved. But when Commonwealth was ''sold'' to our people, it was billed as a bilateral pact that could only be altered by mutual consent, implying that the new status conferred political and economic autonomy and sovereignty to the island.

The United States Government became a party to this misrepresentation in 1953 when it notified the United Nations that it would no longer submit reports regarding the status of Puerto Rico because the island had achieved a ''full measure'' of self-government under the new ''constitutional arrangement.''

Unfortunately, the misinformation campaign continues unabated. Since the creation of the so-called Commonwealth, Puerto Ricans have voted in two referendums on status. But in the most recent of these, the 1993 plebiscite, the definition of Commonwealth on the ballot ''contained proposals to profoundly change, rather than continue the current Commonwealth of Puerto Rico government structure,'' observed the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) and several other colleagues in a 1996 letter to the President of the Senate and to the Speaker of the House of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

What is more, as our colleagues explained, ''Certain elements of the Commonwealth option, including permanent union with the United States and guaranteed U.S. citizenship, can only be achieved by full integration into the U.S. leading to statehood. Other elements of the Commonwealth option on the ballot, including a government-to-government bilateral pact, which cannot be altered, either are not possible or could only be partially accomplished through treaty arrangements based on separate sovereignty.''

To perpetuate this farce, this rhetorical slight of hand that disguises Puerto Rico's true status as a colony, defrauds the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico of their right to self-determination. It leaves them disenfranchised, in a state of political limbo.

Mr. Speaker, we are 8 years into the decade that the United Nations General Assembly has dedicated to the eradication of colonialism, and we act as if we were frozen in time. Does this country and does this Congress really want to celebrate 100 years of colonialism? This centennial gives us no joy. In order for all to celebrate, Congress must act. It is time to pass H.R. 856.

THE YEAR 2000 CENSUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997 the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to continue the conversation I began a few weeks ago about the 2000 Census. As I have said, I believe we need to work together to ensure that we have the best, most honest Census possible. But I believe we are a long way from realizing that type of Census.

As everyone involved in the decennial Census knows by now, I have concerns that we are headed for a failed Census. Today, I want to discuss what I believe are the serious mistakes the Clinton Administration has made to date, and what I believe they need to do to start correcting them in time to save the 2000 Census.

The biggest mistake, indeed a colossal mistake, was made right from the start. They decided to ignore Congress. They thought they could just go ahead and design any methodology they wanted and just say to Congress: This is what we are going to do, and you just pay for it. That is not how our system works on any issue.

Mr. Speaker, we expect the Decennial Census to cost almost $4 billion. In other words, we spend real money on the Census. As a general rule, Congress does not give the executive branch $4 billion and say, hey, do whatever you want with it, you know best.

Under our system, Congress controls the purse strings. So when the administration wants to spend tax dollars, they come to Congress and justify what they want to do. This gives Congress the ability to shape how the money is spent.

Congress plays an even larger role in the conduct of the Census. We do this for one basic reason: the Constitution mandates that it is the Congress' responsibility to direct the manner in which the Census is taken. Let me quote from the Constitution itself: Quote: ''The actual enumeration shall be made within every subsequent term of 10 years, in such a manner as they, meaning the Congress, shall direct by law.'' End quote. In other words, the Constitution places the responsibility for the Census on the Congress, not the executive branch.

For reasons I do not fully yet understand, the Clinton Administration used the ''Hillary Health Care Model'' for designing the 2000 Census. They decided to design a complicated, untested Census plan that was created by ''experts.'' And since the idea was sanctioned by well-meaning experts, they just figured there was no reason to explain it or to sell it to average Americans and certainly no reason to work with the Congress.

Mr. Speaker, remember the secret health care task force that designed the original Health Security Act? They were all well-meaning, hard-working individuals with great educations and they designed the ultimate graduate school seminar project. The plan was over 1,000 pages long. They had thought

of every possible problem. And when the American people raised concerns, they just said do not worry, we know best. When Congress asked questions, the President threatened vetoes. Well, the Clinton health care plan collapsed.

Unfortunately, they are headed down the same path on the Census. They used some legitimate problems in the 1990 Census as an excuse to totally redesign a 200-year method for taking the Census. But because they used experts, in this case statisticians, to design this unprecedented method, they decided they did not need approval from Congress. How could Congress have any legitimate concerns after all, because the Census Bureau used ''expert panels'' to create this new concept?

Well, ''expert panels'' weren't elected by the people. Professional statisticians are not constitutionally responsible for directing the Census. Academics do not have the responsibility for deciding how taxpayers' dollars are spent. That is Congress' job.

By the way, I have a Ph.D. in marketing and statistics, so I understand the theory behind what they are trying to pull off. I believe, however, that the Clinton Administration dropped the ball in informing the Congress, working with the Congress, and seeking approval from Congress.

This serious miscalculation has placed the 2000 Census in danger and the institution of the Federal Government most impacted by a failed Census is the United States House of Representatives. Every State legislature, every city council, every school board needs a successful Census to legitimately represent the people. Let me repeat that. Every State legislature, every city council, every school board needs a successful Census to legitimately represent the people.

If the administration fails in the implementation of their academic theory, all representative bodies in this country will be thrown in turmoil and uncertainty.

The majority in Congress have made it very clear that we do not approve of the administration's current plan. What we want, or more precisely what we intend to pay for, is a traditional Census that is transparent and fair. We understand the problems of the 1990 Census and we want them fixed. We do not believe, however, that we need to throw out the baby with the bath water.

To date, I am not satisfied they have gotten the message downtown. In November, Congress passed and the President signed legislation to continue on an actual enumeration. They have not gotten the message.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the legislation—''that funds appropriated under this act . . . shall be used by the Bureau of the Census to plan, test and become prepared to implement the 2000 decennial census, without using statistical methods. . . .''

It seems pretty clear that the law requires them to prepare for a traditional Census. I don't believe that's what they are doing. They're budget submission hides behind legalisms and technicalities and says, ''The Administration has not included additional funding for nonsampling census activities because that funding is not required by the agreement.''

To me, that is yet another slap in the face to the Congress. They seem to have this attitude that Congress' opinion doesn't matter.

The 2000 Census is in deep trouble at this moment. The Commerce Department's own Inspector General has said that. I stand ready to work with the Administration. We want and we need a successful Census in 2000. But the attitude downtown needs to turnaround. They need to understand that we have a role to play—a very major role to play—in the planning, preparation and implementation of the 2000 Census.

POST OFFICE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997 the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, oftentimes, the Federal Government is called to spend billions of dollars to try and repair communities after they fall apart. It is far better for the Federal Government and its agencies to lead by example, and one of the ways that we can lead by example is best illustrated by the impact that the United States Postal Service has on our communities.

Post Offices are the heart and soul of America's small towns, drawing people to main streets and preserving the core of these communities. Despite this vital role, the Postal Service continues to move post offices to the outskirts of town, leaving devastated communities in their wake.

This is happening across the country, not just in my community in Oregon. I have heard similar stories from Washington, Montana, Colorado, Ohio, Louisiana, New York, and everywhere in between. Small downtowns across the country are being stranded despite the protest of town residents.

Mr. Speaker, it is absurd that the Postal Service gives its customers more say in which Elvis stamp to issue than where the post offices are located. Residents of Christianburg, Virginia, know this story all too well. They used to gather at a post office in the center of town to collect their mail and talk about the events of the day. Today, their main post office has moved 3 miles from downtown leaving only a small contact station in its wake. The gathering place for the community has become this window in a grocery store next to the motor oil and the fuel filters.

Fortunately, Christianburg residents refused to take this affront as the final word. Residents of the town, supported by the city council and their Chamber of Commerce, fought back and finally after a 2-year battle, it appears as though the Postal Service has conceded that a ''communications breakdown'' occurred and they are apparently ready to reverse this decision.

Our Nation's governors know that these post office relocations are directly contributing to the decline of their towns and reducing the access of the elderly and disabled to post office services. The governors have now asked for our help. They have asked Congress to eliminate the loophole that is keeping citizens from having a voice in these post office relocation decisions.

They have also asked that we require the Postal Service to comply with the same local zoning and building codes that apply to State and local governments. Governors made this request because they know firsthand the problems caused when the Postal Service claims immunity from the same laws that private citizens, businesses and local governments abide by.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the governors and have introduced H.R. 1231, which would meet their goals. The Post Office Communities Partnership Act strengthens the voice of local citizens in decisions to relocate or rebuild postal facilities. It would give at least 60 days notice before renovating or relocating. It would require the Postal Service to consider a number of additional factors, including the community sentiment, the extent to which the post office is a part of a core downtown, and the effect a new facility may have on a community. And it must comply with all local zoning, planning and land use regulations.

The bill is fair. It does not place unnecessary burdens on the Postal Service. For the first time they would be treated as a responsible member of the community and not above local laws.

Mr. DOYLE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to join with my distinguished colleagues to speak about H.R. 1231, the Post Office Relocation Act. In particular, I want to express my appreciation to Representative BLUMENAUER for organizing this forum and to recognize his efforts in fashioning thoughtful legislation that directly responds to the postal needs and concerns of constituents in every community in our country.

Regardless of where one may reside, the services that the U.S. Post Office provides are deeply rooted in the essence of community and by extension connote a sense of identity. Thus, rural and urban residents understandably react unfavorably when their mail delivery or local post office is altered in some way. A community's reaction is unduly compounded when they have a sense that their concerns and needs were not considered as part of the decision-making process.

In just the last year, I have been approached by several communities in the 18th Congressional District of Pennsylvania that are faced with some type of difficulty regarding postal services. While the circumstances of these cases are quite different, the level of frustration they have experienced with respect to their ability to interject individual thoughts and opinions has been the same.

The residents of Whitaker, Pennsylvania—in my district—have had to deal with having the