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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 3, 1998.

I hereby designate the Honorable VINCE SNOWBARGER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ) for 5 minutes.

SUPPORT H.R. 856, THE UNITED STATES-PUERTO RICO POLITICAL STATUS ACT

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, March 2, was a celebratory date for all Americans. The Jones Act, introduced by the gentleman from Virginia, was enacted on that date in the year 1917, and Puerto Ricans were granted statutory citizenship of the United States. For 81 years, the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico have been denied the most fundamental rights of American citizenship, the right to vote for the President and the right to voting representation in the House and in the Senate.

Since we began our work in Congress in 1993, everyone here has been aware of my struggle for political equality and my frustrations as a nonvoting Member of the U.S. House of Representatives in trying to achieve equal rights for the 3.8 million U.S. citizens of the Territory of Puerto Rico.

The Children's Health Care Initiative is a perfect example of this struggle. As finally passed, the children in Puerto Rico, all of whom are U.S. citizens, will receive one-seventh of what they would receive if they had been treated as children in a State. It is a matter of serious concern that the health of the American children of Puerto Rico was not considered of equal value within the Nation. Modifications are now being proposed, but we encounter similar struggles every day that confirm that Puerto Ricans are disenfranchised second-class U.S. citizens.

Yet, Puerto Ricans have been model U.S. citizens. Our men and women have valiantly and willingly served in every one of our Nation's armed conflicts since World War I to defend American democratic values.

It is now time for Congress to take action to bring to these 3.8 million citizens political, economic, and social equality. The mechanism to achieve this is within our reach. H.R. 856, also known as the United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act, represents this mechanism to grant the people of Puerto Rico one of their basic rights, the right to self-determination.

This bill provides for the celebration of the first-ever congressionally sanctioned referendum in this century, allowing Puerto Ricans to choose between two decolonizing formulas, separate sovereignty and statehood, or to remain in the current territorial status. It is an opportunity to end the colonial status of 3.8 million of our U.S. citizens through the democratic exercise of self-determination.

The right to self-determination has been earned by the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico as a result of their faithful commitment to the Nation. Over 340,000 Puerto Ricans have served in the Armed Forces, many giving their lives in defense of American democracy wherever they were needed in the world.

If the Congress refuses to grant this right to their own disenfranchised citizens, our Nation's image as the symbol of liberty and democracy in the world would be severely tarnished.

There are some people, however, interested in derailing this bill by referring to it as a statehood bill and spreading fear on what they believe are the negative consequences of statehood. I want to set the record straight.

The bill provides the people of Puerto Rico the right to express their political choice by selecting between the three status options. H.R. 856 is not an enabling act that offers the territory instant admission as a State, as some are trying to portray.

These messengers of ignorance contend that statehood will be the fatal for the Federal budget due to the additional funding that would be required, yet fail to mention the positive effect that taxes paid by individuals and companies in Puerto Rico would have in that same budget.

If we were a State now, we would pay $4.5 billion in taxes, and the additional benefits to Puerto Rico would be $3.1 billion; in other words, a net revenue of $1.4 billion to the U.S. Treasury.

In a similarly intimidating fashion they try to raise havoc with the linguistic issue by arguing that there is no room for a Spanish-speaking State, failing to mention, once again, that the official languages of the Government of Puerto Rico and the languages of instruction in school are both Spanish and English. You need to consider that

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these are merely excuses to prevent the Congress from doing the right thing.

Congress is facing an unprecedented opportunity to end the inequality and disenfranchisement of the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico by enabling them the exercise of the most fundamental right of all democracies, self-determination, a right that the United States has defended as a Nation throughout the world. It would, indeed, be a national shame if this right were not extended to its own citizens.

We must reject the ignorant, fear-inspired movement to stop the democratic process and deny self-determination to Puerto Rico. As the world's leader, one of the main objectives of U.S. foreign policy has been to promote and defend democracy and self-determination around the world. It might be a good idea to begin applying our policies to our own citizens seeking this right.

I am asking for your support when H.R. 856 reaches the House floor. The U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico and every American committed to freedom, democracy, and justice will be grateful. It is the right thing to do.

CONGRATULATIONS TO TARA LIPINSKY, OLYMPIC GOLD MEDAL WINNER

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

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Tara Lipinsky on her outstanding accomplishment on behalf of the United States of America, winning as she did the Olympic gold in women's figure skating at Nagano.

Ms. Lipinsky, the youngest person to ever win a gold medal in an individual event in winter Olympics history, has made all America proud with her wonderful performances. The grace and elegance that Tara Lipinsky brings to her skating is invigorating, and the drive and determination that she has exercised to develop her talent sets a shining example for all of us.

Ms. Lipinsky, along with fellow Olympians Todd Eldredge, Jerod Swallow, Elizabeth Punsalan, Jessica Joseph and Charles Butler, all Olympians, all trained at the Detroit Skating Club in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. As the Member of Congress with the great honor to represent Michigan's 11th Congressional District, which by the way includes Bloomfield Hills, it is also my home, I would like to take this opportunity to also congratulate the coaches, the family members, and everyone else that was involved that make the Detroit Skating Club one of the best training facilities for ice skaters in the world.

Mr. Speaker, Tara Lipinsky's victory has touched hearts around the world and made the citizens of my district and across the country extremely proud. We owe all our Olympic athletes a hearty well done and congratulations.

2000 CENSUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, last week one of my colleagues came to the House floor and said that the planning for the 2000 census was done in secret. I am here today to put the facts on the table so that the American people can decide for themselves. Designing the 2000 census has been one of the most public processes in the history of the census.

Dr. Barbara Bryant, the director of the Census Bureau for President George Bush, began the process in 1991 shortly after the conclusion of the 1990 census. She took over the Census Bureau less than 4 months before the 1990 census began, and she knew that it could be improved. The results from the 1990 census reinforced that decision.

In partnership with Congress, Dr. Bryant began the process that resulted in the census design we are debating today. To achieve a better census design, Congress turned to the National Academy of Sciences.

The gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. ROGERS) testified before the House Subcommittee on the Census in 1991 and said there is a need for ''an independent review of the census that is fundamental in nature, a back-to-basics, zero-based study that begins with no preconceived notions about what we collect or how we collect it. For that reason, I have pursued the idea of having the National Academy of Sciences conduct such a review. The Academy is credible, experienced, and more importantly, independent. Plus, I have been satisfied they can pull together a panel of fine minds, capable of blending fresh policy viewpoints with an understanding of statistical methods.''

In 1992 Congress passed H.R. 3280, ''a bill to provide for a study to be conducted by the National Academy of Sciences on how the government can improve the decennial census of population, and on related matters.'' That study laid out the blueprint for the 2000 census.

It has been alleged that there has been no congressional involvement in planning the census. But how can that be, when the design for the census is based on a study mandated by Congress? In addition, between 1991 and 1994 there were 15 House and Senate hearings on the 2000 census.

If there has been any neglect, it has been since 1995 when Congress abolished the Subcommittee on the Census. In 1995, 1996 and 1997 there were only 4 hearings on the 2000 census.

My colleagues have suggested that there has been no public involvement in designing the census. Again, I would like to have the facts speak for themselves. In 1992 the Secretary of Commerce established an Advisory Committee on the 2000 Census made up of nearly 50 organizations. I would like to put a list of those organizations into the RECORD.

The list referred to follows:

The National Governors Association, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, the American Statistical Association, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the Business Roundtable, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, the National Association of Counties, the National Association of Secretaries of State, the National Association of Towns and Townships, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Speaker, these organizations met over 20 times since 1992 and each meeting has been open to the public.

The activities of public involvement were not just here in Washington. The director of the Census Bureau and the Under Secretary for Economic Statistics at the Department of Commerce have gone to scores of cities and held town meetings to get public involvement. At each of these town meetings they have solicited public input on the plans that they have put before the public for conducting a fair and accurate census for 2000.

My colleagues have criticized the administration for developing a census designed by the experts. I wonder why they would want a census designed by amateurs.

The facts are that developing the design for the 2000 census has been one of the most public processes in the history of the census. The process has included major constituent groups, Congress and the public. The design for the census has been endorsed by experts and nonexperts alike.

It is very simple. In 1990 the census had an error rate of over 10 percent. Those who oppose a more accurate census want to go back to the way it was done in 1990, even if it costs more, because they believe that the errors in the census work to their advantage. The administration has put forward a plan to reduce the errors in the census and make it more fair and accurate.

The choice is simple. Do we move into the 21st century with a census that uses modern, scientific methods to count absolutely everyone? Or do we do it the old way and pay more to get a census that has millions of errors in it? I say we follow the plan of Dr. Bryant and the National Academy of Sciences.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT SAMPLING

American Jewish Committee, National Association of Counties, American Statistical Association, U.S. Conference of Mayors, Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics, Children's Defense Fund, Arab American Anti-Discrimination League, American Sociological Association, National League of Cities, and Cuban American National Council, Inc.

National Association of Business Economists, Japanese American Citizens League,