must adhere to? Why, since the post office is such a critical part of our community, should the community not be as involved with potential relocation issues as they are in helping pick which version of the Elvis stamp we are going to have?

I have discussed on the floor of this House in the past problems we have had in Leon County, Florida, where the Postal Service decided that it would not abide by the same groundwater environmental standards for runoff on their parking lot as other private businesses; or where in Ball Ground, Georgia, the Postal Service was not going to abide by a comprehensive plan to help metropolitan Atlanta deal with its critical environmental problems.

□ 1045

Well, after making, as it were, a Federal case out of it, the personal intervention, I think, of the Postmaster General, it looks like we are moving towards resolution in Leon County, Florida, and in metropolitan Georgia. But it should not have to be a major battle. It is time for the post office to stop fighting this legislation. It is time for the post office to institutionalize with us to make sure that the Postal Service is a full partner for the next millennium of livable communities in America.

Mr. Speaker, this small step can lead the way for the Federal Government itself across the country to provide that sort of partnership for livability.

ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING SUBMISSION OF AMENDMENTS ON H.R. 416, FEDERAL RETIREMENT COVERAGE CORRECTIONS ACT

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to make an announcement. I want to inform the House of the Committee on Rules' plans in regard to H.R. 416, the Federal Retirement Coverage Corrections Act. The bill was favorably reported by both the Committee on Government Reform and the Committee on Ways and Means.

The Committee on Rules will meet on Wednesday to grant a rule which may require that amendments be preprinted in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and which may limit amendments to the bill. In this case, amendments to be preprinted would need to be signed by the Member and submitted to the Speaker's table by the close of legislative business on Wednesday. Members should use the Office of Legislative Counsel to assure that their amendments are properly drafted and should check with the Office of the Parliamentarian to be certain that their amendments comply with the rules of the House. It is not necessary to submit amendments to the Committee on Rules or to testify as long as the amendments comply with House rules.

Mr. Speaker, a Dear Colleague letter announcing this potential amendment process was mailed to all Member offices yesterday.

COMMANDANCY OF THE ALAMO

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 3 minutes.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise, as is tradition by members of the Texas delegation. Today is Texas Independence Day, and today I would like to follow in the tradition that has been done for years, to read a letter that was written from Colonel Travis, who was the commandant, who was the head of the Texans who were in the Alamo that was written on February 24, 1836, from Bexar in Texas.

To all people of Texas and all Americans in the world:

Fellow citizens and compatriots, I am besieged by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continual bombardment and cannonade for 24 hours and have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken. I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, and our flag still proudly from the walls. I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of liberty and patriotism and everything dear to the American character to come to our aid with all dispatch. The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in 4 or 5 days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor and to that of his country—victory or death.

Signed, William Barret Travis, Lieutenant Colonel Commander of the Texans in the Alamo.

P.S. The Lord is on our side. When the enemy appeared in sight, we had not three bushels of corn. We have since found in deserted houses 80 or 90 bushels and got into the walls 20 or 30 head of cattle.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

AMERICAN CITIZENS OF PUERTO RICO AND THE TERRITORIES MUST BE RECOGNIZED AS EQUALS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that many of you saw the article ''Talking About a Revolution'' in Roll Call yesterday. The article highlighted the 45th anniversary of the attack perpetrated by a group of terrorists on the U.S. House of Representatives on March 1, 1954. Just like Russell Weston, Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols and others, the terrorists in the 1954 attack were also American citizens.

In commemorating such an anniversary, I wish that the same consideration to detail was provided on other issues concerning Puerto Rico. In our society it seems that it is the negative that consumes our attention, and it is a shame that this terrorist and cowardly act continues to be resurfaced without ever mentioning that the perpetrators were part of a small Fascist party then existing in Puerto Rico.

The article did not choose to highlight also that today, March 2, is the 82nd anniversary of the day when all Puerto Ricans and those born in Puerto Rico thereafter became U.S. citizens through an act of Congress and that it is also the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Puerto Rico regiment of volunteers which later became the 65th Infantry Army regiment, one of the most decorated U.S. Army units of this century. Thus, 100 years ago today, our predecessors in this U.S. Congress were discussing the issue of Puerto Rico and voted on and approved the organization of the first body of troops on the territory which they called the Porto Rico Regiment of Voluntary Infantry, 18 years before we were granted citizenship. We have been equals in war and death, but we are discriminated against in peace and life.

Our rights to liberty and free speech are intrinsic rights of our democracy that have been defended since our Nation's inception. As troops from the United States have fought to ensure and maintain freedom and democratic values everywhere and anywhere that has been needed in this world in this century, 197,034 soldiers hailing from Puerto Rico have fought shoulder to shoulder with our fellow citizens from every other State.

When we consider the century that binds us together, it is clear that the interrelationship between the United States and its citizens in Puerto Rico is most evidenced in our participation in defense of democracy. Military leaders such as General Douglas MacArthur, the supreme commander for the allied power during the Korean War, described it best:

''The Puerto Ricans forming the ranks of the gallant 65th Infantry on the battlefields of Korea by valor, determination and a resolute will to victory give daily testament of their invincible loyalty to the United States and the fervor of their devotion to those immutable standards of human relations to which the Americans and Puerto Ricans are in common dedicated. They are writing a brilliant record of achievement in battle, and I am proud indeed to have them in this command. I wish that we may have many more men like them.''

It is unquestionable that every one of the 197,034 soldiers who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces take the responsibility as U.S. citizens very seriously, willing to give their lives for American democratic values. But their sacrifice would not have been possible without the patriotism and honor to duty evidenced by the support of their families

and all other American citizens in Puerto Rico. Who in my generation in America does not know the story of the Sullivan brothers in the Second World War? But how many Americans know that during the Korean War Mrs. Asuncion Rodriguez Acosta from the town of Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico, was the only American mother who had five sons serving in the Korean front at the same time?

Despite this brilliant record of gallantry and courage, the policy of the U.S. Government sets apart its 4 million American citizens in Puerto Rico and the territories. We are good enough to defend democracy throughout the world, but we are not good enough to have the same rights, nor good enough to receive the same benefits as all other American citizens in the 50 States. Are our sacrifices worth any less by virtue of living in a territory?

The bottom line is, can the United States continue to support a policy of discrimination in the Federal programs that are designed to protect our Nation's most needed citizens, be it in health, housing and economic prosperity?

A superficial mention of the terrorist attack dated 45 years ago only detracts attention from the real issues and should not be allowed to take the place of the in-depth discussions that the Nation should now be engaged in, including how and when to eliminate discrimination.

I urge you, Mr. Speaker, and I urge all of my colleagues to take the necessary steps to ensure that American citizens of Puerto Rico and the territories be recognized as equals and that we be granted equal consideration in all Federal programs together with our fellow citizens in the 50 States. Not only have we earned that right, but not to do so violates the most basic tenets of our democratic system which is based on the principle of equal rights to all. We cannot focus our attention on what a terrorist chooses to do and ignore the responsibility of Congress to direct a stop to discrimination. We must focus in our commitment to and the defense of our cherished American values.

THE INDEPENDENT COUNSEL STATUTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, as Congress this week begins the debate on reinstating the independent counsel law, I think, as a student of history, it is interesting to review what has taken place regarding that law.

Regarding congressional action on that matter certain questions are raised:

Should an administration investigate itself?

Should the alleged wrongdoing of a major administration official be left to the attorney general or to a special counsel or an independent counsel?

Those are the questions that are now being asked as we face the expiration of the current independent counsel law.

Some say the problem is the law, some say the problem is the independent counsel. It is interesting to note, if we review history, what goes around comes around both in law and also in politics. A brief review of the independent counsel law, if folks would just take a moment to do that, reveals that we are about to return to where we started if the independent counsel law is not renewed.

Mr. Speaker, even in 1972, President Nixon suggested the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate the Watergate scandal. As we know from history, President Nixon in 1973 also ordered the Attorney General to fire the Watergate special prosecutor. Those actions led Congress and President Carter to enact in 1973 an Ethics in Government Act. All totaled, the special prosecutor law was invoked 11 times from 1978 to 1982 with three appointments of special prosecutors.

In 1983, that law was revised and renewed for another 5 years. In 1987, with the Iran-Contra statute, when it came up for reauthorization, and although it gave great heartburn, President Reagan in December of 1987 signed the reimplementing bill into law. With three investigations during the Bush administration, President Bush let the statute expire in 1992.

With a new administration and new scandals, the Attorney General, Janet Reno, under the general law authority, appointed Robert Fisk as a special counsel, not an independent counsel, but under her general authority to investigate Whitewater, and she initiated that action on June 30, 1994.

Vowing to head up an administration with the highest ethical standards, President Bill Clinton took the step of being the first President since Carter to endorse the institution of an independent counsel law. On July 1, 1994, President Clinton signed the reauthorization bill and commented about the law, and let me quote from the President: ''a foundation stone for trust between the government and our citizens.'' He dismissed charges that it had been, and I quote, ''a tool of partisan attack and a waste of taxpayer funds.'' Instead, he said the statute was, and let me quote, ''has been in the past and is today a force for government integrity and public confidence,'' end quote.

The Attorney General spoke before Congress, the same Attorney General who will be having the Department of Justice advocate the end of the independent counsel law, and stressed the government's and her own support for the bill, and let me quote what she said:

> As a vehicle to further the public's perception of fairness and thoroughness, and to avert even the most subtle influence of what may appear in an investigation of highly-placed executive officials.

□ 1100

How interesting it is how the law comes around and goes around. How interesting it is that today the shoe is on the other foot. The administration is about to advocate the abolition of the Independent Counsel law. I think we just need to take a few minutes and look at history and see how people have taken various stands, depending on whose ox is getting gored.

I like to reflect on history, and I think this is a little lesson in history, particularly as it deals with the appointment of an Independent Counsel.

MEDICARE REFORM: DO NOT TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the National Commission on the Future of Medicare will wrap up its work sometime this month. The Commission members were given the task of putting Medicare on solid financial footing. Unfortunately, they want to save Medicare by privatizing it.

Under the Commission proposal, Medicare would no longer pay directly for health care services. Instead, it would provide each senior with a voucher good for part of the premium for private coverage. Medicare beneficiaries could use this voucher to buy into the fee-for-service plan sponsored by the Federal Government, so-called traditional Medicare, or join a private plan.

The Commission proposal creates a system of health coverage, but it abandons the principles of comprehensiveness and egalitarianism that make Medicare such a valuable national program, an essential national service for America's elderly.

Today the Medicare program is income-blind. All seniors have access to this same level of care. The Commission proposal markets a class-based health care system of two-tiered health care: excellent care for the affluent, only barely adequate or worse health care for the less well off.

The idea that vouchers would empower seniors to choose a health plan that best suits their needs is a myth. The reality is that they will be forced to accept whatever health care plan that they can afford. Medicare beneficiaries have been able to enroll in private managed care plans for sometime now, and their experience, unfortunately, does not bode well for a full-fledged privatization effort.

Most managed care plans are for profit. The theory that they can sustain significantly lower costs than traditional Medicare simply is not panning out. Because managed care plans are profit-driven, they do not tough it out when those profits are not so forthcoming. We learned that the hard way