OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 28, 2006.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
The Speaker, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on March 28, 2006, at 9:30 a.m.:

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 1259.

With best wishes, I am,

Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS,
Clerk of the House.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 4 of rule I, Speaker pro tempore Aderholt signed the following enrolled bills on Friday, March 17, 2006:

H.R. 4826, to extend through December 31, 2006, the authority of the Secretary of the Army to accept and expend funds contributed by non-Federal public entities to expedite the processing of permits;

S. 2275, to temporarily increase the borrowing authority of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for carrying out the National Flood Insurance Program;

S. 2320, to make available funds included in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program for fiscal year 2006, and for other purposes.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken after 6:30 p.m. today.

□ 1430

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL VISITOR CENTER ENFORCEMENT ACT

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4882) to ensure the proper remembrance of Vietnam veterans and the Vietnam War by providing a deadline for the designation of a visitor center for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4882

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 ''Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center Enforcement Act''.

SEC. 2. SITE.

Section 6 of Public Law 96–297 is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(e) SITE.—The visitor center authorized by subsection (a) shall be located in the open land in the triangular area between Henry Bacon Drive, NW, 23rd Street, NW, Constitution Avenue, NW, and the Lincoln Memorial.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHWARZ of Michigan). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PEARCE. 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 gentleman from New Mexico?

There was no objection.

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

H.R. 4882, introduced by Resources Committee Chairman RICHARD POMBO, along with Ranking Member NICK RAHALL, Congresswoman DONNA CHRISTENSEN and myself, would locate the congressionally approved underground visitors center for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on land adjacent to the Lincoln Memorial.

Chairman POMBO felt compelled to take this unusual action in direct response to what he and I and others believe is the unreasonable bureaucracy choreographed by the National Capital Planning Commission.

In November of 2003, the President signed the bill into law authorizing the creation of the visitors center. For 3½ years, this project has been under way with the National Park Service and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund having promptly met all requests for environmental and related information on the siting of the center. Yet, the commission demands more.

Last November, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and the National Park Service gave the commission an extensive traffic analysis and met other information requests for a December 1 meeting at which the commission was expected to approve the site. However, without any notice to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the commission removed the visitors center from the meeting agenda and requested an extensive and unprecedented environmental analysis.

There is no need for an additional analysis. In compliance with the Commemorative Works Act, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund commissioned a site selection study environmental analysis in June 2005 that recommended the most appropriate site, which is cited in H.R. 4882, as amended. Site A, as it is known, would not interfere or encroach on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial or other memorials and protects the open space and visual sight lines of the National Mall as required by the authorizing legislation.

As a Vietnam veteran, I believe the visitors center is a long overdue complement to the most visited memorial in Washington, DC. While ''the Wall,'' as it has become known, certainly provides a visitor with an intense and solemn experience, it lacks personal context. Our brave soldier, sailors, and airmen desperately need something more, an experience that can help them heal while bringing closure. Their objectives were honorable and their sacrifice was exemplary. Yet their heroism remains unnoticed by younger generations.

As today's participants in the military, young men and women, fight the war on terror, there is no better way to reassure them that America will honor their sacrifice, no matter what the Nation feels. The greatest thing that we can do to reassure them is to honor our Vietnam veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the bill, as amended.

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

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

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

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join Chairman POMBO as an original cosponsor of this measure, along with the ranking member on our Parks Subcommittee, Representative DONNA CHRISTENSEN. We urge our colleagues to approve H.R. 4882.

While the fighting ended more than 30 years ago, our work as a nation to reconcile with all that took place during the Vietnam Era continues.

Just as the Revolutionary War gave birth to our liberty, and the survival of our Union through the Civil War and two World Wars gave us strength, the lessons of the Vietnam War can grant us wisdom; and while the emotions stirred by that war in the hearts and minds of Americans are many and varied, the journey this Nation has taken with regard to Vietnam resembles nothing so much as a journey of grieving.

We grieve for the fallen, for the bereft families, for the survivors and their painful scars, and for the wounds inflicted on the country and the people of Vietnam.

Mr. Speaker, the experts tell us that there are stages to the grieving process. In those 30 years, we have experienced them each in turn.

The process began with denial and with anger. For a time, we denied Vietnam its rightful place in American history as we denied those who fought and died their rightful place in the pantheon of American heroes. And Lord knows we have felt the anger. To our shame, we directed much of that anger at those who served.

We have also lived through what the experts call the bargaining phase. We

have wished, we have hoped, and we have prayed that things might have turned out differently, that we might, as a nation, have responded differently. We have tried to negotiate away our failures.

And we have surely endured the next phase, the depression that comes with war and with death. Those who returned from Vietnam and the families of those who did not have felt the deep darkness of painful loss. And our Nation, as a whole, has endured a lingering sadness for so much that was lost during that time.

But, finally, Mr. Speaker, we reached the last stage; and it is here that the Vietnam Memorial plays such a powerful role. We have achieved some level of acceptance. We have, however belatedly, begun to treat those who sacrificed for their country in Vietnam with the reverence they have earned, and we have begun to heal. The Vietnam Memorial is a powerful symbol of that healing and an emotional catalyst for it.

The Wall's designer, the amazingly gifted Maya Lin, described her idea for the Wall as a ''rift in the Earth.'' The Wall literally stands as a deep, dark scar on the land, and it represents the deep scar we carry as a nation; but a scar is an important part of healing.

The National Park Service describes the goal of the memorial as ''nourishing national reconciliation,'' and in achieving reconciliation, the Memorial has succeeded beyond even the wildest dreams of its most ardent supports.

More than 20 million people have made the journey to the memorial and the journey through the memorial, leaving millions of personal items in tribute and in memory; and they have felt some measure of healing, of acceptance. Perhaps more important, the Wall, and the reaction to it by the millions who have seen it, has begun to make Vietnam veterans and their families feel some measure of acceptance as well.

The leadership of the House Resources Committee has pledged to work together in a bipartisan fashion to ensure that this process of healing and acceptance continues.

A visitors center will broaden and deepen the experience of those who come to the Wall. A visitor center will educate. Visitors can learn about the 57,939 names that were inscribed on the Wall when it was built and the more than 300 that have been added since. The center can offer information regarding the 151 people listed on the Wall who, in making the ultimate sacrifice for their country, were awarded the Medal of Honor, or the 16 clergy members, or the 120 people who hailed from foreign countries. We still have many lessons to learn.

A visitors center can help interpret as well. The center will provide space for a small sampling of the enormous volume of memorabilia left at the Wall, and as more and more visitors bring with them less and less personal experience of the war, a visitors center will provide them invaluable context and meaning.

Fittingly, Mr. Speaker, one end of the Vietnam Memorial points directly toward the grand statue of our 16th President housed inside the Lincoln Memorial. Written on the wall of that memorial are words from Lincoln's second inaugural address, which also speak to the role of the Vietnam Wall:

''With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the Nation's wounds.

''To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.''

H.R. 4882 will help finish the work we are in regarding Vietnam. It will help continue the healing provided by the memorial. It will help bind up the Nation's wounds, and we urge its passage.

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

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

I thank the gentleman for his comments and would note that in this past week I was able to tour a brand-new school in my district, the 2nd District of New Mexico, that is named after the Bataan March.

The Bataan Death March occurred because the Nation forgot a small increment, a small group of soldiers, most of them in the New Mexico National Guard. Those people were taken captive, and now I find young school members, school kids today understanding the sacrifices that were made in that Bataan March back in World War II.

I was in Vietnam when the Nation turned its back on the young soldiers of the Vietnam Era. I was there as we were spit on and cursed as we came back. Right now, most Vietnam veterans look for only one greeting, that is, welcome home. Even today, those words are enough to satisfy the Vietnam veteran to whom a nation turned its back.

For the National Capital Planning Commission to turn its back on our veterans from Vietnam one more time is beyond belief. I urge passage of the bill.

Mr. POMBO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4882, as amended.

H.R. 4882, legislation I introduced along with Resources Committee Ranking Member Congressman RAHALL, National Parks Subcommittee Chairman PEARCE and Subcommittee Ranking Member CHRISTENSEN, would locate the congressionally approved underground visitor center for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial adjacent to the Lincoln Memorial.

I felt compelled to take this unusual action in direct response to what I believe is the unreasonable bureaucracy choreographed by the National Capital Planning Commission, NCPC. After having met with the NCPC chairman, I believed more than ever that I had to take such action when I asked him the simple question: When will the commission complete its unusually long evaluation for the placement of the center? His answer was that the commission was still collecting information and that he could not give me a day, month, week or year.

Following years of failed attempts to secure an authorization for the visitor center, I was able to get legislation to the President in November 2003. It is now March 2006 and the National Park Service and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund have promptly met all NCPC requests for environmental and related information on the sitting of the center and yet the commission wants more. Enough is enough.

As late as November 2005, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and the National Park Service gave the NCPC an extensive traffic analysis and met other NCPC requests for a December 1 NCPC meeting. The commission was to approve the site for the center at this meeting.

Instead, without any notice to the National Park Service and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the NCPC removed the visitor center from the meeting agenda and requested an extensive and unprecedented environmental analysis.

I do not believe there is a need for additional analysis. In compliance with the Commemorative Works Act and the NCPC policies and procedures, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund commissioned an environmental analysis/site selection study in June 2005. The recommended site for the visitor center is cited in H.R. 4882. Site A, as it is known, would not interfere or encroach on the Lincoln or Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and protects the open space and visual sightlines of the Mall as required by the authorizing legislation.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to thank John Reese and Scott Randall of the city of Danville, CA, and Mike Weber of the city of San Ramon, CA, for their service to this country and their leadership and strong support for the visitor center.

Finally, if there was any doubt as to the need for this important legislation, one should take a look at the article that appeared in the March 23, 2006, edition of the Washington Examiner. A spokeswoman for the NCPC is quoted as saying the commission is concerned that "you could end up with a four- or five-story building next to the Lincoln Memorial."

How is that possible when the visitor center is required by statute to be located underground? I think that quote sums up the agenda of the staff of the NCPC and their unfounded opposition to the visitor center.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4882, as amended.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to raise some serious concerns about H.R. 4882, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center Deadline Enforcement Act. I think everyone in this body, myself included, believes strongly that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial should have a visitors center. That is why Congress passed H.R. 1442 2½ years ago with unanimous support.

That bill authorized the visitors center to be constructed on Federal land in the District of Colombia. It also required that the design and construction of the center comply with existing

Federal law governing the placement of memorials, museums, and other facilities on the Mall. As I am sure Members know, the construction of new facilities on the Mall is a difficult and often contentious issue where the competing interests of particular advocates sometimes conflict with the need to protect the sightlines and openness of the Mall itself.

In order to deal with these issues fairly, ensure that all interested parties have a voice, and protect what is truly a national treasure, Congress has created the National Capitol Planning Commission, over which the Government Reform Committee has jurisdiction. It has also established in law a process for the consideration and approval of new facilities on the Mall in the Commemorative Works Act.

The bill before us, H.R. 4882, short-circuits that process in two ways. First, it would create an arbitrary deadline for the visitors center's approval—30 days from the date of enactment. Second, the bill designates the sight on which the center will be built—a small triangle of land between the Vietnam Veterans and Lincoln Memorials. This seems like the kind of micro-management that could be avoided if the Commemorative Works Act process was followed.

One of the requirements of current law is for an environmental assessment to be done on all new facilities on the Mall. It is my understanding that the lack of a completed environmental assessment for the Vietnam visitors center is what has held up the approval for the facility by the Nation Capitol Planning Commission. This assessment will provide critical information needed for final site approval, and it is my further understanding that this assessment is currently underway.

I believe that this approval process should be allowed to reach its own conclusion, without mandated deadlines and site selection. The National Capitol Planning Commission is working in good faith with the National Park Service, the General Services Administration, the government of the District of Colombia, and Vietnam Veterans groups to reach a timely conclusion to this approval process. They should be allowed to do so.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 4882, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center Deadline Enforcement Act.

I want to thank the chairman of the Committee on Resources, the gentleman from California (Mr. POMBO), and also our ranking member, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL), for their leadership in bringing this legislation to the floor.

In 2003, Congress authorized the construction of a visitor center for the Vietnam Memorial to help provide information and educate the public about the memorial and the Vietnam War.

Unfortunately, over the past three years, progress in selecting a location for the visitor's center has stalled due to bureaucratic redtape. The legislation we are considering today will bring the site-selection process to a close by designating both a location for the center's construction and a deadline for its completion.

I believe an Educational Visitors Center will serve as an important learning tool for the millions of visitors who visit the Wall each year, especially those too young to remember Vietnam.

I strongly support this effort to at last make the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center a reality and I urge my colleagues to vote in support of this legislation.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, there is no place more sacred for me than the Vietnam Memorial. A close second is the Lincoln Memorial. I visit and run by these poignant places on our National Mall on a nearly daily basis when Congress is in session.

When changes to the Mall are planned it is critical to have a process in place to protect the integrity of the memorials that honor our history. I'm appalled that a bill such as this is coming before Congress, which short circuits the well-functioning process currently in place.

This isn't about bureaucracy and the environment. This is about respect for two sacred places.

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

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

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4882, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. PEARCE. 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.

H. GORDON PAYROW POST OFFICE BUILDING

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4786) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 535 Wood Street in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, as the ''H. Gordon Payrow Post Office Building''.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4786

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

SECTION 1. H. GORDON PAYROW POST OFFICE BUILDING.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 535 Wood Street in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, shall be known and designated as the ''H. Gordon Payrow Post Office Building''.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the ''H. Gordon Payrow Post Office Building''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DENT) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which 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 gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I introduced H.R. 4786 to honor H. Gordon Payrow, a man who was wise beyond his years. He was a man who challenged the process and brought new and innovative ideas and policies to his community. In his early years, he attended Bethlehem High School and Allentown Preparatory School. After graduation, he went on to study at Lehigh University where he earned a degree in business.

After his marriage to Dorothy Parker in 1943, he was elected to the Bethlehem City Council in November of 1951. It was not long after that he was elected as mayor and named the first ''strong mayor'' to emerge from the mayor-council form of government first authorized in 1957.

At his inauguration in 1962, Mayor Payrow declared: ''Today marks the end of the North Side, South Side, and West Side. From here on we will only think of Bethlehem,'' thus bringing together a melting pot of cultures and proclaiming a new unity for the city. Payrow was extremely popular with both Democrats and Republicans, which led him to hold office for three consecutive terms.

During his tenure, Mayor Payrow never retreated from tackling controversial issues. Under Payrow, Bethlehem hired its first female police officer and began the construction of a new city hall. He oversaw the creation of the city's Fine Arts Commission, the Beautification Committee, and the Environmental Conservation Commission. He was also instrumental in laying the groundwork for a massive revitalization of Bethlehem's downtown area.

Further, during his three terms, the mayor worked to construct several fire stations, to demolish blighted housing developments, and to oversee the replacement and construction of several bridges critical to the transportation infrastructure of the city of Bethlehem.

Gordon Payrow was a man of great integrity and skill who believed in his city and in his constituents. The city of Bethlehem is a better place because of his influence, and it is only fitting and proper that a postal facility in the city be named after him.

I urge all Members to join me in honoring a great man that promoted excellence in government by passing H.R. 4786.

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.