

Texas (Mr. COMBEST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1212, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1212, the bill just passed.

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

There was no objection.

AFFIRMING THE CONGRESS' OPPOSITION TO ALL FORMS OF RACISM AND BIGOTRY

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 121) affirming the Congress' opposition to all forms of racism and bigotry.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 121

Whereas the United States of America has been enriched and strengthened by the diversity and mutual respect of its people;

Whereas the injustices and inequities of the past continue to demand our forceful commitment, both as individuals and as an institution, to equal justice under law and full opportunity for every American;

Whereas a racist attack upon any group of Americans is an affront to every one who cherishes the promise of America and the values that sustain our democracy; and

Whereas every Member of Congress has a responsibility to foster the best traditions and highest values of this nation: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) insists that no individual's rights are negotiable or open to compromise; and

(2) reaffirms the determination of all its Members to oppose any individuals or organizations which seek to divide Americans on the grounds of race, religion, or ethnic origin; and

(3) denounces all those who practice or promote racism, anti-Semitism, ethnic prejudice, or religious intolerance; and

(4) calls upon all Americans of good will to reject the forces of hatred and bigotry wherever and in whatever form they may be found.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.

Res. 121, the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this is an important matter before us. I want to commend the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER) for causing this embarrassing substitute to be brought to bear. The scheduling and the substance of this resolution is an utter affront to all believers of civil rights and regular order in the House of Representatives. I appeal to every Member to vote against the underhanded processes involved in bringing H. Res. 121 to the floor this afternoon.

First, a word about bipartisan cooperation, since we have all come back from Hershey over the weekend. Without the courtesy of a simple phone call from the chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), this bill was discharged from the committee with no hearing, no markup; another example of how Committee on the Judiciary Democrats are still being treated unfairly at every turn of the process, not even a single phone call. The leadership continues to mistreat what is almost an equal number of Democrats as Republicans in the House.

Secondly, this bill, I think, is intended to be serious but it is really just a joke. A generalized, amorphous, meaningless resolution is an idea taken from the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER) and is now so watered down as to be insulting.

It is a cover for those Republicans who do not want to condemn the Council of Conservative Citizens because so many Republican leaders have been associated with this racist group. They have cloaked themselves in mainstream conservatism, but it is masking an underlying racist agenda. Its leader is the former Midwest director of the White Citizens Council. Their web site reads like something out of the Third Reich.

What are we doing here today? I urge that the Members vote "no" on this resolution.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CANADY) will control the 20 minutes on the majority side.

There was no objection.

Mr. CANADY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATTS).

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, hatred expressed through racial, religious or ethnic prejudice is an affront to the institutions of freedom, equal

justice and individual rights that together form the bedrock of the American republic.

We need no reminder that bigotry lives on in America. The heinous murder of James Byrd, Jr., shocked us all with the graphic portrait of racism in its most vile form. So this resolution before us is not meant to be a mere reminder, nor is it meant to single out for condemnation any one organization or individual.

To be so particular would be to commit a crime of omission by giving a pass to other groups that espouse prejudiced, racist views, in effect saying that their bigotry is not so offensive as to be worthy of our condemnation. The Southern Poverty Law Center says that 537 hate groups exist in the United States. We cannot possibly condemn each bigoted organization, person or act individually.

In any event, there is a better course to take. Today we can make one sweeping statement of principle that acknowledges the existence of bigotry, condemns those who promote or practice it, and affirms the rights of individuals of all races, religions and ethnic backgrounds.

Passing this resolution will not reverse the horrible tragedy of James Byrd's death, nor will it directly prevent future tragedies of the same sort. It will not eliminate the more subtle but more common kind of bigotry that rears its ugly head every single day, like when a man gets on a subway, when a man of a certain color gets on a subway car and instinctively sits next to the person of his color instead of a person of another color; or when a Jewish family on the block is not fully accepted by some of their Protestant neighbors; or when a Hispanic kid walks into a store and is watched under a suspicious eye.

Let us also celebrate the great strides we have made as a Nation and as a people in moving toward a more unified America. Let us salute great men and women like Frederick Douglass and Rosa Parks and John Lewis and Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as the millions of others whose names we do not know but whose efforts have torn down many of the walls that far too long divided us.

Every American must keep working toward that goal of a hate-free America. So today, in this Chamber, let us stand and be counted. Today let us condemn all forms of racial, religious and ethnic prejudice.

Some will say this afternoon that because this resolution did not name a certain group, did not specifically name certain groups, that this resolution has no bearing. Why do we make racism and bigotry that small? What happens is that if someone names a certain group? Then someone else will offer a resolution to name another