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(H.J. Res. 775)

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GOVERNMENT

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HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
MANNED SPACE FLIGHT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE AND ASTRONAUTICS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NINETY-FIRST CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

SEPTEMBER 12, 1969

[No. 8]

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CONGRESSIONAL SPACE MEDAL

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1969

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND ASTRONAUTICS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MANNED SPACE FLIGHT,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, in room 2318, Rayburn House Office Building, at 10 a.m., Hon. Olin E. Teague (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. TEAGUE. The committee will come to order.

Mr. DEMBLING. Do you want me to go through the statement?

Mr. TEAGUE. No.

Mr. DEMBLING. Why don't I just summarize, Mr. Chairman, just our feelings on the bill.

(H.J. Res. 775 follows:)

[H.J. Res. 775, 91st Cong., first sess.]

JOINT RESOLUTION To authorize the President to award, in the name of Congress, Congressional Space Medals of Honor to those astronauts whose particular efforts and contributions to the welfare of the Nation and of mankind have been exceptionally meritorious

Whereas the United States has established and maintains a highly successful manned space flight program, dedicated to the peaceful exploration of space for the benefit of all mankind; and

Whereas the full strength of America's political, industrial, and technological capacity has been effectively teamed to create and support that program, but it cannot be carried out without the intelligence, the dedication, the bravery, and the self-sacrifice of the astronauts who test the hardware and who fly the missions into the hostile environment of space; and

Whereas the United States in its moments of triumph over the success of its space exploration must not forget those brave astronauts who have given their lives in the fullest measure of man's dedication to space exploration: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President may award a medal of appropriate design, to any astronaut who in the performance of his duties has distinguished himself by exceptionally meritorious efforts and contributions to the welfare of the Nation and of mankind.

SEC. 2. There is authorized to be appropriated from time to time such sums of money as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this joint resolution.

STATEMENT OF PAUL G. DEMBLING, DEPUTY ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR AND VICE CHAIRMAN, NASA AWARDS BOARD

Mr. DEMBLING. NASA fully supports the award of a Congressional Space Medal by the President, in the name of the Congress. We prefer that it be limited to astronauts and we have a strong preference for the criteria stated in House Joint Resolution 775, also introduced by Chair-

man Teague; that it be awarded "to any astronaut who, through the performance of his duties, has distinguished himself by exceptionally meritorious efforts and contributions to the welfare of the Nation and of mankind."

Thank you.

Mr. ROUDEBUSH. Are you going to submit your entire statement for the record?

Mr. DEMBLING. Yes, sir.

Mr. ROUDEBUSH. Fine.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PAUL G. DEMBLING, DEPUTY ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR,
NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, we appreciate your invitation to testify on H.R. 13435. I am appearing also in my capacity as Vice Chairman of the NASA Awards Board. H.R. 13435, introduced by Chairman Teague, is designed to accomplish the purpose of honoring outstanding contributors to the United States space program. We are in complete agreement that the courageous astronauts who risk their lives deserve some unique and special honor. H.R. 13435 would establish a medal to be known as the Congressional Space Medal and would authorize the President to award such a medal, in the name of the Congress, to any astronaut or other person for particularly significant contributions to or outstanding achievements in the space program of the United States, as a means of expressing public appreciation and conferring public recognition for such contributions or achievements. The measure would authorize the appropriation of sums as may be necessary to carry out the act.

Over the past several years, a number of suggestions have been made for ways in which the contributions of astronauts could and should be officially recognized. Suggestions have been made that military awards or decorations be given them, that special medals be awarded, and that memorials or other permanent structures recording their work be erected.

NASA, along with other agencies in the Executive and Legislative branches of the Government, has given careful consideration to a wide variety of such proposals. It has been concluded that the efforts of the astronauts in risking their lives in the hostile environment incident to the space program to accomplish the goals of the United States space program is a unique service to the country and to mankind, and that it should be specifically recognized by the Government. It has also been concluded that such recognition properly should take the form of a medal to be awarded by the President in appropriate cases of outstanding service. Such a Presidentially-awarded medal would provide special recognition for those astronauts whose services have been exceptionally meritorious.

There are presently a number of awards for which astronauts, and other participants in the national space program, are eligible. They include the Presidentially awarded "Medal of Freedom" (which, by the way, was awarded "with distinction" to the Apollo 11 astronauts) and the "National Medal of Science" as well as NASA's medals for Exceptional Service, Exceptional Bravery, Exceptional Scientific Achievement, and Distinguished Service.

The latter, which is generally considered to be NASA's highest award, is given to any person in the Federal service who by distinguished service, ability or courage has personally made a contribution representing substantial progress to aeronautical or space exploration in the interest of the United States. The contribution must be so extraordinary that other forms of recognition by NASA would be inadequate. Individual astronauts have, in the past, qualified for some of the above-mentioned medals and have been awarded them. Also NASA awards the Distinguished Public Service Medal to those outside the Federal service who have rendered distinguished service to the Nation's space program. Presumably, those astronauts who also serve in the military are eligible and may be qualified, from time to time, for military awards and decorations for deeds incident to their space activities. Suggestions have been made that certain astronauts be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Nation's highest military award which is given for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in combat at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty. Until now, space exploration, although hazardous, has not been considered an appropriate basis for that award.

H.R. 13435 as presently drafted, would permit the award of the Congressional Space Medal to persons other than astronauts who have made outstanding contributions to the space program. While NASA fully agrees that the success of the space program could not have been achieved without the outstanding contributions of many research scientists and engineers, management personnel, and others, in and out of the Government we do feel that the unique status of the astronauts and the extraordinary burdens placed upon them justify the award of a special medal which they alone should receive. The dedicated people in the military services, in the civilian branches of Government service, and in the private sector are eligible for recognition under other awards outlined above, and many such persons have been recognized by having one of those awards conferred upon them.

NASA supports the award of a Congressional space medal by the President, in the name of the Congress. We prefer that it be limited to astronauts and we have a strong preference for the criteria stated in H.J. Resolution 775 also introduced by Chairman Teague that it be awarded "to any astronaut who in the performance of his duties has distinguished himself by exceptionally meritorious efforts and contributions to the welfare of the Nation and of mankind."

Thank you.

Mr. DUCANDER. The chairman has asked me to read into the record the following amendments which he wishes to offer to House Joint Resolution 775. They are as follows:

Page 2 line 3, following the word "award", insert the following: "and present in the name of Congress,"

Page 2 line 3, following the word "design", insert the following: "which shall be known as the Congressional Space Medal of Honor,"

Amend the title to read:

"To authorize the President to award, in the name of Congress, Congressional Space Medals of Honor to those astronauts whose particular efforts and contributions to the welfare of the Nation and of mankind have been exceptionally meritorious."

Mr. ROUDEBUSH. I move the adoption of the amendments as read.

Mr. TEAGUE. Without objection, they are adopted.

Mr. ROUDEBUSH. I move the bill be reported as amended and the Chairman be authorized to take those necessary administrative steps necessary for properly reporting the resolution and bring it to the floor.

Mr. TEAGUE. The resolution as amended is reported, and the committee is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the committee was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.)



