

through the end of 2007 provided that the fund is reimbursed within 9 months of the borrowing or by the end of the fiscal year in which the money is borrowed.

Third, although the city's financial officer is a city, and not a Federal, official and is appointed by the Mayor, the provision for this office is in the charter. Therefore, even the pending D.C. Council action to strengthen the CFO needs congressional sanction, even though the provision makes an already strong official even more independent by giving him a term of 5 years with dismissal only for cause by the Mayor subject to the approval of the council by resolution approved by at least two-thirds of its members.

The bill also confirms the CFO's personnel and procurement authority under D.C. law and confirms that the collective bargaining rights of CFO employees are preserved.

Finally, an important provision bears mentioning because it helps preserve the justice system in case of emergency. This provision allows the District courts to conduct business outside of the district in case of an emergency. I appreciate that the House has moved this important bill forward so it may obtain early passage in the Senate where its provisions have strong support.

Madam Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, please include the attached exchange of letters between Chairman MICHAEL G. OXLEY of the Committee on Financial Services and myself in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD at the end of the debate on H.R. 3508 under general leave.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES,
Washington, DC, December 12, 2005.

Hon. TOM DAVIS,
Chairman, Committee on Government Reform,
House of Representatives, Rayburn House
Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN DAVIS: On September 15, 2005, the Committee on Government Reform ordered reported to the House H.R. 3508, the 2005 District of Columbia Omnibus Authorization Act. Thank you for consulting with the Committee on Financial Services on those matters in H.R. 3508 within the jurisdiction of this Committee, especially the provisions in section 123 making technical and conforming amendments relating to banks operating under the District of Columbia Code. I am writing to confirm our mutual understanding with respect to the further consideration of H.R. 3508. This bill will be considered by the House shortly.

As a result of this consultation and in the interest of expediting the House's consideration of H.R. 3508, the Committee on Financial Services did not request a sequential referral of the bill. However, the Committee did so only with the understanding that this procedural route will not prejudice the Committee's jurisdictional interest and its prerogatives with respect to this bill or similar legislation. I respectfully request your support for an appropriate appointment of outside conferees from this Committee in the event of a House-Senate conference.

Finally, I request that a copy of this letter and your response be included in the Congressional Record during the floor consider-

ation of this bill. Thank you again for your assistance.

Yours truly,

MICHAEL G. OXLEY,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC, December 13, 2005.

Hon. MICHAEL G. OXLEY,
Chairman, Committee on Financial Services,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your recent letter regarding H.R. 3508, the 2005 District of Columbia Omnibus Authorization Act. I appreciate your assistance and your willingness to expedite the consideration of this bill.

I agree that the provisions in section 123 making technical and conforming amendments to banks operating under the District of Columbia Code are within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Financial Services. I also agree that your willingness to waive a sequential referral request does not prejudice the Financial Services Committee's jurisdictional interest and its prerogatives with respect to this bill or similar legislation. I will support your request for an appropriate appointment of outside conferees from your Committee in the event of a House-Senate conference.

Finally, I will include a copy of your letter and this response in the Congressional Record during the floor consideration of this bill. Thank you again for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

TOM DAVIS,
Chairman.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I urge all Members to support passage of H.R. 3508, as amended; and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Miss MCMORRIS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3508, 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.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF THE HOUSE THAT SYMBOLS AND TRADITIONS OF CHRISTMAS SHOULD BE PROTECTED

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 579) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the symbols and traditions of Christmas should be protected, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 579

Whereas, Christmas is a national holiday celebrated on December 25; and

Whereas the Framers intended that the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States would prohibit the establishment of religion, not prohibit any mention of religion or reference to God in civic dialog: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the importance of the symbols and traditions of Christmas;

(2) strongly disapproves of attempts to ban references to Christmas; and

(3) expresses support for the use of these symbols and traditions, for those who celebrate Christmas.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nevada.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 579, which would express the sense of the House of Representatives that the symbols and traditions of Christmas should be protected.

Each year during the month of December, thousands of homes across America are decorated with Christmas trees, lights and festive wreaths. Christmas is the most widely celebrated festival in the world, with traditions and customs that originated long ago and still are very much alive today.

Christmas has long been for giving and sharing and for coming together with family and friends. The tradition is a celebration of the spirit of love which is what makes this holiday so popular throughout the world. I urge all Members to come together to support and protect the pastime and traditions of a holiday that many of us hold very dear.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to yield 10 minutes of my time to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN) and that he be permitted to control that time.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Madam Speaker, H. Res. 579 expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the symbols and traditions of Christmas should be protected for those who celebrate Christmas. While this resolution focuses on the symbols and traditions of Christmas, it gives this body an opportunity to consider the lessons of Christmas.

The story of Christmas is about a child whose conception was, to say the least, unusual and whose birth was under the most lowly of circumstances. This was a child who lived among and

served the needy and the poor. This is the lesson of Christmas. Though we have modern-day symbols of Christmas, Christmas is not only about beautifully decorated pine trees and gift-wrapped boxes that lie beneath them. Christmas is about goodwill and peace on Earth. It is about tolerance; it is about providing for the less fortunate among us.

We cannot debate H. Res. 579 without considering how our policies address homelessness, the uninsured, the poor, the sick, and the suffering. Yes, we have Christmas symbols and traditions, but what do they really represent if we do not first embrace the spirit and true meaning of Christmas: love, peace, tolerance, compassion, goodwill, and hope for the future. Those are the true expressions of Christmas.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS).

Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of my resolution, H. Res. 579, as amended, expressing the sense of Congress that the symbols and traditions of Christmas should be protected for those who celebrate Christmas and that references to Christmas should be supported.

This measure simply states congressional support for traditional references to Christmas that I believe are being eradicated from the public dialogue.

Madam Speaker, this is a very busy week in Congress; and we are working on some very important measures that impact our Nation. So with that said, some may question the importance of this resolution in light of other national priorities that we are addressing this week, but this resolution is important because it defends the traditions of Christmas for those who celebrate Christmas. It is unfortunate that a congressional resolution is even needed to do this. It is unfortunate that we have had to come to this point.

Christmas has been declared politically incorrect. Any sign or even mention of Christmas in public can lead to complaints, litigation, protest, and threats. America's favorite holiday is being twisted beyond recognition. The push towards a neutered "holiday" season is stronger than ever so that no one can be even the slightest bit offended.

Madam Speaker, overzealous civil liberties lawyers are making their list and checking it twice. Change the Christmas tree to a Friendship tree, check. Change "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" to "We Wish You a Happy Holiday," check. Remove the colors green and red, check. Get rid of Christmas music, even instrumental, check.

When did wishing someone a Merry Christmas show insensitivity? According to a recent poll, 96 percent of Americans celebrate Christmas. In an

effort to create a generic holiday starting at Thanksgiving and ending at New Year's, what are we exactly celebrating?

The purpose of celebrating the Fourth of July is to celebrate our Nation's independence. Why is it not reasonable to say that celebrating Christmas is a celebration of Christ's birth?

This is a selective assault on religious free speech which is a fundamental right. The Founders did not view celebrating Christmas as an issue of church versus State. It is celebrating a holiday that has for thousands of years been celebrated. The framers intended that the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States would prohibit the establishment of religion, not prohibit any mention of religion or reference to God in civic dialogue.

From Madison Avenue to Wall Street, from activists and lawyers to politicians, educators and the media, a culture is being created that shames people for saying Merry Christmas.

Ironically, many retailers, the same group who flood our mailboxes with catalogs and advertisements urging us to purchase gifts for Christmas, have done away with the Christmas greeting Merry Christmas in their stores. Employees have been told not to say Merry Christmas to customers. This is political correctness run amok.

The attack on Christmas, while not new, has now shifted its focus from overtly religious symbols, like the nativity, to symbols regarded by most Americans, including the Supreme Court, to be secular symbols of Christmas, a federally recognized holiday. Now these innocent secular symbols are causing concerns of insensitivity. Santa Claus, Christmas trees, candy canes, Christmas carols, even the colors red and green, they have been placed on the endangered list.

They say to boil a frog you have to do it gradually because if you throw it into boiling water, it will jump out; but if you put the frog in cold water and gradually turn up the heat, the frog will never know he is being boiled until it is too late, and I am afraid that is what is happening to us with our Christmas holiday.

Madam Speaker, the transition to replace Christmas with this vague "holiday season" is a gradual process that over the past few years has reached a new crescendo. Let us protect the symbols and traditions of Christmas for those who celebrate Christmas, or before we know it, we will be looking at a holiday season that represents nothing and celebrates anything.

I for one do not want to surrender and let retailers, overzealous civil liberty lawyers, and the media make me feel guilty for wishing someone a Merry Christmas. For generations, Christmas has been a public expression of the celebration of the birth of Christ. I hope we can say that for many more years to come.

With that, Madam Speaker, I wish you a Merry Christmas.

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

Madam Speaker, first, let me assure the gentlewoman from Virginia that I know she comes to the floor with a pure heart and with every good intention. Let me also assure her that I am not the Grinch that stole the Christmas tree ornaments.

That being said, I really do not understand what we are doing today. I do not understand why we need to set up a straw man just to knock it down, to protect the symbols of Christmas as if they were under attack. Is this another war we fight for reasons that do not exist?

There are people around who need an enemy at all times to try to separate us one from the other as Americans in order to advance their own agenda. I do not think we should be playing into their hands. Nobody is attacking Christmas or its symbols. I enjoy Christmas, sing Christmas carols. I do not celebrate the religious significance of it, but it is a holiday I tremendously respect, as I do my Christian friends, and do wish them a Merry Christmas. But that is not the point.

What we are doing here is we are selling the American people sizzle and providing no steak. We are choosing symbolism over substance, and we are not providing substance, which is why I think most of us came to the Congress of the United States, not to protect symbols, but to protect everybody's rights.

Now, I know when people want to be inclusive they come to the floor and they are very inclusive. I get included in when you want to talk about Judeo-Christian traditions or heritage.

□ 1945

When you want my participation, you know how to do it. But I am offended by this. You have drawn me out. Why not protect my symbols? My symbols are not protected here. And I am not asking them to be because if you came to the floor protecting my symbols and nobody else's, I would say, no thank you. Do not protect me unless you protect everybody because that is the American way. We are doing symbols over substance. We have embarked on a very slippery slope, the incline of which might be too steep. We do not know the unintended consequences.

I like Christmas. I like the message of Christmas. I like helping the needy and the poor and the least among us. But I did not come here to protect the symbols.

Did something happen when I was not looking? Did somebody mug Santa Claus? Is somebody engaging in elf tossing? Did somebody shoot Bambi? If you eat venison, are you a suspect? What silliness we engage in, protecting symbols.

If you wanted to protect the message of Christmas, come to the floor with real bills with substance. Where is your bill to house the homeless? Where is

your bill to feed the needy? Where is your bill to clothe the naked? Where is your bill to protect senior citizens who will not be able to heat their homes this winter? Where is the substance? Why are we engaging, in this terrible time in which we are in, in symbolism?

We can be doing something meaningful. Where is the bill for real health care? Where is the bill to educate the children that we really are leaving behind? We are not doing any of those things. I think we could be doing so much more instead of feeding the flames that divide us instead of bringing us together.

I wish the gentlewoman a merry Christmas. I have no compunction about doing that. But I do not want my government to engage in the foolishness of deciding for people what their symbols should or have to be. And I know that it has been amended so that it now reads that this is for Christian people. I do not want to be here telling Christian people how to observe Christmas. I mean, I did not come here to protect toys and tinsel anymore than I came here to protect presents and potato latkes. This is not my deal. And we have important work to do that is important to real people of all faiths, and people of all faiths should not engage in anything that feeds those who would be divisive.

I know that is not the intent of the gentlewoman, because I think I know her heart well. But this is the unintended consequence of bills such as this when we go down that path.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE).

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 579 and the tradition of Christmas. I commend my colleague, Ms. Davis, for introducing this resolution.

As Americans, we enjoy the freedom to practice our own faith. This heritage inspired the American tradition of respecting individuals in their right to practice their religion, regardless of faith. However, it seems that, in recent years, zealous liberals have tried to destroy this heritage. It all started when schools would no longer call their annual winter recess a Christmas break in order to be politically correct. Now, instead, there is a holiday break, in many instances thanks to actions of the ACLU, American Civil Liberties Union.

While this may be a valid point since various religions observe holidays around the same time, they would not stop there at the erosion. There is a war against Christmas. Our children cannot sing Christmas carols. They can only sing holiday tunes. And now, instead of a Christmas tree, advertising calls them holiday trees. There is no reason why we cannot honor and cherish the traditions of Christmas while

also doing the same with Chanukah, Kwanzaa or any other valued religion celebrated in America. America should never single out a religion for the purposes of banning or looking down upon references to their holiday celebrations. That practice flies in the face of the principles that our Nation was founded on. Instead, we must treasure the traditions that remind us of our history and of our country while at the same time respecting Americans of different faiths. As such, I strongly support House Resolution 579 which recognizes and supports symbols and traditions of Christmas.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this resolution.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), the Dean of the House.

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

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I have a little poem.

'Twas the week before Christmas and all through the House,
no bills were passed 'bout which Fox News could grouse.
Tax cuts for the wealthy were passed with great cheer,
so vacations in St. Barts soon should be near.

Katrina kids were all nestled snug in motel beds,
while visions of school and home danced in their heads.

In Iraq, our soldiers need supplies and a plan,
and nuclear weapons are being built in Iran.
Gas prices shot up, consumer confidence fell,
Americans feared we were in a fast track to . . . well.

Wait, we need a distraction, something divisive and wily,
a fabrication straight from the mouth of O'Reilly.

We will pretend Christmas is under attack,
hold a vote to save it, then pat ourselves on the back.

Silent Night, First Noel, Away in the Manger,

Wake up Congress, they're in no danger.
This time of year, we see Christmas everywhere we go.

From churches to homes to schools and, yes, even Costco.

What we have is an attempt to divide and destroy

when this is the season to unite us with joy.
At Christmastime, we're taught to unite.
We don't need a made-up reason to fight.
So on O'Reilly, on Hannity, on Coulter and those right-wing blogs.

You should sit back and relax, have a few egg noggs.

'Tis the holiday season; enjoy it a pinch.
With all our real problems, do we really need another Grinch?

So to my friends and my colleagues, I say with delight,

a Merry Christmas to all, and to Bill O'Reilly, happy holidays.

Ho, ho, ho. Merry Christmas.

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT).

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Madam Speaker, if our Founding Fathers could be resurrected and be with us here this evening, they would be astounded that we were discussing, debating this subject. Let me explain. Most of our Founding Fathers came here to escape one of two tyrannies, the tyranny of the crown and the tyranny of the church. In the Second Amendment, they address the tyranny of the crown. But that is a subject for another day. In England, the Episcopal Church was the official state church, and it could and did oppress other churches. On most of the countries of the continent, the Roman Church was the official state church, and it could and did oppress other churches, and our Founding Fathers wanted to make sure that this never could happen in their new country. And so in the First Amendment, they wrote the establishment clause which means exactly what it said, not the way it is frequently interpreted today. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, no established state religion, please, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. Not only should there not be a state religion, there should be free exercise of every religion.

But they had no fear, Madam Speaker, of religion. The Continental Congress bought 20,000 copies of the Bible to distribute to their new citizens. And for the first 100 years of our country, our Congress each year voted funds to send missionaries to the American Indians. For 160 years of its existence, the Supreme Court, up until 1947 when they did an abrupt about face, 180 degrees from where they were before in every decision relative to this subject, our Supreme Court said that we were a Judeo-Christian nation, and they affirmed the right for expression of those beliefs. Indeed, 102, I believe, of the first 104 universities in our country were church schools, including Harvard. Harvard's handbook has an interesting note, that the Bible should be the constant companion of its students. And for the first hundred years of its existence, about half of all of the graduates of Harvard were ministers.

Madam Speaker, if our Founding Fathers could be resurrected and be with us this evening, they would unanimously support this commonsense resolution.

Madam Speaker, we should join them and unanimously support this resolution.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I cannot help but note the irony of a bill celebrating Christmas or its symbols coming on the floor in a session that has just destroyed Christmas for millions of poor people.

I am going to make a request of this Member, because I know her and I respect her and I regard her as a friend. And as a Christian, I am going to ask

her in the name of interfaith tolerance if she would withdraw this resolution because it is needlessly divisive, and I think she did not realize when she put it in how divisive it is.

For example, the gentlewoman said Merry Christmas to you, Madam Speaker. I do not know what your background is. But I do not believe she would have said Merry Christmas to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN). And in a real sense, that sums up where our country has come simply to be tolerant of the fact that we are from many faiths, and we do not want to insult anybody. And I say to you that, far from references to Christmas needing to be supported, they are glorified, and we all know it. The notion of giving any aid and comport to the Fox campaign against "happy holidays" would be funny if it were not so serious.

Understand how "happy holidays" developed. It developed out of a country, first and foremost, where there was rampant anti-Semitism. Now, of course, we have many more, we have many more religions and much more diversity. It developed simply out of a sensitivity, so we developed proxy language, and so everybody feels comfortable even when it is not your particular religious holiday. I am not going to go up to a brown-skinned person in a turban and say, merry Christmas. I think that it is more appropriate to say, happy holidays. Maybe the gentlewoman understands why this is important for people who, unlike her and unlike me, are not Christians. If you do not want to feel guilty for wishing someone merry Christmas, I do not want to feel guilty for saying happy holidays to someone whose religious background I do not know.

□ 2000

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

I could not imagine growing up that some day I would be on the House floor debating the merits of Christmas, and I certainly have great respect for my colleagues and their concern. But what is great about America is we can debate Christmas on the House floor.

But let us talk about a few other things that we do in this House that I am very proud that we have done. We have recognized Korean Americans and the symbols. We have recognized Filipino Americans, ideals, very special weeks that we recognize here on this House floor numerous times. Pancreatic cancer, campus safety awareness. As a matter of fact, one of our next bills this evening is American Jewish Month.

And that is what is great about America. We can have this debate about Christmas, but certainly there are thousands of Americans and there are thousands of people around the world that believe in this tradition. I too say "happy holidays" in respect to Chanukah. I say "happy holidays," but

I also will say "Merry Christmas" because that is what December 25 is about.

Again, I appreciate my colleagues and I think that their point is being well considered. I have great respect for my colleagues across the aisle, but I think it is a very cherished national holiday; and I would certainly encourage that we support this, as we have many other symbols and different groups in this country, because that is what Congress is about.

Mr. WEINER. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PORTER. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. WEINER. Madam Speaker, I have no question about the gentleman's values or his intent.

Is there any element of this bill that if we substituted "Chanukah," which you mentioned, recognizing the importance of the symbols and traditions of Chanukah, would you find that offensive in any way?

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I am not sure of the protocol of the debate on the floor.

Mr. WEINER. Madam Speaker, he controls the time. He has yielded to me for a question, and now I am asking it.

Mr. PORTER. I would absolutely support a bill that talked about the symbols of Chanukah. Absolutely.

Mr. WEINER. Will the gentleman yield further for another question?

Mr. PORTER. Absolutely.

Mr. WEINER. Would you find anything offensive about recognizing the importance of the symbols and traditions of Diwali, the Indian New Year for Indian Americans?

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I am, again, not certain this is time for the debate, but I think we should look at all these groups that would like to be considered. Again, this is not a place for the debate, and I would be happy to have this discussion.

Mr. WEINER. It is exactly the place to debate. We are on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Mr. PORTER. But I believe that the gentleman's point is well taken.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

(Ms. WOOLSEY asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, nobody enjoys Christmas more than I. But today we have roughly 160,000 men and women in Iraq putting their lives on the line for an immoral, senseless war. Here at home many of our vulnerable citizens will face a cold, bitter winter because they do not have home energy assistance from the Federal Government. Many others will not get the health care or education they need because of harsh cuts in Medicaid and student loans.

Naturally, the majority does not want to talk about this, and one can

always tell when the right wing is in political trouble. They invariably cook up some divisive culture war that has nothing to do with our real challenges in this country.

What American families really want is the ability to afford more gifts for their children this season regardless of whether there is a wreath in the local department store.

Meanwhile, how many casualties have there been in the so-called "war on Christmas"? Here is a hint: several thousand less than in the war on Iraq.

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL).

Mr. ISRAEL. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman for introducing this resolution. I actually share her view and understand her frustration when any government attempts to ban secular symbols like Santa Claus or Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer or Christmas lights. I do not believe that any community should ban those secular symbols as long as they do not choose one set of symbols over the other; as long as they are inclusive of all symbols.

My difficulty with this resolution is that it excludes some symbols and includes only certain symbols. So I would ask the gentlewoman, in the spirit of diversity, and of the many faiths that we celebrate in this body and throughout America, I would ask her not to withdraw the resolution, but allow this resolution to attract a very significant number of votes, maybe a unanimous vote, simply by adding the words "Kwanzaa," "Ramadan," and "Chanukah" to her resolution. Do not exclude certain symbols. Be inclusive of all.

The gentleman just stated prior to the gentleman from New York that he would support a resolution that includes the holidays of different faiths. So I would take the gentleman up on that offer.

So, Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman and ask her if she would change this resolution, change this language, include Chanukah, include Kwanzaa, include Ramadan, include holidays of all faiths so that this resolution can reflect the best of America, which is a place of justice for all.

Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I would say that the reason for this resolution is that the attack has not been on the menorah or any of the other symbols of the other religions. But the attack has been and is being made on red and green colors, on candy canes, on Santa Claus, which are not even religious symbols. That is the point of the resolution. And with that I will leave it the way the resolution stands.

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

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Madam Speaker, this resolution purports to protect the symbols of Christmas, but what really needs to be protected are not the symbols of Christmas, but rather the spirit of Christmas. The spirit of Christmas demands generosity and goodwill towards others.

Instead of legislation that respects the spirit of Christmas, Congress in just these past few weeks has passed a budget that includes mean-spirited attacks on the least of us. For those who are hungry, we are cutting food stamps. For those who are sick, we are cutting Medicaid. For those who are in prison, we are imposing senseless mandatory minimums. For others we are ignoring increases in heating costs and cutting student loans. At the same time we are cutting those programs to help the least of us, we are cutting taxes for the wealthiest in society.

Madam Speaker, we ought to express our passion for Christmas through deeds, not words; and we should not be distracted from our responsibility to uphold the spirit of Christmas as we consider the effects our actions on the Federal budget will have on the least of us during this holiday season.

For these reasons I oppose this resolution.

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

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER).

Mr. WEINER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I thank the gentleman from Nevada and the gentlewoman from Virginia.

The bottom line is there was a good-faith effort made by the gentleman from New York to change "recognizes the importance of the symbols and traditions of Christmas" to "the symbols of Christmas and Chanukah," and you said no.

It was an attempt to change "strongly disapproves of attempts to ban references to Christmas" to "ban references to Christmas and Kwanzaa," and you said no.

It was a chance to take this and put it into the words that the gentleman from Virginia, the gentlewoman from Florida earlier articulated, and the gentlewoman who is the sponsor says that she intends. The question must be, why? For someone who does not celebrate Christmas, the question looms: Why? Why not say to someone who wants to make this inclusive that, indeed, we are going to make it inclusive? The symbols of Chanukah are not valuable? Sure, they are, I think. The symbols of Kwanzaa are not valuable to some? Sure, they are. I cannot imagine why the gentlewoman who is the sponsor of this, who says that she speaks from a sense of inclusion, would not want to include those. Are those not worthy of being protected? What is the message that is being sent?

The gentleman from Nevada articulated his support. He perhaps should persuade his colleague to offer that UC

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

Again, I appreciate the comments from our friends across the aisle, and I would be happy to cosponsor those bills that were just mentioned. They certainly have merit and should be considered by this House of Representatives.

This evening we are here to discuss H. Res. 579, as amended, and I believe that it should pass. But I also would suggest we do the same for those other religions that were mentioned, from Kwanzaa to Chanukah, and there are many others that should be considered at some point in time.

This evening I respect the fact that my colleague has presented this resolution and would encourage that Members support it.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I am really very saddened by the fact that when given the opportunity to expand this resolution that the sponsor demurred. I am not sure why.

If you do not know and you are saying that you want this to be what this is because yours is the religion that has its symbols under attack, when was the last time you walked into Wal-Mart and saw it saying "Happy Chanukah"? When did you walk into Toys 'R Us and see it saying "Happy Kwanzaa"? Does that give me the right to say that my religion is under attack, the symbols of my faith or the holiday I wish to celebrate are under attack. It is not, and I am not going to be a crybaby and say that it is.

To tell the truth, it is slightly offensive to see people trying to create a war and claiming they are attacked just so that they go on the offense instead of the defense.

This is a prefabricated issue that has no merit. Nobody is attacking the symbols of Christmas. Are you objecting to our wanting to be included because the symbols of your religion are more important than the symbols of anybody else's religion in America? Or is it because you think that the symbols of your religion are more official? And that is the danger in what we are doing.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

We have had a tremendous discussion. The United States of America is a seriously diverse country. I did a bit of research about Christmas and found 32 pages about how we sort of evolved to the point of Christmas in this country.

□ 2015

I think the season is a season to spread goodwill. I would hope that there would not be a political debate necessarily around the yuletide, a political debate, because I was taught, and maybe some of what I was taught

is different, that Christ was born, and out of that evolved Christmastime, and we spread good cheer, and we give hope, and we say, happy holidays, we say merry Christmas, happy Ramadan, happy, productive Kwanzaa.

I just could not imagine, though, what it would be like if I could not hear Mahalia Jackson sing "Silent night, holy night; all is calm, all is bright; round young virgin, mother and child; holy infant, so tender and mild," from which I got the impression that the origin of this period came.

So, I would hope that all of us would have a happy Kwanzaa, a happy Chanukah, a happy Ramadan, a merry Christmas and happy holidays to everybody.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I urge all Members to support the passage of H. Res. 579, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Miss MCMORRIS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 579, 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. PORTER. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Speaker, how many Members arose?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The count by the Chair is not liable to question, but the chair will affirm that she counted more than one-fifth of those present.

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.

URGING OBSERVANCE OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY MONTH

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 315) urging the President to issue a proclamation for the observance of an American Jewish History Month.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 315

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring). That Congress urges the President to issue each year a proclamation calling on State and local governments and the people of the United States to observe an American Jewish History Month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

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