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 office is official 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 office 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 the district in case of an emergency. I appreciate that the House has moved that 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. 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.

H. Res. 579

EXPRESSING THE 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;
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. Let us tolerate it. 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 aged 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, that serves the purpose 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 eroded 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 willed to oblivion. 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.

What 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 freedom which is a fundamental right. Did we ever 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, Christmas is about goodwill and peace on Earth. Let us tolerate it. It is about providing for the less fortunate among us. 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. 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.

When you want my participation, you know how to get it done. I am not 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. I think the only way 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 Christmas to people how to observe Christmas. I do not want the traditions of 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 intended 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 springbreak or 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 traditions 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 this resolution on 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.

Twix the week before Christmas and all through the House, no bills were heard—’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 divi-sive 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 Man-ger.

Wake up Congress, they’re in no danger. This time of year, we see Christmas everywhere, From churches come to schools and, yes, even Costco. What we have is an attempt to divide and de-stroy when this is the season to unite us with joy. At Christmas time, 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 new-wing bloggers. You should sit back and relax, have a few egg nog. ‘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.

H. o. ho. ho. Merry Christmas.

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

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)
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 Filipino Americans, ideals, very special weeks that we recognize here on this House floor numerous times. Pancreatic cancer, campus safety awareness, a month 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 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 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 now and 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 gentleman 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 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 1 minute 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 gentleman 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 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 gentleman, 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 gentleman 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 non-religious. 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 joy on 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. 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. 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 is: 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 someone? Sure, the symbols 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 motive? To make 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 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.”

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.”

I read the resolution and the amendment, and some other amendments that were presented. There were 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.

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER).

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

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

Parliamentary Inquiry

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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. 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.

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