

place. To commemorate this milestone without visibly honoring one of its chief architects would be to overlook the very ideals that built our great Republic.

Benjamin Franklin lived his life with a deliberate sense of purpose, beginning each day by asking: What good shall I do on this day? And ending every evening in reflection: What good have I done today?

Madam Speaker, that is not just a measure of a life well lived. It is the measure of leadership, of duty, and of a nation that strives always to be better than it was the day before. Let us take up that challenge not merely in words but in action.

Let us ensure that Benjamin Franklin's presence in these Halls serves as a constant reminder that our charge is not to serve ourselves, but to serve a greater good.

At the close of each day, may we too be able to answer that question with certainty, having served with purpose, led with integrity, and upheld the ideals that Franklin and our Founders entrusted to us.

Mr. MORELLE. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN), who is my dear friend and the person who has really led this effort.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Madam Speaker, I thank Ranking Member MORELLE for yielding.

Today, I am so grateful to have the opportunity to rise and offer this bipartisan legislation, H.R. 250, the Benjamin Franklin statue placement act. It is so very important to highlight moments where we do come together here in the body, and this bipartisan, bicameral legislation is a bright moment of that kind of unity.

I am really grateful for the support and partnership of my colleagues in this effort, Representative FITZPATRICK and Senators COONS and BOOZMAN, on the other side of the Capitol.

The Benjamin Franklin statue placement act does seek to honor Benjamin Franklin, as mentioned, a renowned author, inventor, statesman, and dare I offer, the most important Founding Father of our great Nation.

Mr. Franklin's accomplishments and inventions are numerous and infamous. Electricity, bifocals, and the lightning rod are just a couple of examples that every day still centuries later are in our lives. He is known, as was mentioned earlier, for very pithy, very profound, and witty statements, such as a stitch in time saves nine or a penny saved is a penny earned. Most memorable, perhaps, is: "It is a republic, if you can keep it."

Arguably, Mr. Franklin's most important accolade is that he is the only person to have signed formally all three foundational documents separating our new Nation from the British monarchy.

The Treaty of Paris, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights, together known as the Charters of

Freedom, boast the signatures of some of our Nation's most revered figures. Mr. Franklin's signature is the only one that appears on all three documents, however. That is not only something worthy of note, but something, of course, to celebrate.

This is why I was shocked when I learned on my very first official tour of the Capitol Building—which was given to me by my own team member, Emma Consoli, who is the one we really should thank for this legislation—that there are no statues on the Capitol tour of Mr. Franklin. Indeed, Mr. Franklin's lone statue sits at the base of a stairwell, a dark stairwell, just off the Senate floor, out of sight of the hundreds of thousands of people who visit the Capitol.

As we approach this Nation's 250th anniversary, it really is of utmost importance to have Mr. Franklin rightly on display and immortalized for his contributions to our foundation. The Benjamin Franklin statue placement act will do just that.

While Representative FITZPATRICK and I both are both immensely proud of Pennsylvania's own Ben Franklin, we know this is not just for Pennsylvania but for our entire country. I am very grateful to the 77 Members who shared this sentiment last Congress and to our 22 evenly bipartisan original cosponsors and to the 33 Members who have already sponsored it today.

I am also very grateful for the leadership of Chairman STEIL and Ranking Member MORELLE who supported this bill and believed in it as it passed through the House Administration Committee unanimously in September.

This placement act, as written, directs the Joint Committee on the Library to procure and to place a statue of Mr. Franklin along the Capitol tour route, as mentioned, before 2026 ends in celebration of our 250th anniversary.

The installation of this statue in the Capitol Building will not only be an apt celebration for such an important figure in our history, but it is something that I will urge my colleagues to make sure that we vote in favor of today, so we can start that clock ticking. It is important that we take up this legislation now so that this awesome statue that has already been built and already been donated can be cast to perfection and placed ahead of 2026.

I am grateful for the support of this effort. I thank the sculptor, Zenos Frudakis, for his beautiful work already. I appreciate so much the hard work that has gone into this by all of the people who stand around me for being able to get this to the floor for consideration.

Mr. STEIL. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared close.

Mr. MORELLE. In closing, Madam Speaker, I thank the people who have spoken here on an idea whose time has more than come. I think this is the appropriate way, and particularly, as Ms.

HOULAHAN says, in recognition of our 250th anniversary upcoming, this will be the appropriate way to honor one of our truly great founding members of the American Revolution and our country.

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

Mr. STEIL. Madam Speaker, I would like to say, once again, I thank my colleagues, Representative HOULAHAN and Representative FITZPATRICK, and my long working relationship with Ranking Member MORELLE for being able to bring this to the floor.

It is correctly noted that as we approach the 250th anniversary of the United States of America, I think it is true and important that we put this statue here in the United States Capitol.

Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 250, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 250.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1545

SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL CONGRESSIONAL TIME CAPSULE ACT

Mr. STEIL. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 469) to provide for the creation of a Congressional time capsule in commemoration of the semiquincentennial of the United States, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 469

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 "Semiquincentennial Congressional Time Capsule Act".

SEC. 2. SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL CONGRESSIONAL TIME CAPSULE.

(a) CREATION BY ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL.—The Architect of the Capitol shall create a Congressional time capsule, to be known as the "Semiquincentennial Congressional Time Capsule" (in this Act referred to as the "Time Capsule").

(b) CONTENTS.—

(1) DETERMINATION BY CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP.—The Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Office of the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, Office of the Majority Leader of the Senate, and Office of the Minority Leader of the Senate shall jointly determine the contents of the Time Capsule, taking into account the requirements of paragraph (2).

(2) SPECIFICATIONS.—The contents of the Time Capsule shall include—

(A) a representative portion of all books, manuscripts, miscellaneous printed matter,

memorabilia, relics, and other materials relating to the United States Semiquincentennial;

(B) copies or representations of important legislative and institutional milestones of Congress during the time before the Time Capsule is buried;

(C) a message from Congress to the future Congress when the Time Capsule will be opened; and

(D) such other content as the offices described in paragraph (1) consider appropriate.

(3) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out this subsection, the offices described in paragraph (1) may consult with the Architect of the Capitol, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and such other entities of the Federal Government as the offices consider appropriate.

(c) DUTIES OF ARCHITECT.—The Architect of the Capitol shall—

(1) prepare the Time Capsule to be sealed and buried on the West Lawn of the Capitol, at a location specified by the Architect, on or before July 4th, 2026, at a time which would permit individuals attending this event to also attend the burial of a time capsule in Independence Mall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, under section 7(f)(1) of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016 (36 U.S.C. 101 note prec.); and

(2) install a plaque to provide such information about the Time Capsule as the Architect considers appropriate.

(d) UNSEALING.—The Time Capsule shall be sealed until July 4th, 2276, on which date the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall present the Time Capsule to the 244th Congress, and such Congress shall determine how the contents within should be preserved or used.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. MORELLE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STEIL. Madam 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.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, today, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 469, the Semiquincentennial Congressional Time Capsule Act.

This nonpartisan legislation would authorize a time capsule to be buried on the Capitol Grounds to mark the Nation's semiquincentennial. America is turning 250 on July 4, 2026. This time capsule represents one way that Congress will participate in the Nation's yearlong celebration of democracy and freedom.

Amongst our toughest challenges of the day, this legislation reminds us that we can all work together. The contents of the capsule will be selected by the Speaker of the House, House minority leader, and the majority and minority leaders in the United States Senate. Maybe we can even ask Speaker JOHNSON to include a pair of his glasses.

The capsule will remain sealed until July 2, 2276, the Nation's 500th anniversary.

The gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) introduced H.R. 469 as a Member of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission with an additional 54 cosponsors.

The Architect of the Capitol provided technical input to the Commission and will work with the congressional leadership to implement the capsule.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have worked with Ranking Member MORELLE on these efforts. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 469, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I will begin by thanking my friend and colleague, the chair of the Committee on House Administration, Chairman STEIL, for his leadership, his friendship, and for helping us get this bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 469. This bipartisan legislation would authorize the Architect of the Capitol to bury a time capsule commemorating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026, to be opened on our Nation's 500th anniversary in the year 2276.

As my colleague and friend has indicated, the items in the capsule will be determined by bipartisan, bicameral congressional leaders. It will include written materials relating to the anniversary, representations of notable legislative and institutional milestones, and a message from this Congress to future colleagues in the 244th Congress. It seems remarkable.

The upcoming anniversary marks a powerful testament to the resilience of the American experiment. Our Nation has faced countless tests to our strength and unity, including a civil war, two world wars, natural disasters, and more. Yet, through each challenge, this country has stood and remains committed to fulfilling the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence 250 years ago.

As we navigate a time of deep division, partisanship, and growing threats to the values that sustain our democracy, this anniversary serves as a reminder to our shared responsibility to uphold the values of liberty and equality championed by our Founders.

I extend my thanks to the Semiquincentennial Commission for its leadership in planning for this momentous occasion, and I particularly commend my friend and colleague, Congresswoman WATSON COLEMAN, for her introduction of this measure.

I also acknowledge the service of a fellow New Yorker, former Representative Joseph Crowley, who has lent his time and talents to the work of the Commission, as well.

I look forward to seeing the items chosen for the time capsule, and I commend my colleagues to recommend that they support this measure.

Mr. Speaker, I note that, last year on the floor, when we passed the bill in the House, I committed to being here when the capsule is opened, so I hope we pass it this year because I am not getting any younger. It is going to be hard to hold on that long, but I am committed to doing it.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. MORELLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN), who has had the leadership to bring this bill to the floor and who will speak on the measure.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank our chairman for his work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, was an essential milestone in the progress of all humanity toward a more fair, just, and democratic society. It is work that continues to this day. As we reflect upon the last 250 years of progress toward these ideals, we must impart the lessons that we have learned to future generations.

As a cofounder and co-chair of the America 250 Caucus, along with my co-chairs, Mr. EVANS, Mr. ADERHOLT, and Ms. SALAZAR, it is an honor to see this legislation come forward today as just one small part of our Nation's 250th anniversary celebration.

This bill will authorize, as we have heard, the Architect of the Capitol to create a time capsule and have it buried on the West Lawn, to remain sealed until July 4, 2276, the Nation's 500th anniversary.

The contents will include items that represent important legislation and institutional milestones of Congress, a message from the 119th Congress to the 244th Congress, and other items that reflect our history.

No one here today will see it when it is opened, but an old Greek proverb states: "A society grows great when the old plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."

The body does its best work when we don't seek fame or followers, renown or retweets, but rather when we work so that distant generations of Americans for whom our names will be mere footnotes will enjoy the fruits of our work here today.

This bill passed last Congress, and I certainly look forward to its passage again today. I am honored to be able to speak to this piece of legislation today.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of our colleagues to support it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MORELLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that we are able to pass both of these bills, hopefully unanimously. I think that

shows our work together on this committee on two important pieces of reality remembering our legacy and our history. Hopefully this helps us to keep that in mind as we continue to navigate these difficult waters and, hopefully to our posterity, that they will remember these moments of people coming together to honor our Founders and to honor our future.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. MORELLE), the ranking member on the Committee on House Administration, for his work.

The gentleman correctly noted that we are in challenging times as we face difficult national issues. As we reflect back in 2 years, we will have a celebration of 250 years of the greatest country in the world.

This time capsule, when viewed 250 years from now in 2276, may it be a reflection that, at the midpoint then, which will be today, we navigated these challenges that we faced with great courage and great vigor.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's work and support on both pieces of legislation today, and I encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 469.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. EZELL). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 469.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MEDAL OF HONOR ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 695) to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the rate of the special pension payable to Medal of Honor recipients, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 695

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 "Medal of Honor Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The Medal of Honor is the highest and most prestigious military decoration of the United States.

(2) To earn the Medal of Honor "the deed of the person . . . must be so outstanding that

it clearly distinguishes his gallantry beyond the call of duty from lesser forms of bravery".

(3) The actions of Medal of Honor recipients inspire bravery, and the willingness to give all, in those who serve in the Armed Forces and those who will serve in the future.

(4) Those listed on the Medal of Honor Roll exemplify the best traits of members of the Armed Forces, a long and proud lineage of those who went beyond the call of duty.

(5) Pursuant to section 1562 of title 38, United States Code, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall pay monthly to each living person whose name has been entered on the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard Medal of Honor Roll a special pension.

(6) Recipients of the Medal of Honor have earned a substantial and historic increase to such special pension in recognition of their conspicuous gallantry, unwavering commitment, and heroic actions above and beyond the call of duty.

SEC. 3. INCREASE IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SPECIAL PENSION PAYABLE TO MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS.

Section 1562 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1)—

(A) by inserting "(A)" before "The Secretary";

(B) by striking "the rate of \$1,406.73" and inserting "the rate described in subparagraph (B)"; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

"(B) The rate described in this subparagraph is equal to the amount of monthly compensation paid to a veteran without dependents under subsection (m) of section 1114 of this title, increased to the next intermediate rate under subsection (p) of such section."; and

(2) in subsection (e)—

(A) by inserting "(1)" before "Effective";

(B) by inserting ", subject to paragraph (2)," before "shall"; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new paragraph (2):

"(2) The Secretary shall not, under paragraph (1), increase the amount of monthly special pension payable under subsection (a) in a year if such amount was otherwise increased during such year."

SEC. 4. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN LIMITS ON PAYMENTS OF PENSION.

Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "November 30, 2031" and inserting "January 31, 2033".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) and the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. MCGARVEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOST. 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 H.R. 695, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 695, offered by my colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. NEHLS).

This bill would increase the rate of special monthly pension for Medal of Honor recipients and their surviving spouses.

The Medal of Honor is our Nation's highest military award. It is reserved for servicemembers who have demonstrated extraordinary bravery and self-sacrifice in combat.

The Medal of Honor special pension is intended to repay part of the debt that our Nation owes them. The Medal of Honor pension is separate from the compensation that a veteran receives when they are unable to work due to service-related disabilities.

Today, there are just 63 Medal of Honor recipients who currently receive less than \$2,000 in special pension payments per month. Their stories of service, without question, should be honored and remembered and told.

However, the current pension offered does not cover the cost of travel to speak at events that inspire future generations and tell their fellow Americans about their service in defense of our freedom.

It is time we increase the Medal of Honor recipients' pension in recognition of their heroic military service and their continued service to our Nation. The bill is fully offset by using a bipartisan offset related to older veterans and pensions, and I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 695, as amended.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for H.R. 695, the Medal of Honor Act.

To join the armed services is an act of profound selflessness. On the Veterans' Affairs Committee, we recognize the sacrifice and service of every servicemember who, in the face of uncertainty and danger, took the oath and chose to commit themselves to a higher purpose.

While every individual servicemember makes sacrifices and dedicates themselves to this path of honor, there are a select few who distinguish themselves from the rest.

The Medal of Honor cannot be won. It must be earned through extreme selflessness and bravery. We recognize this distinguished service with our Nation's highest military honor, the Medal of Honor.

From the first awardee to the most recent, Medal of Honor recipients have demonstrated their unwavering commitment to serve above and beyond the call of duty, even to their own death.

There have been 43 Kentuckians who were awarded the Medal of Honor. I will just talk about one, Sergeant John C. Squires, a Louisville native who went from Male High School to the United States Army and served in Italy in World War II.

It was in April of 1944, in the Italian countryside, that Squires braved automatic gunfire, artillery, and mortar