

111TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1273

Expressing the sense of Congress with respect to the National Day of Prayer.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 20, 2010

Mr. SMITH of Texas (for himself, Mr. FORBES, Mr. BARTLETT, Mr. HARPER, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. WAMP, Mr. EHLERS, Mr. BACHUS, Mr. JORDAN of Ohio, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. KLINE of Minnesota, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. PENCE, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. ISSA, Mr. CHAFFETZ, Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California, and Mr. LATOURETTE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress with respect to the
National Day of Prayer.

Whereas in our Declaration of Independence, the Founders based their right to “dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another” on the “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.” They then declared, “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” They ended, “We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, . . . appealing to the Supreme Judge of the

World . . . do, . . . with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, . . . pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.” The Declaration of Independence (1776);

Whereas Article VII in the U.S. Constitution refers to “the Year of Our Lord”, 1787. U.S. Const. art. VII;

Whereas the First Congress not only acknowledged a proper role for religion in public life, but it did so at the very time it drafted the Establishment Clause. Just three days before Congress sent the text of the First Amendment to the States for ratification, it authorized the appointment of legislative chaplains. *Marsh v. Chambers*, 463 U.S. 783, 788 (1983);

Whereas both Houses of Congress open their daily sessions with prayer and, in recent years, recitation of the Pledge. See Senate Rule IV.1, Standing Rules of the Senate, S. Doc. No. 107–1, at 4 (2002); House Rule XIV.1, Constitution, Jefferson’s Manual, and Rules of the House of Representatives, H.R. Doc. No. 106–320, at 620 (2001);

Whereas, on September 25, 1789, the First Congress unanimously approved a resolution calling on President George Washington to proclaim a National Day of Thanksgiving for the people of the United States by declaring, “a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the many favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a constitution of government for their safety and happiness” See *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38, 101 (1985) (Rehnquist, J., dissenting);

Whereas in Washington’s Proclamation of a Day of National Thanksgiving, he wrote that it is the “duty of all Nations

to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor . . .” 30 *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745–1799*, at 427 (John C. Fitzpatrick ed., Gov’t Printing Office 1939);

Whereas John Adams declared in 1799, “As no truth is more clearly taught in the Volume of Inspiration, nor any more fully demonstrated by the experience of all ages, than that a deep sense and due acknowledgment of the governing providence of a Supreme Being and of the Accountableness of men to Him as the searcher of heart and righteous distributor of rewards and punishments are conducive equally to the happiness and rectitude of individuals and to the well-being of communities . . . I do hereby recommend . . . to be observed throughout the United States as a day of solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer . . .” 9 *The Works of John Adams* 172 (Charles F. Adams ed., 1850–56) (reprint by Books for Librarians Press, 1969);

Whereas President James Madison, on July 9, 1812, proclaimed that the third Thursday in August “be set apart for the devout purposes of rendering the Sovereign of the Universe and the Benefactor of Mankind the public homage due to His holy attributes . . .” 2 *James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* 498 (Bureau of National Literature, Inc.);

Whereas President James Madison, on March 4, 1815, declared “a day of thanksgiving and of devout acknowledgments to Almighty God for His great goodness manifested in restoring to them the blessing of peace. No people ought to feel greater obligations to celebrate the good-

ness of the Great Disposer of Events and of the Destiny of Nations than the people of the United States.” 2 James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents 546 (Bureau of National Literature, Inc.);

Whereas a “National Day of Prayer” is provided for under section 119 of title 36, United States Code;

Whereas in 1952, evangelist Billy Graham led a six week religious campaign in Washington, DC, holding events in the National Guard Armory and on the Capitol steps;

Whereas that campaign culminated in a speech in which Graham called for a National Day of Prayer;

Whereas, on April 17, 1952, Congress passed Public Law 82–324, providing that: “The President shall set aside and proclaim a suitable day each year, other than a Sunday, as a National Day of Prayer, on which the people of the United States may turn to God in prayer and meditation at churches, in groups, and as individuals”;

Whereas, on April 17, 1952, President Harry S. Truman signed that legislation into law;

Whereas, on May 5, 1988, Congress approved Public Law 100–307, “setting aside the first Thursday in May as the date on which the National Day of Prayer is celebrated”;

Whereas, on May 9, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the bill into law;

Whereas the current version of the statute provides: “The President shall issue each year a proclamation designating the first Thursday in May as a National Day of Prayer on which the people of the United States may turn to God in prayer and meditation at churches, in groups, and as individuals.”; and

Whereas all Presidents since 1952 have issued proclamations designating the National Day of Prayer each year: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives that the National Day of Prayer is constitu-
3 tional and a needed tribute to the value of prayer and a
4 fitting acknowledgment of our Nation's religious history.

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