

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1586

To direct the Architect of the Capitol to acquire and place a historical plaque to be permanently displayed in National Statuary Hall recognizing the seven decades of Christian church services being held in the Capitol from 1800 to 1868, which included attendees James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 16, 2013

Mr. GOHMERT (for himself, Mr. CHABOT, Mr. BARTON, and Mr. SCALISE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on House Administration

A BILL

To direct the Architect of the Capitol to acquire and place a historical plaque to be permanently displayed in National Statuary Hall recognizing the seven decades of Christian church services being held in the Capitol from 1800 to 1868, which included attendees James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Congressional Hope
3 for Uniform Recognition of Christian Heritage
4 (CHURCH) Act of 2013”.

5 **SEC. 2. ACQUISITION AND DISPLAY OF HISTORICAL**
6 **PLAQUE RECOGNIZING THE SEVEN DECADES**
7 **OF CHRISTIAN CHURCH SERVICES BEING**
8 **HELD IN THE CAPITOL.**

9 (a) ACQUISITION.—The Architect of the Capitol shall
10 enter into an agreement with a private entity for the de-
11 sign and fabrication of a historical plaque to be perma-
12 nently displayed in National Statuary Hall recognizing the
13 seven decades of Christian church services being held in
14 the Capitol from 1800 to 1868.

15 (b) DESIGN.—The plaque designed and fabricated
16 pursuant to the agreement entered into under subsection
17 (a) shall be of such size and design as may be provided
18 under the terms of the agreement, except that the plaque
19 shall contain the following statement:

20 “The first Christian church services in the Cap-
21 itol were held when the Government moved to Wash-
22 ington in the fall of 1800. They were conducted in
23 the Hall of the House in the north wing of the build-
24 ing. In 1801, the House moved the church services
25 to temporary quarters in the south wing, called the
26 ‘Oven’, which it vacated in 1804, returning services

1 to the north wing for 3 years. During church serv-
2 ices, the Speaker’s podium was used as the preach-
3 er’s pulpit.

4 “Within a year of his inauguration, President
5 Thomas Jefferson began attending church services
6 in the Chamber of the House of Representatives.
7 Throughout his administration (1801–1809), Thom-
8 as Jefferson permitted and encouraged church serv-
9 ices in executive branch buildings. Sermons regard-
10 ing the Old and New Testaments of the Bible were
11 even conducted in the Supreme Court chambers
12 while the judicial branch was located in the old
13 north wing of the Capitol.

14 “The term ‘separation of church and state’, not
15 found in the Constitution, was rather first used by
16 Thomas Jefferson in a letter to the Danbury Bap-
17 tists. Though Jefferson saw no problem with having
18 nondenominational Christian services in government
19 buildings, he affirmed that the Government should
20 not choose an official Christian denomination. The
21 worship services in the Government-owned House
22 Chamber—a practice that continued until after the
23 Civil War—were acceptable to Jefferson because
24 they were nondiscriminatory and voluntary.

1 “President James Madison, the recognized au-
2 thor of the Constitution, followed Jefferson’s exam-
3 ple. In keeping with Madison’s understanding of the
4 first amendment, church services were permitted in
5 the halls of State on Sundays during his administra-
6 tion (1809–1817). However, unlike Jefferson, who
7 rode on horseback to attend church in the Capitol,
8 Madison traveled in a coach pulled by four horses.
9 The services were interrupted in 1814 after the inte-
10 rior was burned by the British and had to be re-
11 paired.

12 “Preachers of every Christian denomination
13 preached Christian doctrine in this Chamber. On
14 January 8, 1826, Bishop John England (1786–
15 1842) of Charleston, South Carolina, became the
16 first Catholic clergyman to preach in the House of
17 Representatives. The first woman to preach before
18 the House, and likely the first woman to speak offi-
19 cially in Congress under any circumstances, was the
20 English evangelist, Dorothy Ripley (1767–1832),
21 who conducted a service on January 12, 1806.”.

22 (c) PRESENTATION CEREMONY.—The Architect of
23 the Capitol is authorized to use National Statuary Hall
24 for a presentation ceremony for the plaque on a date de-
25 termined by the Architect. The Architect of the Capitol

1 and the Capitol Police Board shall take such action as
2 may be necessary with respect to physical preparations
3 and security for the ceremony.

4 (d) DISPLAY.—Upon receiving the plaque designed
5 and fabricated pursuant to the agreement entered into
6 under this section, the Architect of the Capitol shall dis-
7 play the plaque permanently in a place of prominence in
8 National Statuary Hall.

9 **SEC. 3. USE OF EXISTING FUNDS.**

10 Any amounts obligated or expended by the Architect
11 of the Capitol to carry out this Act shall be derived from
12 funds available to the Architect as of the date of the enact-
13 ment of this Act.

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