

113TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. RES. 547

Affirming the vital role that prayer has played throughout the more than 200-year history of our Nation, strengthening the fabric of our society, and recognizing May 1, 2014, as the 63rd annual National Day of Prayer.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 8, 2014

Mr. FORBES (for himself, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. ADERHOLT, and Mr. LANKFORD) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

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## RESOLUTION

Affirming the vital role that prayer has played throughout the more than 200-year history of our Nation, strengthening the fabric of our society, and recognizing May 1, 2014, as the 63rd annual National Day of Prayer.

Whereas the first act of America's first Congress in 1774 was to ask a minister to open with prayer and to lead Congress in the reading of four chapters of the Bible;

Whereas in 1789, on the same day that Congress finished drafting the First Amendment, it requested President Washington to declare a National day of prayer and thanksgiving, resulting in the first Federal official Thanksgiving proclamation;

Whereas the Nation has a long history of turning to prayer both in times of crisis and in times of thanksgiving, including over 130 national calls to prayer by the President of the United States since 1789, including—

(1) President Washington’s Thanksgiving Proclamation of October 3, 1789, “[I]t 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—and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.”;

(2) President Lincoln’s Proclamation of March 30, 1863, “We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.”;

(3) President Roosevelt's prayer before the Nation on D-Day, June 6, 1944, "Many people have urged that I call the Nation into a single day of special prayer. But because the road is long and the desire is great, I ask that our people devote themselves in a continuance of prayer. As we rise to each new day, and again when each day is spent, let words of prayer be on our lips, invoking Thy help to our efforts.";

(4) President Eisenhower's Proclamation of November 12, 1956, "It is also fitting at this season that we should consider God's providence to us throughout our entire history. Let us remember the Pilgrim Fathers who, fleeing from religious oppression, landed on a bleak, forbidding shore and began to carve out what became this great Republic which it is our happy destiny to love and serve. For their foresight, their courage, and their idealism let us give thanks to the Power which has made and preserved us a Nation. Humbly aware that we are a people greatly blessed, both materially and spiritually, let us pray this year not only in the spirit of thanksgiving but also as suppliants for God's guidance, to the end that we may follow the course of righteousness and be worthy of His favor.";

(5) President Kennedy's National Day of Prayer Proclamation of October 8, 1963, "On this day, let us acknowledge anew our reliance upon the divine Providence which guided our founding fathers. Let each of us, according to his own custom and his own faith, give thanks to his Creator for the divine assistance which has nurtured the noble ideals in which this Nation was conceived.";

(6) President Clinton's National Day of Prayer Proclamation of April 18, 1997, "As we face the last

years of the 20th century, let us uphold the tradition of observing a day in which every American, in his or her own way, may come before God seeking increased peace, guidance, and wisdom for the challenges ahead. Even as we continue to work toward hopeful solutions, may our national resolve be matched by a firm reliance on the Author of our lives—for truly it is in God that we trust.”; and

(7) President George W. Bush’s National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Proclamation of September 13, 2001, “I call on every American family and the family of America to observe a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance, honoring the memory of the thousands of victims of these brutal attacks and comforting those who lost loved ones. We will persevere through this national tragedy and personal loss. In time, we will find healing and recovery; and, in the face of all this evil, we remain strong and united, ‘one Nation under God.’”;

Whereas the act of prayer is both an expression of religious belief and an act of speech that is protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution;

Whereas both the House of Representatives and Senate have a long tradition of opening their daily legislative sessions with prayer;

Whereas physical evidence of the Nation’s long tradition of prayer is a permanent part of the Capitol building, including a painting in the Rotunda of the pilgrims praying for divine protections aboard the Mayflower before they embarked for America as the word’s “God with us” inscribed on a sail above their heads;

Whereas the law requires in 36 U.S.C. § 119, “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 May 1, 2014, marks the 63rd annual observance of the National Day of Prayer: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2               (1) recognizes the 63rd annual observance of  
3       the National Day of Prayer;

4               (2) encourages all the people of the United  
5       States to come together to pray and reaffirm the im-  
6       portance prayer has played in the Nation’s heritage;  
7       and

8               (3) expresses support for the continued recogni-  
9       tion each year of the National Day of Prayer, and  
10      of the importance that prayer and faith have played  
11      in the Nation’s history.

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