

welfare eligibility system makes sense. But we are not debating whether or not privatization is a good idea. All we are debating—or at least all we should be debating—is whether Texas should be allowed to explore the options of allowing private contractors to administer a part of the welfare system. It is not possible for anyone to know what impact privatization will have until the bids are submitted. I would say to those who oppose privatization as well as those who support privatization: Let's wait and see what proposals are made for privatization before we jump to a conclusion either way.

Injecting some competition into this process will produce a welfare system that is better for welfare recipients and taxpayers. I would hope that those who oppose privatization will put their energy into improving the current system instead of trying to prevent any competition.

Approving the Texas waiver request does not necessarily mean that Texas will privatize any part of the welfare system. The Federal Government still must approve any contract with a private company before any privatization can become final. We should wait until we see the proposals from private companies before we decide whether or not privatization makes sense. We can't honestly debate the merits of privatization until we know the facts about what privatization will mean.

If the bids by private contractors don't adequately address the concerns that have been raised about the impact that privatization will have on individuals applying for assistance and on the current employees, or if the public sector can demonstrate that they can administer welfare programs more efficiently and effectively than any of the private contractors, I will be the first to argue that we shouldn't go forward with privatization.

I regret that this issue has become so politicized. I would urge all parties involved to cool our rhetoric and try to work together to find a way to allow Texas to explore this option while providing safeguards against the concerns we all share. I know Governor Bush and Commissioner McKinney are committed to finding a constructive solution, and believe that the administration is willing to work with them as well. I hope that they will continue their dialog to find a solution that will allow Texas to move forward with this proposal.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the move to make technical corrections to the welfare reform law, H.R. 1048. Although I was hopeful that the measure would include provisions to exempt Hmong veterans from benefit restrictions, I am pleased that the sense of Congress was included in the amendments offered. This sense of Congress would recognize the service of thousands of Hmong and other Highland Lao veterans who fought in special guerrilla units on behalf of the United States during the Vietnam war. I would also state that Congress should approve legislation for the purpose of continuing certain welfare benefits for these Hmong and Highland Lao veterans and their families based on their service to the United States.

I believe that we must go further than this sense of Congress language to recognize the service of the Lao Hmong, however, this is an important step in the process of honoring the sacrifice of the Hmong patriots. The Hmong stood by the United States at a crucial time in our history; now we have an opportunity to repay that loyalty. Many of those who survived and made it to the United States are sepa-

rated from other family members and are having a difficult time adjusting to life here.

I worked to include language in this bill that would make the treatment of Hmong veterans commensurate with that of other aliens who served in United States regular military forces. While this provision was not included, I am encouraged that this sense of Congress has bipartisan support and expresses a shared intent to amend this matter and am hopeful that this issue will be resolved in the near future to avert the August 1997 deadline. The loss of benefits to these legal immigrants that can't pass an English language test is unfair and works a special hardship on the Hmong, refugees and asylees nationally.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the House of Representatives approved the passage of H.R. 1048, the Welfare Technical Corrections Act of 1997, which I supported. The bill makes a number of technical corrections to the 104th Congress' historic welfare reform bill.

I want to draw particular attention to section 407 of the bill. This section provides for:

...the sense of the Congress that Hmong and other Highland Lao veterans who fought on behalf of the Armed Forces of the United States during the Vietnam conflict and have lawfully been admitted to the United States for permanent residence should be considered veterans for purposes of continuing certain welfare benefits consistent with the exceptions provided other noncitizen veterans under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

The Hmong share a unique historic link with the United States and our objectives in the Vietnam war. It is because of their valiant service that these people deserve our concentrated attention. I want to thank Human Resources Subcommittee Chairman SHAW, Congressman KLECZKA, Congressman RAMSTAD, and the remaining members of the Ways and Means Committee for including this important language in the bill. I am pleased that my communication with the committee has in some measure contributed to raising awareness about the Hmong and their unique situation.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include therein extraneous material on H.R. 1048.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1048, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ADVISING MEMBERSHIP OF ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU ADDRESS ON HOUSE CABLE TV

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, permit me to take this opportunity to inform my colleagues of arrangements I have made for them to be able to view a major speech of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on House cable channel 25.

Recently the Israeli Prime Minister addressed the membership of Voices United for Israel, an organization dedicated to a secure Israel, comprised of more than 200 Christian and Jewish organizations representing 40 million people across our Nation. Based on the attendance of that event, it is obvious that support for a strong United States-Israeli relationship can be found throughout our Nation.

Accordingly, I have arranged for the Prime Minister's remarks to be broadcast on our House cable channeling, channel 25, this Wednesday, April 30, and Thursday, May 1, at both 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on both days, and have sent out a "Dear Colleague" letter to each Member of the House advising them of this event.

Mr. Speaker, I hope our Members and their staff will take the opportunity to view this important speech. It was well received and I highly recommend it.

EXPIRING CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM CONTRACTS

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1342) to provide for a 1-year enrollment in the conservation reserve of land covered by expiring conservation reserve program contracts, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1342

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. ONE-YEAR ENROLLMENT OF LAND COVERED BY EXPIRING CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM CONTRACTS.

(a) ELIGIBLE FARM LANDS.—This section applies with respect to a farm containing land covered by a conservation reserve program contract expiring during fiscal year 1997 if—

(1) the farm had a crop acreage base for wheat, oats, or barley at the time the conservation reserve program contract was executed;

(2) the farm is located in an area in which fall-seeded crops are regularly planted, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture;

(3) the owner of the farm (or the operator with the consent of the owner) submitted, during the enrollment period that ended on March 28, 1997, an eligible bid to enroll all or part of the land covered by the expiring contract in the conservation reserve established under subchapter B of chapter 1 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3831 et seq.); and

(4) the land designated in the bid satisfies the eligibility criteria in effect for enrollment of land in the conservation reserve.

(b) ONE-YEAR ENROLLMENT AUTHORIZED.—

(1) AUTHORITY OF OWNER OR OPERATOR.—Except as provided in subsection (g), the owner or operator of a farm described in subsection (a) may enroll in the conservation reserve for a one-year term to begin on October 1, 1997, the land covered by the expiring conservation reserve program contract and included in the owner's or operator's enrollment bid (as described in subsection (a)(3)) if—

(A) the owner or operator notifies the Secretary in writing, during the special notification period required under paragraph (2), that the owner or operator desires to enroll the land in the conservation reserve for one year under this section; and

(B) the Secretary does not accept, before October 1, 1997, the owner's or operator's enrollment bid (as described in subsection (a)(3)) to enroll the land in a long-term conservation reserve program contract.

(2) SPECIAL NOTIFICATION PERIOD.—Promptly upon the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall provide a special period for owners and operators of farms described in subsection (a) to permit the owners and operators to provide the notification required under paragraph (1)(A) to enter into one-year conservation reserve program contracts under this section.

(c) RENTAL RATE.—The rental rate for a one-year conservation reserve program contract under subsection (b) shall be equal to the amount of the bid (as described in subsection (a)(3)) that the owner or operator submitted with respect to the land to be covered by the one-year contract.

(d) EFFECT OF ONE-YEAR CONTRACT ON SUBSEQUENT ENROLLMENT.—If an owner or operator who enrolls eligible farm land in a one-year conservation reserve program contract under subsection (b) submits a bid to enroll the same land in the conservation reserve under a long-term conservation reserve program contract that would commence on October 1, 1998, and the Secretary accepts the bid and enters into a long-term conservation reserve program contract with the owner or operator, then the one-year contract shall be considered to be the first year of that long-term conservation reserve program contract.

(e) MAXIMUM ENROLLMENT.—The maximum number of acres in the conservation reserve during fiscal year 1998, including land enrolled by the Secretary under one-year conservation reserve program contracts under subsection (b), may not exceed 30,000,000 acres.

(f) APPLICATION OF CONSERVATION RESERVE LAWS.—Except as specifically provided in this section, the terms and conditions of subchapter B of chapter 1 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3831 et seq.) shall apply with respect to one-year conservation reserve program contracts authorized by this section.

(g) EFFECT OF COMPLETION OF 15TH ENROLLMENT.—If, as of the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary has already acted on the bids submitted during the enrollment period that ended on March 28, 1997, to enroll land in the conservation reserve, either by accepting or rejection the bids then the authority provided by this section for special one-year conservation reserve program contracts shall not take effect.

SEC. 2. SPECIAL EARLY TERMINATION AUTHORITY FOR CERTAIN CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM CONTRACTS EXPIRING IN 1997.

(a) EARLY TERMINATION AUTHORITY.—A farm owner or operator described in subsection (b) who is a party to a conservation reserve program contract expiring during fiscal year 1997 may terminate the contract at any time after June 30, 1997. Notwithstanding section 1235(e) of the Food Security Act

of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3835(e)), the termination shall take effect immediately upon submission of notice of the termination to the Secretary of Agriculture and shall not result in a reduction in the amount of the rental payment due under the conservation reserve program contract for fiscal year 1997.

(B) ELIGIBLE OWNERS AND OPERATORS.—A farm owner or operator referred to in subsection (a) is a farm owner or operator with respect to whom one of the following circumstances apply:

(1) Neither the owner, operator, nor any other eligible person submitted, during the enrollment period that ended on March 28, 1997, an eligible bid to enroll all or part of the land covered by the expiring conservation reserve established under subchapter B of chapter 1 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3831 et seq.).

(2) An eligible bid was submitted during the enrollment period to enroll all or part of the land covered by the expiring contract in the conservation reserve, but the Secretary of Agriculture rejected the bid and the owner or operator did not notify the Secretary, in the manner provided in section 1(b), that the owner or operator desired a one-year contract under section 1.

(c) CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM CONTRACT DEFINED.—In this section, the term "conservation reserve program" means a contract entered into under subchapter B of Chapter 1 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3831 et seq.) for enrollment of farm acreage in the conservation reserve established under such subchapter.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. SMITH] and the gentleman from Texas [Mr. STENHOLM] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. SMITH].

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. SMITH of Oregon asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, today the House considers H.R. 1342, a bill reported by the Committee on Agriculture on April 17 by voice vote.

This bill will provide a one-time legislative remedy to a problem that many of us have seen coming for many months, and that is a specific timing problem for winter crop producers whose current CRP contracts will expire this September.

Members of the Committee on Agriculture, the gentleman from Virginia Mr. MORAN, who introduced the bill in February seeking to solve this matter, the gentlemen from Texas, Mr. COMBEST and Mr. STENHOLM, and many others in a bipartisan effort have been working diligently to find the correct fix for this problem. We believe H.R. 1342 is a limited remedy to a very real problem that many landowners are now facing.

As a matter of information, this bill is different from the committee bill adopted in that if the Secretary awards CRP contracts prior to enactment, this bill is void. If the bill is enacted prior to any Secretarial announcement, then eligible landowners will be offered a 1-year contract.

Many farmers who needed to know some time ago whether or not they were going to get another CRP contract, will not know in time and will not be able to plant a winter crop of wheat, barley, or oats. And, by the way, through CBO we understand that the loss to farmers is somewhere in the neighborhood of \$600 million for a lost crop.

For those of my colleagues who may not know, producers do not just hop on the tractor and put a crop in the ground. Farmers with the major part of their operations currently in CRP need significant time for securing seed, fertilizer, pesticides and, yes, even a bank loan.

Those of us from arid areas of the country know that precious soil moisture is being consumed now by required CRP cover crop. That cover crop should have been removed some time ago in many of the areas of the country to save moisture for the coming winter crop planting.

As Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Richard Rominger pointed out to the Committee on Agriculture during hearings last year, the benefits of CRP to the U.S. environmental areas are substantial and quantifiable: 2.4 million acres planted in trees and 8,500 miles of filter strips along water bodies, 1.7 million acres of wildlife practices and more than 30 million acres of lands devoted to grass cover.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service estimates CRP contracts have saved nearly 700 million tons of soil annually. By any terms, the CRP has been a Federal policy success; from an environmental standpoint and from any budgetary standpoint. CBO now identifies this bill, if passed, to save \$75 million.

Of course, the problem is here. Most of these producers cannot and will not gamble on waiting for the USDA to make a decision. Of course, should that occur, all the conservation benefits over the past 10 years will be lost. The huge blocks of land which conservationists have identified as bringing back our native bird populations in the Great Plains will be broken up into smaller segments, far less beneficial to wildlife. Miles of filter strips buffering water courses will be torn up. Millions of acres of grasslands will be returned to annual production. I do not believe we should let that happen.

Again, this bill seeks a technical fix that will allow winter crop producers to know if they have a CRP contract for the coming year. If they are eligible under the terms of the CRP bid process that concluded March 28, they would receive a contract at rental rates offered for this new enrollment.

If the Secretary awards them a contract later, this spring or early summer, then they will be provided a new 10-year contract. On the other hand, if they are not awarded a contract, the 1-year contract provided in this bill will expire next year, giving the landowner plenty of time to seed a crop in 1998.

This bill does not harm the current CRP program. There are no changes made in eligibility criteria or overall standards for entry or early exit. We believe landowners who have made a credible bid will be considered by the Secretary under the terms of the new rental rates and the new environmental benefits index.

As I said earlier, this bill is a technical remedy to a specific problem. Remember, this bill saves \$75 million to the taxpayers, if enacted. Without it, farmers will lose \$600 million. It is farmer friendly, it is budget friendly, and it is environmentally friendly. I urge its adoption.

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

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

(Mr. STENHOLM asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1342.

Mr. Speaker, it has become apparent from meeting with farmers and discussing the situation with the chairman, that farmers in winter wheat States who have expiring Conservation Reserve Program [CRP] contracts will probably not have adequate time to react should those contracts not be reenrolled in the CRP.

In other words, these particular producers will not be able to prepare the ground and begin to summer fallow their acreage in time to ensure adequate moisture for fall planting. I am supporting the chairman's efforts to help these producers who were caught in a timing crunch through no fault of their own.

I would have preferred that we would have completed the farm bill in a reasonable time so that we wouldn't be in this position today. We have a large number of acres expiring in 1 year because a great deal of them received a 1-year extension due to the fact that the farm bill was not completed in 1995. Now the USDA is under tremendous pressure to make quick decisions on how many acres of the nearly 26 million bid into the program should be accepted.

There seems to be some question of fact as to how much time these farmers need to prepare their land. In addition, USDA has several concerns in regard to how this bill will affect the 15th sign-up. In any event, if USDA maintains its schedule to announce the results of the 15th sign-up, then this bill will become moot.

I look forward to working with the Department to ensure the integrity of the new CRP remains intact. That is why I am supporting the chairman's legislation. This is a small fix for a major problem for a specific group of producers.

We also give some flexibility to producers such as those in Mr. Peterson's district who are going to have very limited options should there be remaining effects from this spring's flooding or a repeat during planting season next year. By allowing landowners who were not eligible to rebid existing contracts or whose bids to reenroll were not accepted to early out of their contracts, we are giving them maximum flexibility to ensure they will be prepared for planting in the spring of 1998.

Again, I rise in support of the chairman's legislation, and urge my colleagues to support the passage of H.R. 1342.

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

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN].

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill, and I rise reluctantly because my good friend, the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. SMITH], knows that we are both interested in the same things, but this bill would prevent new environmentally sensitive land from being enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. Instead, it would allow farmers who have highly productive land currently in the program the opportunity to collect a Federal check for not producing for 1 more year. Those farmers who have land that they could enroll in the program, that would have very positive environmental benefits on the nearby communities by being in the program, would be shut out for another year.

I suggest if we want to do right by conservation programs and the environment, we should vote "no" on this bill. This bill goes backward in efforts to protect our environment, not forward. I must, with all due respect to my friend from Oregon, oppose the bill.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In closing, let me reiterate again, as I mentioned in my statement, that this bill saves the taxpayers money. This is for farmers in America. Without this bill, farmers could lose \$600 million in crops. This is environmentally friendly, as I have stated.

Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1342. I do not intend to take a lot of time on this issue. However, I would like to share the Nebraska wheat growers support for this bill with my colleagues.

For quite a while, Nebraska's wheat growers have been concerned USDA would not decide which bids to accept into CRP until it was too late for fall-seeded crops. My wheat growers would have faced the difficult decision of planting on land that has the possibility of being enrolled in CRP, or waiting for USDA's decision which could be negative.

The bill will allow winter crop producers to know now that they can be enrolled in CRP for the coming crop year. This will solve a minor, but very serious timing problem.

H.R. 1342 makes this situation a little easier for all winter wheat growers. I'm pleased to support the 1-year CRP option for fall-seeded crops, and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1342.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker I rise today in support of H.R. 1342, a bill to provide technical corrections for the Conservation Reserve program. I would like to first thank the chairman of the Agriculture Committee for bringing this legislation before the House of Representatives.

For those of us with producers caught by the timing of these new CRP regulations, this bill offers a sensible method of returning the ground to production agriculture and protecting

the conservation benefits of the program for as long as possible. H.R. 1342 is a narrow solution to a real problem.

At a hearing on February 26, 1997, held by the Subcommittee on Forestry, Resource Conservation and Research, I shared my concerns on the timing of the new CRP regulations. On February 27, I introduced legislation, H.R. 861, that shares much in common with the bill before this Chamber. H.R. 1342 allows producers whose land is not accepted to extend their contract for up to 1 additional year at the owner's new bid. For producers in winter wheat country, this bill allows for a reasonable transition of land back into production.

Under the current CRP enrollment situation established by the USDA, producers are faced with the option of losing 11 years of production in a 10-year program or being told to tear up the ground prior to being notified of a CRP decision and then trying to receive cost-share funds to replant the land back into grass if that land was indeed accepted. Neither one of these situations made sense to Kansans whose land is in the program or to this Member of Congress.

The Conservation Reserve program is an extremely important, popular, and effective program for the people of the first district of Kansas and across the country. Nationwide, over 30 million acres of environmentally sensitive land have been enrolled in this important program. The benefits of this program are readily seen through reduced runoff and soil erosion, improved wildlife habitat, and better air quality by reducing wind erosion. These benefits are important and I am optimistic that through the efforts of this legislation, the conservation benefits can be extended and maintained.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1342 and take a positive step in supporting one of this Nation's most successful conservation programs.

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1342, a bill to allow farmland in winter wheat and fall-planted crops to remain in a conservation program for one more year.

This temporary measure would provide certainty to Montana farmers and ranchers whose Conservation Reserve Program contracts are expiring in September.

Frankly, I am very concerned about the situation Montana farmers face. They are caught between the rules of nature and those of the Department of Agriculture.

Nature tells them there is a time for preparing their land and the Department tells them to wait.

In last year's farm bill, we asked producers to manage risk; to produce for markets. The Department's delay makes that impossible. Clearly, the situation calls for correction.

The Congressional Budget Office indicates that the bill saves \$75 million next year. Enacting this bill would also prevent the potential loss of \$600 million in income for farmers nationwide. That's how much is at stake if farmers are unable to produce a viable crop while they wait for the Department's decision.

As I said earlier this year, Montana farmers need certainty. They need to know; should they prepare land for planting fall crops or for establishing a cover suitable for long-term enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program.

If they aren't accepted in the Conservation Reserve Program, they're caught between nature's seasons and the Department's process.

We can't change nature, but we can change the rules to help not hinder our farm families.

Mr. Speaker, my friends and neighbors look to Congress for help. And, that's what this bill would deliver. I agree with Chairman BOB SMITH and I'm a cosponsor of this important legislation. I urge Members to support this legislation. It's good for the environment, good for the farmer, and good for the taxpayer.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1445

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. SMITH] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1342, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill just considered.

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

There was no objection.

AWARDING CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO FRANK SINATRA

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 279) to award a congressional gold medal to Francis Albert Sinatra.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 279

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The President is authorized to present, on behalf of the Congress, to Francis Albert "Frank" Sinatra a gold medal of appropriate design, in recognition of his accomplishments as an entertainer and humanitarian, which include—

(1) having a career in the entertainment industry spanning 5 decades where he produced, directed, or appeared in more than 50 motion pictures, recorded thousands of songs with annual sales numbering in the millions, and won many major awards in American popular entertainment including 7 Grammys, a Peabody, an Emmy and a Best Supporting Actor Oscar; and

(2) earning the Life Achievement Award of the NAACP, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his humanitarian and social justice efforts.

(b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Treasury shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and inscriptions to be determined by the Secretary.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATION.—There are authorized to be appropriated not to exceed \$30,000 to carry out this section.

SEC. 2. DUPLICATE MEDALS.

(a) STRIKING AND SALE.—The Secretary of the Treasury may strike and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 1 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses, and the cost of the gold medal.

(b) REIMBURSEMENT OF APPROPRIATION.—The appropriation used to carry out section 1 shall be reimbursed out of the proceeds of sales under subsection (a).

SEC. 3. NATIONAL MEDALS.

The medals struck pursuant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. CASTLE] and the gentleman from New York [Mr. FLAKE] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. CASTLE].

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

This afternoon, I rise in support of H.R. 279, the bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Francis Albert Sinatra, a man who is perhaps better known to many Americans as Old Blue Eyes, the Chairman of the Board, or simply the Voice.

Mr. Speaker, the standard for a Congressional Gold Medal is that the recipient must be someone who has performed an achievement that has an impact on American history and culture that is likely to be recognized as a major achievement in the recipient's field long after the achievement itself. Frank Sinatra's career in music and entertainment clearly meets and exceeds this standard.

Frank Sinatra is perhaps the greatest singer of popular American music of this century. His career spans over 6 decades. Sinatra's style, phrasing, timing and of course his voice have influenced and set the standard for American singers since World War II. In my home State of Delaware and across the country, there are radio stations that for years have devoted weekly shows of 3 hours or more to the music of Frank Sinatra.

There are few musicians or singers whose music can inspire and sustain that type of long-term interest and enthusiasm. From his big band days with the Harry James and Tommy Dorsey orchestras to his seminal work on the Capitol label with the Nelson Riddle orchestra in the 1950's, Frank Sinatra became the preeminent American popular singer.

He made the swinging Sinatra style of the 1960's and the 1970's the standard and continued to gain new fans in the 1980's and 1990's. Frank Sinatra helped define what Americans listen to and what people all over the world consider to be American music. From his own contemporaries to rock musicians today, everyone recognizes the impact Frank Sinatra has had on American popular music and culture.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation did not materialize overnight. It represents the hard work of a number of Members, particularly the gentleman from New York [Mr. SERRANO], the sponsor, with bipartisan help from his colleagues the gentleman from New York [Mr. KING], the gentleman from California [Mr. BONO], and others. The gentleman from New York [Mr. SERRANO] has been a longtime advocate of a Congressional Gold Medal for Frank Sinatra.

This legislation has not received any special treatment. I told the gentleman from New York [Mr. SERRANO] that it must demonstrate broad support by getting 290 cosponsors in the House. To their credit, the gentleman from New York [Mr. SERRANO], the gentleman from New York [Mr. KING], the gentleman from California [Mr. BONO], and other Members went to work to develop the support necessary to give Frank Sinatra the highest civilian honor this Congress can award. The bill has 302 cosponsors, including bipartisan support from Members of the House leadership, and the gentleman from California [Mr. HORN] wants to be a sponsor, too. He just asked me.

Mr. Speaker, before the ranking member of the subcommittee is recognized, I urge the House to show its high hopes, think of a summer wind, say I get a kick out of you and make 1997 a very good year by awarding this gold medal to the man who did it my way. I urge the immediate adoption of H.R. 279.

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

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

First of all, let me thank the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. CASTLE] for expediting getting this bill to the floor. As always, the gentleman has been most gracious with his time and flexibility to allow us to bring this bill out today. I also wish to congratulate the gentleman from New York [Mr. SERRANO] for his sponsorship, his diligence, his tenacity. I am grateful that the gentleman has expedited this bill coming, furthermore, because the gentleman from New York [Mr. SERRANO] has driven me crazy trying to make sure that at the point that he had his 290 signatures we would be willing to bring it to the floor.

So I think this is a great day for us and a great day for the Sinatra family, Frank especially, and a great day for the gentleman from New York [Mr. SERRANO] and the leadership that he has provided.

I do not intend to take much time. Several Members have comments and remarks about Mr. Sinatra to make. But let me just say that although Mr. Sinatra is from Hoboken, NJ, he has always identified with the State and city of New York. Everyone knows his rendition of "New York, New York."

Few, however, realize his accomplishments as a complete entertainer. He has won an Emmy, Grammy, Peabody, and an Oscar. He has also been honored