

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.

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AUTHORIZING RELEASE OF  
RECORDS ON MISSING PERSONS  
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 172) to authorize and direct the Archivist of the United States to make available for public use the records of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 172

*Resolved*, That the Archivist of the United States is authorized and directed to make available for public use the records of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia (94th Congress).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS).

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

Mr. Speaker, the question of a final resolution on military and, indeed, even civilian personnel in Southeast Asia, principally in Vietnam, has been one that this country has wrestled with for some time.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) was a member of the Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia during that Select Committee's existence in the 1970s. That particular committee was dissolved in the 94th Congress, and portions of its records, including 20 executive sessions, were, according to the appropriate procedures at the time, sealed for 50 years. Less sensitive records were sealed for 30 years.

As a member of the Committee on Ways and Means and the Subcommittee on Trade, it was my pleasure a few years ago to travel with then subcommittee Chairman Sam Gibbons on the first official congressional visit to Vietnam prior to our recognition of that country. We spent 2 days in Hawaii being briefed on the extensive, laborious, scientific pursuit of all leads in terms of missing in action and prisoners of war. We also carried on a number of discussions with Vietnamese officials and with individuals in the private sector, indeed loved ones who had sons, daughters, husbands, missing in that war.

It just seems appropriate, according to H. Res. 172, that the conditions in which we now relate to the country of Vietnam, as it pertains to records that were sealed, would only make it more difficult to conclude once and for all the question of prisoners of war and

missing in action. In fact, opening up reports so that any number of people can examine and find leads they find most appropriate, especially the ability to move into the country and talk to individuals, would maximize the opportunity for closing this particular chapter in America's history.

For that reason, and especially since the Senate has already taken similar action, I would urge all Members to support H. Res. 172.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to join the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), and others who cosponsored this resolution and the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), the chairman of the House Committee on Administration, in support of House Resolution 172.

□ 1430

This action, hopefully, will help both historians, researchers and, most of all, loved ones of missing American servicemen in Southeast Asia; and we should strive, when at all possible, for a policy of openness with respect to the records of loved ones who fought overseas on behalf of our country.

Simply put, this resolution would declassify the records of the House Select Committee on Missing Persons. It would authorize and direct the archivist of the United States to make these records available to the public.

In the 1970s, Mr. Speaker, the Select Committee investigated and tried to determine whether American servicemen had, in fact, been left behind in Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War. As has been explained, House rules mandated when the Select Committee was dissolved that its records be kept secret for 50 years. Similar rules governed the records of the Senate Select Committee that studied the same issue.

However, several years ago, Mr. Speaker, the Senate agreed to reduce the period of secrecy to 20 years and, thus, directed all its committee files be declassified. We should do the same thing, and we should do it for two principle reasons:

First, the families and loved ones of missing servicemen in Southeast Asia deserve and ought to know what the House Select Committee uncovered, and they should not have to wait even another day. These families should not have to fight their government on the release of these files, particularly since many of their loved ones fought so valiantly, so bravely, on behalf of our government, our people, and our commitment to democracy.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I believe that secrecy only fuels suspicion. While there are, of course, secrets the government must keep for national security reasons, this is not the case in this instance. As the Senate Select Com-

mittee stated in its final report, and I quote, "Nothing has done more to fuel suspicion about the government's handling of the POW-MIA issue than the fact that so many documents related to those efforts have remained classified for so long."

Mr. Speaker, today we have an opportunity to end that suspicion, and we certainly should do it. I commend the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT), and the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER), who introduced this resolution, and I am pleased to rise on behalf of its immediate passage.

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

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the principal sponsor of H. Res. 172, the chairman of the Committee on International Relations.

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

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I am pleased to rise today in support of H. Res. 172, a measure designed to declassify the records of the House Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia.

I want to thank the chairman of the Committee on House Administration, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), as well as the ranking minority member, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), for allowing this bill to be brought to the floor under suspension of the rules in this timely manner.

I helped to create and served as a member of the Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia during the 94th Congress. At that time the Select Committee was tasked with the responsibility of determining whether American servicemen had been left behind in Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War.

When the Select Committee was dissolved, after completing its work, some 35 boxes of material were sent over to the National Archives and Records Administration. Of that total, 11 boxes contained classified information. This material was subject to House classification rules, which mandated that the material be kept classified for a period of 50 years.

Earlier this decade, the Senate Committee on POW and MIA Affairs declassified all of its files on this issue, making them open to both the families and to researchers. This legislation simply allows the House to follow suit by making a change in House rules and opening all of the Select Committee's files and boxes of material to the public.

In approving this measure for suspension, the committee staff expressed some concern that privacy rights might be compromised if the files were declassified. They were subsequently

assured by the archivist that any cases where privacy is a concern, such as an individual who testified on conditions of anonymity, would be honored and such files would not be made public.

Mr. Speaker, the end of the Cold War has resulted in the discovery of literally hundreds of documents which had previously been out of reach behind the Iron Curtain. I see no need for the House to maintain a veil of secrecy over its Select Committee files, especially when such information may provide some insight into the fate of some of the more than 2,000 service members who still remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam conflict.

Accordingly, I ask my colleagues to join in supporting this worthy legislation which would bring the House rules on this subject in accord with those of our counterpart committee in the Senate.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time, once again thanking the gentleman from New York for this resolution.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time, adding that the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) asked me to make his comments known and his expressions of appreciation to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and others for their leadership on this, and he joins us very strongly in supporting this legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, House Resolution 172.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### ORGAN DONOR LEAVE ACT

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 457) to amend title 5, United States Code, to increase the amount of leave time available to a Federal employee in any year in connection with serving as an organ donor, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 457

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

#### SECTION 1. INCREASED LEAVE TIME TO SERVE AS AN ORGAN DONOR.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Organ Donor Leave Act".

(b) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (b) of the first section 6327 of title 5, United States Code (relating to absence in connection with serving as a bone-marrow or organ donor) is amended to read as follows:

"(b) An employee may, in any calendar year, use—

"(1) not to exceed 7 days of leave under this section to serve as a bone-marrow donor; and

"(2) not to exceed 30 days of leave under this section to serve as an organ donor.".

(c) TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS.—(1) The second section 6327 of title 5, United States Code (relating to absence in connection with funerals of fellow Federal law enforcement officers) is redesignated as section 6328.

(2) The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 63 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding after the item relating to section 6327 the following:

"6328. Absence in connection with funerals of fellow Federal law enforcement officers."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 457.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 457, the Organ Donor Leave Act. I commend the distinguished gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) for introducing this important bill. I know that my colleagues in the House are strong supporters of organ donation; but whenever we have a chance to highlight this important issue, we should do so.

More than 54,000 people are currently on the organ transplant waiting list, and about 4,000 each year die while waiting for a transplant. I believe that Congress should do whatever it can do to encourage our citizens to consider becoming organ or bone marrow donors and that the Federal Government should be a leader in this effort.

The Organ Donor Leave Act does that. Mr. Speaker, the least we can do for those who are giving so much of themselves is to give them the time to rest and recover with their families as they save the lives of others.

H.R. 457 will make it easier for Federal employees to become organ donors by providing those who donate organs with 30 days of paid leave in any calendar year. Under current law, employees are permitted to take 7 days of leave in order to donate bone marrow or organs.

H.R. 457 retains the 7-day leave period for bone marrow donors but increases the leave available to organ donors to 30 days. This leave is separate and distinct from the annual or sick leave available to Federal employees.

Mr. Speaker, my home State of Illinois has been a leader in organ and tissue donation through our Secretary of State's office. In fact, I signed up as a potential organ donor when our Secretary of State, now Governor George Ryan, came to the House floor of the

Illinois General Assembly and personally signed up every legislator on our driver's license on the back.

Illinois is one of the few States with an organ/tissue donor registry. In Illinois, this registry makes use of the existing driver's license and ID card database to identify individuals who are willing to be organ or tissue donors after death. Since October 1992, everyone applying for or renewing an Illinois driver's license or identification card is asked if they want to participate in this registry.

The response has been terrific. Approximately 3 million Illinoisans have joined the registry and nearly 100,000 more enroll each month. The average participation rate statewide is 38 percent compared to a national average of 13 percent, and some counties have reported participation rates of over 70 percent.

The bottom line is when we make it easier for individuals to become organ donors, more people will become donors. H.R. 457 is an important step towards making it easier for Federal employees to be organ donors, and I hope we will see the same kind of response with Federal employees that we have seen in Illinois.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members of the House to support H.R. 457.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) for her kind comments, and certainly I want to thank the chairman of the committee, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), and our ranking member, the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN), as well as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Civil Service, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH), for making sure that we moved in a bipartisan effort to bring this bill to the floor of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I introduced already 457, the Organ Donor Leave Act, because it supports Federal employees who make the lifesaving decision to become living organ or bone marrow donors by granting them additional leave time to recover from making the donation.

In the last 20 years, important medical breakthroughs have allowed for a larger number of successful organ and tissue transplants and a longer survival rate for transplant recipients. In many cases, transplantation is the only hope for thousands of people suffering from organ failure or in desperate need of corneas, skin, bone, or other tissue.

Despite the success rate of organ transplants, the need for donated organs and tissues continues to outpace the supply. Currently, however, 60,000 Americans are waiting for life-saving transplants. Tragically, every day 12 people die while waiting for a transplant. Every 16 minutes another name is added to the waiting list. This is a