

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1451, The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Act recognizing the bicentennial of his birth. As a proud Hoosier, I call attention to the fact that Abraham Lincoln spent several key years of his life, his most formative years, maturing from youth to manhood while living in the State of Indiana.

Therefore, it is most fitting that this bill gives the Governor of Indiana the authority to appoint two members of the commission. Growing up in Indiana was a considerable influence in the life and development of Abraham Lincoln. He received his first exposure to politics and the issues that would later dominate his life in public service while living in Indiana. One of his first jobs was at a general store and meat market, which was owned by William Jones, whose family owned slaves in violation of the Indiana State Constitution. This was Lincoln's first introduction to slavery.

Abraham Lincoln firmly held to the highest ethical standards throughout his political career, appropriately earning the nickname Honest Abe. His vigorous work ethic and strong sense of morality are shining examples of selfless devotion to public service. His memory continues to serve as a guiding light for the future. He was fiercely devoted to his family, and he put the interests of his country above his own, which tragically led to his assassination. The Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural Speech live on as two of the most important and best written speeches in American history.

Mr. Speaker, Indiana takes pride in its contributions to the life of President Lincoln, and we look forward to the work of the Commission in honoring him and reminding Americans of his legacy. All Americans, regardless of their state, take great pride in Abraham Lincoln. I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1451, the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Act. First of all, I would like to thank Congresswoman JUDY BIGGERT of the Civil Service Subcommittee, who happens to represent Illinois, for speaking so eloquently on this important piece of legislation. Secondly, I commend Mr. LAHOOD, my colleague also from Illinois, for his sponsorship of this measure honoring President Abraham Lincoln. I also would like to mention Congressman RON LEWIS of Kentucky for his work on H.R. 1451, which ensured that President Lincoln's birthplace of Kentucky also had a legitimate role in this commission.

Mr. Speaker, in 9 years the United States will celebrate the bicentennial anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. On this occasion we will certainly want to properly honor Abraham Lincoln for his immeasurable contributions to our Nation and to mankind. The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, established by H.R. 1451, will study and recommend activities and programs through which we, as a nation, can best remember and honor Abraham Lincoln, and rededicate ourselves to the ideals for which he fought and died.

At this time, I also would like to express my appreciation to my colleague from Indiana, Congressman MARK SOUDER, for his efforts on behalf of our home State. Indiana is proud to be the boyhood home of Abraham Lincoln. From age 7 to age 21, he lived on the frontier in southern Indiana. During his years in Indiana, he acquired his education, grew to his full

height, and most important, developed his strong character which served our Nation so well during the crisis of the Civil War.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1451, and again thank all those involved for making this the exceptional piece of legislation that you see before you.

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to again voice my support for the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Act. It is very fitting that we are considering this legislation today because this Saturday, February 12, will mark the 191st birthday of one of the greatest Presidents to ever serve our Nation.

Lincoln occupied the White House through 4 of our country's darkest years and was faced with the prospect of uniting our country torn asunder by civil war. Through his leadership and perseverance, Mr. Speaker, the Union was preserved.

While it is impossible to overlook his contributions to America from the White House, there is much more to the story of Abraham Lincoln that endures in the hearts and minds of his countrymen. Lincoln was born to humble roots in a log cabin in Hodgenville, Kentucky, located in the Second District. He was largely self-educated, yet became one of our country's greatest statesmen with his eloquent use of the English language. He clung to the highest ethical standards throughout his political career, earning the nickname Honest Abe. He was fiercely devoted to his family, and he put the interest of his country above his own, which ultimately led to his assassination. He was born into obscurity but earned the gratitude and love of every American.

Lincoln's story is one of America, and should serve as an inspiration to all of us. It is a story posterity needs to learn, and it is incumbent on the Federal Government to use all available resources to preserve his legacy.

Lincoln has always been one of my heroes of history. In fact, his portrait, along with many other likenesses, graces my Washington and District offices and serves as a reminder to me of my duty to my country and responsibility to those who have elected me to serve.

I urge my colleagues to support the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Act. As Edwin Stanton said upon the President's death, "Now he belongs to the ages." We have an opportunity today to make sure President Lincoln remains a man for the ages by passing this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that this commission will conduct its inaugural meeting in Hodgenville, Kentucky, the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 1451.

The question was taken.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1430

POISON CONTROL CENTER ENHANCEMENT AND AWARENESS ACT

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 632) to provide assistance for poison prevention and to stabilize the funding of regional poison control centers.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 632

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Each year more than 2,000,000 poisonings are reported to poison control centers throughout the United States. More than 90 percent of these poisonings happen in the home. 53 percent of poisoning victims are children younger than 6 years of age.

(2) Poison control centers are a valuable national resource that provide life-saving and cost-effective public health services. For every dollar spent on poison control centers, \$7 in medical costs are saved. The average cost of a poisoning exposure call is \$32, while the average cost if other parts of the medical system are involved is \$932. Over the last 2 decades, the instability and lack of funding has resulted in a steady decline in the number of poison control centers in the United States. Within just the last year, 2 poison control centers have been forced to close because of funding problems. A third poison control center is scheduled to close in April 1999. Currently, there are 73 such centers.

(3) Stabilizing the funding structure and increasing accessibility to poison control centers will increase the number of United States residents who have access to a certified poison control center, and reduce the inappropriate use of emergency medical services and other more costly health care services.

SEC. 3. DEFINITION.

In this Act, the term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL TOLL-FREE NUMBER.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide coordination and assistance to regional poison control centers for the establishment of a nationwide toll-free phone number to be used to access such centers.

(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting the establishment or continued operation of any privately funded nationwide toll-free phone number used to provide advice and other assistance for poisonings or accidental exposures.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, \$2,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2000 through 2004. Funds appropriated under this subsection shall not be used to fund any toll-free phone number described in subsection (b).

SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONWIDE MEDIA CAMPAIGN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a national media campaign to educate the public and health care providers about poison prevention and the availability of poison control resources in local communities and to conduct advertising campaigns concerning the nationwide toll-free number established under section 4.

(b) **CONTRACT WITH ENTITY.**—The Secretary may carry out subsection (a) by entering into contracts with 1 or more nationally recognized media firms for the development and distribution of monthly television, radio, and newspaper public service announcements.

(c) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, \$600,000 for each of the fiscal years 2000 through 2004.

SEC. 6. ESTABLISHMENT OF A GRANT PROGRAM.

(a) **REGIONAL POISON CONTROL CENTERS.**—The Secretary shall award grants to certified regional poison control centers for the purposes of achieving the financial stability of such centers, and for preventing and providing treatment recommendations for poisonings.

(b) **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS.**—The Secretary shall also use amounts received under this section to—

(1) develop standard education programs;

(2) develop standard patient management protocols for commonly encountered toxic exposures;

(3) improve and expand the poison control data collection systems;

(4) improve national toxic exposure surveillance; and

(5) expand the physician/medical toxicologist supervision of poison control centers.

(c) **CERTIFICATION.**—Except as provided in subsection (d), the Secretary may make a grant to a center under subsection (a) only if—

(1) the center has been certified by a professional organization in the field of poison control, and the Secretary has approved the organization as having in effect standards for certification that reasonably provide for the protection of the public health with respect to poisoning; or

(2) the center has been certified by a State government, and the Secretary has approved the State government as having in effect standards for certification that reasonably provide for the protection of the public health with respect to poisoning.

(d) **WAIVER OF CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary may grant a waiver of the certification requirement of subsection (c) with respect to a noncertified poison control center or a newly established center that applies for a grant under this section if such center can reasonably demonstrate that the center will obtain such a certification within a reasonable period of time as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(2) **RENEWAL.**—The Secretary may only renew a waiver under paragraph (1) for a period of 3 years.

(e) **SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.**—Amounts made available to a poison control center under this section shall be used to supplement and not supplant other Federal, State, or local funds provided for such center.

(f) **MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.**—A poison control center, in utilizing the proceeds of a grant under this section, shall maintain the expenditures of the center for activities of the center at a level that is not less than the level of such expenditures maintained by the center for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year for which the grant is received.

(g) **MATCHING REQUIREMENT.**—The Secretary may impose a matching requirement with respect to amounts provided under a grant under this section if the Secretary determines appropriate.

(h) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, \$25,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2000 through 2004.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore (Mr. **BARRETT** of Nebraska). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. **UPTON**) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. **TOWNS**) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. **UPTON**).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. **UPTON**. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on S. 632.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to approve S. 632, the Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act.

This long-overdue legislation will provide a stable base of support for our Nation's threatened poison control centers and improve public education and awareness about these life-saving resources.

This Senate bill is the companion measure to the legislation that I introduced with my colleague and friend, the gentleman from New York (Mr. **TOWNS**), in the last session of Congress. I am pleased to note that our bill enjoys strong bipartisan support, it has more than 130 cosponsors; and that the Senate bill, this bill, was approved by unanimous consent under the leadership of our Ohio friend, Senator Mike **DEWINE**.

Poison control centers provide vital, very cost-effective services to the American public. Each year more than 2 million poisonings are reported to poison control centers throughout the United States. More than 90 percent of these poisonings occur in the home, and more than 50 percent of poisoning victims are children under the age of 16.

For every dollar spent on poison control center services, \$7 in medical services are saved. But in spite of their obvious value, poison control centers are indeed in jeopardy.

Historically, these centers were typically funded by the private and public sector hospitals where they were located. The transition to managed care, however, has resulted in a gradual erosion of the funding. As this funding source has been drying up, poison control centers have only partially been able to replace the support by cobbling together other State and local and private funding.

The financial squeeze has forced many of the centers to curtail their poison prevention advisory services and their information and emergency activities and reduce the number of nurses, pharmacists, and physicians answering the emergency telephones. Currently, there are 73 centers. In 1978 there were 661.

The Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act will provide

up to \$28 million each year over the next 5 years to provide a stable source of funding for these centers, to establish a national toll-free poison control hotline, and to improve public education on poisoning prevention and poison center services.

The legislation is designed to ensure that these funds supplement, not supplant, other funding that the centers may be receiving and provides the Secretary of Health and Human Services with the authority to impose a matching requirement.

Further, to receive Federal funding, a center will have to be certified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services or an organizational expert in the field of poison control designated by the Secretary. I want to recognize especially Senator **DEWINE**'s contribution and his leadership.

In addition to my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. **TOWNS**), I would especially like to thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. **BLILEY**), chairman of the Committee on Commerce; the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. **DINGELL**), the ranking member; and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. **BILIRAKIS**), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Health and the Environment; and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. **BROWN**), his ranking member, for their interest and leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, there is no greater pain or nightmare to watch a loved one suffer for something that we could cure.

I can remember, as a new dad, buying those little gadgets and putting them on my cupboards in my kitchen to make sure that my daughter and my son would not be able to open those up and find the detergent and bleach and other things that might be in those cabinets. But despite that foresight, it is not 100 percent foolproof. And when these things happen, we have to make sure that every family across this great country has access to an 800 number where they can immediately reach out to someone who knows what to do when that tragedy might strike.

That is what this bill does, Mr. Speaker. It provides that access so our kids and our loved ones can live. I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation. It is long overdue, and I look forward to its passage this evening.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleague and friend, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. **UPTON**), in supporting S. 632.

I also would like to thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. **DINGELL**), the ranking member of the full committee; and, of course, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. **BILIRAKIS**), the chairman of the subcommittee; and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. **BLILEY**), the chairman of the full committee; and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. **BROWN**),

who is the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Health and the Environment. I would like to thank all of them for their outstanding leadership, along with the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH).

The Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act, we introduced virtually identical legislation, H.R. 1221, in March of last year. The poison control centers provide cost savings, effective preventive services to the American public. For every dollar spent on a center's services, \$7 in medical costs are saved.

Yet, we have seen a dramatic decrease in the number of centers. They have actually decreased them by 588 from 1978 to 1999, when we introduced 1221. That is hard to understand.

When we talk to the nurses, they want it. When we talk to the doctors, they want it. Anybody that is involved in health care is asking that we fund these poison control centers and that we do it now. Because they are so important in terms of saving the lives of so many people, especially our children.

This legislation would authorize appropriations for \$28 million over the next 5 years, which provides a stable source of funding. The Secretary of Health and Human Services is also directed under the legislation to improve public education about poisonings and to provide correlation and assistance to regional poison control centers for the establishment of a nationwide toll-free phone number to access these centers. This kind of effort is critical if centers are to provide the maximum level of service to our most vulnerable population, the Nation's children.

Children are disproportionately impacted. For example, 60 percent of poisonings involved children under the age of 6.

In hearings that we held during the 104th Congress, in the House Government Operations Subcommittee on Human Resources, suggested that the unintentional injuries and deaths that result from poisonings could be mitigated if we had a stable source of funding for poison control centers.

In other words, if we would just say that we were going to be committed to it and put forth a certain amount rather than continuing to do a piecemeal kind of thing, we would be able to save a lot of lives because people would know where to turn.

S. 632 provides us with the opportunity today to ensure a stable source of funding. I urge my colleagues, including the 130 cosponsors of our bill, H.R. 1221, to join me in voting for this measure. It passed the Senate by unanimous consent. We should do no less today to guarantee that poison control centers have the financial security they need to provide our citizens with life-saving information about these centers.

Mr. Speaker, let me just again commend my colleague, the gentleman

from Michigan (Mr. UPTON), for the outstanding job that he has done. Because when we walk the streets and we talk to people that have children and they talk about some of the incidents that have occurred and that they do not know where to turn, when we talk to physicians who are actually in the emergency rooms of these various hospitals who say that they look to these poison control centers to get information to be able to deal with the mother, or for a mother to be able to pick up the phone and call a center and for the center to tell her what to do on the phone, we are talking about saving money.

I cannot understand why we are so reluctant to do this in this day and age when we know that it is important that we cut costs. But we need to do it in a very reasonable fashion.

So I want to once again thank my colleague for having the foresight to say that this should be done. I think that we have to continue to work to make certain that we have that central number so that everybody knows that, once an incident occurs, that a person right away will know what to call by saying 1-800 and that mother would be able to be relieved of some of that tension that she might have if otherwise that information was not available.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, it is hard to think of an issue that the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) and I when we have tried to lead on an issue have not reached out to each other and sought some partisan support. And I again appreciate that friendship and hard work.

At the end of the day, at the end of this day, this Congress is going to follow through with what the Senate did and make sure that, in fact, these poison control centers are in place and that they are going to be funded.

There is an old movie that I remember, "Ghostbusters." Remember that? "Who are you going to call? Ghostbusters." I am not going to sing it. But when a parent has a problem, particularly a parent, but it could be anybody, there has got to be a number that they can call, whether it is their cell phone in their pocket or the phone in their kitchen. And this bill does that. Because they do not have time, they do not have a lot of time to react when someone might be writhing on the floor with some substance that they might have ingested and they have no idea what to do, particularly as a non-physician, as most of us in this body are.

This bill is going to save lives; and at the end of the day, it is going to save money too. I cannot think of a better promise to the American taxpayer, to the folks that we serve, as we have visited our day-care centers and we see those wonderful little kids that are playing. They cannot distinguish between a box of detergent and a box of

cereal. They just know that it usually has got a pretty color.

We have got to make sure that, in fact, their lives are going to be saved when they do something that they really should not do if they had had some parental involvement during that tragic moment.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support this legislation. I would hope that we can pass it without any objections at all.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge you to support S. 632, the Poison Center Enhancement and Awareness Act of 1997. This important legislation authorizes Congress to provide assistance to poison control, information and treatment centers nationwide through a grant-funding program that would be administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The funding will be used to educate the public about the benefits of poison prevention and treatment, primarily through the "Mr. Yuk" campaign.

The federal government should support poison control and treatment centers because they provide immediate, around-the-clock toxicity assessments and treatment recommendations over the telephone for all types of poisoning, overdoses and drug interactions affecting people of all ages. On a daily basis, parents, grandparents, child-care providers, teachers and health care providers consult these centers. Most calls are safely managed over the phone and referrals are made to health care facilities as appropriate. More severe cases are followed up so progress can be assessed and additional recommendations provided as necessary.

The Illinois Poison Center (IPC), which is located in my congressional district, is the nation's oldest and Illinois' only remaining poison control, information and treatment center. Since 1953, it was operated by a local Chicago hospital. By 1996, however, the hospital was no longer able to maintain the center's operation, largely because of a lack of funding. Also by that time, the four other poison centers located in Illinois had closed. Eventually, the IPC's operations were assumed by the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council and, at the request of others around the state, the center was expanded to serve the entire state.

Unfortunately, the IPC's existence, like that of other poison centers around the nation, is jeopardized because of a lack of stable funding. There remains, however, a great need to support these centers and their education and treatment efforts. Studies also show that 90 percent of all poisonings happen in the home, and 53 percent of these cases involve children under six years of age. Also, a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that for every dollar spent on a poison center saves \$7 in unnecessary medical costs. In 1998 alone, more than 79 percent of all human exposures presented to the Illinois Poison Center were handled without a referral to a hospital emergency department or a private physician. This in turn saved more than \$15 million in unnecessary emergency room and physician office visits.

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 632, The Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act. I ask my colleagues to consider that poisoning is the third most common form of unintentional death in

the United States. Every year, poisoning accounts for 13,000 deaths. It also leads to 285,000 hospitalizations and 1 million days of acute hospital care. The direct costs of poisoning are estimated at over \$3 billion per year, which is more than our annual expenditures on gunshot wounds, burns and drownings combined.

S. 632 will provide a stable source of funding for poison control centers, establish a national toll-free poison control hotline, and improve public education on poisoning prevention and services. This assistance is needed because poison control centers have experienced a gradual erosion of funding as payments to hospitals (where they have typically been located) have been reduced. This financial squeeze has forced many centers to curtail their poison prevention advisory services and their information and emergency activities, and to reduce the number of nurses, pharmacists, and physicians answering the emergency telephones. Currently, there are 73 centers. In 1978, there were 661. And yet, such centers are very cost-effective. For every dollar spent on poison control center services, seven dollars in medical costs are saved.

Therefore, I encourage my colleagues to pass this bill, S. 632, which is being considered today under suspension of House rules. I join my Commerce Committee colleagues—Representatives UPTON, BILIRAKIS, and TOWNS—who are the original cosponsors of a very similar House Bill, in supporting its passage.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. UPTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 632.

The question was taken.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1445

EXPRESSING SORROW OF THE HOUSE AT THE DEATH OF THE HONORABLE CARL B. ALBERT, FORMER MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

Mr. WATKINS. Mr. Speaker, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 418) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Oklahoma is recognized at this time to offer this resolution.

The Clerk will report the resolution.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 418

Resolved, That the House has learned with profound sorrow of the death of the Honorable Carl B. Albert, former Member of the House for 15 terms, and Speaker of the House of Representatives for the Ninety-second, Ninety-third and Ninety-fourth Congresses;

Resolved, That in the death of the Honorable Carl B. Albert the United States and the State of Oklahoma have lost a valued and eminent public servant and citizen.

Resolved, That the Clerk communicate these resolutions to the Senate and transmit a copy thereof to the family of the deceased.

Resolved, That when the House adjourns today, it adjourn as a further mark of respect to the memory of the deceased.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska). The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATKINS) is recognized for 1 hour.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WATKINS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 418.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WATKINS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today I offer this resolution on behalf of myself and three fellow Oklahomans, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS), the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK), the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATTS), and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON).

Mr. Speaker, I rise today with deep respect for and in honor of the life and service of my friend, Carl Albert of Oklahoma's Third Congressional District, a former Member and Speaker of this House.

It is also with great sadness that I record former Speaker Albert's passing last Friday evening, February 4, at the age of 91; but, let me quickly add though, 91 great and distinguished years. Only 21 Members remain in this House today who served with Mr. Albert prior to his retirement in 1977.

Carl Albert was an honorable man who was not tall in height, but was truly a giant of a man, whom I looked up to for his leadership to his country and his service to his fellow human beings.

Speaker Albert grew up in poverty in the small coal mining town of Bugtussle in Pittsburg County, and graduated from nearby McAlester High School, deep in the heart of my district of Southeastern Oklahoma, mainly called Little Dixie.

Through his intelligence, leadership and hard work, Carl Albert lifted himself from poverty to eventually hold the third highest office in the land, yes, Speaker of the House, and twice was a mere heartbeat away from the presidency.

My earliest memory of Carl Albert is his speech to my high school class in Bennington, Oklahoma during our eighth grade graduation ceremony. Even at that time, Mr. Albert was larger than life to me. He was a great orator, with amazing leadership qualities. His message to my classmates in the small poverty area of that southeastern Oklahoma town was that regardless of your circumstances as a

young person, with hard work and perseverance you can rise up and make the most of your life and make a difference in the lives of others.

I remember Carl Albert as a great man of great humility, who did not seek power for power's sake. As Speaker, Carl Albert served as captain of the Congressional ship during some of our Nation's most difficult times, including the latter years, the closing years, of the divisive Vietnam War and President Nixon's impeachment proceedings and his resignation; and we all need to salute his steadfast leadership in this House during the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

During these times, Carl Albert never sought to advance his own agenda or to use these events for his own personal gain. Instead, he sought to unite our country, instead of divide it; and, as a result, we are a stronger and more united country today.

In 1977, Carl Albert stepped down after 6 years in the Speaker's Chair and returned to his home in the Bugtussle community in Pittsburg County, and, as his son David said to me last Saturday, began a new career as a grandpa.

Carl Albert always talked lovingly of his wife, Mary; his children, David and Mary Frances; and his four grandchildren, Katy, Michael, Carl David and Luke.

Carl Albert knew the value of family and friends and home. That is why it is no surprise to me that, even as a national and international leader, the Speaker and his wife Mary chose to retire to southeastern Oklahoma after 30 years in a Congressional career that saw him reach the pinnacle of power in this U.S. House.

1997 was also the year that I became a Member of this House succeeding the Speaker, Carl Albert. I also remember being introduced in 1977 as "that young congressman who is replacing Carl Albert." As I said then, and still say today, I may have succeeded Carl Albert, but no one, no one, could ever replace him.

My wife, Lou, and I have firsthand experience and knowledge of the sacrifices that the Speaker and his family made during those years of service to this House; and our State and nation are very thankful for Carl Albert's service.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I ask that the House pay honor and tribute to Carl Albert, known as "the Little Giant from Little Dixie." His service to this State and Nation and his fellow human beings provide a legacy unequalled in Oklahoma history, a legacy that will live together as a symbol of one man who overcame great adversity early in his life and then dedicated the rest of that life to serving others, including a highly successful 30-year Congressional career.

Yes, Oklahoma and the United States lost a great leader in Carl Albert, but his deeds and his works and the spirit of his legacy will never be lost in the history of America.