

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair desires to announce that pursuant to clause 4 of rule I, the Speaker pro tempore signed the following enrolled bills on Thursday, June 1, 2000:

H.R. 3293, to amend the law that authorized the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to authorize the placement within the site of the Memorial of a plaque to honor those Vietnam veterans who died after their service in the Vietnam war, but as a direct result of that service;

H.R. 4489, to amend section 110 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, and for other purposes.

TRIBUTE TO BOB HOPE

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Madam Speaker, today we honor the U.S. servicemen who participated in the invasion of Western Europe by the Allies on June 6, 1944. It is only fitting, however, that we pay special tribute to a gentleman who is admired by millions of our veterans.

Bob Hope is beloved for his tireless efforts to entertain U.S. troops around the globe, from World War II to the Persian Gulf War.

As one of the countless soldiers that he entertained during Vietnam and Desert Storm, I know personally of the positive impact that his visits made to uplift our spirits.

Last week, Americans were saddened to learn of the legendary entertainer's illness requiring a stay at the Eisenhower Medical Center, near his home, in Palm Springs.

With his devoted and loving wife, Dolores, by his side, Mr. Hope is recovering, and the family has asked that everyone keep Mr. Hope in their prayers.

Mr. Hope, from those of us who were blessed by your courage and commitment to our efforts around the globe, may God bless you. And, Mr. Hope, we all hope that you get well soon, and our best wishes go out to you and your family.

INTERNATIONAL ABDUCTION

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

Mr. LAMPSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to talk about the issue of international child abduction. For 3 months now, I have been coming to the floor to tell the story of children who have been abducted abroad. I have also been holding public events and introduced a resolution with my friend the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT).

Well, all of this work is beginning to pay off. On Tuesday, May 22, the House passed H. Con. Res. 293, urging signato-

ries to the Hague Convention to abide by that agreement. Just within the past 3 weeks, I have heard amazing news from two different parents whose cases this Congress has brought to light.

One of those parents, Jim Rinnaman, saw his daughter 3 weeks ago for the first time in 4 years. Another, Paul Marinkovich, is bringing his son home after 3 years of searching.

Madam Speaker, these parents are being reunited with their children because of the work that Congress is doing and the pressure that these countries are feeling from our Government and from the media.

On behalf of American parents, I want to thank my colleagues for passing H. Con. Res. 293 and urge them to continue working with me on this very important issue. By continuing to take action and raise awareness, we can bring our children home.

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CANNOT
HANDLE TRUTH

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Madam Speaker, an Iranian defector said Iran was responsible for the bombing of Pan Am 103, not Libya.

No kidding, Sherlock. The whole world was told that years ago, but the Justice Department turned their back. Reports said that Iran hired the Syrians and the Syrians recruited terrorists from all around the world.

Beam me up. Those two Libyans may have been mules in general, but they are scapegoats specifically.

I yield back the fact that from Waco to Ruby Ridge to now Pan Am 103, the Justice Department just cannot handle the truth. I also yield back the fact, my colleagues, that if these two Libyans masterminded the bombing of Pan Am 103, they would have choked on a chicken bone years ago in Kadafi's cell.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that she will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any record votes on postponed questions will be taken after debate has concluded on all motions to suspend the rules but not before 6 p.m. today.

DESIGNATING WASHINGTON
OPERA IN WASHINGTON, D.C., AS
NATIONAL OPERA

Mr. GOODLING. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4542) to designate the Wash-

ington Opera in Washington, D.C., as the National Opera.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4542

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

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION.

The Washington Opera, organized under the laws of the District of Columbia, is designated as the "National Opera".

SEC. 2. REFERENCES.

Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper or other record of the United States to the Washington Opera referred to in section 1 shall be deemed to be a reference to the "National Opera".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLING. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 4542.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4542, to designate the Washington Opera in Washington, D.C., as the National Opera.

The beginnings of the Washington Opera were unusual, as it was founded by a music critic, Day Thorpe, of the now defunct Washington Star, along with a few others who decided that the Nation's capital should have an operatic enterprise of its own.

In the early years, the Washington Opera was limited by financial and practical constraints to no more than one or two productions per year. Since that time, the Washington Opera has grown and prospered. Today, it is the resident opera company of the Kennedy Center, due primarily to the artistic excellence of the ensemble.

In addition to performances, the Washington Opera has created several education and community programs that serve a broad and diverse population. These outreach programs are dedicated to enhancing the lives and learning of the children and adults of the greater Washington region, developing future audiences, and making the experience of opera available to those who otherwise have limited access to this art form.

Through these programs, the Washington Opera has made extensive outreach to the Washington, D.C. area public schools and to the community at large. These programs have reached more than 150,000 individuals and have been driven by the idea that "learning by doing" is a highly effective way to spark young children's interest in the arts.

The number and scope of programming has grown to 22 programs that provide performance experiences, curriculum enhancement activities, in-school artist and docent visits, professional development opportunities for teachers and young artists, interactive family-oriented presentations, and more.

Under the stewardship of Artistic Director Placido Domingo, the Washington Opera has achieved the stature of a world-class company and plays to standing-room-only audiences at the Kennedy Center Opera House and Eisenhower Theater.

I would like to mention a personal note about this Artistic Director Placido Domingo. When my daughter, at 17, was playing the professional tour, I did not have the money to send a coach or anybody in the family, so I gave her a lot of advice about not paying too much attention to anybody, particularly men, as she moved from the Italian Open to the Swiss Open to the German Open and then to the French Open. And when she was leaving the French Open to go to the Paris Open, she apparently was standing there in tears and this gentleman asked her what was her problem? And she said, well, my luggage went the other way and I have to play the first round of the French Open as soon as I get to Paris.

The gentleman said, well, the first thing we have to do is put you in first class because you cannot be cramped up back there and then go play tennis.

Well, if the father had known that, he really would have been upset about some man moving her to first class.

When she got to Paris, the gentleman gave her a hundred dollars. And she said, Well, I cannot take that. And he said, well, how will you play? You only have your racket and your sneakers. You will have to buy clothing.

When she came back and we were sitting there as a family watching television, Placido Domingo and Johnny Denver were doing a couple of the duets that they have done, and she said, Dad, that is the man that put me in first class and that is the man who gave me the \$100. And it was Placido Domingo. And I understand that is typical of him.

The Washington Opera has earned its position of leadership in the musical world without the government support typical in most world capitals. The company has been a leader through its commitment to sustain new American operas by presenting them in crucial second productions, giving these new works life beyond the short span of their premieres. It leads by championing the lesser known works of significant musical work rarely presented on today's opera stages.

It has been hailed for its work with operas on the epic scale. As the British magazine *Opera Now* recently stated, "The Washington Opera is carving out a new area of expertise . . . staging grand spectacles to exacting standards with precision and power not often

seen even at the world's top houses." The company is also renowned for the number and quality of its new productions, its discovery and nurturing of important young talent, and the international collaboration system it has pioneered with leading foreign companies.

Since 1980, the company has grown from a total of 16 yearly performances of four operas to 80 yearly performances of eight operas, while the budget has increased from \$2 million to more than \$25 million per year. The company has averaged 98 percent attendance over the last fourteen seasons—a remarkable sales record. It now earns approximately 65 percent of its total budget through ticket sales, raising the remaining 35 percent through contributions from the individuals, corporations, and foundations. A sign of fiscal strength, this ratio of earned to contributed income is the highest of any opera company in the country.

The Washington Opera has requested this legislation designating it as the "National Opera." There are precedents for granting private or quasi-private entities a "national" designation. For example, the National Aquarium in Baltimore and the National Aviary in Pittsburgh both received their "national" designation through acts of Congress. Such a designation does not bring with it federal funding or a federal subsidy. Rather, it grants the entity national prominence, which may increase ticket sales and improve fundraising prospects.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and to vote "yes" on final passage.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, it is an honor to be able to rise in support of the legislation of my colleague. H.R. 4542, which would change the name of the Washington Opera to the National Opera, is a piece of legislation that our side supports wholeheartedly.

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This opera was born in 1956, which was the year I was born. It has moved from two performances to now over 80 performances a year with an attendance rate of 98 percent or better, and I want to compliment my chairman for offering this legislation. I think it is an appropriate designation to change the name.

It is a world-renowned opera; and to have the designation of the National Opera, I think, is most appropriate.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLING. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Northern Virginia (Mr. DAVIS), an opera buff.

(Mr. DAVIS of Virginia asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 4542, the bill to designate the Washington Opera as the National Opera. Since its founding in 1956, the Opera has been providing enrichment and arts education to the Washington Metropolitan area.

From its humble beginnings under the stewardship of music critic Day Thorpe, when a lack of funds limited them to two performances a year, the Opera has consistently grown both in stature and in size. In 1980, the Washington Opera had a total of 16 performances of four operas with an operating budget of \$2 million. Throughout the 1990s, the Opera has truly emerged as a world class institution and has grown to 80 performances of eight operas with an annual budget of more than \$25 million.

The great success the company has enjoyed is a credit both to its management and the support it has received from the Washington metropolitan community. Over the last 14 seasons, the company has averaged a remarkable 98 percent attendance, with 65 percent of its revenue coming from ticket sales. The remaining 35 percent of the budget is provided by individual and corporate donations. The ratio of 65 earned to 35 contributed is evidence of the company's fiscal strength and is the highest in the Nation.

The Washington Opera has earned its position of leadership in the musical world without the crucial government support that is typical in most world capitals, in a city without the strong business base that helps fund many U.S. opera companies. The company has been a leader through its commitment to sustain new American operas by presenting them in crucial second productions, giving these new works life beyond the short span of their premieres. It leads by championing lesser-known works of significant musical worth rarely presented on today's opera stages. It has been hailed for its work with operas on the epic scale. As the British magazine *Opera Now* recently stated, "The Washington Opera is carving out a new area of expertise, staging grand spectacles to exacting standards with precision and power not often seen at the world's top houses."

The company is also renowned for the number and quality of its productions, its discovery and nurturing of important young talent and the international collaboration system it has pioneered with leading foreign companies.

One of the greatest contributions to the D.C. metro area have come from the company's educational outreach program. Reaching out beyond the bounds of the opera community, the Washington Opera has made a concerted effort to bring the arts to students around the region. As budgets for arts education have continually shrunk, it is more important than ever that private institutions have what limited government support can be provided to reach our school-aged children. It is with that goal in mind that I strongly support the passage of H.R. 4542 and ask my colleagues to do the same. I want to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING) for his leadership on this issue and shepherding this bill to the House floor.

Mr. FATTAH. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAH) for yielding me the time. Madam Speaker, may I say that the chairman of the committee introduced the last speaker as an opera buff; the gentleman is better known in this House as a baseball buff, but we are pleased to rank the gentleman to the rank of opera lovers.

In any case, Madam Speaker, great capitals normally have great cultural institutions. I regret to say that for a very long time, the Nation's capital did not have great cultural institutions. As a fourth generation Washingtonian, I must say that growing up in the Nation's capital was like growing up in a cultural desert. The only great company was the National Symphony Orchestra, and I am pleased that now the Congress would name the Washington Opera the National Opera.

I think this is most appropriate, particularly when we consider that this is not a Nation that subsidizes the arts very greatly; and the very least, it seems to me that we can do is recognize the arts in this way.

Twenty-five million visitors come to the Nation's capital every year, many of them the constituents of Members of the House and Senate. As the Washington Opera becomes the National Opera, I believe that the national Opera will set an example for the country and will welcome millions who would otherwise not be inclined to attend the opera.

Throughout the world, the reputation of this company, particularly since Placido Domingo became the artistic director, is generally regarded as a world-class company. It plays to standing-room-only audiences. It raises its own money. Now it asks very little of us. It asks that we give it a name that will help it raise more of its own money. I would like to bring to the attention of Members something of what the Washington Opera Company does in its immediate area because it has very energetic education and community programs that serve public, private, and home-schooled students throughout the region, 31 percent Anglo, 27 percent African American, 33 percent Latino, 8 percent Asian, roughly reflecting the population of the region. 70 percent of those served by these education and community programs are between the ages of 5 and 18. Of the remaining 30 percent who are adults, 40 percent are senior citizens.

Here is an opera company which has reached to every age group, every ethnic group, and every section of the region. Now as the National Opera Company, it will welcome people to come from all over the country. Its education and community programs target adults and students throughout the grades K through 12 and particularly underserved populations. 40 percent are

from the District, 35 percent are from Maryland, 25 percent are from Virginia.

It is particularly appropriate that the chairman would rise to support this bill, because this is in many ways a quintessential educational enterprise. We now know increasingly as we learn more about the brain and its functions that music can be important in the intellectual as well as the social development of students. When the Washington Opera Company comes to the Congress of the United States not with its hands out for money but to ask that it be given a name that will help it raise money, I strongly urge that the Congress give it the public recognition that will help the Washington Opera Company grow as a national opera company and will help it bring opera to increasing millions of citizens of the United States.

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

I would like to just reiterate my support for this legislation. This opera raises over \$25 million annually in private support, but I do believe that the new designation as provided in this legislation hopefully will provide additional impetus for those who want to support the continuation of a great cultural institution. I want to compliment, again, the gentleman from Pennsylvania and also the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia for this legislation.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4542, a bill designating the Washington Opera in Washington, DC, as the National Opera. This opera company is known for the number and quality of new productions, discovery and nurturing of important young talent, and an international collaboration system with leading foreign companies.

The Washington Opera has achieved the stature of a world class company and plays to standing-room only audiences at the Kennedy Center Opera House and Eisenhower Theater. Like so many other institutions in Washington, the opera attracts, entertains, and educates people from all over the world.

The company has averaged 98 percent attendance over the last fourteen season. It now earns approximately 65 percent of its total budget through ticket sales, raising the remaining 35 percent through contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

A sign of fiscal strength, this ratio of earned to contributed income is the highest of any opera company in the country. Beyond the value of music itself, increasing evidence clarifies the role of music in the intellectual and social development of our community.

The opera allows people to cross language and cultural barriers, increase understanding, and build tolerance in a multi-cultural setting.

The Washington Opera remains true to its mission of presenting the highest quality opera in the Nation's Capital, broadening public understanding and awareness of opera, and maintaining opera as a living art form.

Mr. Speaker, for over 40 years this opera company has been a beacon of light not only for the Washington, DC community, but also for the entire Nation. People from all over the United States and the world realize this opera

company is a reflection of our Nation's commitment to the arts.

As a cosponsor of H.R. 4542, I stand in support of this bill to designate the Washington Opera as the National Opera and urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4542, a bill to designate the Washington Opera in Washington, DC, as the National Opera. The Washington Opera has an impressive history that has earned its position as one of opera's premier venues.

The Washington Opera continued to grow and flourish. In 1980, the company has grown from a total of 16 performances and 4 operas to 80 performances and 8 operas, while the budget has increased from \$2 million to more than \$25 million. In 1980, the opera did not own a single opera set; by the spring of 2000 the company had originated and built 61 new productions, becoming one of the most prolific producing companies in the United States.

The Washington Opera prides itself by providing world-class productions for its audiences. The Washington Opera became the first American Opera Company to produce a repertory season in two separate theaters. Giving performances in the 2,200 seat Opera House and the more intimate 1,100 seat Eisenhower theaters allow the company to perform in settings that reflect each opera's proper acoustical ambiance.

Along with providing quality entertainment, The Washington Opera contributes to the education and diversity of the community. The Education and Community Programs serve a diverse population of public, private and the home school students that are 31 percent Anglo, 27 percent African-American, 33 percent Latino, and 8 percent Asian. Roughly 70 percent of those served by Washington Opera programs are students between the ages 5 to 18 of various needs and abilities. Adults constitute the remaining 30 percent, of which 40 percent are senior citizens.

Among other programs, The Washington Opera has developed teaching methods that provide educators with tools to engage students in the learning process. At a young age, students learn about the value of the arts. There are 22 programs each providing performance experiences, curricular enhancement activities and professional development opportunities for both teachers and young artists. These programs foster enthusiasm and help enrich our youths' educational experience.

Under the jurisdiction of Artistic Director Placido Domingo, The Washington Opera's reputation continues to increase. The Washington Opera plays to standing-room-only audiences at the Kennedy Center Opera House and Eisenhower Theater. The Washington Opera has earned its position of leadership in the musical world without the critical governmental support typically offered to most world capitals, in a city without the strong business base that helps fund many U.S. opera companies.

The Washington Opera has requested this legislation to designate The Washington Opera as the "National Opera." There are precedents for granting private entities a "national" designation. For example, the National Aquarium in Baltimore and the National Aviary in Pittsburgh both received their "national" designation through acts of Congress. Such a designation does not bring with it federal funding or a federal subsidy.

This change will grant the group further prominence, which, in turn, may expand ticket

sales, improve fundraising capabilities and most importantly, broaden the opera's community programs in an effort to influence a greater breadth of individuals.

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4542, a bill to designate the Washington Opera in Washington, D.C., as the National Opera.

When first approached about the redesignation by Artistic Director Placido Domingo, I thought of the Bard's famous line, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

However, this "national" designation will aid the Washington Opera in furthering their position of leadership in the musical world. Founded in 1956, the Washington Opera has achieved the stature of a world class company and plays to standing room only audiences at the Kennedy Center Opera House and the Eisenhower Theater.

In the spring of 2000, the company had originated 61 new productions, becoming one of the most prolific producing companies in the United States. In addition, the company has averaged 98 percent attendance over the last fourteen seasons.

The Washington Opera has always recognized that their service to the nation does not end with each production. Instead, Washington Opera's Education and Community Programs department dedicates itself to enhancing the lives and learning of children and adults by making the experience of opera available to those who otherwise have limited access to the art form. The Washington Opera has made extensive outreach efforts to area public schools and to the greater Washington community at large. Through their OperAccess program, they have actively involved members of our community who are visually, physically, or audibly impaired. By devoting themselves to broadening the public's understanding and awareness of opera, the company has served as the leader in maintaining opera as a living art form in America.

The National Opera designation will serve to facilitate the company's fundraising efforts and ticket sales, as well as oblige the company, even more than in the past, to become the cradle for American opera.

I urge my colleagues to please support H.R. 4542 and to designate the Washington Opera as the National Opera.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4542.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING CONGRESSIONAL PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

Mr. GOODLING. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res.

229) expressing the sense of Congress regarding the United States Congressional Philharmonic Society and its mission of promoting musical excellence throughout the educational system and encouraging people of all ages to commit to the love and expression of musical performance.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 229

Whereas in February 1996, several Senators and members of the House of Representatives participated in a performance of the Broadway musical "1776", a story depicting the signing of the Declaration of Independence;

Whereas in April 1996 several Senators and members of the House of Representatives met with Maestro Martin Piecuch, the music director of the musical "1776", and formed the United States Congressional Choral Society;

Whereas on May 20, 1998, the United States Congressional Choral Society debuted at St. Joseph's Church on Capitol Hill, with standing ovations following its rendition of the "Song of Democracy" and the "Battle Hymn of the Republic";

Whereas on March 13, 1999, the United States Congressional Philharmonic Orchestra String Quartet played before the Ambassador to the United States from Canada at the Embassy of Canada in the District of Columbia;

Whereas on March 19, 1999, the United States Congressional Choral Society appeared in performance at the Washington National Cathedral;

Whereas on May 13, 1999, the United States Congressional Philharmonic Orchestra String Quartet played before a gathering of Ambassadors at the Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room of the United States Department of State;

Whereas the United States Congressional Philharmonic Society is approved as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization under the Internal Revenue Code and is a corporation in good standing under the laws of the State of Delaware;

Whereas the United States Congressional Philharmonic Society will offer free concerts to the public in the Washington metropolitan area;

Whereas the United States Congressional Philharmonic Society will encourage the development of young musical talent across the United States by providing educational programs for schools across the nation and establishing internships and scholarships; and

Whereas the United States Congressional Philharmonic Society envisions holding a series of concerts focusing on themes such as Celebrations of America, Salutes to the States, a Great Americans series, and an International Congressional Concert series: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress that the United States Congressional Philharmonic Society should be applauded—

(1) for organizing two musical groups, the United States Congressional Choral Society and the United States Congressional Philharmonic Orchestra;

(2) for having as its mission the promotion of patriotism, freedom, democracy, and understanding of American culture through sponsorship, management, and support of these groups and their derivative ensembles as they communicate through the international language of music in concerts and other multimedia performances in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and the world; and

(3) for promoting musical excellence throughout the educational system, from pre-school through post-graduate, and encouraging people of all ages to commit to the love and expression of musical performance.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING).

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

I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 229 expressing the sense of Congress regarding the United States Congressional Philharmonic Society and its dual mission, promoting musical excellence throughout the educational system and encouraging people of all ages to commit to the love and expression of musical performance.

In February 1996, several Members of Congress participated in the performance of the Broadway musical 1776, a story depicting the signing of the Declaration of Independence. I practiced and rehearsed and then was unable to participate. The Members of Congress so enjoyed this experience that as an outgrowth, the United States Congressional Choral Society was founded in April 1996. The Congressional Choral Society is composed of Members, staff and friends of the United States Congress. In fact, I have also performed with the choral society.

On May 20, 1998, the Congressional Choral Society debuted along with the Washington Symphony Orchestra at St. Joseph's Church on Capitol Hill with standing ovations following their rendition of the Song of Democracy and the Battle Hymn of the Republic. The marriage of the Congressional Choral Society and the Washington Symphony Orchestra gave birth to the idea and the eventual reality of a congressional Philharmonic orchestra. The United States Congressional Philharmonic Society is the institution principally responsible for the formation, development, and operation of the United States Congressional Philharmonic Orchestra and the United States Congressional Choral Society which, I might add, I have chaired in all 15 years of its existence.

The vision of the Congressional Philharmonic Society is to become the artistic voice of America through the international language of music. The society will do that by encouraging congressional Members, staff, and friends of the United States Congress to use their musical resources and talents. Given those talents and resources, the society can accept invitations to present musical programs and intends to present musical performances that will enrich lives all across America with patriotic and classical presentations.

The mission of the Congressional Philharmonic Society is to promote patriotism, freedom, democracy, understanding, and world peace through