

to hit another record this year, a whopping \$429 billion.

The President also had to admit that thanks to these new projections, he is already behind in his campaign pledge to cut the deficit in half over the next 5 years. Yet the President has no plans to alter his misguided policies that took us from record surpluses when he arrived in Washington to record deficits now.

But the President is still not finished. He has a plan that would use an additional \$2 trillion in Federal funds to privatize Social Security. Enough is enough. Congressional Republicans need to stop blindly following this President before it is too late, and it is time that they abandon this risky Social Security privatization scheme.

ELECTION AS MINORITY MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 49), and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 49

Resolved, That the following named Members and Delegates be and are hereby elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

(1) COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE.—Mr. Holden, Mr. Thompson of Mississippi, Mr. McIntyre, Mr. Etheridge, Mr. Baca, Mr. Case, Mr. Cardoza, Mr. Scott of Georgia, Mr. Marshall, Ms. Herseth, Mr. Butterfield, Mr. Cuellar, Mr. Melancon, Mr. Costa, Mr. Salazar, Mr. Barrow.

(2) COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS.—Mr. Murtha, Mr. Dicks, Mr. Sabo, Mr. Hoyer, Mr. Mollohan, Ms. Kaptur, Mr. Visclosky, Mrs. Lowey, Mr. Serrano, Ms. DeLauro, Mr. Moran of Virginia, Mr. Olver, Mr. Pastor, Mr. Price of North Carolina, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Cramer, Mr. Kennedy of Rhode Island, Mr. Clyburn, Mr. Hinchey, Ms. Roybal-Allard, Mr. Farr, Mr. Jackson of Illinois, Ms. Kilpatrick of Michigan, Mr. Boyd, Mr. Patah, Mr. Rothman, Mr. Bishop of Georgia, Mr. Berry.

(3) COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES.—Mr. Spratt, Mr. Ortiz, Mr. Evans, Mr. Taylor of Mississippi, Mr. Abercrombie, Mr. Meehan, Mr. Reyes, Mr. Snyder, Mr. Smith of Washington, Ms. Loretta Sanchez of California, Mr. McIntyre, Mrs. Tauscher, Mr. Brady of Pennsylvania, Mr. Andrews, Mrs. Davis of California, Mr. Langevin, Mr. Israel, Mr. Larsen of Washington, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Meek of Florida, Ms. Bordallo, Mr. Ryan of Ohio, Mr. Udall of Colorado, Mr. Butterfield, Ms. McKinney, Mr. Boren.

(4) COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET.—Mr. Moore of Kansas, Mr. Neal of Massachusetts, Ms. DeLauro, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Ford, Mrs. Capps, Mr. Baird, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Davis of Alabama, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Allen, Mr. Case, Ms. McKinney, Mr. Cuellar.

(5) COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE.—Mr. Kildee, Mr. Owens, Mr. Payne, Mr. Andrews, Mr. Scott of Virginia, Ms. Woolsey, Mr. Hinojosa, Mrs. McCarthy, Mr. Tierney, Mr. Kind, Mr. Kucinich, Mr. Wu, Mr. Holt, Mrs. Davis of California, Ms. McCollum of Minnesota, Mr. Davis of Illinois, Mr. Grijalva, Mr. Van Hollen, Mr. Ryan of Ohio, Mr. Bishop of New York, Mr. Barrow.

(6) COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE.—Mr. Waxman, Mr. Markey, Mr. Boucher, Mr. Towns, Mr. Pallone, Mr. Brown of Ohio, Mr. Gordon, Mr. Rush, Ms. Eshoo, Mr. Stupak, Mr. Engel, Mr. Wynn, Mr. Gene Green of Texas, Mr. Strickland, Ms. DeGette, Mrs. Capps, Mr. Doyle, Mr. Allen, Mr. Davis of Florida, Ms. Schakowsky, Ms. Solis, Mr. Gonzalez, Mr. Inslee, Ms. Baldwin, Mr. Ross.

(7) COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES.—Mr. Kanjorski, Ms. Waters, Mrs. Maloney, Mr. Gutierrez, Ms. Velázquez, Mr. Watt, Mr. Ackerman, Ms. Hooley of Oregon, Ms. Carson, Mr. Sherman, Mr. Meeks of New York, Ms. Lee, Mr. Moore of Kansas, Mr. Capuano, Mr. Ford, Mr. Hinojosa, Mr. Crowley, Mr. Clay, Mr. Israel, Mrs. McCarthy, Mr. Baca, Mr. Matheson, Mr. Lynch, Mr. Miller of North Carolina, Mr. Scott of Georgia, Mr. Davis of Alabama, Mr. Gene Green of Texas, Mr. Cleaver, Ms. Bean, Ms. Wasserman Schultz, Ms. Moore of Wisconsin.

(8) COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM.—Mr. Lantos, Mr. Owens, Mr. Towns, Mr. Kanjorski, Mrs. Maloney, Mr. Cummings, Mr. Kucinich, Mr. Davis of Illinois, Mr. Tierney, Mr. Clay, Ms. Watson, Mr. Lynch, Mr. Van Hollen, Ms. Linda T. Sanchez of California, Mr. Ruppertsberger, Mr. Higgins.

(9) COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION.—Ms. Millender-McDonald, Mr. Brady of Pennsylvania.

(10) COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.—Mr. Berman, Mr. Ackerman, Mr. Faleomavaega, Mr. Payne, Mr. Menendez, Mr. Brown of Ohio, Mr. Sherman, Mr. Wexler, Mr. Engel, Mr. Delahunt, Mr. Meeks of New York, Ms. Lee, Mr. Crowley, Mr. Blumenauer, Ms. Berkley, Mrs. Napolitano, Mr. Schiff, Ms. Watson, Mr. Smith of Washington, Ms. McCollum of Minnesota, Mr. Chandler, Mr. Cardoza.

(11) COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY.—Mr. Berman, Mr. Boucher, Mr. Nadler, Mr. Scott of Virginia, Mr. Watt, Ms. Zoe Lofgren of California, Ms. Jackson-Lee of Texas, Ms. Waters, Mr. Meehan, Mr. Delahunt, Mr. Wexler, Mr. Weiner, Mr. Schiff, Ms. Linda T. Sanchez of California.

(12) COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES.—Mr. Kildee, Mr. Faleomavaega, Mr. Abercrombie, Mr. Ortiz, Mr. Pallone, Mrs. Christensen, Mr. Kind, Mrs. Napolitano, Mr. Udall of New Mexico, Mr. Grijalva, Ms. Bordallo, Mr. Costa, Mr. Melancon, Mr. Boren.

(13) COMMITTEE ON RULES.—Mr. McGovern, Mr. Hastings of Florida.

(14) COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE.—Mr. Costello, Ms. Eddie Bernice Johnson of Texas, Ms. Woolsey, Mr. Udall of Colorado, Mr. Wu, Mr. Honda, Mr. Miller of North Carolina, Mr. Davis of Tennessee, Mr. Carnahan, Mr. Lipinski.

(15) COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS.—Ms. Millender-McDonald, Mr. Udall of New Mexico, Mr. Lipinski.

(16) COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT.—Mr. Mollohan.

(17) COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE.—Mr. Rahall, Mr. DeFazio, Mr. Costello, Ms. Norton, Mr. Nadler, Mr. Menendez, Ms. Corrine Brown of Florida, Mr. Filner, Ms. Eddie Bernice Johnson of Texas, Mr. Taylor of Mississippi, Ms. Millender-McDonald, Mr. Cummings, Mr. Blumenauer, Mrs. Tauscher, Mr. Pascrell, Mr. Boswell, Mr. Holden, Mr. Baird, Ms. Berkley, Mr. Matheson, Mr. Honda, Mr. Larsen of Washington, Mr. Capuano, Mr. Weiner, Ms. Carson, Mr. Bishop of New York, Mr. Michaud, Mr. Davis of Tennessee, Mr. Chandler, Mr. Higgins, Mr. Carnahan, Ms. Schwartz of Pennsylvania, Mr. Salazar.

(18) COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS.—Mr. Filner, Mr. Gutierrez, Ms. Corrine Brown of Florida, Mr. Snyder, Mr. Michaud, Ms. Herseth, Mr. Higgins.

(19) COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS.—Mr. Stark, Mr. Levin, Mr. Cardin, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Lewis of Georgia, Mr. Neal of Massachusetts, Mr. McNulty, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Tanner, Mr. Becerra, Mr. Doggett, Mr. Pomeroy, Mrs. Jones of Ohio, Mr. Thompson of California, Mr. Larson of Connecticut, Mr. Emanuel.

Mr. MENENDEZ (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ELECTION OF MINORITY MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES AND COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 50) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 50

Resolved, That the following named Member be and is hereby elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

(1) COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES.—Mr. Sanders (to rank immediately after Ms. Waters).

(2) COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM.—Mr. Sanders (to rank immediately after Mr. Kanjorski).

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COMPOSITION OF MEMBERS OF PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE DURING 109TH CONGRESS

Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the requirement of clause 11(a)(1) of rule X, during the 109th Congress, the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence be composed of not more than 19 Members, of whom not more than 11 be from the same party.

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

There was no objection.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 54, CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 42 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 42

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 54) to amend title 31, United States Code, to provide reasonable standards for congressional gold medals, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. The bill shall be considered as read. No amendment to the bill shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that section 2 of the resolution be stricken.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, this rule provides for 1 hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services. It provides that the bill shall be considered as read for the purpose of amendment and makes in order only those amendments printed in the Committee on Rules report accompanying this resolution. It provides that the amendments made in order may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report, equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent. These amendments shall not be subject to amendment and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Com-

mittee of the Whole. The rule waives all points of order against the amendments printed in the report. Finally, it provides for one motion to recommit, with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce this fair, structured rule for H.R. 54, the Congressional Gold Medal Enhancement Act of 2005. This legislation builds on important reforms that my good friend, the former Governor and now Member of Congress, the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) has made to the Commemorative Gold Coin program almost a decade ago.

Today, we have the opportunity to bring these same improvements to the Congressional Gold Medal program and ensure that the original intent and prestige of the Congressional Gold Medal program as the Nation's highest civilian award and the most distinguished award given by Congress is preserved.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 54 will improve the Congressional Gold Medal program by limiting the number of medals awarded by Congress to no more than two in any calendar year. It would also ensure that the tradition of only awarding these medals to living or recently deceased individuals for their meritorious service continues, as was originally intended by the program.

The proud tradition of this unique honor began when the first Congressional Gold Medal was authorized in 1776 and presented to George Washington in 1790. The tradition of only awarding these medals for military service continued until 1858 when Congress awarded Dr. Frederick Rose, an assistant surgeon in the British Navy, with a medal for the kindness that he showed to sick American naval personnel.

□ 1030

With Dr. Rose's receipt of the gold medal, Congress also created the Medal of Honor as the first permanent military decoration. The creation of the esteemed Medal of Honor allowed Congress to begin using the gold medal exclusively to recognize individuals that have performed an achievement that has an impact on American history and culture that will be recognized for generations to come.

Over the years since its inception, without strict rules governing how it was awarded, this venerable program has acquired a small problem. By a slow process, as currently administered, it has grown much larger than it was originally intended. From 1776, when Congress established the award, to 1904, Congress approved only 47 medals. In the last 100 years, Congress has awarded almost twice as many, 86 medals, including 20 in the past decade alone. In the 1990s, Congress faced this same problem of proliferation within the Commemorative Coins Program, which has grown out of control and was costing taxpayers far more than ever envisioned when that program began.

In order to maintain sound fiscal discipline and the prestige of the Congres-

sional Gold Medal Program, we are here today to approve the common-sense reforms by the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), our chairman, and supported by the Committee on Financial Services chairman, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY). Many of these reforms simply codify what is already an existing practice in the House Committee on Financial Services and the Senate Banking Committee.

By adopting this legislation, Congress will be able to move more effectively and efficiently to manage the Congressional Gold Medal Program while maintaining the prestige and the purpose for which it was originally created.

I support this rule and urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume; and I thank my friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS), for yielding me the time.

It is a new year, Mr. Speaker, a new Congress and new Presidential term. We have heard new commitments to work across party lines and calls for civility and camaraderie in the halls of the Capitol. We have heard the President speak of a more civilized Washington and a bipartisan approach to the legislative process.

Then and now Congress starts its work. The rhetoric starts; reality sets in. We are not even 2 full weeks into the House legislative calendar, and it is starting to sound like the same old song and dance.

Any way we look at it, Mr. Speaker, process or policy, the House is off to a bad start. It is the first day of normal legislative business in the 109th Congress, and the House is already considering a restrictive rule for a bill that has not gone through proper House procedures.

New Congress Members just coming from parliamentary procedure training session must be doing a double-take. They just spent a week in a refresher course on how a bill becomes a law. Then, all of the sudden, that process has not been followed on one of their first votes. I guess I was confused, too, and what I can say to them is, Welcome to Washington.

The proponents of the underlying legislation will try to argue that it is not a new bill because it was first introduced in the 108th Congress. While that might be true, the Committee on Financial Services did not act on the bill in the 108th Congress, and it has not acted on it in this year.

I ask, why is the full House considering a relatively controversial piece of legislation without any committee action? Why the rush? Why set such a precedent for the 109th Congress' beginning?

The Committee on Financial Services, the committee of jurisdiction for the underlying legislation, will not

even organize itself until next week, let alone hold a hearing or markup on my good friend's, and he is my good friend, the gentleman from Delaware's bill.

Think about it this way: the first bill that the House is considering in the 109th Congress under normal rules actually makes it harder to pass legislation and create laws honoring our country's greatest heroes. Just like Social Security, some of my Republican friends are trying to create a problem where one does not exist.

As the gentleman from Texas already noted, the rule does make in order two amendments offered by my good friend, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY).

The first Crowley amendment increases the total number of medals of honor to be permitted awarded from four to six per Congress. The second Crowley amendment provides for an equitable distribution of gold medals between the majority and the minority.

While I intend to support both of these amendments, and certainly appreciate them being made in order, the Committee on Rules failed to make in order a third Crowley amendment which would have maintained the status quo. That amendment would have ensured that worthy groups or individuals and organizations remain eligible to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The Committee on Rules also rejected along a party-line vote an amendment to the rule which would have made it open to all germane amendments.

If the underlying legislation were to become law, President and Nancy Reagan never would have received the medal because they received it as a couple. Neither would Dr. Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King, Joseph DeLaine and Harry and Eliza Briggs, Billy and Ruth Graham, President and Betty Ford, the Navajo Code Talkers or the American Red Cross, just to name a few.

Can anyone in this body honestly suggest that the individuals aforementioned and organizations are unworthy of this institution's top award? Is there an epidemic of distributing too many Congressional Medals of Honor to unworthy recipients that somehow or another has escaped at least me in knowing about them?

Mr. Speaker, I am not worried about Congress going on a spree to award the Medal of Honor to unworthy recipients. The rules applied by the Committee on Financial Services to even consider a bill awarding the Congressional Medal of Honor are so stringent that the integrity and prestige of the award will always be protected.

On the contrary, if today is any indication, perhaps we ought to be just a bit more concerned about the integrity of procedure in the House of Representatives than about the integrity of a system that is dependent upon bipartisan cooperation.

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

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

I appreciate the comments from the gentleman from Florida, my good friend from the Committee on Rules, and would like to ask him at this time if he would like to consume the time. At this time, I may have one additional speaker, but do not at this time and would wish that the gentleman would consume his time. Then I would expect to close. I would like to ask the gentleman if he would like to do that.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. If the gentleman would yield, I appreciate my good friend's good suggestion, and I am prepared to begin yielding time to colleagues who are present to begin speaking.

Mr. Speaker, with that understanding, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman from Florida and ranking member, and the gentleman representing the Committee on Rules on the Republican side and also the author of this legislation.

I rise to oppose the rule and the underlying legislation for some of the very reasons that my good friend and colleague from Florida has enunciated.

I also raise another question, that this body is the people's House and the people represent a wide diversity of America, heroes and sheroes, little unknown to many of us until they rise and shine.

It is interesting that this legislation would come without going to the full committee in this session to be able to have the oversight of the committee structure, and then to be reminded of the fact that we took great joy and pleasure in honoring both President Reagan and Mrs. Reagan, Dr. King and Mrs. King, and of course, legislation that I proposed to acknowledge the Columbia Seven that tragically lost their lives on our behalf as astronauts and heroes in space.

All right. I recognize that judgment is necessary, but this legislation does not speak to judgment. It speaks to denial, and it denies the Congress its authoritative right to make decisions on who has represented America in the most honorable way to deserve a Congressional Gold Medal.

The legislation that I have has over 320-plus sponsors out of 435 and growing. Individual Members acquiesced and affirmed the fact that these individuals were worthy of a Congressional Gold Medal.

I agree, as well, that the Committee on Financial Services has put in place a very effective, very effective oversight of this process.

Let me thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) for his in-

sight in his amendments that would expand the numbers for the congressional session and also bifurcate or equalize the numbers for each party.

I, too, believe that there should be restraint in judgment, but I believe as well that America has her heroes and sheroes and who are we in 2005 to predict what might happen in 2010 or 2015 or 2020 where there may be a multitude of heroes who Americans believe are deserving of this worthy award.

I am disappointed and saddened that this could not be a bipartisan process. I, for one, believe that we should overwhelmingly vote against the rule and overwhelmingly vote against this intrusion into the objective and the precise and the bipartisan decisions that have been made on Ronald Reagan and Mrs. Reagan, the President of the United States; Dr. King and Mrs. King, very surely representatives of the human and American spirit.

I would ask my colleagues to reconsider this legislation and most specifically because it violated, if you will, the precise rules that we adhere to, oversight by committees, the Committee on Rules' involvement in an open rule, and the bipartisan spirit in which we honor our heroes and sheroes, whether dead or alive.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge my colleagues to defeat the overly restrictive rule that has been reported out of Committee relating to H.R. 54. Despite my disappointment and dismay at not only the criteria of this rule but the nature of the underlying legislation, I am pleased that two amendments offered by my colleague from New York, Mr. CROWLEY were made in order.

The central amendment that would have made this legislation palatable at the very least and not so disrespectful to the heroes that we strive to honor with the congressional gold medal has been effectively blocked by partisan stubbornness. If the import of this legislation is good, why not allow the representatives of this august body to openly debate it before the American people? Are we so ashamed of its true legislative intent that we feel the need to hide behind obstructionist rules? I say that legislation with bona fide purpose should have nothing to fear—at the very least should it fear honest and open debate.

The underlying legislation that is before this House seeks to "provide reasonable standards for congressional gold medals" but will essentially limit the bestowal of honor to American icons. One of the main reasons that the medal is bestowed is to make the highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions. HR 54 will summarily restrict this goal and prevent many honored heroes from receiving proper recognition.

Blocking debate on a provision that is utterly unreasonable is disrespectful to the constituents that Members seek to honor with the congressional gold medal.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose this rule and I urge my colleagues to defeat it.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to announce that we have no further speakers, and I would say to my good friend, the gentleman from Texas, we yield back the balance of our time.

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

Mr. Speaker, today we have a bill which the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) has brought to the floor, which we believe is a good bill, supported by the gentleman from Ohio (Chairman OXLEY). I urge my colleagues to support this rule, as well as the Oxley manager's amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 54, the Congressional Gold Medal Enhancement Act of 2005.

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

There was no objection.

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SESSIONS). Pursuant to House Resolution 42 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 54.

□ 1043

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 54) to amend title 31, United States Code, to provide reasonable standards for congressional gold medals, and for other purposes, with Mr. LAHOOD in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY).

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today, I rise in support of H.R. 54, the Congressional Gold Medal Enhancement Act of 2005, authored by the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), and urge its immediate passage. The legislation is a commonsense effort to maintain the prestige of this award.

□ 1045

As the Members know, the gold medal is the highest civilian honor bestowed by Congress. It has been award-

ed to a long and distinguished line of individuals who have made significant contributions to this country, beginning with General George Washington even before the Declaration of Independence. Recipients have included civil rights leaders, cultural icons and leaders in science.

But a disturbing trend has emerged since the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) sensibly reformed the commemorative coin program a decade ago. Until that point, Congress approved the awarding of only a few, usually one or two, gold medals each Congress, but approved as many as a dozen commemorative coin programs, often at great cost to taxpayers. Chairman CASTLE's reforms eliminated the cost to the taxpayers, restoring the dignity to the commemorative coin program. He also instituted a requirement that two-thirds of the House should sponsor legislation for either commemorative coins or gold medals before consideration could take place so that support would be broad and bipartisan.

Those reforms have been successful, but denied the opportunity to enact numerous commemorative coin programs, Congress increasingly has turned to the gold medal program, and we now find ourselves in a situation of having fewer honorees for commemorative coins than we do from gold medals. During the last Congress, only three commemorative coins were struck, and we approved five medal programs honoring seven individuals. By comparison, in the first 123 years of the gold medal, only 45 people were so honored.

Mr. Chairman, all medal honorees to date have been good choices and well deserving of the honor. However, we could be faced with a quandary: Either approve a medal for an individual who has had some accomplishment, but probably is not at the same level as a General Washington or a Jonas Salk, or else decline to approve the legislation.

We should not let ourselves get into that situation, Mr. Chairman. Chairman CASTLE's common-sense limit of two gold medals a year, and limiting the recipients to individuals rather than groups, maintains the prestige and honor of receiving a Congressional Gold Medal. Combined with the requirement of a minimum cosponsorship level of two-thirds of the House is the best way to preserve the integrity of the gold medal.

At the appropriate time, I will offer a manager's amendment that seeks to change the effective date of this legislation from December 31 of this year to immediately upon enactment so that the rules for awarding medals would remain the same throughout this Congress and not change midsession.

Mr. Chairman, I urge immediate passage of this legislation.

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

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to express my disappointment that this legislation is not being offered under an open rule. In fact, the chairman of the full Committee on Financial Services, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY), who holds jurisdiction over this legislation, even requested during his Committee on Rules testimony last night a more open process for debate on this bill, and I thank the chairman for those comments.

I would also like to take a moment to specifically thank and welcome our new Committee on Rules ranking member, my friend and colleague, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), who will serve as a true and tireless fighter for Democrats and our rights in the minority on the Committee on Rules over the next 2 years.

Mr. Chairman, the bill we are debating today, H.R. 54, the Congressional Gold Medal Enhancement Act of 2005, while introduced in the previous Congress, was never debated in committee because no hearings were convened, and no markup was held. And given that the Committee on Financial Services has yet to even hold its organizational meeting for the 109th Congress, the committee has obviously not yet had an opportunity to consider this issue carefully. In my view, we are rushing to act on an issue that does not represent a problem.

Having said that, Democrats are open to debating and voting on this legislation. In the last several Congresses, Congressional Gold Medals have been considered in the House under a well-established and a bipartisan process that works well. Regular order for consideration of gold medals involves the need, under the rules of the Committee on Financial Services, to gain the cosponsorship of two-thirds of the House before the legislation is considered in committee, a full two-thirds sponsorship of the House before it is considered in committee.

The bar for consideration for gold medals is set relatively high for a reason: Gaining a two-thirds cosponsorship ensures that a solid bipartisan majority of the House is in full support of honoring a particularly noteworthy individual or individuals.

Under the rule today, I plan to offer two amendments. The first amendment would raise the number of gold medals from two per calendar year to six per Congress, or an overall increase of two medals per Congress. This is especially key, as in the 108th Congress we awarded five Congressional Gold Medals. They went to Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of Great Britain; Dr. Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women; Jackie Robinson, the first black player in Major League Baseball; the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, posthumously, and his widow Coretta Scott King, the civil rights icons; and the posthumous awarding to Reverend Joseph A. DeLaine, Harry and Eliza Briggs, and Levi Pearson, the leaders in our Nation's efforts to desegregate public