

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

schools that led directly to the case *Brown et al. v. The Board of Education of Topeka*.

My second amendment would provide for equitable distribution of gold medals between the majority and the minority.

My amendments seek to maintain the spirit and process of bipartisanship that has characterized the House's consideration of gold medals, the highest honor that this Congress can bestow on an individual or group of individuals. It is my hope that the House will adopt these amendments to make this bill a better bill.

Stating that, though, I am dismayed that the Committee on Rules refused to allow consideration of a key amendment that would strike a section of the bill that only permits the granting of Congressional Gold Medals to individuals. While I tend to agree with the notion that distributing what is an exceptional honor to too many individuals could devalue the symbolic worth of a gold medal, there are occasions when more than one person is justified to receive the medal for their honorable actions in tandem with others.

In the last Congress, we enacted into law legislation awarding the Congressional Gold Medal posthumously, as I mentioned before, to Reverend Joseph A. DeLaine, Harry and Eliza Briggs, and Levi Pearson in recognition of their contributions to the Nation as pioneers in the effort to desegregate public schools that led directly to the landmark desegregation case of *Brown v. The Board of Ed.*

In previous Congresses, the House has awarded gold medals to other groups, such as Native American Code Talkers, who were critical to the safety of allied communications during World War II; to the Little Rock Nine, the civil rights pioneers who led to the integration of our public schools; and to Ronald and Nancy Reagan, in honor of their contribution to our country.

I fear that limiting gold medals to only individuals would also limit certain people from consideration who are most deserving of receiving one of our Nation's highest honors.

For example, my good friend and Republican colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) offered an amendment in the previous Congress, which the House passed, to honor the officers, emergency workers, and other employees of the Federal Government and any State or local government, including any interstate governmental entity, who responded to the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and who perished in that attack on September 11 with a Congressional Gold Medal. This would not be possible if this bill passed. And I would hope that my friend, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING), will oppose this bill, because if it were to pass, it would put an end to any opportunity to present the Congressional Gold Medal to any of those heroes.

Again, while I urge my colleagues to support my two amendments that were

made in order, I am dismayed that this third amendment was not made in order. If this bill were already law, Congress would not have been able to issue the Congressional Medal of Honor to the Little Rock Nine or to the Reagans. I feel this is a serious oversight in the base of this bill.

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

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), the sponsor of the legislation.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY) for his support of the legislation as well as his managing of it here today, and his general goodwill for all people in this country.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 54, the Congressional Gold Medal Enhancement Act of 2005, and I do urge its immediate adoption after consideration of the amendments today.

Congress created the Congress Gold Medal honor in 1776 to recognize military leaders, and awarded the first medal to George Washington for his heroic service in the Revolutionary War, as the chairman indicated earlier. Since then, the gold medal has evolved to become the highest civilian honor Congress confers to express gratitude for distinguished service, to dramatize the virtues of patriotism, and to perpetuate the remembrance of a great event. The legislation we consider today seeks to maintain the prestige of the medal by limiting the number that may be awarded in any given year.

To understand the need for such legislation, a little history of the medal is in order. As I mentioned, the first Congressional Gold Medal was struck in 1776, in Paris, for America had no appropriate facilities at that point, at the behest of the Continental Congress, which had not yet declared independence from Great Britain. The recipient was General George Washington, and the act that inspired the medal was his leadership of the Continental Army in driving the British from Boston.

In the next dozen years, Congress awarded six more gold medals to individuals for heroic action in the Revolutionary War. That is an average of one medal every Congress. By comparison, in the 108th Congress we authorized five medal programs honoring seven individuals and one couple. In the 106th Congress we authorized seven medal programs, but because of multiple recipients, the number of medals totaled more than 300.

Mr. Chairman, all of those medals were deserved, and I supported their authorization. My concern, and a concern shared by many Members, is that the luster and the importance and the meaning of a Congressional Gold Medal will be tarnished if we do not limit the number we award. Reversing this trend will protect the medal's prestige.

Mr. Chairman, this is a simple piece of legislation with great meaning. It will ensure the future integrity and

true honor of the award. It is my goal that each recipient, President, civil rights leader, military hero, inventor, or noted healer, who receives the Congressional Gold Medal will remain part of a unique honor bestowed by the United States Congress.

As you may recall, Mr. Chairman, we had a similar problem a decade ago with commemorative coins. While commemorative coins are not as prestigious as Congressional Gold Medals, both are used to recognize moments in history. These coins have also helped raise money through surcharges for a worthy cause. A decade ago, the commemorative coin program had gotten out of control, with many coin programs approved each year, and many of the programs costing taxpayers money. One blatant example is the 1996 Olympics coin program that the GAO estimates cost taxpayers \$26 million.

In response, Mr. Chairman, I authored and Congress approved the Commemorative Reform Coin Act. Now coin programs are limited to two a year and demand full cost recovery for taxpayers before any surcharges are paid. Additionally, before Congress can consider a coin or medal program, two-thirds of the House, 290 Members, must cosponsor the legislation to demonstrate broad bipartisan support. And having done that, I can tell you it takes broad bipartisan support to get the 290 Members.

I believe that the reforms to the commemorative coin program have been extraordinarily successful. Since these reforms were enacted in the 104th Congress, commemorative coins have not cost the taxpayers a dime. Instead, the programs have raised millions for worthy causes, provided valuable collections, and, importantly, restored prestige to commemorative coins.

But something disturbing happened when we reformed the commemorative coin program. The number of Congressional Gold Medals saw a dramatic increase. From 1776, when Congress created the medal, to 1904, Congress approved 47 medals. In the last 100 years, Congress awarded 86 medals, including 20 in the past decade, since the commemorative coin reforms. And this number jumped even higher, over 300, when including multiple recipients for each medal.

Mr. Chairman, over the years, Congressional Gold Medals have gone to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Jackie Robinson, Mother Teresa, Elie Wiesel, Pope John Paul II, British Prime Ministers Winston Churchill and Tony Blair, Jonas Salk, John Wayne, and Robert F. Kennedy, among others. Reading the list of all the medal recipients and the deeds that earned the medal is quite inspiring. To maintain these medals as the highest of honors, the legislation before us would limit the number of medals that may be awarded to two a year, and clarify that recipients are individuals and not groups.

I understand there is concern by the minority that one bill per year should be designated for each party.

□ 1100

I feel it is important to note that proposals in the past have been sponsored in about equal numbers by Republicans and Democrats, and I do not really recall any discussion of the recipients' or the sponsors' party affiliations. In my view, any such discussion would be inappropriate, as these awards should be awarded in true bipartisan fashion.

In practice, however, not through statute, the Committee on Financial Services requires a two-thirds cosponsorship before considering proposals to award medals, a practice that the Senate has now adopted. I believe by the adoption of these simple changes, we can preserve the prestige and the integrity of the Congressional Gold Medal Program, something I believe all Members support.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in maintaining the integrity of the Congressional Gold Medal by supporting this measure. I urge immediate and unanimous passage of H.R. 54 with no amendments but the manager's amendment.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 6 minutes to the gentlewoman 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. Chairman, the angst that I have with H.R. 54 does not speak to the eloquence that we have heard on the floor about our commitment to honoring our heroes and sheroes. Let me make it perfectly clear, despite all of the accolades that we have spoken today, if this legislation were in place, President Reagan and Mrs. Reagan would not receive the Congressional Gold Medal; neither would Dr. King and Mrs. Coretta Scott King; neither would the Indian Code Talkers who helped save thousands of lives in World War II. I think that is the crux of this debate, not whether or not we have restrictions or nonrestrictions because I believe it is a given that the Committee on Financial Services has done a commendable job in its oversight.

As I look back on the numbers in the last four Congresses, how interesting it is and the good sense of the Crowley amendment because those that have been passed by this body only equal to five or six credible, rational and reasonable reasoning for awarding, for example, those who were intimately involved in *Brown v. Board of Education* that changed the lives of millions of Americans and today even is a standard for equal education in America.

Mr. Chairman, I am confused by the necessity of this legislation and why we would not be able to enthusiastically support the very precise, as I said previously, and thoughtful amendments by the gentleman from New

York (Mr. CROWLEY), particularly those dealing with the idea of the number of gold medals, increasing them to six per Congress. That is 2 years, that means three and three possibly, or however it is broken down, and then the fairness of equal distribution between Republicans and Democrats, all of us, of course, being Americans.

What is to argue the case or why would we argue the case that there were those who contributed together who are not worthy. I do not take this as any kind of personal act by my Republican friends, but I do think it is a misstep in judgment and that we would have benefited from a more bipartisan overview, review of this legislation. For example, we would not have been able to honor, as some Americans perceive as very important, Ruth and Billy Graham.

So this narrow or narrowing or this interpretation of one hero when there may be an adequate partnering that may be important that would symbolize the greatness and goodness of America puzzles me and, in fact, disturbs me. Frankly, the civil rights movement was a group effort and it might be likely that one would want to honor the group of civil rights activists, the unknown, the unsung heroes that we are able to bring to the attention of the United States Congress. How many really knew Harry and Eliza Briggs? How many knew Levi Pearson? But once we debated and found out the facts, we knew that they were in fact heroes and sheroes. I think we do ourselves an enormous disservice by coming down hard-handed on who has given so much for America.

And then I would say why start with divisive legislation. Yes, there are only a few of us on the floor of the House, but we obviously are not able to speak for all of those unsung heroes yet to be brought to the attention of this House. All of us come in our course of life to meet people in our districts and around the country where we claim that we want to bring them to the attention of the American people not frivolously; but after we have looked at the history, we know they are truly worthy of a Congressional Gold Medal.

So why we need this restrictive law that has not already been satisfied by the oversight of a bipartisan Committee on Financial Services and the requirement, Mr. Chairman, the requirement of over 290 signatures, and most of these received close to 400. And that is the test, whether your colleagues will support you.

Mr. Chairman, in support of the gentleman's two amendments, I am querying as to the amendment offered which would really balance this legislation which would speak to protect President Reagan and Dr. and Mrs. Billy Graham and others who came together.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, an amendment was offered yesterday evening before the Committee on Rules that would have asked groups as well as individuals. We struck a portion of the language dealing with limiting this only to individuals. I would have asked, if that amendment had passed, would have enlarged the pool to groups as well. That was not passed in the Committee on Rules, and therefore we are here today working a bill that does not have that provision in it.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for his leadership and simply say that is the spirit of bipartisanship. That would have been reflective of Members having an opportunity in their wisdom to present their case before the United States Congress and the Committee on Financial Services. That would have been fairness to the unsung heroes. That would have been in respect to President and Mrs. Reagan, Dr. King and Mrs. King, Dr. Graham and Mrs. Graham, as well as many others.

I ask my colleagues to vote against this legislation, allow us to work in a bipartisan manner and do not take away from those as yet unrecognized the honor of a Congressional Gold Medal.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the bill before the Committee of the Whole because it is unreasonably restrictive. Its passage will result in the preclusion of our ability to pay tribute to Americans in the most respectful manner.

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. H.R. 54 will summarily restrict this goal and prevent many honored heroes from receiving proper recognition.

Section 2, paragraph (e)(2)(A) of H.R. 54 would limit the striking of a congressional gold medal to "only an individual." Such "unreasonably" restrictive legislation would preclude the bestowal of this award collectively to the 9 students who "voluntarily subjected themselves to racial bigotry during the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, otherwise known as the "Little Rock Nine."

Similarly, under this restrictive provision, the Secretary of the Treasury cannot lawfully strike a congressional gold medal to honor former President Ronald Reagan and his wife

Nancy Reagan in recognition of their services to America or to honor former President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn Carter. Furthermore, H.R. 54 would make it illegal for Congress to cause the Secretary to strike a congressional gold medal to honor the monumental contributions made to the civil rights movement by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his widow, Coretta Scott King, or the brave employees and others who responded to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and perished and to the people aboard United Airlines Flight 93 who resisted hijackers and caused the plane to crash.

Mr. Chairman, I oppose this legislation and ask that my colleagues join me to defeat it unless the overly restrictive provisions are fixed or removed.

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

In listening to the sponsor in terms of the need for this legislation, one could intimate by the introduction that possibly medals were given out in a haphazard manner. I mentioned before it takes two-thirds of the Members of the House, the entire body, to introduce a gold medal for its consideration in the Committee on Financial Services, a bar that I believe is a very, very high bar and one that is not easily attained.

I would also point out that limiting this to individuals, and again to reiterate, Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King were both issued the gold medal. They would not have gotten that medal under this legislation. Harry and Eliza Briggs, Levi Pearson, and Reverend Joseph Armstrong DeLaine were all issued the medal in one provision. As mentioned before, Nancy Reagan, along with President Reagan, would not have been eligible. Under the provisions today, they would have to get it individually. Betty and Gerald Ford, the Little Rock Nine, and Dr. Graham and Ruth Graham would not have received it either. I think therein lies a tremendous flaw.

It also intimates that there may be too many of these gold medals given out. Who that received this medal in the past was not worthy of it? Was it Dr. Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King; was it Reverend DeLaine, Harry and Eliza Briggs, and Levi Pearson; was it Jackie Robinson; was it Dorothy Height; Tony Blair in the last Congress?

In the 106th Congress was it Nancy Reagan; was it Pope John Paul, II; was it Charles Schulz, the great cartoonist? Was it Rosa Parks? Who amongst those was not qualified, who do we believe was not deserving of this medal. Therein lies the flaw in this bill. It actually limits us from giving to those who I believe are most deserving of recognition of this gold medal.

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

Mr. Chairman, let me close by first indicating to the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) that the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) as well as myself acknowledge that the

folks who received the medal in the past were most deserving.

I would point out, in fact, that the medal that was awarded, for example, to Ronald and Nancy Reagan, was one medal, and the same thing with Dr. King and Coretta Scott King, and Betty and Gerald Ford. Couples are treated much differently from a group. I guess perhaps what I found in studying this, perhaps the most egregious example of going beyond what the initial scope of the medal was was in the 106th Congress where we awarded five medal bills, one of them was for the Navajo Code Talkers which did not go in regular order. It was attached at the last minute to an appropriations bill. It not only covered the 29 original code talkers but also an additional 275 of those who qualified as code talkers.

I guess, and I do not want to speak for the sponsor of the legislation, but I think it points out the need to tighten these requirements. That is what the purpose of this legislation is all about.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OXLEY. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, would it be safe to say under regular order if this legislation were passed that the code talkers, under regular order, and that was an extraordinary provision made in the appropriations process, under regular order would they be eligible to receive this medal in the future if this bill were to pass?

Mr. OXLEY. If the bill were passed, the answer is no, they would not.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman will continue to yield, that is the point I am trying to make. To say that the code talkers, and I am not saying the gentleman is suggesting this, but to suggest that they did not deserve the ultimate award, even as a group, for what they provided to the service of this country during World War II is just ridiculous. They certainly deserved as a group. Any one individual, no. There were multiple individuals who provided an incredible service to us.

I would also point out that two is not individual. Two individuals makes up a group, to my understanding, and that would include Nancy and Ronald Reagan. That would include any husband and wife, including Dr. King and Coretta Scott King. That would preclude them from getting this medal in the future. That is my understanding of the legislation before us.

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Chairman, let me point out in the case of the Navajo Code Talkers, there were other tribes also that had code talkers, not just the Navajo. Again, the issue is where do we start and where do we finish in this area.

Again, going back to the history of the medal, and the first recipient was George Washington, it was to an individual and was to an individual for a very, very long period of time.

The gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) pointed out correctly, histori-

cally the gold medal was given out quite rarely, 45 in 123 years, to individuals. The change ironically was brought about with the change in the Commemorative Coin Program that did in fact move the Congress to adopting more gold medals.

This is an effort to try to get back to where history started us, awarding that medal to an individual and awarding it not to a group, no matter how small or how large, and that really was the intent of the legislation.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OXLEY. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

□ 1115

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I want to recognize the significance of this medal, that it is not given out willy-nilly; that, as I mentioned before, it takes extraordinary measures to get enough support to get this medal passed. I recognize that the first person who received this medal was General George Washington, prior to him becoming President of the United States, when the country was brand new, when we did not have the richness of diversity and of events that have taken place throughout the history of our country ever since this first medal was given to George Washington; that we have grown as a Nation, in size and in stature; and that there have been many events that have occurred throughout our history since the striking of the first medal that have inured greatly to the advancement of our country that from time to time need to be recognized. That is what this medal gives an opportunity to do, both to individuals and to groups.

Certainly General Washington was an incredible individual, someone who was deserving of the first medal that was ever produced, and I think he accepted that on behalf of all those men and women who fought for independence from Great Britain back during the War of Independence. But certainly we have grown in size, both in States, from Thirteen Colonies and States to 50 States, and the number of people in this country have grown incredibly since the founding of this Nation, and the events that have occurred throughout our history has certainly changed the shape of the distribution of this medal as well. I think that needs to be recognized and taken into consideration.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OXLEY. I yield to my friend from Delaware, the sponsor of the legislation.

Mr. CASTLE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, not to prolong the discussion, because I think the gentleman from New York is making some very valid points that should be debated, one of them which is an amendment which is not included here today, and

that is the issue of the groups. We have checked the history of this. To the best of my knowledge, and the gentleman may have some different evidence, I do not think it is different because it is fairly clear who has received these medals, it has always been individuals historically. It was never couples. That is only something that has happened in the more recent couple of decades, perhaps a couple of times. As far as the groups are concerned, there have only been three altogether.

Certainly I am not suggesting any of them are not deserving, for goodness sake. They all are. The Navajo Code Talkers clearly are deserving. That obviously created some problems because of the volume of the medals, and it was done in sort of an unusual procedure. The Red Cross is another very deserving, and so are the veterans of the Civil War, which is the other group we found, although that was done much after the Civil War. There are all kinds of groups out there.

The Congressional Gold Medal of Honor has always been bestowed upon an individual in a very special ceremony to honor that individual. It is not easy to get done. I do not know if the gentleman has done it. As I said before, I did it. It is difficult to get 290 signatures on anything around here. So it is difficult to get done. So obviously it is going to be somebody who is deserving. It is going to be as bipartisan as could be. You cannot do it with one party or the other. You have got to get everybody. That is what the history of it is.

We tried to develop this legislation to have a great recognition of what we consider to be the greatest honor this Congress can give to a limited number of individuals, which was always what the intent of it was. There are a whole lot of ways of recognizing groups. You and I could sit here and name groups for hours at a time that could be honored. But the Congressional Gold Medal was never really created for that purpose. That is the intent of what we are trying to do in the legislation. I just wanted to make that point in the history of it.

Mr. CROWLEY. If the gentleman will yield further, let me just make a point. I appreciate what the gentleman from Delaware has said. The reality is, though, a country of 300 million people, only 20 medals have been awarded in the past decade. That is not an awful lot of medals. The point that the gentleman is making is that it has been extraordinary when we have actually issued this medal to groups. Why are we now limiting ourselves; when it is extraordinary, recognized as extraordinary, why are we now officially and legally limiting the ability of Congress to issue this medal to groups? I do not understand that.

We understand the process is hard. The gentleman has just said himself to get two-thirds of the Members of this House truly requires bipartisanship to get this done. This is not done, as I

mentioned before, in a willy-nilly manner. There is great effort involved. I understand it.

I remember when my friend from New York (Mr. FOSSELLA) was doing this for John Cardinal O'Connor and the effort that it took to get both sides to get enough Members to sign onto that. I do understand the difficulties in that, but I hope the gentleman understands the appreciation that has been set forth by my testimony here today as well as my good friend from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) that sometimes, not oftentimes, it is not just individuals, but it is groups who are responsible for incredible, incredible events in this country and I believe are deserving of the Congressional Gold Medal. I hope that the gentleman would agree with that and we will have a motion to recommit that will, if passed, put this back to committee and will strike that language limiting it only to individuals.

Mr. OXLEY. Reclaiming my time, and the gentleman may want to respond. Let me just comment. There is an avenue, I would suggest to my friend from New York, to honor large groups. That would be the commemorative coin. It is somewhat ironic that after the reforms that were made by the gentleman from Delaware where we tightened the restrictions on commemorative coins, and for good reason, that we then had this increase in the gold medal. I think we can safely say that the gold medal traditionally supports the concept of honoring an individual for service to the country, and that the commemorative coin, which has been essentially put on the back burner, presents a very appropriate avenue for recognizing groups that heretofore have not been honored.

I think that the reforms in the past and the ones that the gentleman from Delaware is now propounding in this bill makes excellent sense. I think once the Members understand the changes, that they are going to gravitate toward the concept of a commemorative coin as opposed to the gold medal. That is precisely what the gentleman from Delaware proposes in this legislation.

Mr. CROWLEY. Not to prolong the debate, either, because I know we want to move on, but since 1999 when we passed the Coin Act, there have been some concerns on our side of the aisle. I know that one of the amendments your side has accepted, or that was accepted in the Rules Committee, it remains to be seen whether it passes or not, that would evenly divide the number of gold medals, that did not exist in the coin bill that passed. Overwhelmingly it has been one side. In terms of bipartisanship, it has not been very bipartisan in terms of coins that have been established. According to our records, 15 out of the 16 coin bills that were passed were sponsored by Republicans. I do not think that is just going to happen under this legislation. That is also, I think, some of the fear in terms of changing the rules, for lack of a better word, on the gold medal has

stirred up consternation on our side of the aisle. I offer that as well.

I recognize that the minting of a coin is a way that we can bring recognition to individuals and to groups. I just do not think that we should be limiting ourselves as the House of Representatives and as a Congress in reducing our leverage or our ability to honor groups of individuals who have done incredible, incredible works on behalf of this Nation. I think that is what that provision of the bill will actually end up doing is limiting, tying our hands from honoring groups in the form of the Congressional Gold Medal. That is why I stand in opposition to that.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman will yield further, I do not mean to reiterate or repeat too much. Looking at the history of these Congressional Gold Medals, though, I think is very telling in terms of what we are doing because the history has always been to individuals for outstanding achievement. So in terms of the groups, I really think we should honor that. That is not disrespectful of any group that has gotten it or all the other groups who are potentially eligible out there if you use them in that criteria of measurement.

But the other issue is interesting, and that is how many of these should we be able to have? First of all, the history of the gold medal has been very bipartisan. I think, as we all know, when we are dealing with that many signatures, it is going to be bipartisan. There is no question about that. But my sense is that the two a year is not as limiting as one might think when you really again look at the history of this. In fact, if anything, it would be an expansion over what the total history of it has been. By the time you go through a legislative session and you gather 290 signatures and you go through committee and you go to the floor, and I have handled these bills, they often happen the last day, by the way, so it is always very confusing in terms of what we are doing. I think you are going to find this is not as limiting as one might think.

Again, I recognize the fact that it is a bigger country, that there is much more going on in the country and that kind of thing, but we are really trying to make sure that this is truly an honor for somebody who does something extraordinary in science or the arts, or an elected official or somebody of that nature, usually a President, I think the only elected official who has ever been honored; people in religion, people who have just absolutely stood out in their circumstances.

My sense is while we can argue here on the floor that it is limiting, I think the bottom line is it is not going to end up being as limiting as one might think. Hopefully it would not be. Obviously if that happened to be the case, it is something that could always be revisited, but I just do not think it is going to be the case.

I believe that straightening this out is actually going to make these gold

medals much more of a distinction than perhaps they would be if we allowed this to continue, particularly with the commemorative coin changes, increasing the pressure to try to do so many of these.

Mr. OXLEY. Let me, in closing, Mr. Chairman, indicate, first of all, my respect for the Members who have undertaken the responsibility of going out and getting 290 signatures. Virtually everyone I have talked to said, never again, because of the difficulty. I said, well, think of it this way. You get a chance to meet a lot of new friends. Every time you walk over or ride over for a vote, every time you see a Member in the dining room, wherever it may be, you are getting their support. But it is a difficult process.

I think the gentleman from Delaware was right in raising that bar to where it is now, because it really does focus one's attention on how difficult that process is. It does make it, by definition, a bipartisan process. That is a fact of life that we deal with time and time again. The legislation before us, I think, does restore the medal to what it was envisioned to be way back in 1776.

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

The CHAIRMAN. All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read for amendment under the 5-minute rule.

The text of H.R. 54 is as follows:

H.R. 54

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 "Congressional Gold Medal Enhancement Act of 2005".

SEC. 2. REASONABLE STANDARDS ESTABLISHED FOR CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDALS.

Section 5111 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(e) CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL STANDARDS.—

“(1) MAXIMUM NUMBER.—During any calendar year beginning after December 31, 2005, the Secretary of the Treasury may strike not more than 2 congressional gold medals for presentation pursuant to an Act of the Congress.

“(2) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary may strike congressional gold medals only in accordance with the following requirements:

“(A) RECIPIENTS.—Only an individual may be a recipient of a congressional gold medal.

“(B) TIMING.—No gold medal may be presented posthumously on behalf of any individual except during the 20-year period beginning 5 years after the death of the individual (unless the Act of Congress authorizing the striking of such medal was enacted before the death of such individual)”.

The CHAIRMAN. No amendment to the bill shall be in order except those printed in House Report 109-1.

Each amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered 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.

It is now in order to consider Amendment No. 1 printed in House 109-1.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MR. OXLEY

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 1 offered by Mr. OXLEY:

Page 2, beginning on line 2, strike “During any calendar year beginning after December 31, 2005,” and insert “Beginning on the date of the enactment of the Congressional Gold Medal Enhancement Act of 2005.”.

Page 2, line 6, insert “in any calendar year” before the period at the end.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 42, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

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

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume. Mr. Chairman, the amendment changes the effective date of the introduced version of the bill from after December 31, 2005 to instead make the new limitation on the number of congressional gold medals effective on enactment of the bill. The change will be made so that uniform guidelines governing the medal program will be in effect for the whole 109th Congress and beyond and not change in the middle of the Congress. If we were to pass the bill but leave the effective date until the end of the session there would be a land rush to enact bills on gold medals that would place Members in an awkward position.

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

The CHAIRMAN. Does any Member claim time in opposition?

The gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

Something that is not often highlighted outside the hall is that there are actually friendships between Democrats and Republicans, and Mr. OXLEY and I share that. I would like to point out for the record though that he is extremely partisan when it comes to congressional baseball, and I hope that next year he gives the Democrats an opportunity to have a win.

Having said that, I have no objections to this amendment.

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

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY).

The amendment was agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider Amendment No. 2 printed in House Report 109-1.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MR. CROWLEY

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 2 offered by Mr. CROWLEY: Page 2, strike line 2 and all that follows through line 6 and insert the following new paragraph:

“(1) MAXIMUM NUMBER.—During the 2-year period comprising each Congress (beginning with the 109th Congress), the Secretary of the Treasury may strike not more than 6 congressional gold medals for presentation pursuant to an Act of the Congress.”.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 42, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY) each will control 10 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY).

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume. This amendment is a simple and fair amendment that would increase the maximum number of Congressional gold medals that Congress could award from two per calendar year to six per Congress, an increase of two medals per Congress. The reason for this amendment was best summed up by the Republican Rules Committee Member, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) last night during his questioning of Chairman OXLEY. He had concerns that the bill in its current form would make members hesitate before introducing their own Congressional gold medal bills until late in the first year, waiting to see if others had more noteworthy recipients, then late in the first year rushing to introduce their bills and possibly missing the two medals in 1 year deadline due to the high threshold of needing two-thirds of the House as cosponsors, then forcing a larger number of congressional gold medal bills to compete for the two open slots in the following year.

I too share some of those concerns and believe we can address this by passing this amendment. This would allow for the passage of six medals over the life of a Congress instead of two per year over the life of a calendar year.

I believe that Members on both sides would prefer the flexibility of having more rather than fewer possibilities to award gold medals to citizens who deserve to be bestowed with one of our Nation's highest honors. But this higher number does not cheapen the medal because of the high threshold needed for consideration, two-thirds of the chamber. Foolish medal bills will not attract the support that they would need for consideration.

Finally, this amendment is needed in the most practical purpose yet. In the last Congress we awarded five congressional gold medals. They went to Tony Blair, 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, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., posthumously and his wife Coretta Scott

King, the civil rights icons, and posthumously awarded to the Reverend Joseph A. DeLaine, Harry and Eliza Briggs, and Levi Pearson, the leaders in our nation's efforts to desegregate public schools that led directly to the case of Brown versus the Board of Ed.

Additionally, we granted six medals in the 106th Congress and six in the 105th Congress. In the 106th Congress we passed into law three Democratic sponsored bills and three Republican sponsored bills. They went to Ronald and Nancy Reagan, Pope John Paul II, Charles Schulz, John Cardinal O'Connor, Theodore Hesburgh, Rosa Parks.

And in the 105th Congress two Democratic sponsored bills and four Republican sponsored bills for medals became law. Gerald and Betty Ford, the Little Rock 9, Nelson Mandela, to the patriarch Bartholomew, to Mother Teresa of Calcutta and to Frank Sinatra, introduced by my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. SERRANO).

□ 1130

This amendment is about flexibility for Members, the ability to debate and consider legislation over the entire Congress just as we do with every other piece of legislation. It will not cheapen but rather enhance this most prestigious of American honors. In fact, the existing Committee on Financial Services rule requiring two-thirds cosponsorship of the House for a gold medal, which by definition represents broad-based bipartisan support, prevents the awarding of frivolous and undeserved medals to groups of individuals. I trust that two-thirds of the House represents a solid bipartisan consensus of the will of the House and therefore believe that this acts as a check on any effort to award medals to any groups of individuals who in the opinion of the House do not deserve such award. I urge the acceptance of this amendment.

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

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

The amendment offered by the gentleman from New York is really in many ways contrary to the reforms that are already enacted, led by the gentleman from Delaware and the one that is now before us. The institution of two-thirds of the Members was very important, and the reforms in the Commemorative Coin Reform Act, which was adopted almost 10 years ago, instituted a two-coin-per-year maximum. The reforms in that program have worked perfectly. Congress has not passed more than two programs for issue in any year since the law passed in 1996. One year, in 2003, only one coin was issued. The reforms have restored the dignity of the commemorative coin program, which had spun out of control; and similar reforms will do the same for a Congressional Gold Medal. So it seems to me a natural progression in the reform process. And, indeed, the Founding Fathers found the need to award only 45 medals in the first 123

years of our country, but over the last decade Congresses have awarded nearly 10 times that many in just 10 years. I think those numbers are critical in understanding why the necessity for this reform effort, and for that I am opposed to the amendment.

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

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

I am disappointed that the chairman will not support this amendment. I think it is a reasonable amendment, one that I do not think in any way disrupts what the intention of the bill by the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), the sponsor, is, that is, to limit the number. We certainly are limiting the number in this amendment to six as opposed to what the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) would do per calendar year, which would be four. We are still limiting it to six. I think in the most recent history, we have not done more than six within a Congress. This again will help to free the hands of Members to introduce gold medal legislation for people who they believe are worthy of that great honor.

I would just like to point out again that the Founding Fathers in their wisdom did not have as many people that they had to honor during that time. We have grown more than tenfold since the founding of this Nation. There have been many more events that have taken place since the Founding Fathers initially granted those initial gold medals, and I think that once again if we do not pass this, we will further be limiting our ability to ensure that those who are most deserving will receive this great honor.

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

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE).

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, I will be brief. First of all, this is not a killer amendment. This is not an unreasonable amendment, and the sponsor has certainly always been a very reasonable Member of Congress, and we are arguing at the margins here in terms of what we are doing, and I recognize that. And I recognize these arguments because they are compelling to a degree.

Having said all those things, I still oppose it. And let me explain why. It is not a lot different from what I have already said, Mr. Chairman, and that is essentially we are trying to make this a medal of true distinction for true heroes of the United States of America. I also believe, by the way, and the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) said something I thought was interesting, and that is it is difficult to get the names on the legislation. So the first year becomes a little more difficult, and that is true. We sort of learn techniques in this when we have done it.

One is we take it to conferences or big gatherings of people and pass it out that way. The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) will always be a hero in my mind because he took it amongst the Democrats and got a lot of signatures when I was struggling with it on a bill that I did last year, and I appreciate that a great deal. But I have learned when one really applies oneself, they can do it reasonably rapidly; and hopefully the committees will be able to be responsive to it and will be able to do two a year if that is what we decide to do. But my judgment is four in total in the course of 2 years is sufficient.

And I am worried about the influx that is going on. The chairman cited the numbers. I do not remember the exact numbers. It was something like 45 medals in the first 120 years and now 10 times that many in the last 10 years. That means that this has increased, I think, at a rate that is too rapid, and again I do not in any way belittle anyone who has received this because they are all very distinguished people. But having said that, we want this to be the highest honor possible. So my judgment is we should defeat the amendment. If at some point it proves we need to expand this, we would certainly consider that. But I think we should try to restore this program to where it was before.

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

Mr. Chairman, the sponsor made compelling arguments that the amendment is reasonable. Therefore, one would conclude that if it is reasonable and compelling arguments are made that there would be bipartisan support for the amendment. Unfortunately, that is not going to be the case. I hope that some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, though, do recognize that not only are there compelling arguments, that they are reasonable and that it is a reasonable amendment and therefore deserves to be voted in favor of. And I hope that my colleagues on the other side as well as my side of the aisle view it the same way.

Mr. Chairman I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY).

The question was taken; and the Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote, and pending that, I make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

It is now in order to consider amendment No. 3 in House Report 109-1.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MR. CROWLEY

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 3 offered by Mr. CROWLEY: Page 2, line 6, insert "and the Secretary may not strike any congressional gold medal, notwithstanding an Act of the Congress providing for the striking and presentation of such congressional gold medal during a period referred to in this paragraph, if at least half the total number of congressional gold medals permitted to be struck under this paragraph during such period were already authorized to be struck during such period pursuant to Acts of the Congress that were originally introduced as bills or joint resolutions by Members associated with the same political party as the political party with which the Member is associated who introduced the bill or resolution that resulted in the Act of the Congress that authorized the striking of such congressional gold medal" before the period at the end.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 42, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. OXLEY) each will control 10 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY).

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

I hope that this amendment would also be received as reasonable and with cogent arguments. My second amendment made in order under the rule would allow for the equitable distribution of these medals between the majority and the minority. Since the 104th Congress, 24 gold medal resolutions became law. Using the process currently in place that has worked so well for us, the two parties in the House have evenly split sponsorship of these medals. Republican Members have sponsored 10 medals and Democratic Members have also sponsored 10 medals. In fact, this amendment probably makes more sense with Republican support in it than Democrats, as in the 108th Congress, five congressional medals were awarded and four of those were sponsored by Democrats, only one by a Republican.

But I offer this amendment out of basic fairness for both sides. I, therefore, believe if we are to limit the number of gold medals and if we are to obtain the bipartisanship that has characterized the process, my amendment should be passed by the Chamber, my fear being that if we limit it to only four, then leadership will decide who will sponsor those four, and we in the minority may find ourselves on the short end of that stick. And that is why I offer this amendment. I hope that the Members will agree to accept this amendment.

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

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

I do oppose the amendment. I have some empathy for the first amendment

offered by the gentleman from New York, but certainly not this one. Clearly, if there is a bipartisan element to this whole idea of getting two-thirds of the people supporting it, it is the Congressional Gold Medal, and I think the gentleman somewhat undercuts his own argument by giving us the figures that he did because, in fact, I do not think most Members, when they are approached by a Member carrying that bill, really are concerned about whether it is a Republican sponsor or a Democrat sponsor. They are concerned about who that individual being honored is. And just by the definition of having two-thirds sponsor would indicate a strong bipartisan support and historically that has always been the case.

And I think that the amendment would tend to compartmentalize the authors of these gold medal resolutions that would be difficult to enforce and perhaps would cause some kind of a rush to try to get the necessary signatures prematurely. So I think it is really difficult for the committee, for example. As the gentleman knows, who has served on my committee with great distinction, we pride ourselves on the bipartisanship of the committee and the leadership of the committee, and we have continued to do so. So I think this is superfluous at best and, as a result, would oppose the amendment.

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

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

I appreciate the comments of my colleague, the chairman of the committee. Just to add that, yes, we do work in a very bipartisan way. If the chairman and I were making decisions as to who would receive the gold medal, I think we would work it out amongst ourselves to make sure that it was done in a very bipartisan way. That, unfortunately, has not been the history of the House, and I just point out, for instance, as I mentioned earlier, back when we created the commemorative coin legislation in 1999, out of the 16 coins that have been created, 15 have been introduced by Republican Members, only one by the minority. The majority has had 15 of the 16. The minority has had one. I do not think that is a very fair and balanced way in which we can collectively and bipartisanly recognize those who have made tremendous sacrifices or achievements or contributed to this country.

And I believe that we are limiting it to, in this case, this legislation, if passed the way it does, four congressional gold medals that we in the minority may very well find ourselves in a very difficult position in that we may not have any of our honorees awarded the medal even though we go through the process of collecting the two-thirds. It then becomes a political decision as to which honorees will get the gold medal in that particular year and which will not. For instance, if there

are 16 individuals who are sponsored by Members of the House and those individuals get two-thirds of the signatures required, which of the 16 will get the four medals? Which of those 16? That decision will be made based on a political decision that is made within the House, and I dare say that outside influence would also come to bear on that decision that was made as well.

□ 1145

That is why I am asking for this fair and balanced approach; that if we are going to limit it to just four, that it will be two per year. I do not think it is unreasonable to ask that it is done in this way.

Quite frankly, if there is someone that the Democratic side of the aisle, if we have used up our one per year and we have another extraordinary person, I think we can work with each other to ask a Republican Member of the House to sponsor that bill. And vice versa. If we somehow find we have run out of opportunities on our side to introduce legislation, I do not think it is unusual to ask a Member of the other side of the aisle to sponsor the bill.

That is the spirit in which I think we can work in a bipartisan way to ensure that every person who receives this gold medal, besides getting a two-thirds vote, it is done in a bipartisan way. I do not think this is frivolous, and I do not think this trivial.

That is why I offered the amendment, and I hope we pass it.

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), the sponsor of the legislation.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, I made a couple of these points before, and again I will not repeat too much here, but first and foremost is the 290 signatures. I do not know if one party is ever going to have 290 Members or not, I sort of doubt it, at least in the time most of us are around here, and you need both parties in order to do this.

I learned with the coin that I did, which was Benjamin Franklin. I cannot tell you, and hardly anyone can tell you, whether Benjamin Franklin was or would have been a Republican or a Democrat in his history. We do not know the politics of people like George Washington, and certainly the people who have been from other countries, a number of individuals who received medals here in the Congress of the United States.

In the history of the gold medals, as I believe the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) pointed out, it has been as much Democrats, even more so than Republicans. Even on the business of the commemorative coins, a number of the sponsors in the Senate have been Democrats as well.

I just have never noticed a lot of politics in this, I guess is my point. It seems to me I have been asked to sign these, and I generally sign them, unless it is something I think is spurious, by Democrats and Republicans. I do not

think about it. Certainly, if a party feels it is being slighted, they can say we are just not going to sign on to something.

I do not think this needs a political balance. What it really needs, I think, is to find out, if we are going to do two, who the two most distinguished individuals are who should be recognized and go ahead and recognize them, apart from whatever the politics may be. I do not think it is going to fall down along political lines.

So I do rise in opposition to this. I just think it is sort of a necessary strain on having a political balance on something which is not essential.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CASTLE. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman's comments. I know that the gentleman does not approach this in any other fashion but a bipartisan fashion.

But the question I have is if we are going to limit this to two per year, it could be that five Members on our side of the aisle have five individuals they want to recognize. There could be five individuals on the Republican side of the aisle who have five individuals they want to recognize. That is 10 people, 10 bills, 10 instances where Members have garnered two-thirds.

Who then will decide who gets the medals? It then becomes a very political decision as to who gets each of the medals. Will it be the five on the majority side? Will it be two from the majority side? Will it be two from the minority side? Will it be one each? Who of the 10 deserving will get it, and who will not get it?

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, reclaiming my time, and I will be glad to yield further in a moment, it typically has not worked that way. Typically, the way you do it is, somebody comes to you with the idea, maybe it is a Thomas Edison or somebody of that ilk, of that nature, and you generally will then go to your leadership or to the leadership on the other side or to the chairman of the committee and say, Look, I am interested in getting this done. If I am going to go out and get the 290 signatures, I want some idea that it is going to be considered.

I would be dumbfounded if you had five on one side and five on the other. In fact, I would be dumbfounded if you had two on one side and two on the other. You generally sort of pre-clear it; and, generally speaking, politics has just not entered into it. Before you go through all that effort and work, you want to get a pretty good idea that the bill is going to be able to get at least through the House. Then, by the way, getting it through the Senate is another whole other issue that you have to deal with as well.

So, typically, we have not had a surplus of these. Generally speaking, when we have gotten to the 290, it has already been pretty well agreed upon by leadership.

As the gentleman knows, on commemorative coins, they can be done in our years. We are doing coins already for 2007 and years beyond that, I believe, at this point. But almost always you work it out in advance.

As the gentleman knows from our committee work, I do not know of any time where we have actually had to pick and choose at the committee on these coins. It is almost always worked out in advance and agreed upon.

Mr. Chairman, I truly do not worry about this from a political point of view. I really do not think this is a necessary amendment to deal with that, based on what I have seen. I do not think limiting it to two is going to change that at all.

I certainly would support the best people, which is what we are trying to do. Frankly, most of these bills, while there may be a Democrat sponsor or a Republican sponsor, almost always has a cosponsor from the other side. You cannot really do it without sponsors from both sides. So there is much more bipartisanship in this process than almost anything I know about in this Congress.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman will yield further, the rules will have changed once we pass this bill, whereas right now it is unlimited. Granted, where it is unlimited, there has not been this rush to introduce bills. As the gentleman mentioned before, this is not done in a very quick fashion. This is done in a bipartisan way.

But when we limit it to two per year, we are putting a cap on it, I think we can in the future find ourselves in a situation where, all right maybe five on each side is a little much, maybe two on each side. Then which of the four? Who makes that decision as to which of the four gets the medal? And therein lies the politics.

Unfortunately, I think you are creating more politics in this bill. I do not think that is your intent. I think you are doing this because you want to enrich the value of the gold medal. I understand that. But I think inherently by the changes being proposed, you are bringing more politics into the decisionmaking as to who obtains this medal. That is what I am trying to in a sense, avoid by evenly dividing between Democrat and Republican, majority, minority, the ability for both sides to equally participate in this process.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, reclaiming my time, technically, as the gentleman and I both know, we have seen a lot, the majority is always going to control ultimately what is going to happen on the floor. It will go through the committee and go to the floor.

I still go back to a whole history. I have been here for 12 years. I have watched these medals. I have never seen a bit of politics in these medals. I just have not seen it.

I do not think the limiting of the numbers is really going to alter that. I

think a large part now is because you need all those signatures, you just cannot do it in a partisan sense.

So I do not think this amendment is necessary. I think it brings in an element of politics that frankly we just do not have in the legislation. So I will oppose it. I understand the gentleman's arguments, but I would oppose the amendment.

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

Unfortunately, I think that in the past there may have been some politics involved. I understand that one of my colleagues on this side had achieved the requisite number of signatures for a commemorative gold medal for the Columbia 107 in the last Congress, in the middle of the last Congress, and that was never awarded.

So I do not know why. I do not know if there was any reason for that, when the requisite number of signatures were given, that that bill was not taken up in the committee and that Member was not successful in getting that award to the Columbia 107. Why that was not done, I do not know. I do not know if politics was part of that. Maybe someone can answer that question.

But therein lies the problem, that from time to time, quite possibly there is politics involved as to why some individuals receive the gold medals and others do not.

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

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

Mr. Chairman, to close, and again in opposition, I think it is unfortunate and really not necessary to put Republican-Democrat in the statute. That is really what we are trying to do; that is what the gentleman from New York is trying to do. This is an issue that needs to be worked out at the leadership level, which traditionally has been the case.

The last example that the gentleman mentioned, I do not know what all that had to do with, but I think it was above our pay grade. But at the same time, that is how it works, and to encase Republican and Democrat in the statute I think at this time would certainly not be in the best interests of the process, and that is why I continue to oppose my friend's amendment.

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

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

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate my colleague on the other side. It is the pay grade issue I am concerned about, as the gentleman mentioned, as to who makes these decisions and as to why some individuals are successful in garnering a gold medal for an individual or group, and maybe another is not. There is some political judgment that is made as well, I believe.

As the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) said, there is a process that

will begin after this legislation is passed, nuances that Members will work through. I would just offer, if this amendment were to pass, they would work through these nuances.

As I mentioned before, if two gold medals were enacted into law by Democrats and I had a third that I wanted to get passed, I would go to the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) and say, Mike, we do not have any more room on our side. Here is an opportunity; someone is deserving. Would you consider sponsoring this and passing it? I think, quite frankly, if there was a compelling argument, the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) would say, Certainly, JOE CROWLEY. We will do it.

That is a nuance to work through as well in terms of working in a bipartisan way. This simply ensures that both Republicans and Democrats are working in a bipartisan way, beyond the two-thirds vote; that medals are not being used for political purposes, but are being given because the individuals deserve them. That is what we are trying to do with this amendment.

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

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY).

The question was taken; and the Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote, and pending that, I make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

SEQUENTIAL VOTES POSTPONED IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, proceedings will now resume on those amendments on which further proceedings were postponed in the following order: amendment No. 2 offered by Mr. CROWLEY of New York and Amendment No. 3 offered by Mr. CROWLEY of New York. The first vote will be on Amendment No. 2 offered by Mr. CROWLEY of New York.

The Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the time for the second electronic vote.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MR. CROWLEY

The CHAIRMAN. The pending business is the demand for a recorded vote on amendment No. 2 offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 189, noes 212, not voting 32, as follows:

[Roll No. 10]

AYES—189

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Andrews
Baca
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd
Brady (PA)
Brown (OH)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardin
Cardoza
Carmahan
Carson
Case
Chandler
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Conyers
Cooper
Costello
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (TN)
DeGette
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Edwards
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Evans
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Ford
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva

NOES—212

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bass
Beauprez
Biggert
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehlert
Boehner
Bonilla
Bonner
Boozman
Bradley (NH)
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite,
Ginny
Burgess

Gutierrez
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth
Higgins
Hinchev
Hinojosa
Holden
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee
(TX)
Jefferson
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy (RI)
Kildee
Kilpatrick (MI)
Kind
Kucinich
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Maloney
Markey
Matheson
McCarthy
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McKinney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeke (NY)
Melancon
Menendez
Michaud
Millender-
McDonald
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Oliver

Buyer
Calvert
Camp
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Choccola
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Culberson
Cunningham
Davis (KY)
Davis, Jo Ann
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeLay
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.

Harris
Hart
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Hayworth
Hefley
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Holt
Hostettler
Hulshof
Hunter
Hyde
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Istook
Jindal
Johnson (CT)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Keller
Kelly
Kennedy (MN)
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline
Knollenberg
Kolbe
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Latham
LaTourette
Leach
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel
E.
Mack

NOT VOTING—32

Baird
Berkley
Bilirakis
Bono
Boustany
Burton (IN)
Costa
Cox
Davis (FL)
DeFazio
Delahunt

□ 1222

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, Mr. SOUDER, Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut and Mr. DOOLITTLE changed their vote from “aye” to “no.”

Mr. CLEAVER changed his vote from “no” to “aye.”

So the amendment was rejected. The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated against:
Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Chairman, on rollcall No. 10 I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted “no.”

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MR. CROWLEY

The CHAIRMAN. The pending business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

Marchant
Marshall
McCaul (TX)
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Ney
Northup
Norwood
Nunes
Nussle
Osborne
Otter
Oxley
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pombo
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)

Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Ros-Lehtinen
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Ryun (KS)
Sanchez, Loretta
Saxton
Schwarz (MI)
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Sherwood
Shimkus
Shuster
Simmons
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Sodrel
Souder
Stearns
Sweeney
Taylor (NC)
Terry
Thomas
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walden (OR)
Walsh
Wamp
Porter
Weldon (FL)
Weldon (PA)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

Ehlers
Feeney
Foley
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Gallegly
Gibbons
Granger
Graves
Israel
Jenkins

Lantos
Manzullo
McCotter
Moran (VA)
Portman
Rohrabacher
Roybal-Allard
Shays
Simpson
Sullivan

Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Ferguson
Fitzpatrick (PA)
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxy
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Green (WI)
Gutknecht

The CHAIRMAN. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 182, noes 211, not voting 40, as follows:

[Roll No. 11]

AYES—182

Abercrombie Green, Al
Ackerman Green, Gene
Allen Gutierrez
Andrews Hastings (FL)
Baca Herseth
Baldwin Higgins
Barrow Hinchey
Bean Hinojosa
Becerra Holden
Berman Holt
Berry Honda
Bishop (GA) Hooley
Bishop (NY) Hoyer
Blumenauer Inslee
Boren Jackson (IL)
Boswell Jackson-Lee
Boucher (TX)
Boyd Jefferson
Brady (PA) Johnson, E. B.
Brown (OH) Jones (OH)
Brown, Corrine Kanjorski
Butterfield Kaptur
Capps Kennedy (RI)
Capuano Kildee
Cardin Kilpatrick (MI)
Cardoza Kind
Carnahan Kucinich
Carson Langevin
Case Larsen (WA)
Chandler Larson (CT)
Clay Lee
Cleaver Levin
Clyburn Lewis (GA)
Conyers Lipinski
Cooper Lofgren, Zoe
Costello Lowey
Cramer Lynch
Crowley Maloney
Cuellar Markey
Cummings Matheson
Davis (AL) McCarthy
Davis (CA) McCollum (MN)
Davis (IL) McDermott
Davis (TN) McGovern
DeGette McIntyre
DeLauro McKinney
Dicks Meehan
Dingell Meek (FL)
Doggett Meeks (NY)
Doyle Melancon
Edwards Menendez
Emanuel Michaud
Engel Millender-
Eshoo McDonald
Etheridge Miller (NC)
Evans Miller, George
Farr Mollohan
Fattah Murtha
Filner Nadler
Ford Napolitano
Gonzalez Neal (MA)
Gordon Oberstar

NOES—211

Aderholt Buyer
Akin Calvert
Alexander Camp
Bachus Cannon
Baker Cantor
Barrett (SC) Capito
Bartlett (MD) Carter
Barton (TX) Castle
Bass Chabot
Beauprez Chocola
Biggert Coble
Bishop (UT) Cole (OK)
Blackburn Conaway
Blunt Cox
Boehlert Crenshaw
Boehner Culberson
Bonilla Cunningham
Bonner Davis (KY)
Boozman Davis, Jo Ann
Bradley (NH) Davis, Tom
Brady (TX) Deal (GA)
Brown (SC) DeLay
Brown-Waite, Dent
Ginny Diaz-Balart, L.
Burgess Diaz-Balart, M.

Gutknecht Marchant
Hall Marshall
Harris McCaul (TX)
Hart McCreery
Hastings (WA) McHenry
Hayworth McHugh
Hefley McKeon
Hensarling McMorris
Herger McNulty
Hobson Mica
Hoekstra Miller (FL)
Hostettler Miller (MI)
Hulshof Moran (KS)
Hunter Murphy
Hyde Musgrave
Inglis (SC) Myrick
Issa Neugebauer
Istook Ney
Jindal Northup
Johnson (CT) Norwood
Johnson (IL) Nunes
Johnson, Sam Nussle
Jones (NC) Osborne
Keller Otter
Kelly Oxley
Kennedy (MN) Paul
King (IA) Pearce
King (NY) Pence
Kingston Peterson (PA)
Kirk Petri
Kline Pickering
Knollenberg Pitts
Kolbe Platts
Kuhl (NY) Poe
LaHood Pombo
Latham Porter
LaTourette Portman
Leach Price (GA)
Lewis (CA) Pryce (OH)
Lewis (KY) Putnam
Linder Radanovich
LoBiondo Ramstad
Lucas Regula
Lungren, Daniel Rehberg
E. Reichert
Mack Renzi

NOT VOTING—40

Baird Gallegly
Berkley Gibbons
Bilirakis Gohmert
Bono Granger
Boustany Graves
Burton (IN) Grijalva
Costa Harman
Cubin Hayes
Davis (FL) Israel
DeFazio Jenkins
Delahunt Lantos
Ehlers Manzullo
Foley McCotter
Frank (MA) Miller, Gary

□ 1229

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated for:

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, on rollcall No. 11, Crowley No. 3, had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Chairman, I would like to inform you that I was absent for rollcall vote No. 10 and rollcall vote No. 11 on January 26, 2005. These votes were on amendments to H.R. 54, the Congressional Gold Medal Enhancement Act of 2005.

I respectfully request that it be entered into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD that if present, I would have voted: Rollcall vote No. 10, on the Crowley amendment—"no"; rollcall vote No. 11, on the Crowley amendment—"no."

The CHAIRMAN. Under the rule, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. TERRY) having assumed the chair, Mr. LAHOOD, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the

Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 54) to amend title 31, United States Code, to provide reasonable standards for congressional gold medals, and for other purposes, pursuant to House Resolution 42, he reported the bill back to the House with an amendment adopted by the Committee of the Whole.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the rule, the previous question is ordered.

The question is on the amendment.

The amendment was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMEND OFFERED BY MR.

CROWLEY

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommend at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman opposed to the bill?

Mr. CROWLEY. Yes, I am opposed to the bill in its current form.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommend.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Crowley of New York moves to recommend the bill, H.R. 54, to the Committee on Financial Services with instructions to report the same to the House forthwith with the following amendment:

Page 2, strike line 7 and all that follows through line 19 and insert the following new paragraph:

“(2) PROGRAM REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary may not strike a congressional gold medal for presentation posthumously on behalf of any individual except during the 20-year period beginning 5 years after the death of the individual (unless the Act of Congress authorizing the striking of such medal was enacted before the death of such individual).”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

□ 1230

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, today we begin the 109th Congress in earnest, and we do so by considering a bill that we do not need to act on for a problem that, in our view and in the view of many of my colleagues, simply does not exist. We considered this bill today not in the spirit of openness and bipartisanship that should categorize the democratic debate in the House, but with a restrictive rule that did not allow us to have a debate on a key issue: whether one of the highest honors that can be bestowed upon citizens of our country for their extraordinary deeds, a Congressional Gold Medal, can be awarded to one individual or more for their collective honorable or heroic actions.

Mr. Speaker, if this bill passes in its current form, not only would it limit medals to two per year, but it would prevent the House of Representatives and the Senate from awarding medals in the future to any group of individuals for their collective heroic deeds,