

Ohio (Mr. NEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2872, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT TO AWARD A CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1259) to authorize the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress, collectively, to the Tuskegee Airmen in recognition of their unique military record, which inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1259

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

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

(1) In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt overruled his top generals and ordered the creation of an all Black flight training program. President Roosevelt took this action one day after the NAACP filed suit on behalf of Howard University student Yancy Williams and others in Federal court to force the Department of War to accept Black pilot trainees. Yancy Williams had a civilian pilot's license and had earned an engineering degree. Years later, Major Yancy Williams participated in an air surveillance project created by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

(2) Due to the rigid system of racial segregation that prevailed in the United States during World War II, Black military pilots were trained at a separate airfield built near Tuskegee, Alabama. They became known as the "Tuskegee Airmen".

(3) The Tuskegee Airmen inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces, paving the way for full racial integration in the Armed Forces. They overcame the enormous challenges of prejudice and discrimination, succeeding, despite obstacles that threatened failure.

(4) From all accounts, the training of the Tuskegee Airmen was an experiment established to prove that so-called "coloreds" were incapable of operating expensive and complex combat aircraft. Studies commissioned by the Army War College between 1924 and 1939 concluded that Blacks were unfit for leadership roles and incapable of aviation. Instead, the Tuskegee Airmen excelled.

(5) Overall, some 992 Black pilots graduated from the pilot training program of the Tuskegee Army Air Field, with the last class finishing in June 1946, 450 of whom served in combat. The first class of cadets began in July 1941 with 13 airmen, all of whom had college degrees, some with Ph.D. degrees, and all of whom had pilot's licenses. One of the graduates was Captain Benjamin O. Davis Jr., a United States Military Academy graduate. Four aviation cadets were commissioned as second lieutenants, and 5 received Army Air Corps silver pilot wings.

(6) That the experiment achieved success rather than the expected failure is further evidenced by the eventual promotion of 3 of these pioneers through the commissioned officer ranks to flag rank, including the late

General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., United States Air Force, the late General Daniel "Chappie" James, United States Air Force, our Nation's first Black 4-star general, and Major General Lucius Theus, United States Air Force (retired).

(7) 450 Black fighter pilots under the command of then Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., fought in World War II aerial battles over North Africa, Sicily, and Europe, flying, in succession, P-40, P-39, P-47, and P-51 aircraft. These gallant men flew 15,553 sorties and 1,578 missions with the 12th Tactical Air Force and the 15th Strategic Air Force.

(8) Colonel Davis later became the first Black flag officer of the United States Air Force, retired as a 3-star general, and was honored with a 4th star in retirement by President William J. Clinton.

(9) German pilots, who both feared and respected the Tuskegee Airmen, called them the "Schwartzte Vogelmenschen" (or "Black Birdmen"). White American bomber crews reverently referred to them as the "Black Redtail Angels", because of the bright red painted on the tail assemblies of their fighter aircraft and because of their reputation for not losing bombers to enemy fighters as they provided close escort for bombing missions over strategic targets in Europe.

(10) The 99th Fighter Squadron, after having distinguished itself over North Africa, Sicily, and Italy, joined 3 other Black squadrons, the 100th, the 301st, and the 302nd, designated as the 332nd Fighter Group. They then comprised the largest fighter unit in the 15th Air Force. From Italian bases, they destroyed many enemy targets on the ground and at sea, including a German destroyer in strafing attacks, and they destroyed numerous enemy aircraft in the air and on the ground.

(11) 66 of these pilots were killed in combat, while another 32 were either forced down or shot down and captured to become prisoners of war. These Black airmen came home with 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, Bronze Stars, Silver Stars, and Legions of Merit, one Presidential Unit Citation, and the Red Star of Yugoslavia.

(12) Other Black pilots, navigators, bombardiers and crewman who were trained for medium bombardment duty as the 477th Bomber Group (Medium) were joined by veterans of the 332nd Fighter Group to form the 477th Composite Group, flying the B-25 and P-47 aircraft. The demands of the members of the 477th Composite Group for parity in treatment and for recognition as competent military professionals, combined with the magnificent wartime records of the 99th Fighter Squadron and the 332nd Fighter Group, led to a review of the racial policies of the Department of War.

(13) In September 1947, the United States Air Force, as a separate service, reactivated the 332d Fighter Group under the Tactical Air command. Members of the 332d Fighter Group were "Top Guns" in the 1st annual Air Force Gunnery Meet in 1949.

(14) For every Black pilot, there were 12 other civilian or military Black men and women performing ground support duties. Many of these men and women remained in the military service during the post-World War II era and spearheaded the integration of the Armed Forces of the United States.

(15) Major achievements are attributed to many of those who returned to civilian life and earned leadership positions and respect as businessmen, corporate executives, religious leaders, lawyers, doctors, educators, bankers, and political leaders.

(16) A period of nearly 30 years of anonymity for the Tuskegee Airmen was ended in 1972 with the founding of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., in Detroit, Michigan. Organized as a non-military and nonprofit entity, Tuskegee

Airmen, Inc., exists primarily to motivate and inspire young Americans to become participants in our Nation's society and its democratic process, and to preserve the history of their legacy.

(17) The Tuskegee Airmen have several memorials in place to perpetuate the memory of who they were and what they accomplished, including—

(A) the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., National Scholarship Fund for high school seniors who excel in mathematics, but need financial assistance to begin a college program;

(B) a museum in historic Fort Wayne in Detroit, Michigan;

(C) Memorial Park at the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio;

(D) a statue of a Tuskegee Airman in the Honor Park at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado; and

(E) a National Historic Site at Moton Field, where primary flight training was performed under contract with the Tuskegee Institute.

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the award, on behalf of the Congress, of a single gold medal of appropriate design in honor of the Tuskegee Airmen, collectively, in recognition of their unique military record, which inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces.

(b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Treasury (hereafter in this Act referred to as the "Secretary") shall strike the gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

(c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the gold medal in honor of the Tuskegee Airmen under subsection (a), the gold medal shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where it will be displayed as appropriate and made available for research.

(2) SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.—It is the sense of the Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should make the gold medal received under paragraph (1) available for display elsewhere, particularly at other appropriate locations associated with the Tuskegee Airmen.

SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.

Under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck under section 2, at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

SEC. 4. NATIONAL MEDALS.

Medals struck pursuant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS; PROCEEDS OF SALE.

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be charged against the United States Mint Public Enterprise Fund, an amount not to exceed \$30,000 to pay for the cost of the medals authorized under section 2.

(b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the sale of duplicate bronze medals under section 3 shall be deposited in the United States Mint Public Enterprise Fund.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WATT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1259, introduced by the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), which would award a Congressional Gold Medal, the highest honor the Congress can bestow, on the Tuskegee Airmen.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, this award is long, long overdue. Pilots of the 99th Fighter Squadron, including the first group of black pilots who trained at the little airstrip in Alabama near Tuskegee College, and later the 100th, 301st, and 302nd, were not even expected by some to be capable of meeting the challenge. Cruelly, studies commissioned by the Army War College in the 1920s and 1930s speculated that African Americans were capable neither of military leadership nor of flying increasingly complex fighter aircraft.

Tell that theory to Lee A. Archer, the young man from Yonkers who grew up dreaming of being a fighter pilot and reading comic books about the gallant fighter pilots of the First World War. Lee Archer flew 169 combat missions in his P-40 Tomahawk, P-39 Cobra, P-47 Thunderbolt, and his P-51 Mustang, known as the Macon Belle. He became an ace, notching five downed enemy aircraft in his career.

Tell that also to then-Captain Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., a West Point grad, who was one of the first 13 pilots trained near Tuskegee and became the first black flag officer in the Air Force, retiring with three stars and being granted a fourth in retirement by President Clinton.

Tell that to Lieutenant Clarence "Lucky" Luster, who destroyed three German planes and earned a Distinguished Flying Cross the day Archer notched his first victory.

In all, Mr. Speaker, these men, who were not supposed to be able to fly, came home from piloting their distinctive, red-tailed fighters with 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, Bronze and Silver Stars and Legions of Merit, a Presidential Unit Citation, and even the Red Star of Yugoslavia. They also came home with the knowledge that no one could plausibly assert that a segregated armed services made any sense, and integration soon followed.

After the war, these men became business and political and civic leaders, many quite successful both in and outside the military, blazing trails at home the way they had blazed the trails in the skies of North Africa and Europe. Today, Mr. Speaker, we are here during Black History Month to add one more honor to that list.

The legislation before us, cosponsored by 308 Members of the House, seeks to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the Tuskegee Airmen as a group and give it to the Smithsonian for display, with provisions that the medal may be loaned out temporarily

to appropriate sites: perhaps to Moton Field in Alabama, where they trained, or to the Air Force Academy, where a statute of a Tuskegee Airman stands in Honor Park.

Rarely, Mr. Speaker, do we get to do something in this great Chamber that is so widely supported, so appropriate, and so long overdue. It is a pleasure to be here today with Mr. WATT, who is managing the bill, and also again with Mr. RANGEL and the many sponsors of this. Also, I can tell you that we were there for the 60th anniversary with Mr. RANGEL and the Speaker and leaders, and my wife and Mrs. Rangel, and it was a pleasure to be there on that historic day with our congressional delegation.

I commend Mr. RANGEL and the other Members for supporting this, and I urge immediate passage of H.R. 1259.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I am a proud cosponsor of this bill, but that is not why I am here. I am here because of the protocols of the House. The protocols of the House say that a bill goes through a committee and somebody on that committee should be controlling time. But the protocols of the House sometimes put you in a position that you know you are inadequate to effectively do, and that is my position today, because the real person who should be being honored by controlling time is the person who was the original cosponsor of this, my good friend and colleague, Representative RANGEL.

So I want to proudly say that I am a strong supporter of this bill, but I want to yield immediately to my colleague from New York, Representative RANGEL, as much time as he may consume.

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

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, the modesty of the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus amazes even me, because destiny would have it that this is the last day of African History Month and he is the chairman of the historic Congressional Black Caucus. So that shatters protocol, and I thank him for his friendship, his support and the leadership that he has given to all Americans through the Congressional Black Caucus.

Today probably will be one of the closest days to bipartisanship that this august body has seen in a long, long time. And, of course, Chairman NEY is right: what a historic day that was when we went and saw how many tens of thousands of Americans were prepared to give up their lives, knowing the dangers of the Normandy beachhead.

We were there with Sam Gibbons and the leadership, and it did make all of us so proud to be Americans that day. We were not Republicans, Democrats or liberals; we were just so proud that we had this great Nation that had gone

so far in providing her leadership for those who survived and for those who continue to serve.

We have 300 cosponsors of this bill in this body, and I am thoroughly convinced, Mr. Speaker, that the only reason we do not have the rest is that somebody on staff did not handle this right. Because there has been no one that has not felt proud to be able to say three things: thank you, thank you, thank you.

It is absolutely amazing how great this country is when you find young Americans, black as they may be, victims of racism though they may be, fighting to be able to defend this country against the Germans and the Italians and against the Japanese.

The NAACP fought and won the opportunity for this group of young people to be trained, even though the Army had already ruled that they could not be black airmen, or colored airmen or Negro airmen. So they won the right to put their lives on the line and share in the sacrifice to which this great Republic was attached.

I have to thank BARNEY FRANK. He gave me all the questions to ask Chairman OXLEY so that I could get the right answers in order to expedite the bill. And MIKE OXLEY has just been absolutely terrific, as has the Speaker in making sure that we guided this through the parliamentary procedure to be where we are today.

And talking about bipartisanship, Mr. HUNTER, the chairman of the Defense Committee, joined in with Mr. SKELTON, the ranking Democrat, to send a letter to all of his colleagues asking them to see their way clear to support this bill.

And, of course, the last is something that I have to thank Secretary Rumsfeld for. My book is not completed, and I am glad it is not, so I can thank him publicly for sending out a letter to the House and Senate recommending a gold medal for the historic Tuskegee Airmen. They fought not really just for black folks, but they fought for a better America. They fought for a better world. They were pioneers not only in fighting the war, but in showing and giving self-esteem to so many younger people, inspiring them to do what so many Americans just dream of doing, and that is to fly a plane in the defense of their country.

Even though they were denied all types of recognition during the time that they served, and even though they were subjected to all types of scourges by other people, they still continued to fight. There were 450 Tuskegee Airmen that served with the 99th Fighter Squadron and were able to then join with the 332nd Fighter Group in the 15th Air Force.

□ 1545

They flew 15,500 combat sorties, including more than 6,000 missions for the 99th Squadron before July 1944. Sixty-six pilots lost their lives and were killed in action. Thirty-two were

downed or became prisoners of war. And among the outfit they received 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 744 Air Medals, eight Purple Hearts and 14 Bronze Stars.

My colleagues, in all of the time that they were protecting American bombers on their missions from the United States to Europe, in all of that time, no matter how many times that they were shot down, they never lost a bomber, never lost a United States bomber throughout World War II. They set an example for all of us somehow to try to follow, and that is that the vestiges of slavery were not over then and they are not over now. And certainly, when we take a look at those brave young men and women that are fighting in Iraq, we cannot tell whether they are Republican or Democrats; and we do not care whether they are Black, White, or Brown. They are sharing the sacrifices that this great Nation is involved in.

I am so proud that because of my age, my community and my friendship, that the spirit of the Tuskegee Airmen is not involved with history books with me because one of those great airmen happens to be one of my very, very best friends, and that is Percy Sutton. Percy not only flew the planes but he was involved in intelligence and he provided the leadership, not just in the service, but became a leader in the civil rights movement and became a friend and advocate in support of Malcolm X, became the borough president of Manhattan, ran for mayor, and then when that did not work out, started out in business to become one of the most successful people in communication that we have had in the city and in the country.

And so, what did that mean to a CHARLIE RANGEL, who came from a depressed community? We had one symbol of hope. It was not World War II. It was restoring the Apollo Theater, and he brought back the Apollo, and with the empowerment zones, I invite all of you to be my guest in seeing the restoration of a historic beautiful community, Harlem. And Percy Sutton is the father and the creator of giving that type of leadership to my hometown.

What about Roscoe Brown?

Listen carefully. Roscoe Brown, with a single-engine fighter, was the first American to shoot down a German jet, with a propeller plane, was the first to shoot down a German jet fighter plane. And after this, he did not give up his struggle. He continued in education, became president of a university, and today still teaches in the Harlem community.

Lee Archer. As you pointed out, Mr. Chairman, a guy who dreamed as a kid and fulfilled that dream and then finally went into business and even today, even though he is retired, provides the leadership for small business people and others.

As we salute these people today, it gives us an opportunity to think about today and tomorrow, where color

should never be an issue with those people that should not have to put their lives on the line to be respected as being Americans who are fully entitled to all of the benefits.

And to the Members today, I am certain that I speak for the members of the Tuskegee Airmen, let this be the beginning. As we say thank you, let me never have to apologize for forgetting someone or not giving them an opportunity. Let this be the day where Democrats and Republicans can come together, ranking Members and majority Members, in saying as we look at the past and see where we made mistakes; let this be the guidance to provide leadership for all of us to avoid the opportunities in the future.

To all of you who have supported the bill, on behalf of those survivors and their families of the Tuskegee Airmen, I say three things: thank you, thank you, and thank you very much.

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS).

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and I thank my colleague, the ranking member, Mr. RANGEL, for his dedication and perseverance in obtaining the highest congressional honor for one of the most courageous groups of Americans, the Tuskegee Airmen. At a time when civil rights were still being denied and segregation persisted through many parts of our country, the Tuskegee Airmen bravely fought and gave their lives abroad for freedom and liberty that sadly oftentimes they did not receive here at home.

Before 1940, the African Americans were denied the right to fly with the United States military. However, from 1942 to 1946, the Tuskegee Airmen graduated 992 airmen from the pilot training program of the Tuskegee Army airfield, while 450 served in combat.

For every African American pilot, there were 10 other civilian or military African American men and women on the ground performing support duties. Many of them remained in the military during the post-World War II era and spearheaded the integration of the armed services with the integration of the Air Force in 1949.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to go to Iraq about a year ago and visited with the 332nd Fighter Group, the follow-on from the 99th Fighter Squadron that was the Tuskegee Airmen and had a chance to visit with the wonderful men and women who make up that 332nd Fighter Squadron. What a group they are. And they certainly recognize their roots. They recognize the heritage, the valiant heritage of the 99th Fighter Squadron. In fact, Balad air base, where this fighter group is stationed in Iraq, is the site for the Air Force's contingent aeromedical staging facilities where all the casualties in Iraq are brought to this central staging facility, stabilized, flown from Balad to Landstuhl, Germany and then subsequently flown from Landstuhl back

here to Walter Reed in the United States.

When I was there in February, they had performed 19,000 such transfers from the battlefield with one inter-transfer death. I had an opportunity to go back in August of this past year, in 2005: 27,000 patient transfers, again only the one intertransfer death.

Clearly, these men and women are following that great tradition that was started by the 99th Fighter Squadron. Well, sadly today, only 200 of the original Tuskegee Airmen are still with us. I am fortunate to have three of these courageous men living in the district that I represent: Mr. Don Elder, Mr. Robert McDaniel and Mr. Claude Platt. Recently, the Claude R. Platt VFW Tuskegee Airmen chapter was formed. And I am confident that others will benefit greatly from this chapter's rich history and legacy.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for your service and your dedication to your country. I am honored and privileged to represent you before the United States Congress.

Mr. Speaker, the mayor of my town of Highland Village, Texas, back home is the son of a Tuskegee Airman. Mayor Bill Lawrence was born and grew up in Tuskegee, Alabama; and his father served proudly with the 99th Fighter Squadron.

The 26th Congressional District of Texas also pays tribute to the brave men through the National Cowboys of Color museum located in Fort Worth, Texas. A wing of the museum is dedicated to the Claude R. Platt VFW Tuskegee Airmen chapter. The wing is the home of a number of personal artifacts, autographed paintings of the airmen in training, proclamations and other items of recognition.

Mr. Speaker, if you are ever in north Texas, Mr. Ranking Member, if you are ever in north Texas, I encourage you to visit this museum and learn more about the sacrifices and the contributions of these heroic Americans.

Mr. Speaker, once again I want to thank Ranking Member RANGEL for his bringing forth this legislation honoring the Tuskegee Airmen for their service and dedication to our country. We cannot say it enough. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes and 10 seconds 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, let me thank the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina. Let me, as well, appreciate the fact, as Mr. RANGEL has said, that we have a bipartisan moment. I thank the chairman, Mr. NEY, for his support and leadership.

Mr. RANGEL, might I acknowledge you for a brilliant stroke of patriotic genius, for you have recognized that those who battled on the forefront of World War II, who may have worn a

different skin color, came home not in dishonor, but not with much honor. And so I am very humbled to have been one of the cosponsors to join you in the recognition, collectively, of the numbers of airmen who can claim Tuskegee, Alabama and the Tuskegee Institute as a starting point of them being able to reach their dreams of serving on the front lines in World War II and fighting for their America.

As Mr. RANGEL said earlier, these individuals suffered in a segregated America and, in fact, were rejected and rebuffed when they asked to join the United States military to sacrifice their lives. But they were persistent, and they got called to be the Tuskegee Airmen and there were personnel sent from Washington to train them. And sometimes they were thinking, why did I get this assignment? But now we are here today to honor them with a Congressional Gold Medal, some 992 black pilots, and then of course, any number of civilians who were likewise engaged.

Thirty years after the war was over, you heard nothing about the Tuskegee Airmen. And then, of course, they did the wise thing by establishing the first club.

I too have a personal story, because I am proud to say that my father-in-law, Phillip Ferguson Lee, was a Tuskegee Airman; and from the time of my marriage in the early years, what an honor to travel around him or to meet those gentlemen. I was honored to be able to see those gentlemen in their distinguished jackets, senior as they were, but proud and strong. Thank you, Mr. RANGEL. Thank you to the Tuskegee Airmen. Thank you, America, for recognizing these battle-worn soldiers. God bless them and God bless America.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1259, "to authorize the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress, collectively, to the Tuskegee Airmen in recognition of their unique military record, which inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces."

On July 19, 1941 the American Air Force created an all black flight training program at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The Tuskegee Airmen were not only unique in their military record, but they inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces, paving the way for integration of the armed services in the U.S.

The first class of cadets began in July 1941 with 13 men, all of whom had college degrees, some with PhD's and all had pilot's licenses. From all accounts, the training of the Tuskegee Airmen was an experiment established to prove that "coloreds" were incapable of operating expensive and complex combat aircraft. Stationed in the segregated South, the black cadets were denied rifles.

The Tuskegee Airmen were credited with 261 aircraft destroyed, 148 aircraft damaged, 15,553 combat sorties and 1,578 missions over Italy and North Africa. They destroyed or damaged over 950 units of ground transportation and escorted more than 200 bombing missions. "We proved that the antidote to racism is excellence in performance," said retired Lt. Col. Herbert Carter, who started his military career as a pilot and maintenance officer with

the Tuskegee Airmen's 99th Fighter Squadron. Clearly, the experiment, as it was called, was an unqualified success.

The Tuskegee Airmen were awarded three Presidential Unit Citations, 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses and Legions of Merit, along with the Red Star of Yugoslavia, nine Purple Hearts, 14 Bronze Stars and more than 700 Air medals and clusters. It goes without question that the Tuskegee Airmen are deserving of the Congressional Gold Medal.

I would like to thank Congressman RANGEL for his work in bringing this legislation to the floor of Congress, and his efforts in gathering 308 cosigners. This is an important, and long overdue piece of legislation. I ask my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to give their support to H.R. 1259, authorizing "the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress, collectively, to the Tuskegee Airmen . . ."

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SCHWARZ).

Mr. SCHWARZ of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I have had the pleasure of meeting the Tuskegee Airmen, the survivors, on a number of occasions. A number of them live in my home State of Michigan, especially Major General Lucius Theus, who lived in Detroit, a distinguished member of the Tuskegee Airmen. They last rallied in Michigan at Jackson, Michigan, in the summer of 2004; and our colleague from the other body, Senator MCCAIN, and I were privileged to be at that meeting and greet the airmen.

As the unit approached its first year in action, it learned that it was being transferred to the 332nd Fighter Group, a unit activated at Tuskegee in mid-1942 and transferred to Michigan in 1943 where it conducted training at Selfridge Air Base and Oscoda Air Base, both in the eastern side, on the eastern side of the State of Michigan, before deploying to Italy. The 332nd was composed of four African American squadrons, the 99th 100th, 301st, and 302nd under the command of Colonel Davis.

Not long after arriving in Italy, the members of the 332nd were heavily involved in combat missions. Assigned to bomber escort with the 15th Air Force, it escorted the bombers on missions around Italy, flew on the raids to the access oil refineries in Ploesti, Romania, and strafed German troops retreating from Greece. It established a reputation for protecting its bombers. The pilots always followed Colonel Davis' orders. Your job is to protect the bombers and not chase enemy aircraft for personal glory, he said. The Germans called the 332nd the Schwartz Vogrl Menschen, the black birdmen, and began to see a plane with a red tail as something to fear.

On March 24, 1945, the 332nd went on the longest mission flown by the 15th Air Force to the Daimler-Benz tankworks in Berlin. On this mission, it downed three of the new Messerschmitt ME-262 jet fighters. The group received a distinguished unit citation for its performance that day.

At the end of the war, the Tuskegee Airmen returned to an America that was as segregated as the one they had left.

□ 1600

Some of the veterans became leaders in the fight for desegregation, both military and civilian. With their own community, they offered pride and encouragement. And to the white community they offered an example of the equality of men. The Air Force became desegregated in April of 1948. Unfortunately, the rest of the Nation would take much longer. But there is no doubt that the example, professionalism, and expertise of the Tuskegee Airmen hastened that day.

It is fitting today, then, Mr. Speaker, that this bill would bestow the Congressional Gold Medal, our body's highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions, upon the members of the Tuskegee Airmen in recognition of their service to our country during World War II and in the years after that conflict. They are living examples of what is possible when racism is defeated and opportunities are equally available to all members of our great country.

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot rise to the heights of CHARLIE RANGEL, but I rise in tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen. For years, it seems we have considered bills honoring the contributions of these heroic airmen. It is about time this one passed and passed with huge support.

Their achievements in support of our efforts in World War II have inspired books and movies. They have earned decorations and awards for valor that are too numerous to cite. As Mr. RANGEL noted, 992 graduated from pilot training at Tuskegee; 450 went overseas to North Africa and Italy; some 150 died either in training or in combat missions. And yet, though they were shot down, not a single bomber, as Mr. RANGEL noted, among the many they escorted was ever shot down.

While their accomplishments have been recognized by the military, the military in truth cannot adequately honor all of their accomplishments because these men fought and won other battles that were not military in nature. They defied those who thought they lacked the intelligence, the skills, the courage, even the patriotism to fly and fight. Their courage in the air is legendary, but their courage on the ground and in our society made their achievements in the air all the more meaningful and remarkable.

Today, the impact of the Tuskegee Airmen reaches far beyond the skies of Italy and North Africa. Their service led to social changes in our country that include the integration of our Armed Forces. In 1948, Harry Truman

signed Executive Order 9981, directing equality of treatment and opportunity in all of the armed services. President Truman's order ended racial segregation in the military and was a major step towards ending racial segregation in the United States of America.

Today, we recognize the Tuskegee Airmen for valor in battle, but also for accomplishments that succeeded, that transcended the battlefield like Executive Order 9981. The Tuskegee Airmen, the 99th Fighter Squadron and the 332d Fighter Group, not only deserve the Congressional Gold Medal, they will add luster to it.

I salute the Tuskegee Airmen and I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2¼ minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON).

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, on July 19, 1941, the United States military began a revolutionary program in Alabama to train black Americans as military pilots. The program helped change military culture and negative perceptions of blacks in the military, especially the Air Corps.

The Division of Aeronautics of Tuskegee Institute, the famed school of learning founded by Booker T. Washington in 1881, and I am a descendant of his, conducted flight training for aspiring black pilots; and my cousin, still alive, living here, Ira O'Neal, was one of those pilots. The first classes of Tuskegee Airmen were trained to be fighter pilots for the famous 99th Fighter Squadron slated for combat duty in North Africa. By the end of the war, 992 men had graduated from pilot training at Tuskegee, 450 of whom were sent overseas for combat assignment. I should also note that 16,000 men and women supported the Tuskegee Airmen program.

Mr. Speaker, the 450 pilots that flew combat missions over North Africa and Europe, five of them live in the 33rd Congressional District of Los Angeles and Culver City, which I represent. And they are Wilbert Johnson, William B. Ellis, Elbert T. Hudson, Samuel R. Hughes, and Roger B. Duncan.

Mr. Speaker, although pilots that flew twin-engine aircraft did not see combat, it does not take away from the barriers that broke because of their service. In my district there is an individual that flew twin-engine bombers. He is Oscar H. York.

Many others who were not pilots supported the Tuskegee Institute and are original members of the Tuskegee Airmen. These individuals also live in my district. And they are Floyd J. Cawthon, Jerry T. Hodges, Jr., Flora M. Lane, John Lehman, Theodore G. Lumpkin, Jr., Levi H. Thornhill, and Albert L. Wallace.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge both the historic as well as the heroic role all members of the Tuskegee Airmen played in securing our Nation's freedom as well as changing our Nation's culture and perception of African Americans.

Once again, I congratulate Congressman RANGEL for introducing this historic resolution of acknowledgment.

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. WATT and certainly Mr. RANGEL for their leadership on this, and Mr. NEY of Ohio for his leadership on this.

What an honor it is for me to stand here and to speak some words about the extraordinary contributions that the Tuskegee Airmen have made. Let me begin by simply setting the stage, because I think it is very important for us to understand the environment, the time that this activity happened in American history, for us to truly understand the significance of the Tuskegee Airmen. Let us go back for a moment to that time, and let us take a look at what was going on at that time.

In 1921, Benjamin O. Davis had early on, as one of our leading African Americans in the military, put forward the proposition that black men should be trained to fight, but yet there was great hesitation. As a matter of fact, the Federal Government issued a study which said that African American men were incapable, did not have the skill, the courage, the fortitude, and, in fact, they felt inferior to white people, so that they did not have the courage to do this, this at a time in 1921 when the first woman to even get a license to fly was an African American woman by the name of Bessie Queenie Coleman, and she flew as a daredevil.

Circle back to 1941. It was not until then that they gave the Tuskegee Airmen an opportunity at Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, founded by Booker T. Washington.

And the story tells it all. For there is no greater story of freedom and American democracy than that story of the Tuskegee Airmen who, with bravery and courage, went and fought for the freedom of this country and the world while yet back at home African American citizens were second-class citizens.

So when we talk about the Tuskegee Airmen, it is more than just their flying. It is their extraordinary stand for courage in the face of difficulty. We salute the Tuskegee Airmen.

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time, and I will not take it all.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to note and pay tribute to what I am told are approximately 20 Tuskegee Airmen, who are still living and reside in North Carolina, and mention some of their names, from my congressional district two of them: from Greensboro, Harvey Alexander; from Salisbury, Fred Wilson. And from other parts of the State, I do not have all of their names, but I do want to pay tribute to the ones that I have: from Lenoir, North Carolina, George Shade; from Durham, William MacDonald and Dr. Stuart Fulbright;

from Raleigh, North Carolina, my good friend Dr. Harold Webb, whom I have known forever, and Walter Chavis; from Smithfield, North Carolina, Hernando Palmer; and from Dudley, North Carolina, Wilson Eagleson, II.

I want to thank my colleague, Representative RANGEL, again for taking the lead in putting all this together to make this a truly bipartisan recognition of truly heroic and brave airmen.

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

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, let me just say it is a great day for the Tuskegee Airmen. It is a great day for the United States, and it is a shining day for this institution of the House.

I think that if you look at the quote from Langston Hughes, a great African American poet, "Dream your dreams, but be willing to pay the sacrifice to make them come true," our veterans have done that historically throughout the history of this country, and the Tuskegee Airmen have done that.

Again, I thank Congressman RANGEL for giving them the honor they so much deserve.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1259, authorizing the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress to the Tuskegee Airmen. At a time when their country did not see fit to protect their rights, these brave young men nonetheless served valiantly on behalf of all American citizens.

During the Second World War, African-Americans were essentially second-class citizens in American society, and unfortunately this characterization did not end at the water's edge. Not permitted to train as aviators with their white comrades during World War II, 992 brave young men completed pilot training at Tuskegee's Moton Field, at the school founded by Booker T. Washington; 450 of these airmen were sent overseas for combat assignment, and 66 gave their lives during combat flights.

The Tuskegee Airmen populated the famed 99th Fighter Squadron and saw combat duty in North Africa. Others joined the 332nd Fighter Group, which flew missions from bases in Italy. Still others served similarly important roles as mechanics, gunners, and engineers.

Among these brave airmen are several individuals whose stories begin or end in the 12th Congressional District of New Jersey. As a young man, Robert Griffin worked at the local airport in Princeton, New Jersey, washing and refueling airplanes, earning just a few precious minutes of flying time per week. Though the Air Force would not train him as a fighter pilot due to his race, he eventually found a home at the Tuskegee Institute, becoming one of the first black flight mechanics. He later served in the U.S. Air Force after integration, and flew refueling and support missions for 13 years.

A current resident of Ewing, New Jersey—Retired Lieutenant Colonel Edward Harris—received his pilot's license from Tuskegee Institute and Tuskegee Army Air Base in 1944. He served 27 years in the U.S. Air Force and retired as commander of the 2017 Communications Group at McGuire Air Force Base. He subsequently served in the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, and currently resides in Ewing with his wife Delores.

Mr. Speaker, the Tuskegee Airmen are true testament to the selfless sacrifice and brave

service that the U.S. Armed Forces seek to instill in its soldiers, sailors, and airmen. I rise in support of H.R. 1259, and commend all those who would stand tall for their country before their country would not stand tall for them.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1259. By authorizing the Tuskegee Airmen to receive the Congressional Gold Medal, we are not only recognizing an exemplary military record, but also strength of character in the face of prejudice and racism. The Tuskegee Airmen, a unit of 1,000 African American pilots, were America's first black military airmen. Trained at Tuskegee Army Air Field in Tuskegee, Alabama, these men had to overcome biased notions of their fighting ability.

After graduation from pilot training at Tuskegee, 450 members of the unit were sent overseas for combat assignments. These men saw extensive action, completing 15,000 missions between 1941–1946 without losing one American bomber during any escort mission. Collectively they earned more than 744 medals and their heroic service led to the greater achievement of integrating the U.S. Armed Forces—a watershed event in American history. Their brave actions broke forever the myths that allowed segregation, inequity and injustice toward African-Americans to exist in our military.

Today, the remaining survivors, now in their 80's, are role models to generations of young men and women both in and outside of the military. The Tuskegee Airmen persevered and by sharing their stories have taught generations of Americans about the high price of freedom.

They were dedicated and determined young men who came from every section of the country. I am particularly proud to recognize the 38 airmen who were from the State of Virginia, 10 of whom are still living. The living Virginia Tuskegee Airmen are Howard Baugh of Petersburg, Wiley Selden of Norfolk, Grant Williams of Hampton, Ezra Hill of Hampton, Francis Home of Hampton, Theodore Wilson of Roanoke, William Green of Staunton, Carl Johnson of Charlottesville, Augustus Palmer of Newport News and Floyd Carter of Norfolk.

These men served as trailblazers in the efforts to create equal rights and equal treatment for all people. It is my honor to thank them for their service, legacy and rich heritage.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay homage to the Tuskegee Airmen, whose outstanding valor in World War II inspired revolutionary reform in the U.S. Armed Services. H.R. 1259 which I introduced on March 10, 2005 recognizes these achievements and on behalf of the people of the United States conferring upon the Tuskegee Airmen the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress' highest award. Today, I stand before this House with unbounded joy and pride as we prepare to enact this legislation honoring the Tuskegee Airmen who are still with us and honoring those who have passed on. I feel the joy of the wives and widows sons and daughters of Tuskegee Airmen who have waited a long time for this day.

I wish to thank the more than 300 Members of the House who signed on as cosponsors making this a truly bipartisan effort. I wish to commend particularly Chairman MICHAEL OXLEY and Ranking Member BARNEY FRANK, of the authorizing Committee on Financial

Services as well as Chairman DUNCAN HUNTER and Ranking Member IKE SKELTON of the Armed Services Committee who made a bipartisan appeal to the entire House in support of this bill. I would be remiss not to mention Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld who commended this bill to the Members of the House.

WHO ARE THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN?

The term "Tuskegee Airmen" refers to all who were involved in a program the War Department established as a segregated unit in the Army Air Force (AAF) which was termed the "Tuskegee Experiment." The program began on July 19, 1941 with primary training for the first flying cadets but it went on to train African Americans to fly and maintain combat aircraft. The Tuskegee Airmen included pilots, navigators and bombardiers.

Before 1940 African Americans were barred from flying in the United States Army. African Americans were believed to be lacking in qualifications for combat duty. In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt overruled his top generals and ordered the creation of an all Black flight training program. This action followed a pioneering civil rights lawsuit the NAACP filed in Federal Court on behalf of Yancy Williams and others to force the Department of War to accept African American pilot trainees.

On July 19, 1941, the Army Air Force (AAF) began a program in Alabama to train black Americans as military pilots. Due to the rigid system of racial segregation that prevailed in the United States during World War II, Black military pilots were trained at a separate airfield, Moton Field, built by Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The Primary flight training was conducted by the Division of Aeronautics of Tuskegee Institute.

When the first classes of Tuskegee Airmen were completed, they were trained to be fighter pilots for the famous 99th Fighter Squadron, slated for duty in North Africa. Additional pilots were assigned to the 332d Fight Group which flew combat along with the 99th Squadron from bases in Italy.

The first aviation cadet class began in July 1941 and completed training nine months later in March 1942. Thirteen started in the first class. Five successfully completed the training, one of them being Captain Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., a West Point Academy graduate. The other four were commissioned second lieutenants, and all five received Army Air Corps silver pilot wings.

From 1942 through 1946, 994 pilots graduated at the TAAF receiving commissions and pilot wings. Black navigators, bombardiers and gunnery crews were trained at selected military bases elsewhere in the United States. Mechanics were trained at Chanute Air Base in Rantoul, Illinois until facilities were in place in 1942 at the Tuskegee Army Air Force Base.

Four hundred and fifty of the pilots who were trained at TAAF served overseas in either the 99th Pursuit Squadron (later the 99th Fighter Squadron) or the 332nd Fighter Group. The 99th Fighter Squadron trained in and flew P-40 Warhawk aircraft in combat in North Africa, Sicily and Italy from April 1943 until July 1944 when they were transferred to the 332nd Fighter Group in the 15th Air Force.

Nine-hundred and ninety-two Black pilots graduated from the pilot training program of the TAAF, with the last class finishing in June 1946. The Tuskegee Airmen who many

thought would fail in combat, instead accomplished an outstanding combat record. They flew over 15,000 combat sorties, including more than 6,000 missions for the 99th Squadron prior to July 1944. They destroyed 111 German airplanes in the air and another 150 on the ground. They destroyed 950 railcars, trucks and other motor vehicles and sunk one destroyer with P-47 machine gun fire. They established a sterling record: No United States bombers were lost under escort of the 332nd, a unique achievement.

Sixty-six Tuskegee pilots were killed in action or accidents; thirty-two were downed and became prisoners of war. Among them the Tuskegee pilots received 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 744 Air Medals, 8 Purple Hearts and 14 Bronze Stars.

The Black fighter group, the 332nd, was made up of the 99th, 301st and 302nd Fighter squadrons. Individually and collectively the Tuskegee Airmen revealed the racism, bigotry and the lie underlying the conclusion of the 1925 Army War College Study that Blacks lacked intelligence and were cowardly under combat conditions; and therefore they would never be able to fly aircraft of any type. Although African American could work at unskilled jobs in segregated units in World War II, the Army War College's conclusion that they could not handle aircraft in combat had kept them from any training.

African American civil rights advocates raised their voices against this racism. The NAACP sued the government on behalf of Yancy Williams to allow him to be accepted as an aviation cadet. The Tuskegee Experiment was a response to civil rights advocacy. It is a lasting tribute to these early civil rights pioneers and the NAACP that Blacks finally allowed to train the day after Yancy Williams filed his lawsuit.

The Tuskegee Airmen overcame segregation and prejudice to become one of the most highly respected fighter groups of World War II. They proved conclusively that Black Americans could fly and maintain sophisticated combat aircraft. The Tuskegee Airmen's achievements, together with the men and women who supported them, paved the way for full integration in the United States Military.

The outstanding record of Tuskegee Airmen in World War II was accomplished by men whose names will forever live in hallowed memory. Each one accepted the challenge, proudly displayed his skill and determination while suffering humiliation and indignation caused by frequent experiences of racism and bigotry, at home and overseas. These airmen fought two wars—one against a military force overseas and the other against racism at home and abroad. They fought for rights of the people of the United States, when they were not entitled to those rights themselves.

The outstanding record of Tuskegee Airmen in World War II was accomplished by men whose names will forever live in hallowed memory. I am proud that my Colleagues in the House of Representatives have been supportive of this bipartisan bill to honor these men of valor.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1259, a Resolution authorizing the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress to the Tuskegee Airmen.

This recognition of the Tuskegee Airmen, members of an elite group who fought valiantly for America's freedoms overseas while

overcoming racial discrimination, is long overdue. Their story deserves to be told often, not just during this month of February, to remind all Americans of the many sacrifices made along the way by Americans of color in the military who faced discrimination here at home.

I have the privilege of representing four Tuskegee Airmen who reside in my Congressional District: Robert Holts, Ralph Orduna, and Charles Lane, all of Omaha and just south of Omaha in Bellevue, Harry Tull. A fifth Airman, Paul Adams, lives in nearby Lincoln, Nebraska. I am especially proud to note that Colonel Lane of Omaha was the youngest black fighter in World War II. His daughter, Karen Davis, is a longtime member of my District Office staff.

I also want to mention Omaha native Alphonza Davis, who graduated from Omaha Tech High School and later Omaha University. He finished first in his class at Tuskegee and was chosen squadron leader. He was killed in combat in 1944 while over Germany. The local Tuskegee Airmen chapter in Omaha is named after him.

Mr. Speaker, the story of the Tuskegee Airmen was written in the context of racial segregation that existed in our country during World War II. African Americans who wanted to fly in the military were trained at a separate location near Tuskegee, Alabama. The Tuskegee Airmen, known as the Red Tails because of the crimson tails on their aircraft, were the first squadron of African American combat pilots in the U.S. military. Nearly 1,000 men had graduated from pilot training at Tuskegee by the end of the war.

Under the command of Colonel Benjamin Davis, Jr., these aviators served in combat in campaigns in North Africa, Sicily and Europe. Colonel Davis later became the first African American general in the U.S. Air Force.

The Tuskegee Airmen and their record of success during the war are unmatched. Not a single American bomber protected by the Red Tails was ever shot down by enemy aircraft. By war's end, the Tuskegee Airmen had flown over 15,000 sorties, completed over 1,500 missions, destroyed more than 260 enemy aircraft, and more than 1,000 enemy vehicles on the ground. The Airmen were awarded 744 Air Medals, 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 14 Bronze Stars, and 8 Purple Hearts.

I join my colleagues in recognizing the Tuskegee Airmen for their gallant and heroic achievements and urge adoption of H.R. 1259. The award of gold medals to these national heroes is only a small token of the thanks they richly deserve for their service to our Nation.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1259, which recognizes the Tuskegee Airmen for their exemplary performance during World War II, and for paving the way for full integration of the U.S. military. I commend Mr. RANGEL for H.R. 1259, which recognizes the Tuskegee Airmen with a Congressional Gold Medal.

The Tuskegee Airmen were the Nation's first African-American fighter pilots at a time when many people thought that African American men lacked intelligence, skill, courage, and patriotism to become pilots. In spite of adversity and limited opportunities, the Tuskegee Airmen defied stereotypes and played a significant role in U.S. military history.

The first Tuskegee Airmen aviation class began in July 1941 and completed training

March 1942. African American navigators, bombardiers, gunnery crews, maintenance, instructors, and mechanics were trained to be members of the 332nd Fighter group.

The Tuskegee Airmen overcame segregation and prejudice. Nine hundred and ninety-four pilots received commissions and pilot wings. Four hundred and fifty pilots served overseas in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. The Tuskegee Airmen combat record is impressive, including 66 pilots killed in action; 32 pilots captured; no bombers lost while being escorted by the 332nd, a unique achievement; 111 German airplanes were destroyed in the air, and 150 German airplanes were destroyed on the ground.

The Tuskegee Airmen proved conclusively that African Americans could fly and maintain sophisticated combat aircraft. The Tuskegee Airmen received numerous honors, including: 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses; 850 Medals; 14 Bronze Stars; and 9 Purple Hearts.

By the end of World War II, the 332nd became one of the most highly respected fighter squadrons despite prejudice and social equality. The Tuskegee Airmen's achievements must be remembered in the spirit of the heroic Air Force role in the global war on terrorism. With this in mind, I stand today to support H.R. 1259 to express the sense of Congress that the U.S. Air Force should never forget the courage of the Tuskegee Airmen by honoring them with a Congressional Gold Medal.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in strong support of H.R. 1259, which authorizes the President to award the Tuskegee Airmen with the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor. In 1941, an experiment that began as an effort to prove the validity of a 1925 study that claimed African Americans lacked both the intelligence and courage to fly planes during combat, finished as a monumental testament that African Americans had both the aptitude, skill and valor, to not only become military pilots, but to meet and exceed any challenge presented. I also want to take this time to thank and congratulate my good friend and colleague, Representative CHARLIE RANGEL for introducing this legislation.

The story of the Tuskegee Airmen began when Yancy Williams, a Howard college student sued the U.S. Government for the right to participate as an aviation cadet. The Government was forced to either prove that blacks could not learn to fly or to accept them into their civilian pilot training program. As a result, a separate, all-black training facility was built by the Army Air Corps at Tuskegee Army Airfield. Though great racism existed at that time, and many of the original instructors were white, there was very little bias and prejudice reported by instructors during the training.

The first class of the Tuskegee Airmen graduated 5 of 13 cadets, who were made a part of the famous 99th Fighting Squadron. Additional pilots were assigned to the 332nd Fighter Group. Though it was 8 months after the second class graduated, the 99th Fighting Squadron finally deployed to the North Africa as a part of the Allied Armies. The Airmen soon built their reputation as both talented and fearless. The Germans nicknamed them "Schawarte Vogelmenshen" or Black Birdmen, they also earned the nickname, Redtail Angels, from American bombing crews, due to their reputation for being the only unit who never lost a bomber to enemy fighters during escort missions.

In all, between 1942 and 1946, 926 black pilots earned their wings and commissions and 450 of those pilots saw combat during World War II. As a result of their combat service, the Tuskegee Airmen logged 15,533 sorties in the skies over North Africa, Italy and Germany. They destroyed or damaged 409 enemy aircraft, fuel and ammunition dumps and escorted 200 bomber missions. In total, the Tuskegee Airmen were awarded 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 8 Purple Hearts, 14 Bronze Stars, 744 Air Medals and Clusters and 3 Distinguished Unit Citations. This record is a soaring achievement that speaks to the depth of talent, heart and courage that they all exemplified. There were also huge human costs for their sacrifice as the Airmen suffered 66 combat deaths, and 33 were captured as prisoners of war. The sacrifice and contributions of the Tuskegee Airmen were the catalyst for President Truman issuing Executive Order 9981, which as of July 26, 1948, desegregated the United States Armed Forces.

The Tuskegee Airmen's contribution to this country is immeasurable. Their display of heroism and perseverance deserves our eternal gratitude. The Tuskegee Airmen are indeed justified of receiving Congress's highest honor, the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor.

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, they never lost a bomber.

The African-American fighter pilots we know today as the Tuskegee Airmen, flew more than 15,000 sorties, mostly bomber-support missions, over North Africa, Sicily and Europe during World War II. They downed roughly 500 enemy aircraft, and sank a destroyer—and they destroyed an awful lot of prejudice in the process.

It wasn't easy. More than 10 percent—66—were killed; 32 were downed and became prisoners of war. But all thousand or so who were trained at Moton Field near the old Tuskegee College in Alabama, now Tuskegee University, were heroes, whether or not they were among the 450 or so who saw combat duty. So were the roughly 12 black men and women who served as mechanics or other support crew for each pilot, and their black comrades who flew in medium bombers during the war.

Mr. Speaker, no one—man or woman, adults or the near-child drummer boys of the Civil and Revolutionary Wars—no one who goes to war in the defense of this country and the liberty for which it stands can be described as anything but valiant and courageous. But usually, Mr. Speaker, the only fight these heroes have is with the enemy.

The trailblazers of the first class of 13, all college grads and pilots, who went through fighter pilot training at Moton Field in the summer of 1941, and all who came after them, also had to fight prejudice. They beat that enemy as soundly as they beat the Axis, and it was not long after the war that the armed services of this country became integrated.

While the brave Tuskegee Airmen were recognized by their comrades in arms, and respected and feared by enemy pilots, they were relatively unknown after the war until the formation in 1972 of the Tuskegee Airmen Inc. Today, besides the scholarship fund it sponsors, there are several memorials to the Airmen, including one at the Air Force Museum at Dayton in my home State of Ohio. Today, we will approve legislation to award a Congressional Gold Medal to these brave men as a group, and give the medal to the Smithsonian Institution.

Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Gold Medal is the highest honor Congress bestows. It has gone to military heroes, including General George Washington, and heroes of the fight against prejudice. Thus, it is only fitting—and long overdue—that we recognize the Tuskegee Airmen in this manner, and do so during Black History Month.

It is for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, that I rise in strong support of H.R. 1259, introduced by the gentleman from New York, that would award a Congressional Gold Medal to the Tuskegee Airmen, and ask for its immediate passage.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1259. This resolution authorizes the President to award a gold medal on behalf of Congress to the Tuskegee Airmen in recognition of their unique military record, which inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces.

As a veteran of the United States Air Force, I am proud to be a co-sponsor of this important resolution. I thank the gentleman from New York for introducing it and urge my colleagues' support.

Prior to the Tuskegee Airmen, all combat pilots had been white. In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the creation of an all black flight training program to train black Americans as military pilots. Due to the rigid system of racial segregation that prevailed in the United States during World War II, black military pilots were trained at a separate airfield built near Tuskegee, Alabama. The Division of Aeronautics of Tuskegee Institute, the famed school founded by Booker T. Washington in 1881, conducted primary flight training. Thus, they became known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

The first classes of Tuskegee Airmen were trained to be fighter pilots for the famous 99th Fighter Squadron, slated for combat duty in North Africa. Additional pilots were assigned to the 332nd Fighter Group, which flew combat along with the 99th Squadron from bases in Italy.

Due to the success of the program, in September 1943, a twin-engine training program was begun at Tuskegee to provide bomber pilots. However, World War II ended before these men were able to get into combat.

By the end of the war, 992 men had graduated from pilot training at Tuskegee, 450 of whom were sent overseas for combat assignment. During the same period, approximately 150 lost their lives while in training or on combat flights.

The Tuskegee Airmen inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces, paving the way for full racial integration in the Armed Forces. They overcame the enormous challenges of prejudice and discrimination, succeeding, despite obstacles that threatened failure. Yet, their impact can be felt far beyond the U.S. Armed Forces into nearly every aspect of American life. The strength and courage of the Tuskegee Airmen serve as an inspiration to all Americans, regardless of skin color or nationality.

It remains critically important for all Americans to know the Tuskegee Airmen's story and the struggles these men went through and ultimately overcame. I encourage everyone to learn more about these remarkable and inspirational men and urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CONAWAY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1259, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1259 and H.R. 2872 and to insert extraneous material thereon.

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

There was no objection.

CONTINUATION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO ZIMBABWE—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 109-93)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on International Relations and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency blocking the property of persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe is to continue in effect beyond March 6, 2006. The most recent notice continuing this emergency was published in the *Federal Register* on March 4, 2005 (70 FR 10859).

The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions has not been resolved. These actions and policies pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is

necessary to continue this national emergency and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

GEORGE W. BUSH.

THE WHITE HOUSE, February 27, 2006.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 4 o'clock and 15 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m.

□ 1830

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DENT) at 6 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on motions to suspend the rules previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

H.R. 1096, by the yeas and nays;
H. Res. 668, by the yeas and nays;
H.R. 1259, by the yeas and nays.

The first and third electronic votes will be conducted as 15-minute votes. The second vote in this series will be a 5-minute vote.

ACT COMMEMORATING THE LITE, OR LIFETIME INNOVATIONS OF THOMAS EDISON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The pending business is the question of suspending the rules and passing the bill, H.R. 1096, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1096, as amended, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 399, nays 1, not voting 32, as follows:

[Roll No. 14]

YEAS—399

Ackerman	Berkley	Boucher
Aderholt	Berman	Boustany
Akin	Berry	Boyd
Alexander	Bilirakis	Bradley (NH)
Andrews	Bishop (GA)	Brady (PA)
Baca	Bishop (NY)	Brady (TX)
Bachus	Bishop (UT)	Brown (OH)
Baird	Blackburn	Brown (SC)
Baker	Blumenauer	Brown-Waite,
Baldwin	Blunt	Ginny
Barrett (SC)	Boehert	Burgess
Barrow	Boehner	Burton (IN)
Bartlett (MD)	Bonilla	Butterfield
Barton (TX)	Bono	Buyer
Bass	Boozman	Calvert
Bean	Boren	Camp (MI)
Becerra	Boswell	Campbell (CA)