

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

RECOGNIZING JUNETEENTH INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1237) recognizing the historical significance of Juneteenth Independence Day, and expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that history should be regarded as a means for understanding the past and more effectively facing the challenges of the future.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1237

Whereas news of the end of slavery did not reach frontier areas of the United States, and in particular the Southwestern States, for more than 2 years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, and months after the conclusion of the Civil War;

Whereas on June 19, 1865, Union soldiers led by Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, with news that the Civil War had ended and that the enslaved were free;

Whereas African-Americans who had been slaves in the Southwest celebrated June 19, commonly known as Juneteenth Independence Day, as the anniversary of their emancipation;

Whereas African-Americans from the Southwest continue the tradition of Juneteenth Independence Day as inspiration and encouragement for future generations;

Whereas for more than 135 years, Juneteenth Independence Day celebrations have been held to honor African-American freedom while encouraging self-development and respect for all cultures;

Whereas although Juneteenth Independence Day is beginning to be recognized as a national, and even global, event, the history behind the celebration should not be forgotten; and

Whereas the faith and strength of character demonstrated by former slaves remains an example for all people of the United States, regardless of background, religion, or race: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the House of Representatives recognizes the historical significance of Juneteenth Independence Day to the Nation;

(2) the House of Representatives supports the continued celebration of Juneteenth Independence Day to provide an opportunity for the people of the United States to learn more about the past and to better understand the experiences that have shaped the Nation; and

(3) it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(A) history should be regarded as a means for understanding the past and more effectively facing the challenges of the future; and

(B) the celebration of the end of slavery is an important and enriching part of the history and heritage of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HIGGINS. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, as a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I present for consideration H.R. 1237, which recognizes the historical significance of Juneteenth Independence Day, and expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that history should be regarded as a means for understanding the past and more effectively facing the challenges of the future.

H.R. 1237 was introduced on June 4, 2008, and has over 70 Members of Congress who also support Juneteenth, or what many call Freedom Day or Emancipation Day. The measure was considered and reported from the Oversight Committee on June 12, 2008, by voice vote, which brings us to today's floor consideration of the measure.

Most of us are aware, Madam Speaker, Juneteenth commemorates the day Union General Gordon Granger and 2,000 Federal troops arrived at the Galveston Island, Texas to take possession of the State and enforce the emancipation of its slaves 2½ years after the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation.

On June 19, 1865 General Granger read the following Order Number 3: "The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with the proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired laborer. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts, and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere."

In receipt of this message, African Americans who had been slaves in the Southwest celebrated June 19 as the anniversary of their emancipation, and continued the tradition to inspire and encourage future generations.

□ 1700

For more than 135 years, Juneteenth Independence Day celebrations have been held to honor not only the freedom of African Americans but also to encourage self-development and respect for all cultures.

Juneteenth has been recognized as either a State holiday or observance in Texas, Oklahoma, Florida, Delaware, Idaho, Alaska, Iowa, California, Wyoming, Missouri, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, Colorado, Arkansas, Oregon, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, Virginia, Washington, Tennessee, Massachusetts, and North Carolina, as well as the District of Columbia.

The faith and strength of character demonstrated by former slaves remains an example for all Americans, regardless of background, religion, or race.

Madam Speaker, I ask that we, too, show our support for Juneteenth Independence Day by agreeing to adopt H.R. 1237 without reservation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I, too, rise in support of this resolution.

Certainly history is replete with examples like this where well-intended, strong statements are made and then as much as 2 years passes before the event becomes complete. Juneteenth is no exception to that.

More than 2 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, it took 2,000 Federal soldiers marching into Galveston Island in order to free slaves from servitude. So as we look at what we need to do here in Congress today, let us not be dissuaded from doing what is right because it may take time. Let us not be dissuaded from making sure that America has its freedom and independence assured by our own independence in all areas, including natural resources.

I certainly think more than 100 years after the Civil War, we can celebrate the successes of the Civil War; but we also have an obligation to deal with problems that might take 4 or 5 years of domestic exploration and domestic investment in oil and natural gas in order to bear fruit. But I would ask today that we resolve to begin that process because certainly, as we look at President Abraham Lincoln who knew that the Emancipation Proclamation would not immediately free slaves but, in fact, would make a strong statement that we were resolved to do so.

I would hope today as we pass this important piece of legislation, we would resolve to make sure that America is independent and free in the years to come.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I now yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) for as much time as she may consume.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I thank the distinguished gentleman from New

York, and I thank the original author of this legislation, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS), and I thank the distinguished Speaker for her leadership as well, and my colleagues.

Congressman HIGGINS, this is Juneteenth Week for those of us who come from the States in which we honor this very special holiday. And so it is very special to stand today to acknowledge how important, how moving a time this is, particularly in the State of Texas where Major Granger landed in Galveston 2 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, which means that the slaves that were held in the State of Texas were held 2 years longer than any slaves in the United States in the region in which slavery was the law. I would like to acknowledge Rep. Al Edwards who is the Father of the Juneteenth Holiday in Texas.

So we hold this as a sacred time, a time of jubilee and celebration, but also of pain and anguish for knowing that we were held in bondage in the State of Texas for a period of time longer than the time that was declared by the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln.

I'm delighted to be one of the original cosponsors to acknowledge what this day really means. And as we celebrate it throughout the week in Texas, this past weekend I celebrated with the Acres Home Community and their Juneteenth celebration and the Zydeco music and the fun that seniors and children alike would have in fellowship and understanding our history.

And many people don't recognize that it is as important a date as might be days that we commemorate Black History Month, special days such as the acknowledgment and the celebration of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, or the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Civil Rights bill or the March on Washington or the tragic assassination of Dr. King, and this happens to be the 40th year.

It is a time when we renew ourselves in having a respect for freedom. And Major Granger, who came and acknowledged, gave way to decades and years of celebration.

He also gave way to something called Freedom Watch on New Year's Eve. Many people believe that is a celebration for the new year. But in old years or years back, black churches used to watch on New Year's Eve calling it Freedom Watch to be able to celebrate freedom; and it was the idea of knowing that on January 1, 1863, the slaves would be free.

This is a time to acknowledge that our history should be remembered, that we should teach it to our children, that we should take this history to ourselves, if we will, embed it in our hearts and our souls, and make sure that as we embed it, that we live what this history stands for. It stands for determination, tenacity, strength, character, integrity.

And we must fight against all of these things that enslave us now, and

that is, of course, drugs and crime and poverty. And I hope that this Congress, in passing this legislation, will renew our commitment to ridding this Nation of drugs and the devastation of how it destroys families and that we will commit ourselves to building housing, we will commit ourselves to educating our children, we will commit ourselves to building our families, we will commit ourselves to peace, because that's what an emancipation means: Emancipating yourselves from things that were wrong, that were ill.

The Emancipation Proclamation rid this Nation of slavery. Its dastardly effects still continue even today as it separates races and religions, but we have a commitment as the United States Congress to use this floor today to be able to stand against what was a horrific time in the history of America where we held slaves, we debased them, and we rejected humanity and human rights and dignity; but now we must come and respect through this resolution.

So I thank the Congressman for his leadership on managing this bill. I particularly pay tribute to my colleague and friend, Congressman DANNY DAVIS, and to all of my constituents in the State of Texas who will now celebrate this day with a gospel celebration on Saturday, a parade on Saturday, and many, many family reunions around the idea of being emancipated.

Let us live freedom. Let us stand for freedom by building this Nation free of the ills of drugs and poor housing and poverty and war, and that will truly be a commemoration of Juneteenth because Juneteenth is a freedom, and it is emancipation.

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to support H. Res. 1237, legislation commemorating a monumental day in the history of liberty, Juneteenth Independence Day. Juneteenth marks the events of June 19, 1865, when slaves in Galveston, Texas learned that they were at last free men and women. The slaves of Galveston were the last group of slaves to learn of the end of slavery. Thus, Juneteenth represents the end of slavery in America.

I hope all Americans will take the time to commemorate Juneteenth. Friends of human liberty should celebrate the end of slavery in any country. The end of American slavery is particularly worthy of recognition since there are few more blatant violations of America's founding principles, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence, than slavery. I am particularly pleased to join the recognition of Juneteenth because I have the privilege of representing Galveston.

I thank the gentleman from Illinois for introducing this resolution. I thank the House leadership for bringing this resolution to the floor, and I urge all of my colleagues to honor the end of slavery by voting for H. Res. 1237.

Mr. SHAYS. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 1237, which recognizes the historic significance of Juneteenth Independence Day and encourages its continued celebration so all Americans can learn more about our country's past.

The resolution also rightly expresses the sense of Congress that knowing our history

helps us solve challenges we face in the future, and that the celebration of the end of slavery is an important part of the history and heritage of the United States.

Madam Speaker, Juneteenth has long been recognized as the day to celebrate the end of slavery in the United States. Juneteenth is the traditional celebration of the day on which the last slaves in America learned they had been freed.

Although slavery was abolished officially in 1863, it took over 2 years for news of freedom to spread to slaves. On June 19th, 1865, U.S. General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston, Texas and announced that the State's 200,000 slaves were free. Vowing never to forget the date, the former slaves coined the nickname Juneteenth, a blend of the words June and 19th. This holiday originated in the Southwest, but today it is celebrated throughout the Nation.

H. Res. 1237 underscores that the observance of Juneteenth Independence Day is an opportunity for all Americans to learn more about our common past and to better understand the experiences that have shaped our great Nation. I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I urge passage, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1237.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

HONORING THE LIFE OF TIMOTHY JOHN RUSSERT, JR.

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1275) honoring the life of Timothy John Russert, Jr., public servant, political analyst, and author.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1275

Whereas Tim Russert was born in Buffalo, New York, on May 7, 1950;

Whereas Tim Russert graduated from Canisius High School in Buffalo, John Carroll University in University Heights, Ohio, and the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in Cleveland, Ohio, and received 48 honorary doctorate degrees;