

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

Mr. BUYER. Mr. 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The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### EXPRESSING GRATITUDE FOR THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE AMERICAN GI FORUM ON ITS 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1291) expressing gratitude for the contributions of the American GI Forum on its 60th anniversary.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

##### H. RES. 1291

Whereas millions of veterans returning home from World War II looked to the guarantee of educational, medical, housing, and other basic benefits provided by the GI bill;

Whereas these benefits were denied in large part to Americans of Mexican descent and other Hispanics throughout the United States;

Whereas the American GI Forum was founded in 1948 by Army Major Hector P. Garcia, a physician from Corpus Christi, Texas, in response to such inequities;

Whereas the Forum's motto is "Education Is Our Freedom and Freedom Should Be Everybody's Business";

Whereas in 1998 the Forum was granted a Federal charter pursuant to an Act of Congress (Public Law 105-231);

Whereas one of the purposes expressed in the Forum's charter is "fostering and enlarging equal educational opportunities, equal economic opportunities, equal justice under the law, and equal political opportunities for all United States citizens, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin";

Whereas the Forum's Veterans Outreach Program is based in San Antonio, Texas, and provides training, employment, and counseling for veterans in the Southwestern United States; and

Whereas the American GI Forum continues to be a beacon of hope and an avenue for involvement for returning veterans and ordinary citizens aspiring to improve conditions within their own communities: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the need for equal access to veterans' benefits for all who have honorably served;

(2) supports the goals, ideals, and deeds of the American GI Forum and its members;

(3) commends the work of the American GI Forum on its 60th anniversary; and

(4) encourages others to join with the American GI Forum to ensure that veterans are never again denied the benefits they rightfully deserve.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

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

I rise in strong support of House Resolution 1291, which comes to us courtesy of Mr. RODRIGUEZ from Texas. I just want to point out that what we are doing here is expressing the gratitude for the contributions of the American GI Forum as it celebrates its 60th anniversary. We all know that the GI Bill of 1944 made an immense impact on the lives of returning veterans by guaranteeing educational, medical, housing, and other basic benefits.

Though this legislation was groundbreaking, it takes much more than words on paper to ensure that institutional goals are implemented. One man who understood this was Army Major Hector Garcia, who realized that the disparate treatment and denial of benefits to many Hispanic veterans must be ended. To carry out this purpose, he inspired to rally around him a group of fellow veterans who formed the American GI Forum.

Their motto is, "Education is our Freedom and Freedom Should be Everybody's Business." The ideals which they stand for, equal education opportunities, equal economic opportunities, equal justice under the law, and equal political opportunities are ingrained in the fabric of American values. Since its inception, branches around the country have reached milestones in veterans' issues, in education, and civil rights.

Knowing the effects of unequal treatment, Army Major Garcia devoted himself to standing up for the isolated Hispanic members of our veteran community. We are happy to honor the organization he founded. We look forward to working with them for the common good and welfare of veterans for many years to come.

The broad-ranging and comprehensive initiatives which the GI Forum has undertaken over the last 60 years include the cofounding of SER-Jobs for Progress, Incorporated, a top-10 national Hispanic nonprofit organization, and the National Veterans Outreach Program, which is designed to assist military veterans in securing affordable housing and provides counseling and employment assistance services.

It is not the years though, however, that the GI Forum has existed, but how much it has accomplished that indicates their impact and why we are honoring them today. Leaders of the forum, from Army Major Garcia, on to the current president, Antonio Gil Morales, have an irrepressible spirit and a dynamic energy, using their benefit for the benefit of others.

Today, the GI Forum continues to challenge disparate policies on behalf of Hispanic veterans by challenging barriers and enhancing understanding. For their support of all veterans, spe-

cifically Hispanic veterans, and their leadership in being a beacon of hope and an avenue of involvement for returning veterans and ordinary citizens aspiring to improve conditions within their communities, we take the occasion of the 60th anniversary of their founding to recognize the GI Forum with this resolution as evidence of the high esteem in which it's held by all its members.

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

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 1291 recognizes the contributions of the American GI Forum on its 60th anniversary. Mr. Speaker, the work of the founder of the American GI Forum, Dr. Hector Garcia, is one that shows the determination of the American spirit.

Serving during World War II as an infantryman, as a combat engineer, and a medical doctor, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with six battle stars and achieved the rank of major. Upon his return from the war, he worked to encourage other Mexican Americans to educate themselves in the Democratic principles, and founded the American GI Forum in 1948 to fight for equal treatment for Mexican American veterans, including proper medical treatment and educational benefits.

In reviewing the current legislative priorities for the American GI Forum, it is evident their efforts have continued to instill in the Hispanic/Latino community the desire to achieve through liberty.

Mr. Speaker, there is one clarification that I think should be made regarding the resolution whereas clauses, and I will take these up in a moment here with the author of the bill. In particular, the whereas clause reads, "Whereas, millions of veterans returning home from World War II look to the guarantee of educational, medical, housing, and other basic benefits by the GI Bill," and, "Whereas, these benefits were denied in large part to Americans of Mexican descent and other Hispanics throughout the United States."

By having these two statements like this in the whereas clause, this statement implies systematic denial of benefits as a matter of policy by the VA. Individual accounts of bigotry most likely did in fact occur, but I have great concerns with regard to the drafting of the bill. I was very disappointed that the chairman would not work with the minority on the drafting of this bill.

Those of us who wear and have worn the uniform, we embrace the ideals that veterans benefits are to be extended without regard to race, color, or creed. As I said, I will have some questions of Mr. RODRIGUEZ regarding the clarification of his intent on the whereas clauses.

Mr. Speaker, the work of the veterans service organizations like the

American GI Forum advocates for veterans and assists those of us in Congress and particularly on the committee of Veterans' Affairs to formulate policy that will help guide our country in respect to veterans' affairs. I commend the American GI Forum's work these past 60 years.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. Before I recognize the author of the bill, I just want to say that the very definition of institutional racism is the fact that people in the institution don't even recognize its being practiced.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ, you have served us for 10 years. You have been a leader in getting this Congress and this Nation to follow the ideals that we talk about with Mr. Garcia. We thank you for this resolution.

I recognize the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) for such time as he may consume.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and ranking member.

Let me take this opportunity, first of all, to congratulate the GI Forum on their extraordinary work. These are veterans that came after World War II and continue to give in their communities.

I speak today on behalf of a bill that I introduced, House Resolution 1291, expressing the gratitude for the contributions of the American GI Forum on its 60th anniversary. Some 60 years ago, Dr. Hector P. Garcia, a U.S. Army major and veteran of World War II, established the American GI Forum in Corpus Christi, Texas, to address the concerns of the Mexican American veterans who were segregated from other veteran groups.

Dr. Garcia initially formed the group to request services for the World War II veterans of Mexican descent who were denied medical services by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. The forum soon spread into nonveteran issues, such as voting rights issues, jury selection issues, and educational desegregation issues, advocating for civil rights of all Mexican Americans.

The GI Forum's first campaign was on behalf of Felix Longoria, a Mexican American private who had been killed in the Philippines in the line of duty. Upon the return of his body to Texas, he was denied burial services in Texas, and Dr. Garcia and the GI Forum were organized around this issue, requesting the involvement of then-Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson, who secured Longoria's burial at the Arlington National Cemetery. This was a soldier whose body had been returned to Texas and was denied burial in a particular cemetery in south Texas.

The case brought the American GI Forum to the national attention and the charters were obtained throughout the country. A large number of GI Forum organizations were organized during that period, and continue to this day.

Ten years later, in 1998, Congress officially recognized the GI Forum with a

charter. Its motto is "Education is our Freedom and Freedom Should be Everybody's Business." The forum currently operates chapters throughout the United States, with a focus on veterans' issues, education, and civil rights. Its two largest national programs are the San Antonio-based Veterans Outreach Programs and the Dallas-based Service, Employment, Redevelopment-Jobs for progress.

I want to urge Members of Congress to join me in voting for the resolution and expressing the gratitude for the contributions of the GI Forum.

Let me just also indicate that the resolution that we drafted, at the end says, "Whereas, the GI Forum continues to be a beacon of hope." These individuals continue to work with our veterans. They have a beautiful homeless project that reaches out to our veterans out there, and it's veterans working with veterans.

So it says, "Now, therefore be it resolved that the House of Representatives recognizes the need for equal access to veterans benefits for all who have honored their service to, support the goals and ideals and deeds of the American GI Forum and its members, and commends the work of the American GI Forum on its 60th anniversary, and encourages others to join with the American GI Forum to ensure that veterans are never again denied the benefits that they rightfully deserve."

So I will ask for your support.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I have some questions on my time. I would like to inquire of the gentleman regarding his intent on the drafting of the resolution. In particular, the first and second clauses of the resolution. The first clause, "Whereas, millions of veterans returning home from World War II looked to the guarantee of educational, medical, housing, and other basic benefits provided by the GI Bill"; and, "Whereas, these benefits were denied."

As it's drafted, it basically says here are the benefits they looked forward to. And then we say, "these benefits were denied" and then "in large part, to Americans of Mexican descent."

So in the whereas clause we are saying that here are benefits that millions of veterans coming back from World War II looked forward to, then in the drafting it says, oh, by the way, "Whereas, these benefits were denied, in large part to Americans of Mexican descent and other Hispanics throughout the United States."

Now there are other individuals, other forms of odious discrimination of various kinds encountered by veterans, whether they be African American, whether they are women, individuals are Puerto Rican. There could have been many other forms of discrimination and bigotry in which people were subjected to in our country, not only back then but even probably of today.

What I was hoping we could do is that we are actually voting on a resolution on the floor, that this drafting is

kind of awkward. I was hoping that we could try to correct that.

What I wanted to do is yield to the gentleman so he can tell us about his intent with regard to the legislation.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you. The intent, if you look at the final, "Be it resolved that the House of Representatives recognizes the needs of equal access to veterans benefits for all who have honorably served and continues to support the goals and ideals."

Now the whereas that are there, those are the founding principles as to why that group got together right after the war. We all know that there was discrimination. We know that people were denied. There were the Mexican schools and the all-white schools. There were places where you couldn't go eat in Texas either if you were a Mexican. So that existed.

So the language is there as a result of the foundation of this group that organized. When that body came back, as a soldier, he was denied burial. We have Mexican burial sites and white burial sites. Unfortunately, we still have them, in some cases. But the reality was that that is the reality of then. So the whereas talk about the time then where the discrimination existed.

Yes, there were other groups that were discriminated and other people that were denied. But this is not about African Americans, this is not about women. It's about the veterans that served at that point in time that came back and experienced that discrimination. That is why the organization was organized.

By the way, the group now does a beautiful job, and if anyone espouses and loves this country more, it is those veterans that are part of the GI Forum, and they are the ones that have a beautiful program for job training, they have some programs that deal with the homeless, and a variety of other types of programs.

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Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, the chairman and I both have been to Harlingen, we have been in Deep South, Texas. We understand your challenges. We have also met with many of your comrades down there, who have tremendous enthusiasm for our country.

I appreciate your explanation with regard to the "whereas" clauses, that these were the foundation of the GI Forum. I just wanted to make sure that we did not have the implication as a policy record of discrimination by the VA. That in fact there were forms of discrimination by individuals, but our country, who was then run by Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson, never would have in fact embraced any form of this policy.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Remember, we also had discrimination by the military itself. It was there. We can't deny that. It did discriminate, and in some cases it was pretty blatant. It was there.

Mr. BUYER. Okay. I appreciate the gentleman clarifying the intent with regard to the "whereas" clauses.

With that, I urge my colleagues to adopt the resolution before the House, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I would yield such time as she may consume 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. Speaker, let me thank the chairman of the full committee, Mr. FILNER, for constantly coming down on the side of veterans, and my good friend and colleague, Congressman RODRIGUEZ, who eloquently articulated the importance of the GI Forum on its 60th anniversary. Let me thank the ranking member for participating in this debate, and commend my colleagues to this important resolution.

I would just speak briefly of the GI Forum, that I saw just recently in a Judiciary Committee hearing, looking at the treatment of some of our soldiers who are not yet citizens, and how the burden falls on their shoulders, even though they are on the front lines of fighting for our freedom. So we do know there are inequities. But we appreciate the GI Forum for its leadership over the years, and clearly its founding member, who worked so hard and certainly is someone renowned and respected in Texas.

So let me briefly congratulate the GI Forum in its 60th year, and commend my colleagues to reading about Army Major Hector P. Garcia, who we honored just a few weeks ago by naming the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and then recently reauthorized after Mr. Garcia.

One item that comes to mind is that he moved the GI Forum, after being recognized by Lyndon Baines Johnson, Ronald Reagan as President, and former President Clinton, for his service, he began to move the GI Forum towards civil rights. He questioned some of the inequities, and used this organization with its mighty might of returning veterans to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. They did fight for education and civil rights and good health care.

One of the stories that he is well-known for is the story recounted by my good friend from Texas of the soldier who came home from World War II and was not able to be buried in a South Texas funeral home. He thought that to be an unfortunate set of circumstances, and he called then President of the United States and moved this soldier from South Texas to be ultimately buried in the Arlington Cemetery.

So that is the standard of the GI Forum. It is a helping hand for veterans. It is a respected, renowned, national organization, full of patriots who understand as they fought for freedom on the battlefields across the

world that they would also fight for freedom here in the United States.

Let me applaud the Veterans Committee and my good friend Congressman RODRIGUEZ for this very astute legislation, recognition of a valid civil rights organization, the GI Forum, and ask my colleagues to vote for this.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, in closing, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., used to say we have come a long way with regard to civil rights, but we have a long way to go. I would just ask my ranking member from Indiana not to think that any institution in this country, even at a time when we are nominating the first African American of a major political party for President, that discrimination and racism has been cleansed from the American body politic. It exists, it is real, and we have to commit ourselves to continually fighting against it.

That is why this resolution is so important. It reminds us of those who took on the struggle when it was so blatant and so urgent. But that struggle is not over, and we have to recommit ourselves to ending racism and discrimination in any form.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on House Resolution 1291.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support the resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1291.

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. FILNER. 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 motion will be postponed.

#### RECOGNIZING NATIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1271) recognizing National Homeownership Month and the importance of homeownership in the United States.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

#### H. RES. 1271

Whereas the President of the United States has issued a proclamation designating the

month of June 2008 as National Homeownership Month;

Whereas the people of the United States are one of the best-housed populations in the world;

Whereas owning a home is a fundamental part of the American dream and is the largest personal investment many families will ever make;

Whereas homeownership provides economic security for homeowners by aiding them in building wealth over time and strengthens communities through a greater stake among homeowners in local schools, civic organizations, and churches;

Whereas creating affordable homeownership opportunities requires the commitment and cooperation of the private, public, and nonprofit sectors, including the Federal Government and State and local governments;

Whereas homeownership can be sustained through appropriate homeownership education and informed borrowers; and

Whereas affordable homeownership will play a vital role in resolving the crisis in the United States housing market: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) fully supports the goals and ideals of National Homeownership Month; and

(2) recognizes the importance of homeownership in building strong communities and families.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEVER) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation and to insert extraneous material thereon.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

The month of June is National Homeownership Month, and at a time of growing concern about the foreclosure crisis affecting the lives of too many Americans, Congress has responded with a bipartisan effort to revitalize the housing market.

This year, the President, in one of the proclamations that actually I think spoke for most Members of this body, as well as for most Americans, said, "For many Americans, owning a home represents freedom, independence and the American dream."

During National Homeownership Month, we highlight the benefits of owning a home and encourage our fellow citizens to be responsible homeowners. It is difficult to be a responsible homeowner at this time because foreclosure filings last month went up nearly 50 percent compared with a year earlier. Nationwide, this is unbelievable. 261,255 homeowners received at least one foreclosure-related filing in May. That is up 48 percent from the same month last year, and up 7 percent from April. Last week, the Mortgage