

Hon. RICK LARSEN,
Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER JOHNSON, LEADER JEFFRIES, CHAIRMAN GRAVES, AND RANKING MEMBER LARSEN: I write to express support for H.R. 5754, introduced by Representative Jimmy Gomez, which would name the Los Angeles U.S. Courthouse at 350 W. 1st Street in honor of Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez. Their activism, along with four other families, culminated in the landmark 1946 case *Mendez et al v. Westminster et al* that led to the end of segregation in California schools and paved the way for *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The powerful story of the Mendez, Guzman, Palomino, Estrada, and Ramirez families, which culminated in a successful suit against discriminatory school segregation practices in California, holds significance for the state of civil rights and freedom in our Los Angeles region today. This historic case directly influenced Governor Earl Warren to sign a 1947 law repealing public school segregation statutes in California. Just seven years later, Warren, by then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, authored the unanimous opinion in *Brown v. Board of Education*. This landmark decision was influenced by Thurgood Marshall's compelling oral arguments as NAACP chief counsel and ultimately ended school segregation across the country.

As a longtime public servant deeply committed to the progress of our city, our state, and our country, I understand just how important it is for every student to have equitable access to education and other public resources. Honoring the legacy of the Mendez family would be an enduring testament to the maxim "separate is never equal" and the movement for civil rights for all.

I urge you to pass this bill swiftly to ensure the lasting and historic impacts of the *Mendez v. Westminster* case—and the families who fought for equal rights—are permanently and publicly commemorated to inspire all Americans for generations to come. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

KAREN BASS,
Mayor.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2023.

Hon. KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Speaker, House of Representatives.

Hon. HAKEEM JEFFRIES,
Minority Leader, House of Representatives.

Hon. SAM GRAVES,
Chairman, House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee.

Hon. RICK LARSEN,
Ranking Member, House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee.

DEAR SPEAKER MCCARTHY, LEADER JEFFRIES, CHAIRMAN GRAVES, AND RANKING MEMBER LARSEN: We, the below signed Latino civil rights and advocacy organizations, write to express our strong support of Congressman Jimmy Gomez's legislation that would designate the Los Angeles U.S. Courthouse at 350 W. 1st Street in honor of Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez. The Mendez's advocacy led to the landmark 1946 case that ended segregation in California schools and paved the way for the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Fittingly, the courthouse sits just blocks from where the historic Mendez case was originally decided. The Mendez family, including Felicitas and Gonzalo's children, Sylvia, Gonzalo Jr., and Jerome, also strongly support the renaming of the courthouse to the Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez United States Courthouse.

Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez advanced civil rights for all by mobilizing parents in

their community to push for an end to segregation in California schools after their daughter Sylvia and her brothers were rejected from attending a whites-only school because of their Mexican appearance and ancestry. In 1946, the Mendez family's efforts led to the landmark decision in *Mendez, et al vs. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al*, steering California to enact legislation that made it the first state to officially desegregate its public schools. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF), led by Thurgood Marshall at the time, had been developing a legal strategy to end school segregation and wrote an amicus brief in support of Mendez. Some of the arguments LDF made in Mendez were similar to those that were later made in the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision seven years later ending school segregation nationwide.

Our public institutions should reflect the rich diversity that represents the history and strength of our nation. However, of the 200+ named United States courthouses across the country, only 20 are named for people of color and 6 are named in honor of a woman. The Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez United States Courthouse would be the first federal building to be named for a Latina and only the eighth commemorating Hispanic Americans. Given its location in the county with the largest Latino population in the United States, the commemoration of the advocacy of Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez—who were of Puerto Rican and Mexican heritage, respectively—by renaming the courthouse honors both the diversity of its population and the critical progress for civil rights.

During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we highlight and celebrate the centuries of Latino contributions to the United States. It is also an opportunity to acknowledge and lift up Latinos' stories to who we are as a people and nation. The history of the desegregation of schools in California and throughout the Southwest is a significant part of the mostly unsung history of our community in this nation and needs to be better known among our fellow Americans. In short, Latino stories are American stories, and they need to be told.

We urge you to pass this bill expeditiously so that the lasting and historic impacts of the Mendez family and the *Mendez v. Westminster* case are permanently and publicly commemorated to inspire Angelenos and all Americans for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS), Esperanza United (formerly Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network), GreenLatinos, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), Hispanic Federation, Hispanic National Bar Association, IDRA, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, Latinos for Education.

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), MANA, A National Latina Organization, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), Migrant Legal Action Program, National Hispanic Media Coalition, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Latinx Psychological Association, National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association, SER National, The National HEP/CAMP Association, UnidosUS.

Mr. GOMEZ. Mr. Speaker, for all Americans to feel part of our American story, they need to see themselves reflected in the buildings and monuments that commemorate our history.

The Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez Courthouse will be the first courthouse named after a Latina out of over 200 named Federal courthouses.

I thank the over 60 cosponsors, including Members from both sides of the aisle, along with the overwhelming support of the California delegation and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Senate to pass this legislation swiftly to send a clear sign about what we stand for as a Nation.

Mr. MOLINARO. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time, and I am prepared to close.

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this historic legislation, I urge my colleagues to do the same, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MOLINARO. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I join in supporting this bill recognizing the legacy of Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez by naming a United States courthouse in Los Angeles after them. This is an historic and appropriate recognition, 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. MOLINARO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5754, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

THINK DIFFERENTLY TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. MOLINARO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6248) to require Amtrak to report to Congress information on Amtrak compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 with respect to trains and stations, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6248

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Think Differently Transportation Act".

SEC. 2. REPORT ON AMTRAK ADA COMPLIANCE.

Section 24315(b) of title 49, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in subparagraph (B) by striking "and" at the end;

(B) in subparagraph (C) by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

"(D) shall include an action plan for bringing Amtrak rail cars and Amtrak-served stations that are not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) into compliance with such Act as required by the settlement agreement entered into in 2020 between Amtrak and the Department of Justice; and

"(E) shall include a status report on—

"(i) Amtrak-served stations for which Amtrak is solely responsible for compliance with such Act based on a station assessment carried out by Amtrak, including a timeline for any required compliance with such Act, as required by the settlement agreement;

“(ii) Amtrak-served stations for which Amtrak has a shared responsibility for compliance with such Act based on a station assessment carried out by Amtrak, including a timeline for any required compliance with such Act for the portions of the station for which Amtrak is the responsible party consistent with the terms of the settlement agreement, identifying who is responsible for compliance (and the status of the compliance of each responsible party with such Act) for such portions and the timeline for compliance in cases in which Amtrak is not the responsible party; and

“(iii) the status of compliance with such Act for all Amtrak-served stations for which Amtrak is not the responsible party, nor is responsible for a portion of the station, and the entity or entities that have responsibility for compliance with such Act, based on a station assessment carried out by Amtrak or the party responsible under such Act.”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(3) In this subsection, the term ‘station assessment’ means a review of all components of a station including the building, platform, path to train, and parking areas, as required by the Access Board on the date of enactment of the Think Differently Transportation Act.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. MOLINARO) and the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. TITUS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MOLINARO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material into the RECORD on H.R. 6248.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to see my bill, the Think Differently Transportation Act, come to the House floor.

This is yet another item to pass the House that builds off the work that we began when I was county executive in New York State, in Dutchess County, New York, the ThinkDIFFERENTLY initiative.

ThinkDIFFERENTLY is a call to action to break down barriers and create opportunities for those living with intellectual, physical, and developmental disabilities.

The Think Differently Transportation Act does just that. The bill requires that Amtrak submit to Congress and the President an annual report with an expected timeline for bringing Amtrak trains and stations into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Amtrak stations and trains should be fully accessible for all Americans of every ability and fully compliant with Federal law.

The ADA was passed in 1990 and established a 20-year timeframe for intercity rail stations to be accessible to those with disabilities. As of July 2023, sadly, Amtrak has only brought 30 percent of the 385 stations it is responsible for into ADA compliance. This is sim-

ply unacceptable and creates far too many barriers for every person of every ability, making this bill necessary.

The Think Differently Transportation Act is a strong bipartisan bill that allows Congress to have appropriate oversight of Amtrak to ensure it complies with its obligations under the law.

The bill is an important step forward that Congress can take to address accessibility barriers to travel by rail.

I also wish to take this time to acknowledge the original co-lead of this bill, the late Congressman Don Payne, Jr., who, as we know, passed away last month. It was an immense pleasure to work with him, and I would like to think that the passage of this bill would act as some small honor to him and his legacy to helping individuals with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the Think Differently Transportation Act. It is a bipartisan bill that will advance accessibility on Amtrak services. I am sure my words will not be as eloquent as those of Mr. Payne had he been here to speak on this bill himself.

Amtrak received \$22 billion in the bipartisan infrastructure law to buy new equipment, invest in station accessibility, and make improvements in the backlog of capital projects and operating needs.

Congress set specific directions for how Amtrak can use its BIL funds.

With regard to station accessibility, the BIL states that Amtrak funds are to be used to make all the stations Amtrak serves accessible.

The bill we are considering today would require Amtrak to report annually to Congress on accessibility status, improvements, and plans at the more than 500 stations Amtrak serves, not just the ones where it has the responsibility to make accessibility a priority under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Thanks to the BIL, Amtrak is investing in new equipment and new stations. We need assurances that these investments will take into account people with disabilities, as required by the ADA. This bill helps to do just that.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support the Think Differently Transportation Act and to think differently about transportation so it is more accessible.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to say, again, that I support this bill, and I thank the sponsors of it. I wish Mr. Payne were here to see it pass, and I encourage my colleagues to vote in favor.

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

Mr. MOLINARO. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across the aisle for her leadership. I too wish Representative Payne, for many reasons, would

still be here to at least celebrate this important next step.

There are far too many barriers in the lives of those living with intellectual, physical, and developmental disabilities. They shoulder a 70 percent unemployment rate. Access to transportation and the ability to move around, as every American would hope to, creates such enormous barriers to opportunities.

This Think Differently Transportation Act will help to ensure that Amtrak follows the basic expectation that the ADA sets into law, through regular reporting to both Congress and the President on Amtrak's progress, or lack thereof, toward ADA compliance for its trains and stations and all those they serve.

This bill represents an important step toward improving Amtrak's service for customers of every ability.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of the bill, 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. MOLINARO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6248, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

JAMES R. DOMINGUEZ MEMORIAL ACT OF 2023

Mr. MOLINARO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5799) to designate the checkpoint of the United States Border Patrol located on United States Highway 90 West in Uvalde County, Texas, as the “James R. Dominguez Border Patrol Checkpoint”.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5799

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “James R. Dominguez Memorial Act of 2023”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) A native of San Antonio, Texas, Border Patrol Agent James R. Dominguez—

(A) proudly and honorably served his country as an agent of the U.S. Border Patrol for more than 12 years;

(B) began his service with the U.S. Border Patrol in 2000; and

(C) graduated as part of the 434th session of the Border Patrol Academy.

(2) Agent Dominguez served at the Uvalde Station in the Del Rio Sector.

(3) On July 19, 2012, Agent Dominguez stopped to clear debris from the roadway that posed risks to road and community safety along Highway 90 near Cline, Texas. While on scene, Agent Dominguez was struck and killed by a passing vehicle.

(4) Agent Dominguez is survived by his wife and 4 children.