

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I must also rise today to recognize the struggle that still faces us. Juneteenth evokes in all of us thoughts of a dark chapter in our Nation's history, and reinforces that which we already know: the struggle for equality is far from over. The joyous celebration of the emancipation of the slaves of Galveston, Texas, serves to remind us all of the need to remain committed to the justice, and freedom.

Today, Juneteenth is the longest-running celebration of the end of slavery in the United States. Its durability alone illustrates its significance. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, and for all the reasons above, I hope that my colleagues will join me in supporting H. Con. Res. 160.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 160, 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.

Mr. 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. Con. Res. 160 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. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support H. Con. Res. 160, 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, which I am proud to co-sponsor. 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. Con. Res. 160.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support the adoption of House Concurrent Resolution 160, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISSA). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 160.

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. DAVIS of Illinois. 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.

SUPPORTING FIREFIGHTER LIFE SAFETY SUMMIT INITIATIVES AND MISSION OF NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS FOUNDATION AND UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 180) to support initiatives developed by the Firefighter Life Safety Summit and the mission of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the United States Fire Administration to reduce firefighter fatalities and injuries, to encourage implementation of the new "Everyone Goes Home" campaign to make firefighter safety a national priority, and to support the goals of the national "stand down" called by fire organizations.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 180

Whereas for over 350 years our Nation's firefighters have dedicated their lives to ensuring the safety of their fellow citizens and communities;

Whereas throughout our Nation's history too many firefighters have died in the line of duty, leaving behind family members and friends to grieve their tragic losses;

Whereas these volunteer and career firefighters served with pride and died with honor;

Whereas in 1992 Congress created the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to lead a nationwide effort to remember the Nation's fallen firefighters and assist their survivors through a variety of programs;

Whereas the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation is dedicated to preventing future firefighter deaths and injuries;

Whereas the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation convened the first ever Firefighter Life Safety Summit in March 2004 to support the United States Fire Administration's goal of reducing firefighter fatalities by 25 percent within 5 years and 50 percent within 10 years through a commitment of energy and resources;

Whereas the Life Safety Summit developed 16 initiatives to significantly reduce firefighter fatalities and injuries, including the need to—

(1) define and advocate the need for a cultural change within the fire service relating to safety, incorporating leadership, management, supervision, accountability, and personal responsibility;

(2) enhance the personal and organizational accountability for health and safety throughout the fire service;

(3) focus greater attention on the integration of risk management with incident management at all levels, including strategic, tactical, and planning responsibilities;

(4) empower all firefighters to stop unsafe practices;

(5) develop and implement national standards for training, qualifications, and certification (including regular recertification) that are equally applicable to all firefighters, based on the duties they are expected to perform;

(6) develop and implement national medical and physical fitness standards that are equally applicable to all firefighters, based on the duties they are expected to perform;

(7) create a national research agenda and data collection system that relates to the initiatives;

(8) utilize available technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety;

(9) thoroughly investigate all firefighter fatalities, injuries, and near misses;

(10) ensure that grant programs support the implementation of safe practices and mandate safe practices as an eligibility requirement;

(11) develop and champion national standards for emergency response policies and procedures;

(12) develop and champion national protocols for response to violent incidents;

(13) provide firefighters and their families access to counseling and psychological support;

(14) provide public education more resources and champion it as a critical fire and life safety program;

(15) strengthen advocacy for the enforcement of codes and the installation of home fire sprinklers; and

(16) make safety be a primary consideration in the design of apparatus and equipment; and

Whereas the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, the National Volunteer Fire Council, and the Congressional Fire Services Institute have partnered with a number of other fire service organizations to call on all fire departments across the Nation to conduct a "stand down" for firefighter safety beginning Tuesday, June 21, 2005, during which fire departments are urged to suspend all nonemergency activity and instead focus entirely on firefighter safety in order to raise the level of awareness toward firefighter safety and call attention to the unacceptable number of line-of-duty deaths and injuries: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) supports initiatives developed by the Firefighter Life Safety Summit and the mission of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the United States Fire Administration to reduce firefighter fatalities and injuries;

(2) encourages implementation of the new "Everyone Goes Home" campaign to make firefighter safety a national priority; and

(3) supports the goals of the national "stand down" called by fire organizations beginning on June 21, 2005, and encourages all career, volunteer and combination fire departments across the country to participate in this important and life saving effort.

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

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOEHLERT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Con. Res. 180.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, in the early 1970s, a report by the President's National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, entitled "America Burning," presented a dismal assessment of fire safety in the United States. The report found that the U.S. had one of the worst, one of the worst, fire safety records in the industrialized world with nearly 12,000 citizens and 250 firefighters lost to fires annually.

In the years that followed that seminal report, the U.S. Fire Administration was created. Fire prevention and fire safety awareness programs were made a priority in communities across the country. And by 1980, deaths suffered from both citizens and firefighters had been significantly reduced. These improvements steadily continued into the 1980s, and by the end of the 1990s, firefighter deaths had been reduced to an average of about 100 annually. A dramatic drop; still too many.

Unfortunately, after 3 decades of great progress, firefighter deaths are disturbingly once again on the rise. In 2003, 112 firefighters lost their lives in the line of duty. Last year 117 died. And so far this year, there have been 58 deaths, on pace for about 130, which is about a 30 percent increase over the average of the previous decade. That, Mr. Speaker, is totally unacceptable.

These troubling statistics have triggered an unprecedented effort by the leadership of America's fire service to address this problem, and the concurrent resolution before us today recognizes and supports those efforts.

Specifically, the concurrent resolution supports three important efforts, which I will briefly describe. First, the resolution supports the 16 fire safety initiatives developed at a recent Firefighter Life Safety Summit convened by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. The initiatives were developed to support the U.S. Fire Administration's goal, developed under the strong leadership of Administrator David Paulison, of reducing firefighter fatalities by 25 percent within 5 years and 50 percent within 10 years. We are talking about life.

The initiatives range from broad ideas on the need for cultural change within the fire service related to safety to specific goals such as the development of national standards for training, certification, and physical fitness.

The second effort recognized by this concurrent resolution is the "Everyone Goes Home" campaign to make firefighter safety a national priority. The campaign, led by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, intends to

raise fire safety awareness and bring fire prevention to the forefront, using the 16 fire safety initiatives as a blueprint for change.

And the third effort recognized by this concurrent resolution is a national "stand down" for firefighter safety. Today, all across the country, fire departments are being urged to suspend all nonemergency activity and instead focus entirely on firefighter safety, calling attention to the unacceptable number of line-of-duty deaths and injuries. During the stand down, fire departments will talk about the causes of line-of-duty deaths, check apparatus and equipment, discuss health and safety regulations, review fire ground safety issues, and take stock of training needs and fitness goals. The International Association of Fire Chiefs has also requested that all volunteer departments conduct a special safety meeting the evening of June 21, today, or as near to this date as is possible.

I am pleased that we have the opportunity to bring attention to the firefighter safety problem that the fire service is facing today and recognize the importance of these efforts. But this problem, of course, cannot be addressed with one day of recognition. It will take years of steadfast commitment and cooperation by those in the fire service as well as the general public to achieve the fire safety goals set forth by the U.S. Fire Administration. But I am confident that if we work together, we will be successful; and I am hopeful that today's stand down marks an important turning point in our struggle to reduce line-of-duty deaths by firefighters.

And let me just add parenthetically that I am proud to be a Member of this great institution, the Congress of the United States, which has been responsible for initiating the Fire Safety Grant Award program, the SAFER program, providing resources. They get enough words from us on Capitol Hill about how supportive we are of the fire services. They want deeds, and we on a bipartisan basis have followed through by providing literally hundreds of million of dollars to firefighters across the country to get the necessary lifesaving equipment they need to do the job we expect of them: protecting us in our homes and our neighborhoods, our communities.

So we all should take a brief moment to pat ourselves on the back for what we have done responsibly to respond to the problem. But that is not enough, and the fight continues, and I am proud to be a warrior in that fight. None of us had to be drafted. We enlisted.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 180, which supports initiatives by the National Fire Service to reduce firefighter fatalities and injuries.

I want to congratulate the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for intro-

ducing this important measure. The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) is co-chair of the Fire Caucus and is a leading supporter of fire services in Congress and would be here now speaking except that he is in a markup on another legislation.

This concurrent resolution calls attention to the need to take action to reduce firefighter deaths and injury. It explicitly endorses a call from the major fire service organizations for a stand down to promote fire safety. The stand down would apply to every volunteer and career fire department in the Nation.

□ 1145

It would require that each department suspend all nonemergency activities in order to concentrate on measures to raise awareness of safety issues and to institute steps to improve safety.

A growing perception of the need to take corrective action to improve safety was the motivation for a major summit meeting of the fire service community in March 2004. The summit developed 16 firefighter life safety initiatives which are listed in the House resolution.

Unfortunately, despite widespread dissemination and discussion of the initiatives, corrective action has been slow to develop, and the trend in loss in life in the fire service has not improved. The stand down constitutes an action to try to change the culture, which is widely believed to be a key factor in bringing about constructive change.

The fire services perform a critical public safety role, and all Americans respect the high level of devotion to duty and sacrifice that characterize the service personnel. I applaud this resolution that seeks to reduce the loss of life and serious injury that too often occur to firefighters during the performance of their hazardous duties.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this resolution to my colleagues and ask for their support in its passage by the House. Our firefighters have done an incredible job of fire prevention and rescue, saving millions of lives. It is our turn to make sure that we help them by reducing loss of life and serious injury through this resolution.

If I may, I would just like to take a moment to read the names of those that have died in Oregon since 1997. There are 23 names: Randall E. Carpenter, Coos Bay Fire and Rescue; Jeffrey E. Common, Coos Bay Fire and Rescue; Chuck Hanners, Coos Bay Fire and Rescue; Paul E. Gibson, First Strike Environmental, Roseburg, Oregon; David Kelly Hammer, First Strike Environmental, Roseburg, Oregon; Jeffrey D. Hingel, First Strike Environmental, Roseburg; Jesse James, First Strike Environmental, Roseburg; Richard Burt "Richie" Moore, First Strike Environmental, Roseburg; Leland Price, First Strike Environmental, Roseburg, Oregon Department of Forestry Contractor; Mark

Robert Ransdell, First Strike Environmental, Roseburg, Oregon; Ricardo M. Ruiz, First Strike Environmental, Roseburg, Oregon; Robert Chisholm, Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department; Daniel Eric Rama, Grayback Forestry, Inc.; Bartholomew Blake Bailey, Grayback Forestry; Retha Mae Shirley, Grayback Forestry, Inc.; Larry A. Brown, Kingsley Field Fire Department, Klamath Falls; John Robert Hazlett, Odell Fire District; D. Craig Mackey, Oregon Department of Forestry; Lawrence J. "Larry" Hoffman, Oregon Department of Forestry; Thomas Howard Kistler, Polk County Fire District 1; Randall Harmon, Superior Helicopter, Grants Pass; George P. Converse, USDA Forest Service; Alan W. Wyatt, USDA Forest Service; and Richard W. Black, Weyerhaeuser, Eugene Helicopter Operation.

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

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

In wrapping up, I just want to recall a story about when I was a freshman Member of this great body 23 years ago. I sat on the Committee on Science, and we have jurisdiction over firefighter programs. I recall one of the witnesses being asked if there was a distinction between the professional and volunteer firefighters, and one of my senior colleagues at the time quickly demanded recognition from the chair, and he said to that Member asking the question, There are no amateurs in this business; they are all professionals. Some are paid, some are volunteer, but they are all professionals.

The recognition of that has prompted all of us to initiate the fire safety Grant program, to initiate the SAFER program. We expect so much of our firefighters. They need the resources to do the job that we demand that they do every single day.

All of us in our consciousness have a new appreciation for what the firefighters of America do as a result of 9/11 when 343 firefighters lost their lives. They gave their all for this Nation. Since then, we have developed in some quarters, where there was no prior recognition of the need of the fire service, a new appreciation for what we have to do.

Once again, let me credit this institution. We are often criticized for not being as responsive as some would like to some of the issues facing us across this country. But this institution, on a bipartisan basis, has responded to the call.

Today's resolution is about words and concepts and ideas, but more meaningful is the action, the deeds that we do by appropriating money, by following through to make certain that money is used for its intended purpose and used wisely, and it is. So this, in a sense, is an affirmation of our great appreciation for the firefighters, the men and women all across America on a very professional basis who daily are providing some measure of security for

us in our homes and in our communities, and in our Nation.

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

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

I read a list of 23 names from just those in Oregon, but that list could go on and on and on, depending on the State. I am hoping that through this resolution, although I am not foolish enough to believe that there will be no names, but I would sure like to see that reduced to as few as possible. They have done an incredible service to our country, to our communities, and I wish that for every profession we could look at a little bit later on and say, you have done this amazing job of prevention. Mr. Speaker, they are the ones that really make sure that every home, every business had a fire detector, and we think of the number of lives they have saved just by making sure we had that prevention piece. They have done it over and over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT) is right, they were volunteers, but they were professional. They were there training, they were there every night of the week training, they worked all day. Yet when a fire called, they came from wherever they were to make sure that they helped put out that fire and saved and rescued lives. I represent a district that has many rural communities and, again, we have many volunteer fire departments, but they are professional. I hope my colleagues would support this measure.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the House is considering this important resolution, which I have introduced with fire caucus co-chairmen CURT WELDON, SHERRY BOEHLERT and ROB ANDREWS.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude not only for their hard work and support on this measure, but for their years of dedication and leadership on issues of importance to the men and women serving our communities, and our Country, in the fire service.

I would also like to also recognize the contributions of Hal Bruno and Ron Siarnicki at the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, as well as the United States Fire Administrator David Paulison, for having convened the Firefighter Life Safety Summit that resulted in the recommendations upon which this resolution is based.

Finally, Bill Webb at the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, as he does on so many issues, worked to coordinate the efforts of NFFF, USFA, the fire service organizations and our Congressional offices to make this resolution a reality.

Mr. Speaker, for a number of years, the Congressional Fire Services Caucus has worked with the Nation's fire service organizations to identify and address some of the major challenges facing career and volunteer fire departments across the Country.

Among the results of these efforts has been the establishment and funding of such critical federal programs as the Fire Grants and SAFER.

These programs have resulted in billions of dollars being appropriated to help meet the

equipment, training and staffing needs of fire departments in large cities, small towns and rural communities across the Country.

And there is no doubt the dollars provided by these programs have helped save the lives of firefighters and the citizens they protect.

But there is also no escaping the reality that despite the amount of money spent, and the impact of these programs on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of fire departments, we still lose more than 100 firefighters every year to line of duty deaths, so many of which are preventable.

The NFFF and USFA recognized this, and convened the firefighter life safety summit last year, with a goal of reducing firefighter fatalities by 25 percent within 5 years and 50 percent within 10 years.

These are ambitious goals that will only be attained if every member of the Nation's fire service, from the presidents of national organizations to individual firefighters, is committed to implementing the 16 initiatives recommended at the summit, and supported by this resolution.

These recommendations range from developing medical and physical fitness standards for all firefighters to empowering all firefighters to stop unsafe practices.

To highlight the need to adopt these common sense changes, the International Association of Fire Chiefs is leading a national stand down this week, whereby all fire departments are urged to suspend all non-emergency activity and focus on firefighter safety.

This resolution supports this effort, and encourages every fire department to participate in this national stand down in order to raise awareness among our firefighters about the need to take responsibility for their health and safety.

Mr. Speaker, the job of fighting fires is one of the most dangerous and physically demanding activities one can undertake.

The real tragedy is that we have allowed unsafe practices and unhealthy habits to make the job even more hazardous than it already is.

Congress has, and will, continue to accept our responsibility to provide funding for the equipment, training and staffing needs of our departments, but we must insist that our firefighters accept responsibility for making themselves safer on the job.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, House Concurrent Resolution 180 speaks to the heart of how we as a nation value the lives of each and every one of our firefighters. This resolution is a wake-up call to make firefighter safety a national priority. It is a wake-up call to remind us that we need to do more to prevent and reduce firefighter fatalities and injuries. It begins today, where fire departments across the country are participating in "stand down." Today, at participating departments, all non-emergency activities are suspended and firefighters instead will focus only on firefighter safety. Firefighters are so used to putting their lives at risk to save others that their health and well-being is often neglected. Today we hope to begin a new trend where firefighter safety becomes a top priority for every firefighter, whether volunteer or paid, rural or urban, young or old.

The safety and health of firefighters has never been a more important issue. Firefighters now have more responsibilities with

the increased focus on homeland security and hazard response. We rely on them to protect us from harm while we are at home, at work, and everywhere in between. Regrettably, more than 58 firefighters have died this year, a number that far exceeds the annual pace. This is especially disturbing because most, if not all, of these deaths are preventable. There are measures to be taken to reduce the number of fatalities—measures that are described in this resolution. These firefighters don't have to die. The number of deaths can be reduced, but we have to do more. Not only can we ill-afford to lose over 100 firefighters a year, but we cannot afford to lose any. I fully support the goals of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the United States Fire Administration with respect to firefighter safety. I truly believe that at the end of the day, every firefighter must go home.

Ms. HOOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the remainder of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISSA). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 180.

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. BOEHLERT. 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, rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.J. RES. 10, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AUTHORIZING CONGRESS TO PROHIBIT PHYSICAL DESECRATION OF THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 330 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 330

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider in the House the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 10) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States authorizing the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States. The joint resolution shall be considered as read. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the joint resolution and on any amendment thereto to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) two hours of debate on the joint resolution equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary; (2) the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution, if offered by Representative Watt of

North Carolina or his designee, which shall be in order without intervention of any point of order, shall be considered as read, and shall be separately debatable for one hour equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent; and (3) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration of H.J. Res. 10 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the joint resolution to a time designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 330 is a structured rule, and it provides 2 hours of debate in the House, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary. It waives all points of order against consideration of the joint resolution. It makes in order the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the Committee on Rules report accompanying the resolution, if offered, by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WATT) or his designee, which shall be separately debatable for 1 hour, equally divided between the proponent and an opponent.

The rule waives all points of order against the amendment printed in the report, provides that notwithstanding the ordering of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the joint resolution to a time designated by the Speaker, and it allows one motion to recommit, with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, in 1989, the United States Supreme Court *Texas v. Johnson* decision nullified the laws of 48 States banning flag desecration. Today, all 50 States have passed resolutions requesting Congress to approve a Constitution amendment for ratification that would ban flag burning.

The House of Representatives has passed the same, if not similar, legislation for five consecutive Congresses. In the 104th Congress, the House of Representatives passed a proposed amendment with the necessary two-thirds majority by a vote of 312 to 120; while the 105th House passed it 310 to 114, the 106th House passed it 305 to 124, the 107th House passed it 298 to 125, and in the last Congress, the 108th, the House passed it by a vote of 300 to 125.

Our flag, with 50 stars and 13 stripes, represents the history, culture, and ideology of democracy for the world. Millions of Americans throughout our Nation's history died defending our flag and the ideals it represents. To burn a flag is to disrespect America and disrespect democracy. For our enemies, those who embrace terrorism,

communism, and totalitarianism, burning the American flag is a sign of defiance, because freedom threatens the existence of tyranny. For our soldiers fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, our flag is motivation to keep fighting, to move ahead, and reason to liberate a people from fear of oppression, as it has been in every conflict in which our Nation has fought.

□ 1200

For our veterans, the desecration of the flag is a slight for everything they fought for. And it serves to dishonor their friends and fellow soldiers who gave their lives for our country. To the parts of Europe occupied by the allied powers during World War II, the sight of our flag brought tears of joy because it symbolizes an end to atrocity and oppression and the return of freedom.

A constitutional amendment to ban flag desecration is not the end of our first amendment liberties. The Constitution was drafted as a living document that is capable of changing when called for by the overwhelming desire of the American people.

The debate to end flag desecration is an important issue that carries the overwhelming public support needed to pass an amendment to our Constitution. The Constitution is the foundation of our government, and modifying it should not be taken lightly. However, the American citizens have consistently spoken in favor of this amendment for more than 10 years, and it is an issue that is more than 3 decades old.

Our laws provide an opportunity for every citizen to express their opinions freely. If someone does not like the policies of our Nation, the party in power, our military, or even a specific law, they have the ability to protest, to voice concerns, write letters to their Congressmen without the consequences of death or imprisonment.

This freedom is not found in all nations. The desecration of the American flag, however, is not a form of free speech. It is a challenge to the institution that defends liberty. Although some may disagree, the United States is not the root of the world's problems; rather, we have provided relief from subjugation and freedom to many nations.

For those liberated by America and those who cherish freedom, our flag represents more than a Nation, government, or people. It is an emblem of liberty and justice. Our flag deserves to be respected and protected because it is more than just star-studded fabric; it is the symbol of democracy.

With that in mind, I request unanimous support of this rule and the underlying bill.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY), for yielding me time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.