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H. RES. 397

Affirming the rich spiritual and religious history of our Nation's founding and subsequent history and expressing support for designation of the first week in May as "America's Spiritual Heritage Week" for the appreciation of and education on America's history of religious faith.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 4, 2009

Mr. FORBES (for himself, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. NEUGEBAUER, Mr. AKIN, Mr. LATTA, Mr. JORDAN of Ohio, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Ms. FOXX, Mr. GINGREY of Georgia, Mr. JONES, Mr. WOLF, Mr. TURNER, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mr. HOEKSTRA, Mr. YOUNG of Florida, Mr. WAMP, Mr. KLINE of Minnesota, Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee, and Mr. BISHOP of Utah) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

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RESOLUTION

Affirming the rich spiritual and religious history of our Nation's founding and subsequent history and expressing support for designation of the first week in May as "America's Spiritual Heritage Week" for the appreciation of and education on America's history of religious faith.

Whereas religious faith was not only important in official American life during the periods of discovery, exploration, colonization, and growth but has also been acknowledged

and incorporated into all 3 branches of the Federal Government from their very beginning;

Whereas the Supreme Court of the United States affirmed this self-evident fact in a unanimous ruling declaring "This is a religious people . . . From the discovery of this continent to the present hour, there is a single voice making this affirmation";

Whereas political scientists have documented that the most frequently cited source in the political period known as The Founding Era was the Bible;

Whereas the first act of America's first Congress in 1774 was to ask a minister to open with prayer and to lead Congress in the reading of 4 chapters of the Bible;

Whereas Congress regularly attended church and Divine service together en masse;

Whereas throughout the American Founding, Congress frequently appropriated money for missionaries and for religious instruction, a practice that Congress repeated for decades after the passage of the Constitution and the First Amendment;

Whereas in 1776, Congress approved the Declaration of Independence with its 4 direct religious acknowledgments referring to God as the Creator ("All people are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"), the Lawgiver ("the laws of nature and nature's God"), the Judge ("appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world"), and the Protector ("with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence");

Whereas upon approving the Declaration of Independence, John Adams declared that the Fourth of July "ought to

be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty";

Whereas 4 days after approving the Declaration, the Liberty Bell was rung;

Whereas the Liberty Bell was named for the Biblical inscription from Leviticus 25:10 emblazoned around it: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land, to all the inhabitants thereof";

Whereas in 1777, Congress, facing a National shortage of "Bibles for our schools, and families, and for the public worship of God in our churches," announced that they "desired to have a Bible printed under their care & by their encouragement" and therefore ordered 20,000 copies of the Bible to be imported "into the different ports of the States of the Union";

Whereas in 1782, Congress pursued a plan to print a Bible that would be "a neat edition of the Holy Scriptures for the use of schools" and therefore approved the production of the first English language Bible printed in America that contained the congressional endorsement that "the United States in Congress assembled . . . recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States";

Whereas in 1782, Congress adopted (and has reaffirmed on numerous subsequent occasions) the National Seal with its Latin motto "Annuit Coeptis," meaning "God has favored our undertakings," along with the eye of Providence in a triangle over a pyramid, the eye and the motto "allude to the many signal interpositions of Providence in favor of the American cause";

Whereas the 1783 Treaty of Paris that officially endied the Revolution and established America as an independent begins with the appellation "In the name of the most holy and undivided Trinity";

Whereas in 1787, at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin declared, "God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? . . . Without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel";

Whereas the delegates to the Constitutional Convention concluded their work by in effect placing a religious punctuation mark at the end of the Constitution in the Attestation Clause, noting not only that they had completed the work with "the unanimous consent of the States present" but they had done so "in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven";

Whereas James Madison declared that he saw the finished Constitution as a product of "the finger of that Almighty Hand which has been so frequently and signally extended to our relief in the critical stages of the Revolution," and George Washington viewed it as "little short of a miracle," and Benjamin Franklin believed that its writing had been "influenced, guided, and governed by that omnipotent, omnipresent, and beneficent Ruler, in Whom all inferior spirits live, and move, and have their being";

Whereas, from 1787 to 1788, State conventions to ratify the United States Constitution not only began with prayer but even met in church buildings;

Whereas in 1795, during construction of the Capitol, a practice was instituted whereby "public worship is now regularly administered at the Capitol, every Sunday morning, at 11 o'clock";

Whereas in 1789, the first Federal Congress, the Congress that framed the Bill of Rights, including the First Amendment, appropriated Federal funds to pay chaplains to pray at the opening of all sessions, a practice that has continued to this day, with Congress not only funding its congressional chaplains but also the salaries and operations of more than 4,500 military chaplains;

Whereas in 1789, Congress, in the midst of framing the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment, passed the first Federal law touching education, declaring that "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged";

Whereas in 1789, on the same day that Congress finished drafting the First Amendment, it requested President Washington to declare a National day of prayer and thanksgiving, resulting in the first Federal official Thanksgiving proclamation that declared "it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor";

Whereas in 1800, Congress enacted naval regulations requiring that Divine service be performed twice every day aboard "all ships and vessels in the navy," with a sermon preached each Sunday;

Whereas in 1800, Congress approved the use of the just-completed Capitol structure as a church building, with Divine

services to be held each Sunday in the Hall of the House, alternately administered by the House and Senate chaplains;

Whereas in 1853, Congress declared that congressional chaplains have a "duty . . . to conduct religious services weekly in the Hall of the House of Representatives";

Whereas by 1867, the church at the Capitol was the largest church in Washington, DC, with up to 2,000 people a week attending Sunday service in the Hall of the House;

Whereas by 1815, over 2,000 official governmental calls to prayer had been issued at both the State and the Federal levels, with thousands more issued since 1815;

Whereas in 1853, the United States Senate declared that the Founding Fathers "had no fear or jealousy of religion itself, nor did they wish to see us an irreligious people . . . they did not intend to spread over all the public authorities and the whole public action of the nation the dead and revolting spectacle of atheistical apathy";

Whereas in 1854, the United States House of Representatives declared "It [religion] must be considered as the foundation on which the whole structure rests . . . Christianity; in its general principles, is the great conservative element on which we must rely for the purity and permanence of free institutions";

Whereas in 1864, by law Congress added "In God We Trust" to American coinage;

Whereas in 1864, Congress passed an act authorizing each State to display statues of 2 of its heroes in the United States Capitol, resulting in numerous statues of noted Christian clergymen and leaders at the Capitol, including Gospel ministers such as the Revs. James A. Garfield,

John Peter Muhlenberg, Jonathan Trumbull, Roger Williams, Jason Lee, Marcus Whitman, and Martin Luther King Jr., Gospel theologians such as Roger Sherman, Catholic priests such as Father Damien, Jacques Marquette, Eusebio Kino, and Junipero Serra, Catholic nuns such as Mother Joseph, and numerous other religious leaders;

Whereas in 1870, the Federal Government made Christmas (a recognition of the birth of Christ, an event described by the U.S. Supreme Court as "acknowledged in the Western World for 20 centuries, and in this country by the people, the Executive Branch, Congress, and the courts for 2 centuries") and Thanksgiving as official holidays;

Whereas, beginning in 1904 and continuing for the next half-century, the Federal Gvernment printed and distributed The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth for the use of Members of Congress because of the important teachings it contained;

Whereas in 1931, Congress by law adopted the Star-Spangled Banner as the official National Anthem, with its phrases such as "may the Heav'n-rescued land Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation," and "this be our motto, 'In God is our trust!' ";

Whereas in 1954, Congress by law added the phrase "one nation under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance;

Whereas in 1954, a special Congressional Prayer Room was added to the Capitol with a kneeling bench, an altar, an open Bible, an inspiring stained-glass window with George Washington kneeling in prayer, the declaration of Psalm 16:1: "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put

my trust," and the phrase "This Nation Under God" displayed above the kneeling, prayerful Washington;

Whereas in 1956, Congress by law made "In God We Trust" the National Motto, and added the phrase to American currency;

Whereas the constitutions of each of the 50 States, either in the preamble or body, explicitly recognize or express gratitude to God;

Whereas America's first Presidential Inauguration incorporated 7 specific religious activities, including—

(1) the use of the Bible to administer the oath;

(2) affirming the religious nature of the oath by the adding the prayer "So help me God!" to the oath;

(3) inaugural prayers offered by the President;

(4) religious content in the inaugural address;

(5) civil leaders calling the people to prayer or acknowledgment of God;

(6) inaugural worship services attended en masse by Congress as an official part of congressional activities; and

(7) clergy-led inaugural prayers, activities which have been replicated in whole or part by every subsequent President;

Whereas President George Washington declared "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports";

Whereas President John Adams, one of only 2 signers of the Bill of Rights and First Amendment, declared "As the safety and prosperity of nations ultimately and essentially depend on the protection and the blessing of Almighty God, and the national acknowledgment of this truth is

not only an indispensable duty which the people owe to Him";

Whereas President Jefferson not only attended Divine services at the Capitol throughout his presidency and had the Marine Band play at the services, but during his administration church services were also begun in the War Department and the Treasury Department, thus allowing worshippers on any given Sunday the choice to attend church at either the United States Capitol, the War Department, or the Treasury Department if they so desired;

Whereas Thomas Jefferson urged local governments to make land available specifically for Christian purposes, provided Federal funding for missionary work among Indian tribes, and declared that religious schools would receive "the patronage of the government";

Whereas President Andrew Jackson declared that the Bible "is the rock on which our Republic rests";

Whereas President Abraham Lincoln declared that the Bible "is the best gift God has given to men . . . But for it, we could not know right from wrong"

Whereas President William McKinley declared that "Our faith teaches us that there is no safer reliance than upon the God of our fathers, Who has so singularly favored the American people in every national trial and Who will not forsake us so long as we obey His commandments and walk humbly in His footsteps";

Whereas President Teddy Roosevelt declared "The Decalogue and the Golden Rule must stand as the foundation of every successful effort to better either our social or our political life";

Whereas President Woodrow Wilson declared that "America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scripture";

Whereas President Herbert Hoover declared that "American life is builded, and can alone survive, upon . . . [the] fundamental philosophy announced by the Savior nineteen centuries ago";

Whereas President Franklin D. Roosevelt not only led the Nation in a 6 minute prayer during D-Day on June 6, 1944, but he also declared that "If we will not prepare to give all that we have and all that we are to preserve Christian civilization in our land, we shall go to destruction";

Whereas President Harry S. Truman declared that "The fundamental basis of this Nation's law was given to Moses on the Mount. The fundamental basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teachings which we get from Exodus and St. Matthew, from Isaiah and St. Paul";

Whereas President Harry S. Truman told a group touring Washington, DC, that "You will see, as you make your rounds, that this Nation was established by men who believed in God. . . . You will see the evidence of this deep religious faith on every hand";

Whereas President Dwight D. Eisenhower declared that "Without God there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life. Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first, the most basic, expression of Americanism. Thus, the founding fathers of America saw it, and thus with God's help, it will continue to be" in

a declaration later repeated with approval by President Gerald Ford;

Whereas President John F. Kennedy declared that "The rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God";

Whereas President Ronald Reagan, after noting "The Congress of the United States, in recognition of the unique contribution of the Bible in shaping the history and character of this Nation and so many of its citizens, has . . . requested the President to designate the year 1983 as the 'Year of the Bible'", officially declared 1983 as "The Year of the Bible";

Whereas every other President has similarly recognized the role of God and religious faith in the public life of America;

Whereas all sessions of the United States Supreme Court begin with the Court's Marshal announcing, "God save the United States and this honorable court";

Whereas a regular and integral part of official activities in the Federal courts, including the United States Supreme Court, was the inclusion of prayer by a minister of the Gospel;

Whereas the United States Supreme Court has declared throughout the course of our Nation's history that the United States is "a Christian country", "a Christian nation", "a Christian people", "a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being", and that "we cannot read into the Bill of Rights a philosophy of hostility to religion";

Whereas Justice John Jay, an author of the Federalist Papers and original Justice of the United States Supreme

Court, urged "The most effectual means of securing the continuance of our civil and religious liberties is always to remember with reverence and gratitude the Source from which they flow";

Whereas Justice James Wilson, a signer of the Constitution, declared that "Human law must rest its authority ultimately upon the authority of that law which is Divine . . . Far from being rivals or enemies, religion and law are twin sisters, friends, and mutual assistants";

Whereas Justice William Paterson, a signer of the Constitution, declared that "Religion and morality . . . [are] necessary to good government, good order, and good laws";

Whereas President George Washington, who passed into law the first legal acts organizing the Federal judiciary, asked, "where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths in the courts of justice?";

Whereas some of the most important monuments, buildings, and landmarks in Washington, DC, include religious words, symbols, and imagery;

Whereas in the United States Capitol the declaration "In God We Trust" is prominently displayed in both the United States House and Senate Chambers;

Whereas around the top of the walls in the House Chamber appear images of 23 great lawgivers from across the centuries, but Moses (the lawgiver, who—according to the Bible—originally received the law from God,) is the only lawgiver honored with a full face view, looking down on the proceedings of the House;

Whereas religious artwork is found throughout the United States Capitol, including in the Rotunda where the pray-

er service of Christopher Columbus, the Baptism of Pocahontas, and the prayer and Bible study of the Pilgrims are all prominently displayed; in the Cox Corridor of the Capitol where the words "America! God shed His grace on thee" are inscribed; at the east Senate entrance with the words "Annuit Coeptis" which is Latin for "God has favored our undertakings"; and in numerous other locations;

Whereas images of the Ten Commandments are found in many Federal buildings across Washington, DC, including in bronze in the floor of the National Archives; in a bronze statue of Moses in the Main Reading Room of the Library of Congress; in numerous locations at the U.S. Supreme Court, including in the frieze above the Justices, the oak door at the rear of the Chamber, the gable apex, and in dozens of locations on the bronze latticework surrounding the Supreme Court Bar seating;

Whereas in the Washington Monument not only are numerous Bible verses and religious acknowledgments carved on memorial blocks in the walls, including the phrases: "Holiness to the Lord" (Exodus 28:26, 30:30, Isaiah 23:18, Zechariah 14:20), "Search the Scriptures" (John 5:39), "The memory of the just is blessed" (Proverbs 10:7), "May Heaven to this Union continue its beneficence", and "In God We Trust", but the Latin inscription Laus Deo meaning "Praise be to God" is engraved on the monument's capstone;

Whereas of the 5 areas inside the Jefferson Memorial into which Jefferson's words have been carved, 4 are God-centered, including Jefferson's declaration that "God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these

liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever";

Whereas the Lincoln Memorial contains numerous acknowledgments of God and citations of Bible verses, including the declarations that "we here highly resolve that . . . this nation under God . . . shall not perish from the earth"; "The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh'" (Matthew 18:7), "as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether'" (Psalms 19:9), "one day every valley shall be exalted and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh see it together" (Dr. Martin Luther King's speech, based on Isaiah 40:4–5);

Whereas in the Library of Congress, The Giant Bible of Mainz, and The Gutenberg Bible are on prominent permanent display and etched on the walls are Bible verses, including: "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not" (John 1:5), "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom and with all thy getting, get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7), "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8), and "The heavens declare the Glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1);

Whereas numerous other of the most important American government leaders, institutions, monuments, buildings,

and landmarks both openly acknowledge and incorporate religious words, symbols, and imagery into official venues;

Whereas such acknowledgments are even more frequent at the State and local level than at the Federal level, where thousands of such acknowledgments exist, and

Whereas the first week in May each year would be an appropriate week to designate as "America's Spiritual Heritage Week": Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved,* That the United States House of Rep-
2 resentatives—
3 (1) affirms the rich spiritual and diverse reli-
4 gious history of our Nation's founding and subse-
5 quent history, including up to the current day;
6 (2) recognizes that the religious foundations of
7 faith on which America was built are critical
8 underpinnings of our Nation's most valuable institu-
9 tions and form the inseparable foundation for Amer-
10 ica's representative processes, legal systems, and so-
11 cietal structures;
12 (3) rejects, in the strongest possible terms, any
13 effort to remove, obscure, or purposely omit such
14 history from our Nation's public buildings and edu-
15 cational resources; and
16 (4) expresses support for designation of a
17 "America's Spiritual Heritage Week" every year for

1 the appreciation of and education on America's his-
2 tory of religious faith.

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