

106TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5212

AN ACT

To direct the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to establish a program to collect video and audio recordings of personal histories and testimonials of American war veterans, and for other purposes.

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To direct the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to establish a program to collect video and audio recordings of personal histories and testimonials of American war veterans, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans’ Oral History
3 Project Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSE.**

5 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds as follows:

6 (1) Military service during a time of war is the
7 highest sacrifice a citizen may make for his or her
8 country.

9 (2) 4,700,000 Americans served in World War
10 I, 16,500,000 Americans served in World War II,
11 6,800,000 Americans served in the Korean Conflict,
12 9,200,000 Americans served in the Vietnam Con-
13 flict, 3,800,000 Americans served in the Persian
14 Gulf War, and countless other Americans served in
15 military engagements overseas throughout the 20th
16 century.

17 (3) The Department of Veterans Affairs reports
18 that there are almost 19,000,000 war veterans living
19 in this Nation today.

20 (4) Today there are only approximately 3,400
21 living veterans of World War I, and of the some
22 6,000,000 veterans of World War II alive today, al-
23 most 1,500 die each day.

24 (5) Oral histories are of immeasurable value to
25 historians, researchers, authors, journalists, film

1 makers, scholars, students, and citizens of all walks
2 of life.

3 (6) War veterans possess an invaluable resource
4 in their memories of the conflicts in which they
5 served, and can provide a rich history of our Nation
6 and its people through the retelling of those memo-
7 ries, yet frequently those who served during times of
8 conflict are reticent to family and friends about their
9 experiences.

10 (7) It is in the Nation's best interest to collect
11 and catalog oral histories of American war veterans
12 so that future generations will have original sources
13 of information regarding the lives and times of those
14 who served in war and the conditions under which
15 they endured, so that Americans will always remem-
16 ber those who served in war and may learn first-
17 hand of the heroics, tediousness, horrors, and tri-
18 umphs of war.

19 (8) The Library of Congress, as the Nation's
20 oldest Federal cultural institution and largest and
21 most inclusive library in human history (with nearly
22 119,000,000 items in its multimedia collection) is an
23 appropriate repository to collect, preserve, and make
24 available to the public an archive of these oral his-
25 tories. The Library's American Folklife Center has

1 expertise in the management of documentation
2 projects and experience in the development of cul-
3 tural and educational programs for the public.

4 (b) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this Act to create
5 a new federally sponsored, authorized, and funded pro-
6 gram that will coordinate at a national level the collection
7 of video and audio recordings of personal histories and
8 testimonials of American war veterans, and to assist and
9 encourage local efforts to preserve the memories of this
10 Nation’s war veterans so that Americans of all current and
11 future generations may hear directly from veterans and
12 better appreciate the realities of war and the sacrifices
13 made by those who served in uniform during wartime.

14 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM AT AMERICAN**
15 **FOLKLIFE CENTER TO COLLECT VIDEO AND**
16 **AUDIO RECORDINGS OF HISTORIES OF VET-**
17 **ERANS.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the American
19 Folklife Center at the Library of Congress shall establish
20 an oral history program—

21 (1) to collect video and audio recordings of per-
22 sonal histories and testimonials of veterans of the
23 armed forces who served during a period of war;

24 (2) to create a collection of the recordings ob-
25 tained (including a catalog and index) which will be

1 available for public use through the National Digital
2 Library of the Library of Congress and such other
3 methods as the Director considers appropriate to the
4 extent feasible subject to available resources; and

5 (3) to solicit, reproduce, and collect written ma-
6 terials (such as letters and diaries) relevant to the
7 personal histories of veterans of the armed forces
8 who served during a period of war and to catalog
9 such materials in a manner the Director considers
10 appropriate, consistent with and complimentary to
11 the efforts described in paragraphs (1) and (2).

12 (b) USE OF AND CONSULTATION WITH OTHER ENTI-
13 TIES.—The Director may carry out the activities described
14 in paragraphs (1) and (3) of subsection (a) through agree-
15 ments and partnerships entered into with other govern-
16 ment and private entities, and may otherwise consult with
17 interested persons (within the limits of available re-
18 sources) and develop appropriate guidelines and arrange-
19 ments for soliciting, acquiring, and making available re-
20 cordings under the program under this Act.

21 (c) TIMING.—As soon as practicable after the enact-
22 ment of this Act, the Director shall begin collecting video
23 and audio recordings under subsection (a)(1), and shall
24 attempt to collect the first such recordings from the oldest
25 veterans.

1 **SEC. 4. PRIVATE SUPPORT.**

2 (a) ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS.—The Librarian of
3 Congress may solicit and accept donations of funds and
4 in-kind contributions to carry out the oral history program
5 under section 3.

6 (b) ESTABLISHMENT OF SEPARATE GIFT AC-
7 COUNT.—There is established in the Treasury (among the
8 accounts of the Library of Congress) a gift account for
9 the oral history program under section 3.

10 (c) DEDICATION OF FUNDS.—Notwithstanding any
11 other provision of law—

12 (1) any funds donated to the Librarian of Con-
13 gress to carry out the oral history program under
14 section 3 shall be deposited entirely into the gift ac-
15 count established under subsection (b);

16 (2) the funds contained in such account shall be
17 used solely to carry out the oral history program
18 under section 3; and

19 (3) the Librarian of Congress may not deposit
20 into such account any funds donated to the Librar-
21 ian which are not donated for the exclusive purpose
22 of carrying out the oral history program under sec-
23 tion 3.

24 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

25 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
26 this Act—

- 1 (1) \$250,000 for fiscal year 2001; and
- 2 (2) such sums as may be necessary for each
- 3 succeeding fiscal year.

Passed the House of Representatives October 4,
2000.

Attest:

Clerk.