

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MERLE HAGGARD POST OFFICE BUILDING

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1988) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1730 18th Street in Bakersfield, California, as the “Merle Haggard Post Office Building”.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1988

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

SECTION 1. MERLE HAGGARD POST OFFICE BUILDING.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1730 18th Street in Bakersfield, California, shall be known and designated as the “Merle Haggard Post Office Building”.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the “Merle Haggard Post Office Building”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DESANTIS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DESANTIS. 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 the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1988, which designates a post office in Bakersfield, California, as the Merle Haggard Post Office Building.

Merle Haggard once sang about being a “branded man out in the cold” because, having served time in prison, “no matter where I travel, the black mark follows me, I’m branded with a number on my name.” He lamented that: “If I live to be a hundred, guess I’ll never clear my name.”

Well, Merle didn’t quite make it to 100, but it is safe to say that the people of Bakersfield will appreciate seeing the post office bear the name of Merle Haggard. Merle can hold his head up and be proud of who he was.

Now this will be a time for celebration, but remember: “We don’t smoke marijuana in Muskogee; we don’t take no trips on LSD.” So in honor of the Okie from Muskogee, illicit substances will be prohibited at the Haggard Post Office. It will be okay to just stay there and drink, but keep in mind that tonight could be the night the bottle let’s you down.

We would also appreciate if people refrain from burning draft cards on Main Street, and please don’t let your “hair grow long and shaggy” at the Merle Haggard Post Office. Waving Old Glory down at the courthouse will, of course, be encouraged.

Now, Merle didn’t always make it easy for people, particularly his mother. His mother did everything she could to raise him right, but Merle didn’t listen. So, like others, he turned 21 in prison, doing life without parole, and that left only Merle to blame because “Mama tried, Mama tried.”

Merle appreciated all our fighting men and women who fought and died to keep America free. Merle was right to ask if we can really count on being free if we have to depend on “some squirrely guy who claims he just” doesn’t believe in fighting.

Merle was a patriot who loved this country. If you don’t love it, then just leave it. But be warned: “When you are running down my country hoss, you are walking on the fighting side of me. . . .”

May God bless Merle Haggard.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, that was a hard act to follow. I was transported to the 1960s. I was always a fan of Merle Haggard, but not necessarily his political philosophy. I don’t believe the proposition that if you disagree with the policies of your government, you have to leave the country. I actually believe the beauty of America is that you get to disagree, you get to respectfully dissent, and you still get to live here as a full-fledged American.

I am pleased to join my colleagues in consideration of this bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service in Bakersfield, California, as the Merle Haggard Post Office Building.

Merle was born in Bakersfield in 1937, and, as my friend from Florida said, took a circuitous route to becoming “the poet of the common man,” as he was known.

As a teenager, he often found himself in reform school after committing petty crimes. By the age of 20, he was serving time, as Mr. DESANTIS said, in a California prison. It was that experience, however, that helped him turn his life around.

In prison, Merle Haggard rediscovered his love of music, and later put his talent to work on the Bakersfield club circuit. By singing about poverty, the struggles of the ordinary man and woman, and how music saved him during dark times, he captured the imagination and the attention of the entire country, and had 38 number one country hits.

In 1994, Merle was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. In 2010, he received a Kennedy Center Honors from President Barack Obama. After a

long and fulfilling life, Merle died on his 79th birthday in April of last year.

Mr. Speaker, we should pass this bill to recognize the incredible accomplishments to our culture that Merle Haggard represents to celebrate his country music and his ability to give a voice to working men and women everywhere who keep their “nose on the grindstone” and “work hard every day.”

Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of H.R. 1988, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1630

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY), the distinguished majority leader.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I am from California, but I happen to be from Bakersfield, California. I thank the gentleman for his creative use of the lyrics. Merle would be proud.

Mr. Speaker, when you take a look back at American history, you can see figures standing tall who spoke for the everyday working man. Following the long tradition of Whitman and Twain, Merle Haggard was a man who knew America instinctively because he lived an American life. It wasn’t a life of the movies, but it was all the more compelling because it was all the more real. That is the reason they called him “The Poet of the Common Man.”

Merle Haggard didn’t have it easy. At the height of the Depression, his family searched for opportunity out West. Merle grew up with little means and lived with a past of mistakes and regrets.

So he sang. He sang in “Branded Man” of the stigma of prison, crooning “I held my head up high, determined I would rise above the shame.”

He sang in “Working Man Blues” of the grind of doing his duty to his family, “working as long as my two hands are fit to use.”

And he sang of his roots, not of power or wealth or status, but of pride in being “an Okie from Muskogee,” a place of leather boots, football, and Old Glory.

He found success and, more importantly, redemption in the music he shared with his country.

Now, the Bakersfield Sound changed country music, and it is a testament to Merle Haggard’s talent that when you listen to his hits, from “Branded Man” to “Mama Tried,” to “Big City,” to “Working Man Blues,” or even to “Okie from Muskogee,” you not only hear the hardship and wisdom of a well-lived life, but you can hear the roots of so much of the music we still listen to today.

From a man who went from Bakersfield High School to San Quentin prison, to the Country Music Hall of Fame, a building doesn’t seem like much. But I hope that when people pass by the Merle Haggard Post Office Building in

downtown Bakersfield, they will remember an icon of our community, an artist who never backed down, a man whose honesty above his own failings and willingness to pick himself back up inspired music that lifts our spirits and feeds our souls.

Merle Haggard's name will live on in this building, but his spirit will live on in his music that calls us to do the best we can every day God gives us.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers on this side. I just want to echo the sentiments of Mr. MCCARTHY, the majority leader, in honoring a great artist who overcame enormous obstacles in his life to achieve great success and to make contributions to American culture.

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

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption 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 Florida (Mr. DESANTIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 954.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REMOVAL OF USE RESTRICTIONS ON CERTAIN LAND TRANSFERRED TO ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 954) to remove the use restrictions on certain land transferred to Rockingham County, Virginia, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 954

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

SECTION 1. REMOVAL OF USE RESTRICTION.

Public Law 101-479 (104 Stat. 1158) is amended—

(1) by striking section 2(d); and

(2) by adding the following new section at the end:

“SEC. 4. REMOVAL OF USE RESTRICTION.

“(a) The approximately 1-acre portion of the land referred to in section 3 that is used for purposes of a child care center, as authorized by this Act, shall not be subject to the use restriction imposed in the deed referred to in section 3.

“(b) Upon enactment of this section, the Secretary of the Interior shall execute an instrument to carry out subsection (a).”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LAHOOD) and the gentleman from California (Mr. PANETTA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 954, offered by our colleague, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Congressman BOB GOODLATTE of Virginia, would remove certain deed restrictions on an approximately 1-acre portion of a property previously transferred in Rockingham County, Virginia, under the terms of the National Park Service's Federal Lands to Parks Program. The transferred land included a garage that had previously been used by the National Park Service.

Following the transfer, Rockingham County decided that the nonprofit Plains Area Daycare Center, which provides affordable childcare for nearly 100 children, would benefit from use of the garage.

In 1990, Congress passed a law allowing for a portion of the previously transferred land to be used for the childcare center. Although a portion of the transferred property is authorized for use as a daycare center, the center encounters hurdles in securing financing for improvements and repairs due to the terms of the original deed and the subsequent legislation.

H.R. 954 would remove certain deed restrictions from an approximately 1-acre portion of the property, while the other 2 acres would continue to be subject to the existing deed restrictions and revisionary clause. Removal of these deed restrictions will ensure that improvements and repairs can take place without further delay in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 954 removes the use restrictions on a 1-acre parcel of Federal land provided to Rockingham County, Virginia.

In 1989, Congress authorized Rockingham County to use a 3-acre parcel of Federal land for the purpose of establishing a childcare center under the condition that the land continues to be used for this purpose. If the county no longer needs the land for a childcare center, the land reverts back to ownership by the United States or the county has the option to purchase it at a fair market value.

The Federal Government has a long tradition of providing public land to State, county, and local governments. Fair use of Federal land and a fair return to the American taxpayer has yet to be at the forefront of these transactions.

Removing public-purpose requirements and use restrictions should only

be done when it is deemed appropriate and necessary, and in this particular case, the sponsor of this bill has worked with the National Park Service to develop legislation that is both fair and transparent.

The land provided to Rockingham County includes a garage previously used by the National Park Service that the county has determined could benefit Plains Area Daycare Center. The Park Service no longer needs the garage, and removing the use restriction on one of the 3 acres will allow this childcare provider to access financial assistance in order to upgrade and rehabilitate the garage so that it is suitable to their needs.

This is a worthy goal, and I commend the gentleman from Virginia for this legislation, and that is why we support the adoption of H.R. 954.

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

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE), the chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois for yielding to me and for his work on this bill, as well as Chairman BISHOP's work on this legislation and those on the other side of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge passage of H.R. 954. This bill simply removes 20-year-old deed use restrictions on 1 acre of land in Rockingham County, Virginia.

For over 25 years, a little over 3 acres of land and its associated buildings previously held by the Federal Government have been maintained by Rockingham County in the Plains Area Daycare Center in the Sixth District of Virginia.

In 1989, the Federal Government deeded these 3 acres of land, with restriction, to Rockingham County. However, even prior to this official declaration, Rockingham County had already been faithfully maintaining the property no longer utilized by the Federal Government.

The government transferred this land to Rockingham County in 1989 under the condition that this property was to be used for public purposes. The county then decided that the nonprofit Plains Area Daycare Center in Broadway, Virginia, which provides childcare on a sliding scale to many families who otherwise could not afford such a service, would benefit from the use of the old garage located on the property.

Therefore, in 1990, Congress enacted Public Law 101-479, which allowed the deed to be changed from public use to the particular use of the childcare center. Donations by the community, totaling \$75,000, turned the building into a nursery, daycare, and afterschool care facility.

Additionally, the establishment of the daycare center provided for the creation of a playground that the center supports and opens for public use. To