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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MEADOWS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 12, 2018.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK MEADOWS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 8, 2018, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

VICTORY OR DEATH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, there is a battle brewing back home in Texas. According to news reports, it seems that some in our education system have taken issue with one of the most treasured and significant historical letters in Texas history, Lieutenant Colonel William Barrett Travis and his passionate plea in his letter "to all the people of Texas and all Americans in the world."

To add insult to injury, they have also called into question the heroic nature of Travis and the 187 volunteers who sacrificed their lives at the Battle of the Alamo on March 6, 1836.

A committee evaluating the State's history curriculum standards has proposed that we eliminate the study of Travis' historical "Victory or Death" letter. They have also recommended that we remove the word "heroic" from the curriculum because it is a value-charged word, a hero and the heroes of the Alamo.

Well, to quote Travis, I have a value-charged word or two to say about that: "Victory or death," Mr. Speaker. These are the most iconic words in Texas history. That is our battle cry and has been our battle cry since 1836. It is who we are.

Texas' defiant, independent nature was born from those words of that letter written from behind the walls of a besieged Alamo mission in Bexar, Texas. The words on that paper are as much a part of who we are as the blood that runs through our veins.

We shall "never surrender or retreat," to quote Travis. We cannot allow political correctness to rewrite any history or, in this case, edit history.

Maybe they didn't take Texas history from Mrs. Wilson, like I did. However, it seems now that this committee is walking back that original suggestion.

Whatever the case, the Travis letter is every bit the core and soul of freedom as the words of Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence. He says: "I have answered that demand with a cannon shot, and the flag still waves proudly over the north wall. I shall never surrender or retreat."

Mr. Speaker, history is the greatest teacher we have. Book burners who want to erase from textbooks "the establishment of the Republic of Texas brought civil, political, and religious freedom to Texas" are just trying to ignore history.

Those elites who want to rip the Travis letter from our Texas history books dishonor the sacrifice of 187 freedom fighters at the Alamo, of all races, from most of the States and several foreign countries, including Mexico. These individuals gave their last full measure of devotion to liberty.

Webster's dictionary may not define "hero" with the names of those who died March 6, 1836, at the Alamo, but it should.

Travis isn't just my favorite hero. He has intertwined himself throughout my life. He is the inspiration of why I am a lawyer. He was a lawyer.

My first grandson is named Barrett Houston. And inscribed along the bottom of my stationery are the words, "I shall never surrender or retreat."

Travis' letter hung on my wall of the courtroom in Texas and still hangs in my office today in D.C.

Because of men like William Barrett Travis and the Alamo defenders, we are called the great State of Texas. Travis' legacy embodies the passion and loyalty that makes Texans stand out in the world. To consider anything to the contrary is a disgrace.

We must preserve one of our greatest treasures in Texas history so that future generations can learn the meaning of "what is due to his own honor and that of his country." God and Texas.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD the Travis letter.

COMMANDANCY OF THE ALAMO

Bejar, Feby. 24th. 1836

To the People of Texas & All Americans in the World—Fellow Citizens & compatriots—

I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna—I have sustained a continual Bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man—The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken—I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls—I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American

☐ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., ☐ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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