

His career as a public servant began in 1941, when he was selected to work in Army Intelligence during World War II as a member of the Tuskegee Airmen. Just prior to that selection, he was not allowed to fly fighter planes for the Army Air Corps because of racial discrimination. Despite being subjected to racial discrimination, he was committed to serve his country.

After an honorable discharge from the Army, he decided to study law. To support himself while attending law school, he worked for the United States Post Office in New York as a clerk during the evening shift and later as a conductor in the New York City subway system. He maintained this schedule for 3 years. His dedication to finish law school still inspires me today.

Motivated to fight racial discrimination, he represented the controversial revolutionary Malcolm X and other activists during the civil rights era. He also served as president of the New York chapter of the NAACP. His commitment to fight for justice and equality for African Americans was bold and admirable.

A strong interest in politics led him to campaign for the New York State Assembly several times. Finally, in 1964, he was elected and served for two years. Immediately thereafter he became the president for the Borough of Manhattan and remained in that role until 1977.

As an entrepreneur, his love of business and his Harlem community led him to purchase and totally revitalize the legendary Apollo Theatre in 1980. As the Harlem business district has flourished, the Apollo Theatre remains a community landmark and symbol. Another successful business venture he created is the Inner City Broadcasting Company, which housed the first African American owned radio station in New York. Today, there are nineteen radio stations in the Inner City network.

On March 29, 2007, I had the honor and privilege to see Percy Sutton honored with the Congressional Gold Medal along with over 300 other Tuskegee Airmen. It was a great day to see him and other African American veterans finally get the recognition that was so long overdue.

Percy Sutton is a great American and living legend. I'm certain America is a better place because of his contributions. Designating the post office building in Harlem is a great way to keep his legend alive for years to come. Since he is 86 years old and his health is fragile, I urge my colleagues to support this bill. I thank my New York delegation colleagues for cosponsoring this bill.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) 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.

NATIONAL PASSPORT MONTH

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules

and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 554) supporting the goals and ideals of National Passport Month.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 554

Whereas through international travel, Americans can individually play a major role towards improving foreign relations by building bridges and making connections with citizens of other countries;

Whereas interacting with the global community inspires Americans to reflect on the diverse multi-cultural background that has defined the United States as a great country of cooperation and progress;

Whereas having a passport and traveling abroad creates connections with the global community, supporting goodwill throughout the world;

Whereas having a passport and traveling abroad promotes understanding and goodwill throughout the world, opening the doors to increased peace, tolerance, and acceptance;

Whereas having a passport and traveling abroad opens up a preponderance of educational opportunities and experiences for Americans of all ages;

Whereas having a passport and traveling abroad enables Americans to see first-hand the effect of the United States on the world, including the tremendous amount of humanitarian aid given by the United States through both public and private sectors;

Whereas having a passport and traveling abroad reminds Americans that they are members of a global family and gives them opportunities to mend rifts around the world;

Whereas fewer than 23 percent of Americans have passports, thereby limiting their ability to travel outside the United States;

Whereas the more Americans travel outside the United States, the more they will experience opportunities to increase their understanding of the world and the place of the United States in it;

Whereas the creation and support of a National Passport Month signals to Americans the important role they can play as ambassadors for the United States by serving as agents of understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect; and

Whereas travel publishers along with travel editors from the most prestigious media outlets in the United States, student travel organizations, and book sellers have designated September as "National Passport Month" to educate the public about the importance of having a passport and the positive impact international travel has on individuals: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of National Passport Month; and

(2) requests that the President issue a proclamation calling on the Federal Government, States, localities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, other entities, and the people of the United States to observe National Passport Month with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that

all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore: Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Vermont?

There was no objection.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, as a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I am pleased to join my colleague in the consideration of H. Res. 554. This supports the goals and ideals of National Passport Month. H. Res. 554, with 55 co-sponsors, was introduced by Representative BARBARA LEE on July 27, 2007. It was reported from the Oversight Committee on August 1, 2007, by a voice vote.

Madam Speaker, the creation and support of a National Passport Month signals to Americans the important role they can play as ambassadors for the United States by serving as agents of understanding, tolerance and mutual respect to citizens of other countries. The use of a passport and the desire to travel to other nations will bring personal enjoyment, enrichment and interest for both traveler and host, yet less than 25 percent of Americans have passports, thereby eliminating their ability to travel outside the United States. The passport and traveling abroad will create a connection with the global community and support goodwill throughout the world.

Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague, Representative BARBARA LEE from California, for supporting the goals and ideals of National Passport Month, and I support and urge the swift passage of this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

September has been recognized by the tourism industry as National Passport Month in an effort to educate the public and increase awareness of the importance of having passports.

The tourism industry brings in more than \$80 billion annually to the U.S. economy. In helping our economy thrive, it also strengthens public diplomacy through each visitor. Similarly, Americans can improve foreign relations by traveling internationally and meeting with citizens of other countries.

The opportunities to learn different cultures, view history and exchange ideas are endless for those having passports. Interacting with the global community enables travelers to promote understanding and good will.

National Passport Month educates the public on the value and positive impact international travel has on individuals. Without passports, these opportunities could not be achieved. So, therefore, Madam Speaker, I encourage everyone to support H. Res. 554.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I yield 5½ minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, first let me thank the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) for your leadership and for managing the bill, and also for your clarity of why we are offering this resolution today and for your support. I also thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) for your leadership and your support. To the chairman of the committee, Chairman WAXMAN, and our ranking member, Mr. DAVIS, I commend them and thank them for working together to bring this bill to the floor, as well as to our leadership.

Madam Speaker, I want to also express my appreciation to the over 60 cosponsors of this bipartisan resolution for their support.

This resolution is extremely straightforward. What it does is detail and recognize the value of international travel, and request the President to issue a proclamation calling on the Federal Government, States, localities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses and other entities and the people of the United States to observe National Passport Month with appropriate ceremonies, programs and activities.

The purpose of National Passport Month is to create a time to educate the public about the incredible opportunities available to those who obtain passports as well as the positive impact that international travel has on individuals and on our country.

Today, and this is quite a revealing statistic, only about 25 percent of Americans have a passport. Twenty-five percent. That means 75 percent of Americans are limited in their ability to travel abroad because they don't have a passport. As a result, they are unable to take advantage of the enriching opportunities presented by international travel.

As a member of the State-Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, I understand and appreciate the value and importance of international travel and the impact of our foreign aid and the positive value that our foreign aid brings to those throughout the world.

Many years ago I had the opportunity to live in Great Britain for a couple of years, and can say with certainty that there is no substitute for the experience you get from visiting other countries, from meeting with people, from tasting the food, from interacting with the culture. It changes the way we see the world. It broadens our horizons, it deepens our appreciation for different countries and cultures and our shared humanity. It also helps us to learn, to understand, and to tolerate and to mutually respect other cultures. Not only does travel provide enriching opportunities for the individual, it can also have profound

benefits for our Nation as a whole through people-to-people contact.

In addition, having a passport and traveling abroad enables others to see our contributions firsthand, including the tremendous amount of humanitarian aid given by Americans through the public and private sectors.

Americans of all ages are our best ambassadors, and we should promote policies that encourage them to travel, to forge connections with people from other countries, to foster mutual understanding and tolerance, and to help open new doors for peaceful coexistence.

The timing of our efforts could not be more critical. I think we all recognize that America needs a boost in foreign public opinion, and I am confident that connections made with American travelers can and will make a huge difference in improving our image abroad. For all of these reasons, when Lonely Planet, which I am pleased to say is located in Oakland in my district, first raised the idea of a National Passport Month, I immediately got it. I embraced it.

I am proud to have introduced H. Res. 554 and to be a part of this campaign to recognize the importance of international travel, and I am excited by the support we have received.

Last year, Lonely Planet presented me with over 5,000 petition signatures from people all over our country who support these efforts, and this campaign has the support of a broad coalition of over 70 supporting travel organizations and associations to corporations like American Express and Yahoo.

Moreover, the Department of State is on record in supporting September as National Passport Month. Let me just read a quote from their letter: "Since September is a time of the year when schools are reopening and many students are considering travel or study abroad, it is a highly appropriate month to promote public awareness of the value of the United States passport. The Department shares your appreciation of the U.S. passport and supports your resolution."

Given the recent problems with passport backlogs, this resolution is even more timely. The administration must make passports a priority and ensure that we have the resources available to process them in a timely manner. I thank all of the supporters of this resolution.

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

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers on my side, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. HARMAN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 554.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the

rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SYMPATHY AND PLEDGING SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF SEVERE FLOODING IN EASTERN KANSAS

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 544) expressing the sympathy and pledging the support of the House of Representatives and the people of the United States for the victims of the devastating thunderstorms that caused severe flooding in 20 counties in eastern Kansas beginning on June 26, 2007.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 544

Whereas, on June 26, 2007, a storm system lasting several days was responsible for bringing heavy and torrential rainfall to eastern Kansas;

Whereas communities in eastern Kansas received up to 21 inches of rain within a four-day period, resulting in devastating floods throughout the region;

Whereas the flooding led to one person's death and more than 3,100 homes and businesses destroyed or sustaining major damage;

Whereas communities in at least 20 counties were evacuated;

Whereas flood waters caused a petroleum refinery tank system to overflow into the Verdigris River, releasing an estimated 71,000 gallons of crude oil into the Coffeyville community and surrounding area;

Whereas, on June 30, 2007, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius declared a state of disaster for Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Butler, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Coffey, Cowley, Elk, Franklin, Linn, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho, Osage, Wilson, and Woodson counties;

Whereas, on July 2, 2007, President George W. Bush declared a major Federal disaster for the State of Kansas that included Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Butler, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Coffey, Cowley, Elk, Franklin, Linn, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho, Osage, Wilson, and Woodson counties;

Whereas other surrounding counties in Kansas also suffered damage from heavy flooding; and

Whereas areas in Oklahoma and Texas experienced devastating floods that resulted in loss of human life and millions of dollars in damage to homes and businesses: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its heartfelt sympathy for the victims of the devastating thunderstorms that caused severe flooding in 20 counties in eastern Kansas beginning on June 26, 2007;

(2) conveys its gratitude to the local, State, and Federal officials and emergency personnel who responded swiftly to the crisis, including members of the Kansas National Guard and Kansas Highway Patrol;

(3) recognizes the generous support of volunteers, private and corporate donors, religious groups, and charitable organizations that have given generously toward the relief efforts following the destructive flooding; and

(4) commends the spirit of the people of Kansas, who consistently demonstrate an