

After-school programs build strong communities by involving a wide range of parents and teachers and business leaders, community organization volunteers in the lives of young people.

Mr. Speaker, of the more than 28 million children in the United States whose parents work outside the home, more than half have no place to go after school. That is why the "Lights On Afterschool!" effort is so important and deserves our commemoration. That is also why it is critical for Congress and the President to address the fact that, as noted in this resolution, many after-school programs across the Nation are being forced to shut down for lack of funding.

So I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting not only this resolution, but also in efforts to increase Federal funding for after-school programs so that our children receive the services that they need, the services that they deserve.

Finally, I would note that after-school programs are an essential, but not the only component to help working parents address the many challenges in providing for their families in the 21st century economy. That is why I have introduced H.R. 3780, the Balancing Act, as a comprehensive response to these challenges, and I encourage all of my colleagues to join me when I reintroduce the Balancing Act next Congress because the Balancing Act includes after-school programs.

I also encourage my colleagues to vote for H. Res. 809.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 809, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RELATING TO EARLY ORGANIZATION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE 109TH CONGRESS

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I offer a resolution (H. Res. 824) relating to early organization of the House of Representatives for the One Hundred Ninth Congress, and ask unanimous consent for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

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

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I want to thank the chairman for his timely handling of this matter.

I also wanted to ensure that the legislative purposes of this resolution are clear.

One purpose of this resolution is to continue the practice of allowing the House party leaders to call an early organizing caucus of their respective party members, and to do so before the statutorily established date of December 1st. Each party leader can schedule the caucus to begin on any date of his or her choosing after the date of the election. While it is customary to schedule the caucuses to begin at the same time, it is up to each party leader to make that decision for his or her party caucus. If the House has adjourned sine die, then each incumbent Members-elect, and a designated staff person, can be paid for their transportation expenses to attend the caucus. If the House has not adjourned sine die, then there are no travel expenses paid for incumbent Members-elect or their staff. New Members-elect, and a designated staff person from the district, can also attend with all attendance expenses paid by the House.

The resolution also has the purpose of continuing the practice of allowing the House Leadership's orientation program(s), hosted by the Committee on House Administration, to be conducted at any time, or at multiple times, after the date of the election, and allows each Member-elect, and a designated staff person, to be reimbursed for the expenses of attendance. The orientation program has usually been conducted as a part of, and during the same time period as the party caucuses. However if the caucuses are conducted at different times, then the orientation program could be conducted before, during, or after each caucus, with the Member-elect's, and designated staff person's expenses of attendance paid by the House.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

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

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 824

Resolved,

SECTION 1. TIMING OF ORGANIZATIONAL CAUCUSES AND CONFERENCES FOR ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS.

Any organizational caucus or conference in the House of Representatives for the One Hundred Ninth Congress may begin on or after November 3, 2004.

SEC. 2. APPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS TO ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS AT ORIENTATION PROGRAMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—With the approval of the majority leader (in the case of a Member or Member-elect of the majority) or the minority leader (in the case of a Member or Member-elect of the minority), the provisions of law described in subsection (b) shall apply with respect to the attendance of a Member or Member-elect at a program conducted by the Committee on House Administration for the orientation of new members of the One Hundred Ninth Congress in the same manner as such provisions apply to the attendance of the Member or Member-elect at the organizational caucus or conference.

(b) PROVISIONS DESCRIBED.—The provisions of law described in this subsection are as follows:

(1) Subsections (b) and (c) of section 202 of House Resolution 988, Ninety-third Congress, agreed to on October 8, 1974, and enacted into permanent law by chapter III of title I of the

Supplemental Appropriations Act, 1975 (2 U.S.C. 29a).

(2) Section 1 of House Resolution 10, Ninety-fourth Congress, agreed to on January 14, 1975, and enacted into permanent law by section 201 of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1976 (2 U.S.C. 43b-2).

SEC. 3. DEFINITION.

As used in this resolution, the term "organizational caucus or conference" means a party caucus or conference authorized to be called under section 202(a) of House Resolution 988, Ninety-third Congress, agreed to on October 8, 1974, and enacted into permanent law by chapter III of title I of the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 1975 (2 U.S.C. 29a(a)).

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of the resolution, H. Res. 824.

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

There was no objection.

AMENDING CONGRESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT TO PERMIT SECOND TERM FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 5122) to amend the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 to permit members of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance to serve for 2 terms, with a Senate amendment thereto, and concur in the Senate amendment.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Clerk read the Senate amendment, as follows:

Senate amendment:

Page 2, line 11, strike out "the date of the enactment of this Act" and insert "September 30, 2004".

□ 0045

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

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Reserving the right to object, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman for his expeditious handling of this matter.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated during earlier debate on this bill, I believe that the Members of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance should be eligible for a second term of service. The current Board has constructively served Legislative Branch employees, the Members of this body, and the public, by applying the same workplace laws to the Legislative Branch, and to the Congress, that are applied to the private sector. The Board has promoted educational opportunities for both employees and managers, and has undertaken outreach efforts to promote life-safety awareness, and to raise workplace consciousness.

The Board should be congratulated for taking a positive approach to the tasks of education and enforcement. A Government Accountability Office audit has confirmed that the Board, and the Office of Compliance, are operating efficiently and consistent with their statutory mandate.

However, the GAO audit also found that the efficiency of the Office would be greatly impaired by the loss of institutional memory and operational continuity. To remedy this situation, the GAO recommended that both the board, and the four statutory executive officers of the Office, each of whom is appointed by the Board, be eligible for an additional term of service. By allowing the Board an additional term, but denying the Board the opportunity to reappoint their executive staff, much of the efficiency and continuity recognized by the GAO may be lost.

It is my continued hope that a way can be found allow the Board to reappoint their management team to a second term of service. I do not know what concerns led the drafters of the Congressional Accountability Act to limit the Compliance Office's executives to a single 5 year term of service, but it now appears that dropping that limit will make for a better and more efficient Office. So I hope that we will consider implementing the GAO's full recommendation, and lift the term limit on the executive officers, as we are lifting the term limit on the Members of the Board.

Again, I want to recognize my chairman, and thank him for his cooperation in taking this first step to maintaining the efficiency and continuity of the Office of Compliance.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

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

There was no objection.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 5122.

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

There was no objection.

RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO PROMOTE GREATER CIVIC AWARENESS AMONG PEOPLE OF UNITED STATES

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 796) recognizing and supporting all efforts to promote greater civic awareness among the people of the United States.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 796

Whereas the Constitution of the United States establishes a representative form of government in which the people of the United States elect Members of the House of Representatives and Senators of the Senate, and each of the States appoint electors who, based on the popular vote of the State, select the President and the Vice-President;

Whereas the 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th amendments to the Constitution establish that the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude; on account of sex; by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax; and on account of age for those 18 years of age and older;

Whereas the right of citizens of the United States to vote is fundamental to our representative form of government;

Whereas many eligible citizens do not exercise the right to vote;

Whereas numerous civic awareness organizations and advocacy groups at the Federal, State, and local level actively promote voter registration and voter participation; and

Whereas many communities and schools have instituted civic awareness programs: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes and supports all efforts to promote greater civic awareness among the people of the United States, including civic awareness programs such as candidate forums and voter registration drives; and

(2) encourages local communities and elected officials at all levels of government to promote greater awareness among the electorate of civic responsibility and the importance of participating in these elections.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. COSTELLO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY).

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank again our ranking member, the gentleman from Connecticut, for this important measure.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 796, which recognizes and supports all efforts to promote greater civic awareness among the people of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, today our soldiers are fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq to build and protect democracy. This Saturday, Afghanistan will hold a historic election. Reports indicate that more than 10 million Afghans have registered to vote and will participate in the election—despite threats and violence by the opponents of democracy. Iraq is scheduled to hold elections in January, an event that will forever alter the direction of that country and, hopefully, forever separate it from its despotic past.

While we fight abroad to build democracy, unfortunately, here at home, too many of our citizens take our rights for granted and fail to exercise them. Mr. Speaker, no matter what side of the aisle you sit on, we all agree that the election coming up on November 2 will be an extremely important one—one that all eligible citizens should participate in. This resolution encourages that participation because the right to elect our leaders should be exercised and never taken for granted.

When terrorists attacked us three years ago on September 11th, they were attacking not only innocent civilians, but also the very ideals and freedoms that we celebrate as fundamental human rights in this country. Those rights and freedoms are what the terrorists fear and hate most.

Now, more than ever before, it is imperative that every American participate by exercising

the precious gift each citizen has been given, the freedom to choose our leaders.

Recently, the House of Representatives passed a resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the actions of terrorists will never cause the delay of any national election.

We need our citizens to mirror that same resolve and show terrorists that we cherish our democracy and will not be deterred from exercising the rights we have.

There have been a number of reports about how voter registrations have increased dramatically in the past year. State and local elections officials are working hard to process those registrations and make sure that all eligible voters are able to cast a vote on Election Day. I would encourage our citizens to do what they can to help this election run smoothly. Confirm that you are properly registered and find out where your polling place is. This can be done by contacting your local board of elections office, or, in many cases, just visiting their Web site. Doing these things in advance, instead of waiting until Election Day, can protect your right to vote and will make things go much smoother for everyone on Election Day.

While voters need to do their part, we should note that over a million, perhaps as many as 2 million, people will volunteer to serve as poll workers this year. Without them, we simply could not have elections in this country. We should recognize that our democracy survives only through the hard work and participation of millions of our citizens—both as voters and poll workers. I encourage others to volunteer to help at the polls as a poll worker or assistant.

I sincerely hope that every citizen of this great Nation will participate in the 2004 election, and will also do what they can to see that it goes smoothly. Whether it be through early voting, absentee ballots, or visiting the polls on election day, it is our great privilege to live in a country where we have the right to choose our leaders, and it is our responsibility to exercise this right. I thank the gentleman from Texas for introducing this resolution and encourage my colleagues to support it.

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

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to concur with the chairman of our distinguished committee, and thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HALL) for bringing forth this most important piece of legislation, and from the bottom of my heart I want to thank especially those members who worked tirelessly for us in the Clerk's office and recognize Mr. Trandahl and Gigi Kelaher and the distinguished Mr. Paul Hayes and so many members who come here day in and day out and carry on these duties, considering the lateness of the hour.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of a resolution that aims to support the very core of our democracy: voting. The resolution, H. Res. 796, recognizes efforts to promote greater civic awareness in this country.

With this in mind, it is important to reference the words that embody our democratic right that are written in the Constitution. This document establishes that "citizens of the United