

Transcript of the Proceedings for House Resolution 224

U.S. House of Representatives, March 11, 2009, 11:20 AM EST

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 224) supporting the designation of Pi Day, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. Res. 224

Whereas the Greek letter (Pi) is the symbol for the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter;

Whereas the ratio Pi is an irrational number, which will continue infinitely without repeating, and has been calculated to over one trillion digits;

Whereas Pi is a recurring constant that has been studied throughout history and is central in mathematics as well as science and engineering;

Whereas mathematics and science are a critical part of our children's education, and children who perform better in math and science have higher graduation and college attendance rates;

Whereas aptitude in mathematics, science, and engineering is essential for a knowledge-based society;

Whereas, according to the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) survey done by the National Center for Education Statistics, American children in the 4th and 8th grade were outperformed by students in other countries including Taiwan, Singapore, Russia, England, South Korea, Latvia, and Japan;

Whereas since 1995 the United States has shown only minimal improvement in math and science test scores;

Whereas by the 8th grade, American males outperform females on the science portion of the TIMSS survey, especially in Biology, Physics, and Earth Science, and the lowest American scores in math and science are found in minority and impoverished school districts;

Whereas America needs to reinforce mathematics and science education for all students in order to better prepare our children for the future and in order to compete in a 21st Century economy;

Whereas the National Science Foundation has been driving innovation in math and science education at all levels from elementary through graduate education since its creation 59 years ago;

Whereas mathematics and science can be a fun and interesting part of a child's education, and learning about Pi can be an engaging way to teach children about geometry and attract them to study science and mathematics; and

Whereas Pi can be approximated as 3.14, and thus March 14, 2009, is an appropriate day for "National Pi Day": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives--

(1) supports the designation of a "Pi Day" and its celebration around the world;

(2) recognizes the continuing importance of National Science Foundation's math and science education programs; and

(3) encourages schools and educators to observe the day with appropriate activities that teach students about Pi and engage them about the study of mathematics.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. *Davis*) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. *Brown*) each will control 20 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on House Resolution 224, the resolution now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 224, supporting the designation of Pi Day. This Saturday is March 14. The Greek letter pi--the symbol for the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter--is rounded to 3.14.

I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage our Nation's students of all ages, schools, and teachers, to observe Pi Day with fun math and science activities and events.

This is a lighthearted event with serious goals. Math and science underpin our Nation's economic competitiveness and national security. By engaging in fun math and science activities from a young age, we are setting our students on a path towards science and math literacy, and opening the door to rewards and promising careers.

Research has shown that most students who are not comfortable with math and science by junior high remain intimidated or uninterested throughout their education careers.

On Pi Day, we want students to have fun with math and science. Second-graders could calculate the area of a pizza pie at a Pi Day pizza party. Sixth graders could learn about Newton's Laws of Motion from a game of bocce ball. Tenth-graders could learn about the hyperbolic functions by shooting Nerf rockets in the park.

I leave the specifics to the schools, but my advice is to go and have some fun. Let the students see firsthand how math and science is fun and relevant. Let them see that it does apply to them. Let them discover that they really do like math and they really do like science.

This is a lighthearted event, but the underlying problems we have in America are serious. The President of the United States stood in this room a few weeks ago and told us that "the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow."

According to the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science, a survey done by the National Center for Education Statistics, American children in the fourth and eighth grades were outperformed by students in other countries, including Taiwan, Singapore, Russia, England, South Korea, Latvia, and Japan. Other students have been making improvements since the 1995 TIMSS, but they still are not achieving their potential. It doesn't matter to them as individuals but, boy, does it matter to our Nation as a whole.

The 2005 National Academics Report, "Rising Above the Gathering Storm," looked at our economic competitiveness and showed us a blank and bleak future--a stagnating U.S. economy, an ill-equipped educational system, and the U.S. losing its place as a scientific world leader.

The recommendations contained in the "Rising Above the Gathering Storm" report were meant to pull us off the path we were on. They were signed into law in 2007 as part of the America COMPETES Act, and fell basically into three categories: Investments in basic research; innovation as the path toward reducing our dependence on foreign oil; and improving science, technology, engineering, and math education.

Our students' education, especially in science and math, will be a key component of our national economic competitiveness. We need to ensure not only that the Nation produces the top scientists, mathematicians, and engineers, but that every student is prepared for the high-paying technical jobs of the 21st century. We need the engineers that will invent the next new things; we need the manufacturers to design it, and an educated workforce to produce it. We cannot, and would not want to, compete globally on wages alone. We need to operate at a much higher level in this country.

Given the current economic crisis, our economic competitiveness is more important than ever before. We have been trying to create jobs immediately, which we need to do, absolutely; but we also need to look down the road. If we do not take action to strengthen our Nation's economic competitiveness now, including improving science and math education, we could create jobs now, only to lose them in the future to foreign competition.

We need to make sure that our children are prepared, and a strong foundation in math and science education is an essential part of that preparation. One of the best ways we can prepare our students is by encouraging their interest in math and science. So I am asking our Nation's students and teachers, for all of our sake, to go out and have fun around Pi Day.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 224. Improving math and science curriculum in our schools is great and admirable, as well as an absolute necessity, for our undertaking as Nation, and it is one that is long overdue. While our students have continued to improve in these fields over the course of the past few years, America is still being outperformed by students in many other countries.

This is not a problem that can be simply fixed by this resolution. Nonetheless, every step must be taken with an aim to addressing this shortcoming in our school systems, and this resolution is undoubtedly a part of that. So I appreciate and thank Chairman *Gordon* and Ranking Member *Hall* for bringing this important piece of legislation

to the floor in the hopes of drawing even more attention to an area of critical need in our Nation's education system.

For our children and grandchildren to be able to compete in a global world, we must refocus on math and science and inspire our children in these fields at an early age, and House Resolution 224 helps us to do just that. Therefore, I support this resolution and the goals and ideals that it means to attain, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

I want to congratulate my dear friend from Tennessee (Mr. *Davis*) on his remarkable opening remarks, and I want to associate myself with those remarks.

Math and science are absolutely critical for us to be able to compete in a global economy, to be able to compete against nations all over this world. We are lacking in math and science; we are lacking in the subjects that are so critically important to this Nation for us to have our children be able to compete in that global economy.

As a physician, I believe in science, of course. But it is much more than that. We have seen a degradation of the quality of education of our children. No Child Left Behind has been an absolute disaster. In fact, I have talked to educator after educator for the last several years since I have been here in Congress or running for Congress, and I have not found one who likes No Child Left Behind, because teachers are having to teach to the test, having to teach to these national standards, which have led the teachers away from actually teaching kids how to think, how to calculate, how to utilize the scientific method to investigate new things. This resolution helps to place a focus upon that, to help us to bring forth science as being a critical issue for our Nation. And it is a critical issue.

I would like to see No Child Left Behind go away. I would like to see us stop teaching in schools things that are not as important and things that should be taught at home in intact families. So we need to rebuild families and encourage families to do that, instead of continuing this huge leap to a welfare state, a huge leap towards bigger government, a huge leap towards removing responsibility for the individuals and building a bigger government, a bigger socialistic society.

We need to empower teachers, we need to empower educators at all levels to teach math and science, English and history. We need to have English as the official language of America. We need to have the basic tenets of education, reading, writing, arithmetic, science, history, English, be absolutely the important focus of education in America today. This bill focuses on one part of that that we need to bring forth, and I gladly support this House resolution.

I thank my colleague from Tennessee for his remarks, and I do associate myself with those remarks. They were great. With that, I encourage every Member of this body to support this resolution.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Obviously, the gentleman from Georgia is a good friend and a neighbor. Each of us recognizes the need to train the young minds who will be the entrepreneurs, the inventors, those who will be bringing to the table new inventions that will help America's economy not only be competitive, but America's economy be the one that achieves and perhaps even brings this world out of what we see today as an economic recession.

Years ago, in the 1970s, we established legislation on the national level that brought to rural areas in my congressional district and the gentleman from Georgia's congressional district special education, where we literally focused on young minds that were maybe not as capable of reaching the higher achievements, or they may not ever reach college. But some of the instructions that we gave them, some of the special attention we gave through special education has actually presented some of those individuals the opportunity where some have attended college. But it has also given them an opportunity to be competitive in our economy and to be a part of our society. We must do the same thing for the best and brightest as well. It is my hope that, as we engage in K-12, that we continue to focus on science, math, and technology, and to challenge the bright young minds that we have not been challenging in the past.

We have been fortunate in this country through our higher educational system, which is, in my opinion and as scored by many throughout the world, the best higher educational system in the world. It is a merit-based system. In many of the countries throughout the world, their K-12 is also merit-based, and we have been getting some of those best and brightest from some of the K-12 educational systems to come to our colleges and retain them here in our economy, and they have been a part of America's economic growth.

We are losing those students today. We cannot depend on other countries' best and brightest. We have got to be sure that we train our best and brightest. And by challenging our teachers, our school systems, and youngsters to become involved in this fun day could maybe encourage them to realize they can be competitive and become the entrepreneurs and inventors of the future for America.

It is my privilege to manage the bill today, and certainly to manage it with my good friend from Georgia (Mr. *Broun*).

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. *Davis*) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 224.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

Also available at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/R?r111:FLD001:H03291>