

I support the right of private groups to determine their membership. However, since Congress would neither endorse nor charter any group that discriminates against Latinos, African Americans, women or people with physical challenges, just to name a few, Congress cannot in good conscience continue to tacitly endorse the Scouts' discriminatory policy. We believe discrimination against any of these groups is wrong and most of us here would stand up and demand that discriminatory policies be ended. The Boy Scouts must be held to the same standard and therefore Congress has the moral responsibility to revoke the group's Congressional charter.

We must remember, that discrimination is always wrong, whatever form it takes. Whether it's the policies of the Boy Scouts, a corporate employer or a social club, Congress must not condone discrimination. We must lead by example and we must send the message that Congress will not tolerate nor endorse such policies targeted at any group.

I support this bill, and I urge each of my colleagues to do the same. Congress must not lend its seal of approval to any organization which discriminates.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill and to voice the strongest possible support for the Boy Scouts of America.

The Boy Scouts have always emphasized God and Family and Country.

We need more organizations like the Boy Scouts, and we should be doing everything we can to support and encourage them.

I was a Criminal Court Judge for 7½ years before coming to Congress.

I was told on my first day as a Judge that 98 percent of the defendants in felony cases came from broken homes.

I read thousands of reports going into the backgrounds of the people before me. I read over and over things like: "Defendant's father left home when Defendant was two and never returned." "Defendant's father left home to get pack of cigarettes and never came back."

Several years later I read in the Washington paper that two leading criminologists had studied 11,000 felony cases from around the country.

They said the biggest single factor in serious felony crimes was father absent households.

Everything else, like drugs and alcohol, was secondary to the absent father problem.

So many young boys are growing up today without good male role models.

We need the Boy Scouts today more than ever before.

This is a time when we should be doing more for the Boy Scouts, not trying to harass and intimidate them.

We definitely should not be taking the intolerant, bigoted, "politically-correct" position of this legislation.

If this is still a free country, then the Boy Scouts should be free to operate as it has without being discriminated against as this legislation would do.

I urge all my colleagues to oppose this bill and support the Boy Scouts.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, today, we find ourselves debating an intolerance-laden bill advanced by those who will claim to be the "tolerant" ones. What the bill's proponents are

really saying is that they are intolerant of an individual's freedom to associate with those whom they, as individuals, see fit. Two vital issues are raised by this bill's ascendancy to the House floor. The first is that of our constitutional right to freedom of association. The second being the notion of "federal charters."

On June 28, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts of America was within its rights when the private organization expelled an adult scout leader because he was gay. In its five-to-four opinion, the court found that requiring the Boy Scouts to admit homosexuals violated the group's free association rights.

Nevertheless, this Congress has decided to bring to the floor a bill attempting to penalize this private group of citizens for exercising their first amendment "freedom of association" rights. This is very close to denying the very right itself. To the extent the Boy Scouts should be penalized for their exercise of free association (or exclusion in this case), that penalty should only manifest itself through other private citizens exercising their freedom not to associate with individuals or groups whose associations (or lack thereof) they find offensive.

As to the "federal charter", where do we find authority for the federal government to charter organizations it deems "honorable"? To the extent the "charter" is an honorary title awarded by Congress to organizations which is then ultimately used to threaten exercise of the right to freedom of association, I suggest we repeal not only the Boy Scout's charter but all federal charters such that they won't be used as tools of federal meddling.

While I hesitate to further propagate this system of federal charters by which the federal government manipulates private groups, I despise more so this congressional attempt to penalize the Boy Scouts for merely exercising their constitutional rights—or as syndicated columnist Charley Reese recently put it in the Orlando Sentinel:

I think that it's time for all patriotic organizations that have these federal charters to surrender those documents. It is impossible for a dishonorable organization to honor anyone. And these charters are, practically speaking, worthless. If the federal government believes that mindless non-discrimination trumps morality, then it's time to disassociate from such bad company.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HUTCHINSON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4892.

The question was taken.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. 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.

RECOGNIZING CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BIRMINGHAM PLEDGE

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 102) recognizing that the Birmingham Pledge has made

a significant contribution in fostering racial harmony and reconciliation in the United States and around the world, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.J. RES. 102

Whereas Birmingham, Alabama, is an international symbol of the racial strife in the United States in the 1950's and 1960's;

Whereas out of the crucible of Birmingham's role in the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's, a present-day grassroots movement, embodied in the Birmingham Pledge, has arisen to continue the effort to eliminate racial and ethnic divisions in the United States and around the world;

Whereas the Birmingham Pledge, authored by Birmingham attorney James E. Rotch, sponsored by the Community Affairs Committee of Operation New Birmingham, and promoted by a broad cross-section of the community, increases racial harmony by helping individuals communicate in a positive way concerning the Nation's diversity and by encouraging people to make a commitment to racial harmony;

Whereas the Birmingham Pledge, signed by individuals as evidence of their commitment to its message, reads as follows:

"I believe that every person has worth as an individual.

"I believe that every person is entitled to dignity and respect, regardless of race or color.

"I believe that every thought and every act of racial prejudice is harmful; if it is in my thought or act, then it is harmful to me as well as to others.

"Therefore, from this day forward I will strive daily to eliminate racial prejudice from my thoughts and actions.

"I will discourage racial prejudice by others at every opportunity.

"I will treat all people with dignity and respect; and I will strive to honor this pledge, knowing that the world will be a better place because of my effort."

Whereas more than 70,000 people have signed the Birmingham Pledge, including the President, Members of the Congress, State Governors, State legislators, mayors, county commissioners, city council members, and other people around the world;

Whereas the Birmingham Pledge has achieved national and international recognition;

Whereas efforts to obtain signatories to the Birmingham Pledge are being organized and conducted in communities around the world;

Whereas every Birmingham Pledge signed and returned to Birmingham is recorded at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute as a permanent testament to racial reconciliation, peace, and harmony; and

Whereas the Birmingham Pledge, the motto for which is "Sign It, Live It", is a powerful tool to facilitate dialogue on the Nation's diversity and the need for people to take personal steps to achieve racial harmony and tolerance in communities: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That—

(1) the Congress—

(A) recognizes that the pledge popularly known as the Birmingham Pledge has made