



H.Res. 1159 - Recognizing the historical significance of the United States sloop-of-war Constellation as a surviving witness to the horrors of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and a leading participant in America's effort to end the practice

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 1159 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Elijah Cummings (D-MD). The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was not considered.

H.Res. 1159 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 8, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 1159 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Recognizes the historical and educational significance of USS Constellation, a 153-year-old American warship, berthed in Baltimore, Maryland, as a reminder of both American participation in the slave trade and the efforts of the United States Government to suppress this inhumane practice;
- Applauds the preservation of this historic vessel and the efforts of the USS Constellation Museum to engage people from all over the world with this vital part of our history; and
- Supports USS Constellation as an appropriate site for the Nation to commemorate the bicentennial of the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

BACKGROUND

The USS Constellation was commissioned in 1855 and served as the flagship for the African Squadron from 1859 to 1861. The African Squadron was responsible for pursuing slave smugglers who were illegally capturing Africans and placing them for sale on the black market. The Constellation captured three slave ships during her tenure with the African Squadron. The USS Constellation has been decommissioned and is now a tourist attraction in Baltimore, Maryland's Inner Harbor.

Congress passed the Slave Trade Act on March 22, 1794, which outlawed the slave trade from the United States to foreign places and on May 10, 1800, Congress enacted legislation that outlawed all American participation in the international trafficking of slaves. On January 1, 1808, legislation that prohibited the importation of slaves into any port under U.S. jurisdiction went into effect.

On September 25, 2008, the USS Constellation Museum will hold a ceremony to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

STAFF CONTACT

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