

104TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 458

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the President should request the Department of the Treasury and the Secret Service to work with the Government of the District of Columbia to develop a plan for the permanent reopening to vehicular traffic of Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House in order to restore the Avenue to its original state and return it to the people.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 20, 1996

Ms. NORTON (for herself, Mr. DAVIS, Mr. LATOURETTE, and Mr. MORAN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the President should request the Department of the Treasury and the Secret Service to work with the Government of the District of Columbia to develop a plan for the permanent reopening to vehicular traffic of Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House in order to restore the Avenue to its original state and return it to the people.

Whereas in 1791, President George Washington commissioned Pierre Charles L'Enfant to draft a blueprint for America's new capital city, and they envisioned Pennsylvania Avenue as a bold, ceremonial boulevard phys-

ically linking the U.S. Capitol building and the White House, and symbolically the legislative and executive branches of government;

Whereas as an integral element of the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania Avenue stood for 195 years as a vital, working, unbroken roadway, elevating it into a place of national importance as “America’s Main Street”;

Whereas 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the White House, has become America’s most recognized address and a primary destination of visitors to the Nation’s capital, and “the People’s House” is host to 5,000 tourists daily, and 15,000,000 annually;

Whereas as home to the President, and given its prominent location on Pennsylvania Avenue and its proximity to the people, the White House has become a powerful symbol of freedom, openness, and an individual’s access to government;

Whereas on May 20, 1995, citing possible security risks from vehicles transporting terrorist bombs, President Clinton ordered the Secret Service, in conjunction with the Department of the Treasury, to close Pennsylvania Avenue to vehicular traffic for two blocks in front of the White House;

Whereas while the security of the President and visitors to the White House is of grave concern and is not to be taken lightly, the need to assure the President’s safety must be balanced with the expectation of freedom inherent in a democracy, and the present situation is tilted too heavily toward security at freedom’s expense;

Whereas by impeding access and imposing undue hardships upon tourists, residents of the District, commuters, and

local business owners and their customers, the closure of Pennsylvania Avenue, undertaken without the counsel of the government of the District of Columbia, has replaced the former openness of the area surrounding the White House with barricades, additional security checkpoints, and an atmosphere of fear and distrust; and

Whereas in the year following the closure of Pennsylvania Avenue, the taxpayers have borne a significant burden for additional security measures along the Avenue near the White House: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives that the President should request the Depart-
3 ment of the Treasury and the Secret Service to work with
4 the Government of the District of Columbia to develop a
5 plan for the permanent reopening to vehicular traffic of
6 Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House in order
7 to restore the Avenue to its original state and return it
8 to the people, so long as the Secretary of the Treasury
9 and the Secret Service certify that the plan protects the
10 security of the people who live and work in the White
11 House.

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