

If Democrats Controlled the House...

A Weekly Taste of Their Legislative Agenda

October 12, 2012



What sort of legislation might Democrats enact if they control the House? There is little need to speculate—just look at what they are introducing this Congress while in the minority. Below is another example of a bill the Democrats might try to move if given the opportunity.

Proposal: H.R. 3795, the Muhammad Ali Legacy Act

Sponsor: Rep. John A. Yarmuth (D-KY)

Summary: This legislation would authorize the Secretary of State to award grants to organizations which both promote certain global ideals and also “demonstrate a commitment to preserving the legacy of Muhammad Ali.”

Problems with the Bill: Muhammad Ali was an extraordinarily talented boxer, and we have no desire to tarnish his athletic or personal legacy. In spite of this point, the legislation is nonetheless baffling and wrongheaded. Our federal government is now \$16 trillion in debt and is still running an enormous deficit, yet this legislation would seek to spend millions of taxpayer dollars on the preservation of an individual boxer’s legacy. This point becomes clear when looking at the bill’s effects. Though this bill asks for funds to be spent on global cooperation, it lists the dedication to preserving the legacy of Muhammad Ali as a necessary requirement for groups to be eligible to receive these funds. Any group which supports global cooperation but which did not pay proper homage to Muhammad Ali would not be eligible for this federal grant.

This is an absurd notion. The preservation of Muhammad Ali’s legacy may be a noble goal, but this legislation does not offer any justification for why the federal government in particular has the right or the responsibility to secure it. What is more, even if there were conceivable circumstances under which this would be a legitimate federal course of action, there is no reason in our current economic climate that this would constitute worthwhile spending. Private citizens are free to spend their own money on this goal if they so choose; it is not worth borrowing money, all the while burying our children deeper debt, in order to fund the support of Muhammad Ali. This legislation miscalculates the proper role of the federal government and the importance of our enormous mounting debt. It should not be supported.

Reminder: RSC staffers and interns are encouraged to send other examples of questionable legislation to Rick.Eberstadt@mail.house.gov.