

113TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1586

To direct the Architect of the Capitol to acquire and place a historical plaque to be permanently displayed in National Statuary Hall recognizing the seven decades of Christian church services being held in the Capitol from 1800 to 1868, which included attendees James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 16, 2013

Mr. GOHMERT (for himself, Mr. CHABOT, Mr. BARTON, and Mr. SCALISE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on House Administration

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## A BILL

To direct the Architect of the Capitol to acquire and place a historical plaque to be permanently displayed in National Statuary Hall recognizing the seven decades of Christian church services being held in the Capitol from 1800 to 1868, which included attendees James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Congressional Hope  
3 for Uniform Recognition of Christian Heritage  
4 (CHURCH) Act of 2013”.

5 **SEC. 2. ACQUISITION AND DISPLAY OF HISTORICAL**  
6 **PLAQUE RECOGNIZING THE SEVEN DECADES**  
7 **OF CHRISTIAN CHURCH SERVICES BEING**  
8 **HELD IN THE CAPITOL.**

9 (a) ACQUISITION.—The Architect of the Capitol shall  
10 enter into an agreement with a private entity for the de-  
11 sign and fabrication of a historical plaque to be perma-  
12 nently displayed in National Statuary Hall recognizing the  
13 seven decades of Christian church services being held in  
14 the Capitol from 1800 to 1868.

15 (b) DESIGN.—The plaque designed and fabricated  
16 pursuant to the agreement entered into under subsection  
17 (a) shall be of such size and design as may be provided  
18 under the terms of the agreement, except that the plaque  
19 shall contain the following statement:

20 “The first Christian church services in the Cap-  
21 itol were held when the Government moved to Wash-  
22 ington in the fall of 1800. They were conducted in  
23 the Hall of the House in the north wing of the build-  
24 ing. In 1801, the House moved the church services  
25 to temporary quarters in the south wing, called the  
26 ‘Oven’, which it vacated in 1804, returning services

1 to the north wing for 3 years. During church serv-  
2 ices, the Speaker’s podium was used as the preach-  
3 er’s pulpit.

4 “Within a year of his inauguration, President  
5 Thomas Jefferson began attending church services  
6 in the Chamber of the House of Representatives.  
7 Throughout his administration (1801–1809), Thom-  
8 as Jefferson permitted and encouraged church serv-  
9 ices in executive branch buildings. Sermons regard-  
10 ing the Old and New Testaments of the Bible were  
11 even conducted in the Supreme Court chambers  
12 while the judicial branch was located in the old  
13 north wing of the Capitol.

14 “The term ‘separation of church and state’, not  
15 found in the Constitution, was rather first used by  
16 Thomas Jefferson in a letter to the Danbury Bap-  
17 tists. Though Jefferson saw no problem with having  
18 nondenominational Christian services in government  
19 buildings, he affirmed that the Government should  
20 not choose an official Christian denomination. The  
21 worship services in the Government-owned House  
22 Chamber—a practice that continued until after the  
23 Civil War—were acceptable to Jefferson because  
24 they were nondiscriminatory and voluntary.

1           “President James Madison, the recognized au-  
2           thor of the Constitution, followed Jefferson’s exam-  
3           ple. In keeping with Madison’s understanding of the  
4           first amendment, church services were permitted in  
5           the halls of State on Sundays during his administra-  
6           tion (1809–1817). However, unlike Jefferson, who  
7           rode on horseback to attend church in the Capitol,  
8           Madison traveled in a coach pulled by four horses.  
9           The services were interrupted in 1814 after the inte-  
10          rior was burned by the British and had to be re-  
11          paired.

12           “Preachers of every Christian denomination  
13          preached Christian doctrine in this Chamber. On  
14          January 8, 1826, Bishop John England (1786–  
15          1842) of Charleston, South Carolina, became the  
16          first Catholic clergyman to preach in the House of  
17          Representatives. The first woman to preach before  
18          the House, and likely the first woman to speak offi-  
19          cially in Congress under any circumstances, was the  
20          English evangelist, Dorothy Ripley (1767–1832),  
21          who conducted a service on January 12, 1806.”.

22          (c) PRESENTATION CEREMONY.—The Architect of  
23          the Capitol is authorized to use National Statuary Hall  
24          for a presentation ceremony for the plaque on a date de-  
25          termined by the Architect. The Architect of the Capitol

1 and the Capitol Police Board shall take such action as  
2 may be necessary with respect to physical preparations  
3 and security for the ceremony.

4 (d) DISPLAY.—Upon receiving the plaque designed  
5 and fabricated pursuant to the agreement entered into  
6 under this section, the Architect of the Capitol shall dis-  
7 play the plaque permanently in a place of prominence in  
8 National Statuary Hall.

9 **SEC. 3. USE OF EXISTING FUNDS.**

10 Any amounts obligated or expended by the Architect  
11 of the Capitol to carry out this Act shall be derived from  
12 funds available to the Architect as of the date of the enact-  
13 ment of this Act.

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