



HR0622

LRB095 12800 DRH 38188 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, Legislation has been introduced in previous years to provide free mailing privileges for letters and packages to American troops overseas; two bills have been introduced into the 109th Congress - H.R. 923 and H.R. 2874 (H.R. 2874 supersedes H.R. 887, a very similar bill introduced by former Representative Harold Ford on February 17, 2005); and

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WHEREAS, H.R. 923, the Mailing Support to Troops Act of 2005 (introduced on February 17, 2005 by Representative Fossella, with 71 current cosponsors), in its original form would allow family members of service personnel to mail letters and packages free of charge to active members of the military serving in Afghanistan or Iraq and to servicemen and women hospitalized as a result of disease or injury suffered in Afghanistan or Iraq; mailers would need only to write on the envelope or box, "Free Matter for Member of the Armed Forces of the United States", or words to that effect specified by the Postal Service (USPS); mail matter that contains any advertising would specifically be excluded; H.R. 923 would authorize appropriations to reimburse USPS for its extra expenses in transporting such mail; H.R. 923 was referred to the Committee on Government Reform; and

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WHEREAS, H.R. 2874, the Supply Our Soldiers Act of 2005,

1 was introduced by Representative Ford on June 14, 2005, and had
2 31 cosponsors; it would attempt to make it easier for families
3 and charities to ship letters and packages to soldiers serving
4 in combat zones; soldiers mobilizing for overseas duty would be
5 given an allotment of special stamps (equivalent in value to
6 \$150 per calendar quarter) that they can send to their loved
7 ones, or to selected charities, to allow them to send letters
8 and packages without further postage to the service members;
9 there would be a 10-pound limit on packages sent to
10 individuals; the Postal Service would be reimbursed by the
11 Defense Department for providing this service, and Section 3 of
12 the bill would authorize appropriations to the Defense
13 Department for this purpose and for any other expenses it
14 incurs; by putting individual service men and women into the
15 authorization chain for the mail they receive, this bill would
16 avoid the problem of subsidizing unsolicited mail to the
17 troops; additionally, by capping the allotment per service
18 member, it would mitigate potential stress on the military
19 postal system; H.R. 2874 was referred to the Committees on
20 Armed Services and Government Reform; and

21 WHEREAS, On September 29, 2005, the House Committee on
22 Government Reform marked up H.R. 923, and in doing so, accepted
23 an amendment in the nature of a substitute that adopted the
24 core concept, as well as the title, of H.R. 2874; as amended
25 and ordered to be reported by voice vote of the Committee, H.R.

1 923 requires the Department of Defense, in consultation with
2 the Postal Service, to establish a one-year program under which
3 qualified members of the armed services would receive a monthly
4 voucher that can be redeemed, by their families or friends, to
5 pay the postal expenses of sending one letter or parcel
6 (weighing up to 15 pounds) to the service member; the
7 Department of Defense would reimburse the Postal Service for
8 the postal benefits provided by the vouchers; Committee
9 Chairman Tom Davis said that the substitute language had the
10 approval of Representative Fossella, the Committee on Armed
11 Services, and the Postal Service; the Congressional Budget
12 Office estimated that nearly all of the about 145,000 American
13 service personnel who would be eligible for the postage benefit
14 would take advantage of it, and assigned it a budget cost of
15 \$30 million over fiscal years 2006 and 2007; and

16 WHEREAS, The language of H.R. 923 was added by the House
17 Armed Services Committee as Sections 575, 576 ("Funding"), and
18 577 ("Duration") to H.R. 5122, the Sonny Montgomery National
19 Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007; H.R. 5122 was
20 passed by the House on May 11, 2006; on June 22, 2006, the
21 Senate substituted its own defense authorization language for
22 the House language and passed H.R. 5122; the Senate version
23 does not contain the postal benefits authorized in the House
24 bill, so whether the language survives is now a matter to be
25 decided by the conference committee; therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
2 NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
3 urge the Congress of the United States to pass legislation that
4 would allow not-for-profit organizations and family members to
5 mail without charge, twice per month, on the first and 15th day
6 of each month, letters and packages to members of the U.S.
7 Armed Services in combat zones; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
9 delivered to the President pro tempore of the U.S. Senate, the
10 Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, and each member
11 of the Illinois congressional delegation.