

Public Law 106-380
106th Congress

An Act

To direct the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to establish a program to collect video and audio recordings of personal histories and testimonials of American war veterans, and for other purposes.

Oct. 27, 2000
[H.R. 5212]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Veterans’ Oral History Project Act”.

Veterans’ Oral
History Project
Act.
20 USC 2101
note.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSE.

20 USC 2141.

(a) **FINDINGS.**—Congress finds as follows:

(1) Military service during a time of war is the highest sacrifice a citizen may make for his or her country.

(2) 4,700,000 Americans served in World War I, 16,500,000 Americans served in World War II, 6,800,000 Americans served in the Korean Conflict, 9,200,000 Americans served in the Vietnam Conflict, 3,800,000 Americans served in the Persian Gulf War, and countless other Americans served in military engagements overseas throughout the 20th century.

(3) The Department of Veterans Affairs reports that there are almost 19,000,000 war veterans living in this Nation today.

(4) Today there are only approximately 3,400 living veterans of World War I, and of the some 6,000,000 veterans of World War II alive today, almost 1,500 die each day.

(5) Oral histories are of immeasurable value to historians, researchers, authors, journalists, film makers, scholars, students, and citizens of all walks of life.

(6) War veterans possess an invaluable resource in their memories of the conflicts in which they served, and can provide a rich history of our Nation and its people through the retelling of those memories, yet frequently those who served during times of conflict are reticent to family and friends about their experiences.

(7) It is in the Nation’s best interest to collect and catalog oral histories of American war veterans so that future generations will have original sources of information regarding the lives and times of those who served in war and the conditions under which they endured, so that Americans will always remember those who served in war and may learn first-hand of the heroics, tediousness, horrors, and triumphs of war.

(8) The Library of Congress, as the Nation’s oldest Federal cultural institution and largest and most inclusive library in human history (with nearly 119,000,000 items in its multimedia

collection) is an appropriate repository to collect, preserve, and make available to the public an archive of these oral histories. The Library's American Folklife Center has expertise in the management of documentation projects and experience in the development of cultural and educational programs for the public.

(b) **PURPOSE.**—It is the purpose of this Act to create a new federally sponsored, authorized, and funded program that will coordinate at a national level the collection of video and audio recordings of personal histories and testimonials of American war veterans, and to assist and encourage local efforts to preserve the memories of this Nation's war veterans so that Americans of all current and future generations may hear directly from veterans and better appreciate the realities of war and the sacrifices made by those who served in uniform during wartime.

20 USC 2142.

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM AT AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER TO COLLECT VIDEO AND AUDIO RECORDINGS OF HISTORIES OF VETERANS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Director of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress shall establish an oral history program—

(1) to collect video and audio recordings of personal histories and testimonials of veterans of the Armed Forces who served during a period of war;

(2) to create a collection of the recordings obtained (including a catalog and index) which will be available for public use through the National Digital Library of the Library of Congress and such other methods as the Director considers appropriate to the extent feasible subject to available resources; and

(3) to solicit, reproduce, and collect written materials (such as letters and diaries) relevant to the personal histories of veterans of the Armed Forces who served during a period of war and to catalog such materials in a manner the Director considers appropriate, consistent with and complimentary to the efforts described in paragraphs (1) and (2).

(b) **USE OF AND CONSULTATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES.**—The Director may carry out the activities described in paragraphs (1) and (3) of subsection (a) through agreements and partnerships entered into with other government and private entities, and may otherwise consult with interested persons (within the limits of available resources) and develop appropriate guidelines and arrangements for soliciting, acquiring, and making available recordings under the program under this Act.

(c) **TIMING.**—As soon as practicable after the enactment of this Act, the Director shall begin collecting video and audio recordings under subsection (a)(1), and shall attempt to collect the first such recordings from the oldest veterans.

20 USC 2143.

SEC. 4. PRIVATE SUPPORT.

(a) **ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS.**—The Librarian of Congress may solicit and accept donations of funds and in-kind contributions to carry out the oral history program under section 3.

(b) **ESTABLISHMENT OF SEPARATE GIFT ACCOUNT.**—There is established in the Treasury (among the accounts of the Library of Congress) a gift account for the oral history program under section 3.

(c) DEDICATION OF FUNDS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law—

(1) any funds donated to the Librarian of Congress to carry out the oral history program under section 3 shall be deposited entirely into the gift account established under subsection (b);

(2) the funds contained in such account shall be used solely to carry out the oral history program under section 3; and

(3) the Librarian of Congress may not deposit into such account any funds donated to the Librarian which are not donated for the exclusive purpose of carrying out the oral history program under section 3.

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

20 USC 2144.

There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act—

(1) \$250,000 for fiscal year 2001; and

(2) such sums as may be necessary for each succeeding fiscal year.

Approved October 27, 2000.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 5212:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 146 (2000):

Oct. 4, considered and passed House.

Oct. 17, considered and passed Senate.