



## Legislation Text

**File #:** Res 1566-2000, **Version:** \*

Res. No. 1566

Resolution calling upon the United States Congress to acknowledge the primacy of Antonio Meucci in the invention of the telephone and declare his moral vindication for this great achievement in the service of science and all mankind.

By The Speaker (Council Member Vallone) also Council Members Berman, Dear, Malave-Dilan, Henry, Koslowitz, Marshall, Michels, Nelson, Rivera, Robles, Abel and Stabile; also Council Members DiBrienza, Eisland, Fisher, Harrison, Lasher and O'Donovan

Whereas, One hundred and fifty years ago, the great Italian inventor Antonio Meucci arrived in New York City and embarked on the defining chapter of a career both extraordinary and tragic; and

Whereas, Absorbed in a project that he began in Havana, an invention that he later called a "teletrofono," involving electrical communications, Antonio Meucci immediately began to pursue his aspirations with ceaseless vigor and determination; and

Whereas, Mr. Meucci resumed the experiments he began in Havana in his new home in New York, communicating with his wife via a rudimentary electronic line that went from the basement to the first floor; later when his wife began to suffer with crippling arthritis, he put up a permanent line between his lab and his wife's bedroom; and

Whereas, Having exhausted most of his life's savings in pursuing his work, Antonio Meucci was unable to construct a model for his invention, though he demonstrated his instrument in 1860 and had a description published in a New York Italian-language newspaper; while he eventually became a proud American citizen, the inventor never learned English, making his path in the American business community more trying; and

Whereas, Antonio Meucci was unable to raise funds to pay his way through the long, labyrinthine patent application process and was forced to settle for a caveat, a one-year notice of an impending patent only to learn that the Western Union affiliate laboratory had lost his models and Meucci, who at this point was living on public assistance was forced to allow the caveat to lapse at the end of 1874; and

Whereas, In March, 1876, Alexander Graham Bell, who performed experiments in the same laboratory that Meucci used, and where his materials were stored, was granted a patent and was, of course, credited with inventing the telephone; and

Whereas, It should be recalled that if Antonio Meucci could have paid the ten-dollar fee to maintain his caveat, that the Bell patent could not have been granted; and

Whereas, In January, 1887, the Government of the United States moved to annul the patent issued to Alexander Graham Bell for fraud and misrepresentation; the case was found meritorious and viable by the United States Supreme Court, which refused to uphold a dismissal, and remanded the case to a lower court; and

Whereas, Antonio Meucci died in 1889, and the Bell patent was to expire in 1893, causing the case to be discontinued as moot without a resolution ever being reached as to the underlying issue of who invented the telephone; and

Whereas, The Secretary of State of the United States had, at the time of the dispute, stated publicly that "there exists sufficient proof to give priority to Meucci in the invention of the telephone;" and

Whereas, The Council of the City of New York has not forgotten Antonio Meucci's great contributions to science and to humankind, and to the end of preserving his legacy, has by proclamation declared May 1, 2000 to be "Antonio Meucci Day;" now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon United States Congress to acknowledge the primacy of Antonio Meucci in the invention of the telephone and declare his moral vindication for this great achievement in the service of science and all mankind.