United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 1979, and became an international treaty on September 3, 1981; and

Whereas, the convention established a comprehensive framework addressing women's rights within political, cultural, economic, social, and family contexts that serves to strengthen the existing body of standards respecting fundamental human rights by providing a uniform and universal definition of discrimination; and

Whereas, the convention has already demonstrated its value by serving as the instrument by which women in Sri Lanka and Zambia have improved their status; and

Whereas, in 1992, Sri Lanka adopted a charter that was based on the convention and which guaranteed women equal status; in 1985, Zambia also ratified the convention and in 1991 extended its Bill of Rights to cover sex discrimination; and

Whereas, as of June 1997, 161 nations had ratified the convention's provisions; and

Whereas, although the United States is considered a world leader in the protection of basic human rights, supports and has a position of leadership in the United Nations, and was an active participant in the drafting and is a signatory of the convention; the United States is one of the few nations that has not ratified the treaty; and

Whereas, although women have made progress in the struggle for equality in the political, cultural, economic, social, and family contexts, there is much more to be accomplished; and through its support, leadership, and prestige, the United States can help create a world where women are no longer discriminated against and would achieve one of the most fundamental of human rights, that of equality; now therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Alabama, That we urge the United States Senate to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and to support the convention's continuing goals.

Be it further resolved, That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, and every member of the Alabama Congressional Delegation.

REPORT OF COMMITTEES RECEIVED DURING ADJOURNMENT

Under the authority of the order of the Senate of March 9, 2000, the following report of committee was submitted on March 15, 2000:

By Mr. GRAMM, from the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 2097: A bill to authorize loan guarantees in order to facilitate access to local television broadcast signals in unserved and underserved areas, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 106–243).

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. MURKOWSKI, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, without amendment:

S. 408. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey a former Bureau of Land Management administrative site to the City of Carson City, Nevada, for use as a senior center (Rept. No. 106–244).

By Mr. MURKOWSKI, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 1218. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to issue to the Landusky School District, without consideration, a patent for the surface and mineral estates of certain lots, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 106–245).

By Mr. HATCH, from the Committee on the Judiciary:

S.J. Res. 14. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States authorizing Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States (Rept. No. 106–246).

By Mr. LUGAR, from the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, without amendment:

S. 2251. An original bill to amend the Federal Crop Insurance Act to improve crop insurance coverage, to provide agriculture producers with choices to manage risk, and for other purposes.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second time by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 2248. A bill to assist in the development and implementation of projects to provide for the control of drainage water, storm water, flood water, and other water as part of water-related integrated resource management, environmental infrastructure, and resource protection and development projects in the Colusa Basin Watershed, California; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. GREGG (for himself, Mr. KERREY, Mr. BREAUX, and Mr. BAYH):

S. 2249. A bill to amend title VII of the Social Security Act to require the Commissioner of Social Security to provide Congress with an annual report on the social security program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. THOMPSON:

S. 2250. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a shorter recovery period for the depreciation of certain restaurant buildings; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. LUGAR:

S. 2251. An original bill to amend the Federal Crop Insurance Act to improve crop insurance coverage, to provide agriculture producers with choices to manage risk, and for other purposes; placed on the calendar.

By Mr. GRASSLEY:

S. 2252. A bill to provide for the review of agriculture mergers and acquisitions by the Department of Agriculture and to outlaw unfair practices in the Agriculture industry, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MURKOWSKI:

S. 2253. A bill to authorize the establishment of a joint United States-Canada commission to study the feasibility of connecting the rail system in Alaska to the North American continental rail system; and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. WARNER:

S. Res. 274. A resolution to designate April 9, 2000, as a ''National Day of Remembrance of the One Hundred Thirty-Fifth Anniversary of the Battle of Sayler's Creek''; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY):

S. Res. 275. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding fair access to Japanese telecommunications facilities and services; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. SARBANES (for himself, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. DASCHLE, Mr. SANTORUM, Mr. ROBB, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. JOHNSON, and Mr. HATCH):

S. Con. Res. 96. Concurrent resolution recognizing and honoring members of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) who are being awarded the AHEPA Medal for Military Service in the Armed Forces of the United States; considered and agreed to.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 2248. A bill to assist in the development and implementation of projects to provide for the control of drainage water, storm water, flood water, and other water as part of water-related integrated resource management, environmental infrastructure, and resource protection and development projects in the Colusa Basin Watershed, California; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

COLUSA BASIN INTEGRATED RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN LEGISLATION

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to introduce this bill which provides a comprehensive watershed plan to protect against flooding in the Colusa Basin. Last year such flooding caused approximately $4.9 million in damage. In 1995 a major flood caused an estimated $100 million in damages to public and private property and crops.

This bill would provide the necessary authorization for the Secretary of Interior to participate in the Colusa Basin project on a cost-shared basis. The Colusa Basin project would build the necessary infrastructure (small impoundments) to catch flood water, control the rate of release, restore wetlands and vegetation and ultimately protect the area against flooding. This authorization is needed for the project to continue.

I introduced an identical bill in the 105th Congress which passed both Houses of Congress but fell victim to the politics surrounding the omnibus budget bill. This bill once again enjoys bipartisan support.

I urge Congress to consider this bill before the end of the 106th Congress.

By Mr. GREGG (for himself, Mr. KERREY, Mr. BREAUX, and Mr. BAYH):

S. 2249. A bill to amend title VII of the Social Security Act to require the Commissioner of Social Security to provide Congress with an annual report on the Social Security program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

THE SOCIAL SECURITY REPORTING IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2000

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I want to speak today about the issue we are going to take up tomorrow, the Social Security earnings limitation, and the fact that we are going to pass a bill tomorrow which will eliminate a limitation on the ability of people once they retire to make money independent of Social Security benefits they receive and not have their Social Security benefits reduced.

Under present-day law, unfortunately, a retired individual—or not even retired person, a person who has reached eligibility age for Social Security benefits—the age for eligibility retirement is really the wrong term to apply to that individual. That person is penalized if he goes out and gets a job because his benefits under Social Security are reduced if he makes a certain amount of money under that job.

That is wrong. It is something I have tried to correct, and a number of Members of this Senate have tried to correct, for a number of years.

I have a bill, cosponsored by Senators KERREY, BREAUX, GRASSLEY, THOMPSON, ROBB, and THOMAS. It is a very bipartisan bill, obviously, and is strongly supported by many of the Members on the Finance Committee. That bill is, in substance, a reform bill for the entire Social Security system to allow us to have a Social Security system which is solvent for the next 100 years. It is a creative and imaginative piece of legislation, and it accomplishes that growth which is to create solvency in the Social Security system over the next 100 years and do it without raising taxes.

One of the elements of that bill is the repeal of the earnings limitation. It has been something I have supported and I have backed up with legislative language, cosponsored by myself, as I mentioned, and also by other Members of the Senate. Over the years, we have worked in this area. It is a very appropriate area to go into. However, tomorrow when we take up the bill for repealing the earnings limitation, we are going to take it up as sort of an isolated event. We are not taking it up very much as an isolated event but as part of a Social Security reform package. I guess that is where I have my concern, because we know the Social Security system, although solvent today and running very large surpluses, is headed towards the disastrous crash.

When the baby boom generation, the Bill Clinton generation, arrives at retirement, which starts in the year 2008 and accelerates aggressively so that by the year 2014 we actually are running a cash deficit within the Social Security system, we will have so many people retired in this country during the post-2008 period that we will have too many people retired for the younger generation to be able to support them effectively under the present structure of the Social Security system.

It will cost the next earnings generation—that generation who are my children, the children of the Members of this Senate, and their children's children—over $7 trillion in general fund revenues. We are not talking about Social Security taxes; we are talking about general fund revenues over the period from 2014 to 2034. It will cost $7 trillion of general fund revenues to keep the Social Security system solvent.

What does $7 trillion in general fund revenues mean? That means there will have to be tax increases of $7 trillion in order to pay for those benefits, or, alternatively, we will have to cut them.

Some of us have said let's not force this crisis on the next generation, let's not turn to our children and say, Here is the problem; we are going to give it to you. Many of us have said let's look at the problem today and try to solve it, let's try to put in place systems that will allow us to build up a process which will protect our children from having to face the catastrophe of having to support our generation in retirement at levels which they could not possibly afford to support and which would put an undue burden on the next generation in the area of tax increases.

We have put together substantive pieces of legislation. The one I mentioned, for example, the Gregg-Kerrey-Breaux-Grassley-Thompson-Thomas-Robb—Senator Roth is also on that—is one of the proposals.

There is another bill in the House called Kolbe-Stenholm, an aggressive piece of legislation. Senator MOYNIHAN has a piece of legislation. Senator GRAMM from Texas has a piece of legislation. The chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Congressman ARCHER, and Congressman SHAW have proposals. Congressman KASICH and Congressman SMITH have proposals.

There are a lot of proposals out there. Many of them are very substantive and thoughtful. I would like to think ours is. Almost all of them will do a lot more than we are doing today trying to put in place and under control a system that will address the Social Security problem as it is facing us and as it is facing the next generation.

I see the pages down here. These folks are going to end up paying a huge bill as a result of our inaction today in Congress. It is not fair and not right for us to put the next generation in this position.

As we take up the earnings limitation repeal tomorrow, it is necessary and appropriate. It is something we should do. But we should be much more aggressive on this issue. We should be addressing the fundamental problems that are facing us in the Social Security system, the most fundamental of which is that it is an unfunded liability.

Essentially, the Social Security system says we promise you, the baby boom generation, all of these benefits. But we don't do anything about getting the baby boom generation into a position where we can pay those Social Security benefits. Rather, we go on a pay-as-you-go basis. One dollar taken in today is paid out today, or spent on some other operation of government today. So when the baby boom generation retires, there are no dollars available for them to support their benefit structure.

We ought to address that. The best way to address it is to do something which will be called prefunding liability. That is probably a technical term which is sort of lost in its translation. It basically means giving people savings, assets, and gives people something they can physically own and possess, so that when they retire, they will have assets they can use to pay for their retirement benefits under the Social Security system.

In our proposal, this is called a personal savings account. Essentially, we reduce the payroll tax today. We say let's reduce the payroll tax today because it is running a surplus, take that money we save on payroll taxes and give it to all of the Social Security earners today, and allow those Social Security earners to save that money for themselves. So that by the time they retire, they will have a nest egg, a physical nest egg that is based in stocks, Treasury notes, and bonds, which will be available to them to spend on their retirement. It is called free-funding liability, so their actual assets are there when they retire. They actually physically own something they can use to benefit them in their retirement and to support the costs of their retirement structure in Social Security.

That is the essence of what we propose in our bill—to prefund the liability through personal savings accounts. It is an idea for which the time appears to be coming.

I notice Governor Bush is talking about this aggressively. Other people who are running for the Presidency are talking about this aggressively. Regrettably, this administration has not been willing to talk about this aggressively. This administration has walked away from the opportunity to fundamentally reform and improve Social Security so we can past on to our children a solvent system instead of passing on to them an insolvent system.

I and a number of Members on the other side of the aisle have great frustrations. I know Senator KERREY from Nebraska has on numerous occasions—and will tomorrow, I suspect, when he offers his amendment—expressed the frustration he feels and many of us feel about the fact we are unable to get White House leadership on this critical issue of moving forward Social Security reform so the next generation isn't passed a sour lemon but is given an opportunity to have a lifestyle that is equal to ours, or hopefully significantly better, and isn't instead passed a huge bill from our generation that they have to pay off in order to support our generation's retirement. I believe

this administration refuses to take any aggressive action in this area for political reasons because they want to keep the issue alive for the next election cycle.

Clearly, there is bipartisan support in the Senate. As I mentioned, the Members of the Senate supporting the bill are Senator KERREY, Senator BREAUX, and Senator GRASSLEY—a bipartisan group. Their philosophies are significantly different. We could build a coalition in this Senate to pass substantial Social Security reform which would make the system solvent for the next 100 years without raising taxes on the next generation.

If we could get leadership and assistance from the White House, we could do that. Unfortunately, we have not gotten that. Instead, we are getting one little snippet of the Social Security issue, the earnings limitation test. It has been passed by the Senate, passed by the House, and the President says he will sign it if it is a clean bill.

What is the effect of taking up one little part of the whole puzzle? This happens to be a part of the puzzle that ends up costing more money to the system. In other words, when we repeal the earnings limitation, we end up actually putting the system in a less financially sound position than it is today. It is an appropriate thing to do because the earnings limitation is bad public policy. We should not be saying to senior citizens: You shouldn't go out and work; or, if you do work, we will reduce your Social Security benefit.

That is bad policy, especially bad policy when we have a potentially large soon-to-retire generation, the baby boom generation. When our generation retires, as a nation we are going to need to keep people working even though they may be retiring. We won't have enough workers in this country. That is going to be a demographic fact.

The earnings limitation is bad policy. It has a negative impact on Social Security long-term solvency. It aggravates the problem for the next generation by repealing it as a freestanding event. It should, rather, be repealed in the context of an overall reform effort. By doing that, we can adjust for the fact that this may negatively impact the financial situation of the Social Security system, while other things could positively impact it, and we can weigh them off.

But we are not going to do that. We are doing just Social Security limitations. If that is all we can do, that is what we should do. But we should be honest with the American people. We should tell them what the effect of it will be. More importantly, we should tell them the present status and the future status of the Social Security trust funds. We shouldn't continue this babble about how solvent the Social Security trust fund is. Although it is running a surplus today, it is as predictable as night follows day, as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, it is an absolute known fact that beginning in the year 2008, as the large baby boom generation retires, we are going to see the system head toward massive insolvency if we don't have massive tax increases or major benefit cuts.

We ought to tell the American people so they know it is coming and they can plan. If the Congress isn't going to plan, if the White House isn't going to plan, at least give the American people the information they need to plan.

I hope to have this bill agreed to because I think it is reasonable. I am introducing a proposal which was essentially the proposal put forward in November 1999 by the Technical Panel On Assumptions and Methods of the Social Security Advisory Board. It is a professional group, an independent bipartisan group set up by the Social Security trustees for the purpose of reviewing what should be done with the Social Security system. This Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods of the Social Security Advisory Board put out a series of recommendations regarding information that should be available in plain English—they stress ''in plain English''—to the American people. I have suggested we amend this effort by putting in place that recommendation, have the panel's recommendations become a requirement of law, and thus they will be disclosed to the American people.

What will be disclosed? The following:

What the program will cost each year;

What is the projected cash-flow deficit in dollars, real and nominal;

What are the benefits the system can actually fund as opposed to what we tell the public;

What is the impact of all of the above on the Federal budget.

These are not complicated. These can be simply stated. But they are very important facts for the American people to know.

Some don't want the American people to have this information. They realize if people were actually informed about the significant financial crisis we are facing in the Social Security system beginning when the baby boom generation retires, people would get pretty upset. They would ask: Why hasn't Congress acted? Why isn't the White House displaying leadership? Some would rather not have this information on the table. It is ''vanilla'' information. It is information the American people have the right to know. It is information I am suggesting be made available. It is information the Social Security Advisory Board is suggesting be made available. It is not a partisan effort on my part; it is simply a desire to, hopefully, further the effort to inform the American people of the problems we face if we do not get on this issue of Social Security and begin to solve it.

That is the amendment I will offer. That is the bill I am introducing today. I see the Senator from Iowa, the ranking Republican on the Finance Committee. He has been a leader on the issue of Social Security reform in this Congress. I greatly appreciate his support, cosponsorship, and initiation in drafting the bill which solves the overall problem. I thank him for his support.

I thank the Chair for its indulgence, and I yield the floor.

By Mr. GRASSLEY:

S. 2252. A bill to provide for the review of agriculture mergers and acquisitions by the Department of Agriculture and to outlaw unfair practices in the agriculture industry, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

THE AGRICULTURE COMPETITION ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as most of my colleagues know, agriculture is one of the most crucial industries to my State, Iowa. The small, independent family farmer is a common thread running throughout the cultural, economic and social fabric of my State. I firmly believe that if that thread is pulled, the entire fabric of Iowa could come unraveled.

All my life I have lived and worked on a farm. I recognize that Iowa and the world are changing and that agriculture cannot stagnate and stay the same decade after decade. If we are to continue to survive and thrive into the 21st century, Iowa must diversify and adapt. But the best way to do that is not by throwing away the past and the present. The best way to prepare for the future is to build on the best of our heritage. And the family farmer is one of the best things about Iowa's heritage. I am committed to preserving and supporting this valuable member of Iowa's communities.

Any farmer knows that agriculture is a risky business. If you are going to be a farmer, you had better be prepared for ups and downs. But farmers feel more vulnerable now than at just about any time I can recall and with good reason.

We all know there's been a so-called ''merger-mania'' going on throughout our nation's economy. Large corporations are joining forces with other large corporations to form new business giants in every sector of the economy and agriculture is no exception.

In the last couple of years, the AG industry has seen a significant number of multi-million and multi-billion dollar mergers affecting grain and livestock. In the face of all these mergers and new alliances, the independent producer farming a thousand acres or less, sees himself getting smaller and smaller in comparison to many of his competitors. He sees himself having fewer and fewer choices of who to buy from and sell to. Yet, those farmers know, as I do, that the independent farmer is one of the most efficient businessmen in our nation's economy. That's why the United States can feed itself and a good portion of the world. So long as

the market place is fair and open, the family farmer can compete.

I am not suggesting that all mergers are in and of themselves wrong or unfair to family farmers. Businesses may be in situations where their survival and success is dependent on joining forces with another. That right is a fundamental principle of a capitalist system and has to be preserved. Indeed, I believe that farmers do not need to be protected from the marketplace. But I believe we should protect their access to the marketplace.

That is why I will be introducing legislation to guarantee greater openness and accountability to the merger review process as it pertains to agri-business.

My bill will give USDA, the Federal department with the background and expertise in agriculture, a more prominent role in assessing AG mergers. Furthermore, my bill will provide a much-needed balance in the focus of AG merger reviews.

Currently, when the Department of Justice assesses a proposed merger, their focus is weighted towards the impact a merger would have on consumers. No one, certainly not I, would argue against ensuring that a merger does not harm consumers. However, given the fact that AG mergers, more so than other kinds of mergers, impact a way of life, not just an industry, it is critical that we give equal importance to the effect these mergers have on producers.

My bill will do just that by requiring USDA to do an assessment of how a proposed corporate union will affect producers and their access to the market. My bill will keep DOJ in the driver's seat on mergers, but will make the expertise and knowledge of USDA a prominent part of the merger review record.

I am aware other proposals reforming the agri-business merger review process are being crafted. I am certainly willing to consider all suggested reforms. Nonetheless, I believe my bill is strong and balanced in several respects. As I mentioned, my bill provides a heightened role for USDA in the merger review process, giving producers a seat at the table when mergers and acquisitions are being reviewed by DOJ or FTC.

In addition, I would like to highlight the following provisions in my bill.

There is a requirement that USDA do a merger review that focuses on the needs of producers and whether the transaction would cause substantial harm to farmers' ability to compete in the marketplace. This review will be conducted simultaneously with the Hart-Scott-Rodino review now done by DOJ. There is no disruption in the current DOJ/FTC merger review process. My legislation allows for negotiations between USDA and the parties to a proposed merger in order to work out any concerns USDA has.

Under my bill, if USDA's concerns are not satisfied, USDA may challenge the merger in court to either stop the merger or impose conditions on the transaction.

Furthermore, this measure calls for the creation of a special counsel in USDA for competition matters, which is subject to Senate consideration. My bill provides money for additional staff at USDA and DOJ.

This measure also prohibits the enforcement of confidentiality clauses in livestock production contracts that prevent producers from getting the advice they need to make business decisions in their best interests.

My bill provides contract poultry growers the same protections under GIPSA that other livestock producers have.

Finally, under my bill, the competition protection authorities of USDA's packers and stockyards division is extended to include anticompetitive practices by dealers, processors and commission merchants of all AG commodities.

Several components of this bill are based on proposals by the American Farm Bureau, the largest organization representing producers of all commodities.

I believe that bringing to the table a greater understanding of AG producers' needs when examining AG mergers is the biggest missing element to make the merger review process as fair as possible. Closing this gap is the heart of my proposal.

I realize that DOJ currently has consultations with USDA on AG mergers. But I believe the current process is not consistent or open enough to assure producers' their concerns are adequately addressed.

The approach I advocate will ensure that producers' concerns and needs are fully discussed when Federal agencies examine proposed AG business mergers. By guaranteeing inclusion and openness for small, independent producers, we can go a long way toward alleviating their understandable anxiety.

As my colleagues from rural states know, AG concentration is one of the most important issues in agriculture today. It is imperative that we make meaningful progress on this issue before this Congress adjourns. As I stated earlier, I am aware of other efforts, principally by Senator DASCHLE and Senator LEAHY, to craft a legislative response to the recent wave of AG mergers.

I commend them for their hard work and I appreciate their efforts to keep me informed of their progress. I did not feel I could offer my unreserved endorsement of the proposal they have crafted thus far and I have chosen to introduce my own bill.

However, I believe our proposals are close enough in scope, direction and intent that we can achieve a bipartisan compromise sooner rather than later. I want it to be clearly understood that it is my desire to work with Members from both sides of the aisle to calm farmers' fears about high levels of AG concentration.

I am certain Congress will need to take additional steps to secure the freedom of small producers to compete in the marketplace.

But my bill will assure that when AG mergers are given the necessary review, the small, independent family farmer who I am proud to serve, will not be left out.

I urge my colleagues to join me in holding the door open for farmers across the country and I ask for the support of all those who want to preserve the best of our Nation's agriculture heritage and ensure the superiority of U.S. Agriculture for decades to come.

By Mr. MURKOWSKI:

S. 2253. A bill to authorize the establishment of a joint United States-Canada commission to study the feasibility of connecting the rail system in Alaska to the North American continental rail system, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

RAILS TO RESOURCES ACT OF 2000

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, today I am introducing a bill to establish a bilateral U.S. and Canadian commission to study the feasibility of extending the continental railroad system to Alaska via a land link through Canada.

Mr. President, there are three things critical to the establishment of long-term economic stability for any state, region or country. The first is the availability of resources necessary to the production of goods. The second is the availability of labor to manufacture those goods. And the third is the availability of transportation systems to get those goods to market.

My State of Alaska, unfortunately, remains deficient in the third of these critical elements. We have the resources, and we have the labor, but we do not yet have the same essential transportation infrastructure.

The idea of connecting the transcontinental rail system to Alaska is not a new one. The original congressional action to establish the Alaska Railroad called for laying 1,000 miles of track in Alaska, which would have been sufficient to carry it to the Alaska-Yukon border. Canada has at various times also looked at rail connections to the north country. Unfortunately, none of these have been carried through.

During World War II, the United States actually surveyed a route from Prince George, British Columbia all the way through Alaska to tidewater at Teller, on Alaska's Seward Peninsula. But again, this effort was never completed, largely due to wartime shortages of steel.

While someday it would be beneficial to follow through on that World War II plan, what I am proposing today is far less grandiose.

My bill would create a process for appointing members to the U.S. side of a bilateral commission to study the feasibility of extending the current continental rail system from its present terminus in British Columbia, through

the Yukon Territory, to the present terminus of the Alaska Railroad near Fairbanks. The distance to be traversed is on the order of 1,200 miles. Mr. President, this is not pie in the sky. I believe that the extension of the railroad would pay for itself, not immediately, but in the forseeable future.

The area through which the rail line would pass holds some of the richest mineral prospects in North America. The Yukon-Tanana uplands stretch from Fairbanks down through much of the Yukon. This heavily mineralized area holds gold, silver, copper, nickel, lead and zinc in great quantities, plus substantial amounts of other elements. Further south along the possible routes, there are large quantities of high value timber, and vast amounts of lower quality wood that we now utilize for paper, fiberboard and other products.

Mr. President, some individuals and organizations will no doubt argue against even exploring this prospect because of a bias against the use of natural resources, or opposition to ''development'' in the wilderness. To them I would suggest that the construction of a railroad is an opportunity to control development—to avoid areas of particular sensitivity—which would be impossible with other transportation systems. A rail line has far less of a ''footprint'' than even a one-lane road, and its stops are known quantities. Properly constructed, a rail line would make possible the development of vast resources, without creating the kind of uncontrolled situation that can lead to the degradation of highly valued wild lands.

Others may point to the current volume of freight moving to and from Alaska and say, ''There is no way such a tiny amount of freight can support a railroad.'' They would be missing the point. The question is not whether rail is a more effective means to carry the existing volume, it is whether access to rail would spur enough new economic activity to support the venture. I suggest that it might. Experts have suggested there may be the potential for up to 120 million tons of freight per year, which would be more than enough to pay back any investment.

I am not an expert. I cannot verify that contention, any more than I can refute it. That is why we need a comprehensive feasibility study.

In January, a conference to discuss the potential for such an extension was held in Vancouver, British Columbia. Participants were extraordinarily supportive, adopting a strong resolution in favor of proceeding with a joint U.S.-Canada study.

I have drawn from that resolution to prepare the legislation I am introducing today. Specifically, it would provide authorization to for a $6 million, five-year effort to refine our understanding of both the positives and the negatives of a rail extension.

This is in no way an attempt to second-guess the feasibility process. We need an objective, thorough survey of both costs and opportunities.

To that end, I am suggesting that the United States component of the commission include local government, business, academic and Alaska Native leaders with expertise in the relevant fields. I am confident that Canada will choose similarly well-qualified individuals for its own side of the commission.

Let's make no mistake about this—it is not universally supported, and I want my colleagues to be aware of that from the very beginning. Most of those who currently operate companies carrying goods to and from Alaska by truck and by water will find all kinds of reasons to suggest that there is no way a railroad can be made to work.

Mr. President, it is only natural that those with a vested interest in the status quo should oppose change. It is their absolute right to do so. But it is wrong to stifle debate. We should be free to accept and explore new ideas. That is what this commission is all about.

If the railroad connection is economically and environmentally and socially sound, then let's move ahead. If it is not, then let's drop it. But at the very least, let's give it an honest hearing. That's what this bill is about.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 2253

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 ''Rails to Resources Act of 2000.''

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) rail transportation is an essential component of the North American intermodal transportation system;

(2) the development of economically strong and socially stable communities in the western United States and Canada was encouraged significantly by government policies promoting the development of integrated transcontinental, interstate and inter-provincial rail systems in the states, territories and provinces of the two countries;

(3) U.S. and Canadian federal support for the completion of new elements of the transcontinental, interstate and interprovincial rail systems was halted before rail connections were established to the state of Alaska and the Yukon Territory;

(4) Both public and private lands in Alaska, the Yukon territory and northern British Columbia, including lands held by aboriginal peoples, contain extensive deposits of oil, gas, coal and other minerals as well as valuable forest products which presently are inaccessible, but which could provide significant economic benefit to local communities and to both nations if an economically efficient transportation system was available;

(5) per ton of freight moved, rail transportation systems emit lower levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds than other modes of freight transportation;

(6) rail transportation systems are capable of moving cargo with up to nine times the energy efficiency of highway transportation;

(7) rail transportation in otherwise isolated areas facilitates controlled access and reduced overall impact to environmentally sensitive areas;

(8) the extension of the continental rail system through northern British Columbia and the Yukon territory to the current terminus of the Alaska Railroad would significantly benefit the U.S. and Canadian visitor industries by facilitating the comfortable movement of passengers over long distances while minimizing effects on the surrounding areas;

(9) extension of the Alaska Railroad system to the Canadian border is consistent with the intent of Congress as expressed in the Alaska Railroad Organic Act of 1914, which called for a system of up to 1,000 miles in length; and,

(10) ongoing research and development efforts in the rail industry continue to increase the efficiency of rail transportation, ensure safety, and decrease the impact of rail service on the environment.

SEC. 3. AGREEMENT FOR A UNITED STATES-CANADA BILATERAL COMMISSION.

The President is authorized and urged to enter into an agreement with the government of Canada to establish a joint commission to study the technological and economic feasibility of linking the rail system in Alaska to the nearest appropriate point on the North American continental rail system.

SEC. 4. COMPOSITION OF COMMISSION.

(a) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) TOTAL MEMBERSHIP.—The Agreement should provide for the Commission to be composed of 18 members, of which 9 members are appointed by the President and 9 members are appointed by the government of Canada.

(2) GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS.—The Agreement should provide for the membership of the Commission, to the maximum extent practicable, to be representative of—

(A) the interests of the local communities (including the governments of the communities), aboriginal peoples, and businesses that would be affected by the connection of the rail system in Alaska to the North American continental rail system; and

(B) a broad range of expertise in areas of knowledge that are relevant to the significant issues to be considered by the Commission, including economics, engineering, management of resources (such as minerals and timber), social sciences, fish and game management, environmental sciences, and transportation.

(b) UNITED STATES MEMBERSHIP.—Under the Agreement, the President shall appoint the United States members of the Commission as follows:

(1) Two members from among persons who are qualified to represent the interests of communities and local governments of Alaska.

(2) One member representing the State of Alaska, to be nominated by the Governor of Alaska.

(3) One member from among persons who are qualified to represent the interests of Native Alaskans residing in the area of Alaska that would be affected by the extension of rail service.

(4) Four members from among persons involved in commercial activities in Alaska who are qualified to represent commercial interests in Alaska, of which one shall be a representative of the Alaska Railroad Corporation.

(5) Two members from among scholars employed in institutions of higher education in Alaska, at least one of whom must be an engineer with expertise in subarctic transportation.

(c) CANADIAN MEMBERSHIP.—The Agreement should provide for the Canadian membership of the Commission to be representative of broad categories of interests of Canada as the government of Canada determines appropriate, consistent with subsection (a)(2).

SEC. 5. GOVERNANCE AND STAFFING OF COMMISSION.

(a) CHAIRMAN.—The Agreement should provide for the Chairman of the Commission to be elected from among the members of the Commission by a majority vote of the members.

(b) COMPENSATION AND EXPENSES OF UNITED STATES MEMBERS.—

(1) COMPENSATION.—Each member of the Commission appointed by the President who is not an officer or employee of the Federal Government shall be compensated at a rate equal to the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United States Code, for each day (including travel time) during which such member is engaged in the performance of the duties of the Commission. Each such member who is an officer or employee of the United States shall serve without compensation in addition to that received for services as an officer or employee of the United States.

(2) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—The members of the Commission appointed by the President shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Commission.

(c) STAFF.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Agreement should provide for the appointment of a staff and an executive director to be the head of the staff.

(2) COMPENSATION.—Funds made available for the Commission by the United States may be used to pay the compensation of the executive director and other personnel at rates fixed by the Commission that are not in excess of the rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of title 5, United States Code.

(d) OFFICE.—The Agreement should provide for the office of the Commission to be located in a mutually agreed location within the impacted areas of Alaska, the Yukon Territory, and northern British Columbia.

(e) MEETINGS.—The Agreement should provide for the Commission to meet at least biannually to review progress and to provide guidance to staff and others, and to hold, in locations within the affected areas of Alaska, the Yukon Territory and northern British Columbia, such additional informational or public meetings as the Commission deems necessary to the conduct of its business.

(f) PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES.—The Agreement should authorize and encourage the Commission to procure by contract, to the maximum extent practicable, the services (including any temporary and intermittent services) that the Commission determines necessary for carrying out the duties of the Commission. In the case of any contract for the services of an individual, funds made available for the Commission by the United States may not be used to pay for the services of the individual at a rate that exceeds the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 6 DUTIES.

(a) STUDY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Agreement should provide for the Commission to study and assess, on the basis of all available relevant information, the technological and economic feasibility of linking the rail system in Alaska to the North American continental rail system through the continuation of the rail system through the continuation of the rail system in Alaska from its northeastern terminus to a connection with the continental rail system in Canada.

(2) SPECIFIC ISSUES.—The Agreement should provide for the study and assessment to include the consideration of the following issues:

(A) Railroad engineering.

(B) Land ownership.

(C) Geology.

(D) Proximity to mineral, timber and other resources.

(E) Market outlook.

(F) Environmental considerations.

(G) Social effects, including changes to the use or availability of natural resources.

(H) Potential financial mechanisms.

(3) ROUTE.—The Agreement should provide for the Commission, upon finding that it is technologically and economically feasible to link the rail system in Alaska as described in paragraph (1), to determine one or more recommended routes for the rail segment that establishes the linkage, taking into consideration cost, distance, access to potential freight markets, environmental matters, and such other factors as the Commission determines relevant.

(4) COMBINED CORRIDOR EVALUATION.—The Agreement should also provide for the Commission to consider whether it would be useful and technologically and economically feasible to combine the power transmission infrastructure and petroleum product pipelines of other utilities into one corridor with a rail extension of the rail system in Alaska.

(b) REPORT.—The Agreement should require the Commission to submit to Congress and the Secretary of Transportation and to the Minister of Transport of the government of Canada, not later than 5 years after the Commission commencement date, a report on the results of the study, including the following:

(1) FEASIBILITY.—The Commission's findings regarding the technological and economical feasibility of linking the rail system in Alaska as described in subsection (a)(1).

(2) ROUTE.—If such an action is determined technologically and economically feasible, the Commission's recommendations regarding the preferred route and any alternative routes for the rail segment establishing the linkage.

SEC. 7. COMMENCEMENT AND TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.

(a) COMMENCEMENT.—The Agreement should provide for the Commission to begin to function on the date on which all members are appointed to the Commission as provided for in the Agreement.

(b) TERMINATION.—The Commission shall terminate 90 days after the date on which the Commission submits its report under section 6.

SEC. 8. FUNDING.

(a) RAILS TO RESOURCES FUND.—The Agreement should provide for the following:

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The establishment of an interest-bearing account to be known as the ''Rails to Resources Fund''.

(2) CONTRIBUTIONS.—The contribution by the United States and the government of Canada to the Fund of amounts that are sufficient for the Commission to carry out its duties.

(3) AVAILABILITY.—The availability of amounts in the Fund to pay the costs of Commission activities.

(4) DISSOLUTION.—Dissolution of the Fund upon the termination of the Commission and distribution of the amounts in the Fund between the United States and the government of Canada.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Funds are hereby authorized to be appropriated to any Fund established as described in subsection (a)(1) in the total amount of $6,000,000, to remain available until expended.

SEC. 9. DEFINITIONS.

In this section:

(1) AGREEMENT.—The term ''Agreement'' means an agreement described in section 2.

(2) COMMISSION.—The term ''Commission'' means a commission established pursuant to any Agreement.

(3) COMMISSION COMMENCEMENT DATE.—The date determined under section 6(a).

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 526

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. ABRAHAM) was added as a cosponsor of S. 526, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow issuance of tax-exempt private activity bonds to finance public-private partnership activities relating to school facilities in public elementary and secondary schools, and for other purposes.

S. 801

At the request of Mr. SANTORUM, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 801, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reduce the tax on beer to its pre-1991 level.

S. 821

At the request of Mr. LAUTENBERG, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 821, a bill to provide for the collection of data on traffic stops.

S. 890

At the request of Mr. WELLSTONE, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. TORRICELLI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 890, a bill to facilitate the naturalization of aliens who served with special guerrilla units or irregular forces in Laos.

S. 1016

At the request of Mr. DEWINE, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1016, a bill to provide collective bargaining for rights for public safety officers employed by States or their political subdivisions.

S. 1139

At the request of Mr. REID, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SANTORUM) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1139, a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, relating to civil penalties for unruly passengers of air carriers and to provide for the protection of employees providing air safety information, and for other purposes.

S. 1197

At the request of Mr. ROTH, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1197, a bill to prohibit the importation of products made with dog or cat fur, to prohibit the sale, manufacture, offer