support of a contingency operation for purposes of entitlement to medical and dental care as members of the Armed Forces on active duty.

S. 2928

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2928, a bill to ban bisphenol A in children's products.

S. 2931

At the request of Ms. SNOWE, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2931, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to exempt complex rehabilitation products and assistive technology products from the Medicare competitive acquisition program.

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2931, supra.

S. 2932

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2932, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the poison center national toll-free number, national media campaign, and grant program to provide assistance for poison prevention, sustain the funding of poison centers, and enhance the public health of people of the United States.

S. 2979

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2979, a bill to exempt the African National Congress from treatment as a terrorist organization, and for other purposes.

S. 2994

At the request of Mr. LEVIN, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. COLEMAN) and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2994, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to provide for the remediation of sediment contamination in areas of concern.

S. 3005

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3005, a bill to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish procedures for the timely and effective delivery of medical and mental health care to all immigration detainees in custody, and for other purposes.

S. 3008

At the request of Mr. BOND, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. STEVENS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3008, a bill to improve and enhance the mental health care benefits available to members of the Armed Forces and veterans, to enhance counseling and other benefits available to survivors of members of the Armed Forces and veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 3022

At the request of Mr. LEVIN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3022, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to prohibit the sale of dishwashing detergent in the United States if the detergent contains a high level of phosphorus.

AMENDMENT NO. 4796

At the request of Mr. CARPER, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 4796 intended to be proposed to H.R. 2642, a bill making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 4800

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 4800 intended to be proposed to H.R. 2642, a bill making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. BIDEN (for himself and Mr. LUGAR):

S. 3052. A bill to provide for the transfer of naval vessels to certain foreign recipients; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, today, Senator LUGAR and I are introducing the Naval Vessel Transfer Act of 2008, a bill to permit the transfer of certain U.S. Navy vessels to particular foreign countries. All of the proposed ship transfer authorizations have been requested by the U.S. Navy, with the approval of the Office of Management and Budget.

Pursuant to section 824(b) of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1994, as amended, 10 U.S.C. 7307(a), a naval vessel that is in excess of 3,000 tons or that is less than 20 years of age may not be disposed of to another nation unless the disposition of that vessel is approved by law enacted after August 5, 1974. The bill we introduce today would provide that required approval for six transfers: a guided missile frigate for Pakistan; two minehunter coastal ships for Greece; an oiler for Chile; and two amphibious tank landing ships for Peru. These would all be grant transfers under section 516 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2321j). If any Member of this body has questions or concerns regarding one or more of the proposed ship transfers, please let us know.

The bill also contains provisions that are traditionally included in ship transfer bills, relating to transfer costs and repair and refurbishment of the ships, and exempting the value of a vessel transferred on a grant basis from the aggregate value of excess defense articles in a given fiscal year.

The authority provided by this bill would expire 2 years after the date of enactment of the bill.

Finally, the Department of Defense has provided the following information on this bill:

These proposed transfers would improve the United States' political and military relationships with close allies. They would support strategic engagement goals and regional security cooperation objectives. Active use of former naval vessels by coalition forces in support of regional priorities is more advantageous than retaining vessels in the Navy's inactive fleet and disposing of them by scrapping or another method.

The United States would incur no costs in transferring these naval vessels. The recipients would be responsible for all costs associated with the transfers, including maintenance, repairs, training, and fleet turnover costs.

This act does not alter the effect of the Toxic Substances Control Act, or any other law, with regard to their applicability to the transfer of ships by the U.S. to foreign countries for military or humanitarian use. The laws and regulations that apply today would apply in the same manner if this section were enacted.

The Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Donald C. Winter, has added: ''Expeditious enactment of the proposal is in the best interests of the Navy's Maritime Strategy as it will allow us to strengthen the capabilities of partner nations.''

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

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

S. 3052

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 ''Naval Vessel Transfer Act of 2008''.

SEC. 2. TRANSFER OF NAVAL VESSELS TO CERTAIN FOREIGN RECIPIENTS.

(a) TRANSFERS BY GRANT.—The President is authorized to transfer vessels to foreign recipients on a grant basis under section 516 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2321j), as follows:

(1) PAKISTAN.—To the Government of Pakistan, the OLIVER HAZARD PERRY class guided missile frigate MCINERNEY (FFG–8).

(2) GREECE.—To the Government of Greece, the OSPREY class minehunter coastal ships OSPREY (MHC–51) and ROBIN (MHC–54).

(3) CHILE.—To the Government of Chile, the KAISER class oiler ANDREW J. HIGGINS (AO–190).

(4) PERU.—To the Government of Peru, the NEWPORT class amphibious tank landing ships FRESNO (LST–1182) and RACINE (LST–1191).

(b) GRANTS NOT COUNTED IN ANNUAL TOTAL OF TRANSFERRED EXCESS DEFENSE ARTICLES.—The value of a vessel transferred to a recipient on a grant basis pursuant to authority provided by subsection (a) shall not be counted against the aggregate value of excess defense articles transferred in any fiscal year under section 516 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2321j).

(c) COSTS OF TRANSFERS.—Any expense incurred by the United States in connection with a transfer authorized by this section

shall be charged to the recipient (notwithstanding section 516(e) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2321j(e))).

(d) REPAIR AND REFURBISHMENT IN UNITED STATES SHIPYARDS.—To the maximum extent practicable, the President shall require, as a condition of the transfer of a vessel under this section, that the recipient to which the vessel is transferred have such repair or refurbishment of the vessel as is needed, before the vessel joins the naval forces of the recipient, performed at a shipyard located in the United States, including a United States Navy shipyard.

(e) EXPIRATION OF AUTHORITY.—The authority to transfer a vessel under this section shall expire at the end of the 2-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

By Mr. SMITH (for himself and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. 3053. A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to provide grants for eligible entities to provide services to improve financial literacy among older individuals; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator CANTWELL, I introduce a bill to provide grants to Area Agencies on Aging to provide services to improve financial literacy among older individuals.

A number of trends have occurred over the past few years that make financial literacy a critical element of retirement security. The personal savings rate in the United States has declined dramatically over the last two decades. According to the Commerce Department, the personal savings rate was 0.2 percent in March of this year. This means for every $1,000 of after-tax income, the average person saved only $2.

In addition, the shift from defined benefit to defined contribution retirement plans has generally placed the burden on employees to effectively manage the investment of their pensions.

However, many Americans, including older Americans, lack financial literacy skills. In the 2008 Retirement Confidence Survey by EBRI/Matthew Greenwald & Associates, 40 percent of retirees surveyed reported that they are not knowledgeable about investments and investment strategies. In addition, a 2003 national survey by AARP of consumers aged 45 and older found that they often lacked knowledge of basic financial and investment terms. For example, only about half of respondents reported knowing that diversification of investments reduces risk.

The Smith-Cantwell bill will improve older Americans' financial literacy and help them better prepare for and manage their assets in retirement. Under the bill, grants will be provided to Area Agencies on Aging to enable these organizations to provide services to improve financial literacy among older individuals, especially older women. These services include education, training and other assistance.

This bipartisan financial literacy bill will help increase older Americans' financial literacy so they can make more informed and prudent investment and retirement planning decisions. And I am pleased that the Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging have both endorsed this bill.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to enact this important bill. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 3053

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

SECTION 1. FINANCIAL LITERACY SERVICES.

Part A of title XI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1301 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''FINANCIAL LITERACY SERVICES

''SEC. 1150A. (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) AREA AGENCY ON AGING.—The term 'area agency on aging' has the meaning given that term in section 102 of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3002).

''(2) FINANCIAL LITERACY SERVICES.—The term 'financial literacy services' means the services described in subsection (b)(1).

''(3) OLDER INDIVIDUAL.—The term 'older individual' has the meaning given that term in such section 102.

''(b) GRANTS FOR SERVICES.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall make grants to eligible entities and other entities determined appropriate by the Secretary to enable the entities to provide services to improve financial literacy among older individuals, including older individuals who are women, and the family members and legal representatives of such individuals. The Secretary shall make the grants on a competitive basis, and nationwide.

''(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—To be eligible to receive a grant under this subsection, an entity shall be an area agency on aging or another entity that meets such requirements as the Secretary may specify.

''(3) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant under this subsection, an entity shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require. In the case of an entity who intends to provide the financial literacy services jointly with other services as described in paragraph (4)(C), the application shall include information demonstrating that the entity has the capacity to provide the services jointly.

''(4) USE OF FUNDS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—An entity that receives a grant under this subsection shall use the funds made available through the grant to provide financial literacy services, such as financial literacy education, training, and assistance.

''(B) PROVISION THROUGH CONTRACTS.—The entity may provide the services directly or by entering into a contract with an organization that provides counseling, advice, or representation to older individuals and the family members and legal representatives of such individuals in a community served by the entity.

''(C) PROVISION WITH OTHER SERVICES.—The entity may provide the services alone or jointly with other services provided by or funded by the eligible entity, such as—

''(i) services provided through State Health Insurance Assistance Programs;

''(ii) services provided through a Long-Term Care Ombudsman program under section 307(a)(9) or 712 of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3027, 3058g);

''(iii) information and assistance services provided under the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3001 et seq.);

''(iv) legal assistance services provided under the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3001 et seq.);

''(v) services provided through Senior Medicare Patrol Projects conducted by the Administration on Aging;

''(vi) case management services; and

''(vii) services provided through Aging and Disability Resource Centers.

''(5) REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit to Congress an annual report on the activities carried out by entities under a grant under this subsection.

''(c) NATIONAL SUPPORT CENTER FOR FINANCIAL LITERACY GRANT.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may make a grant to an eligible center to coordinate the services provided through, and support the grant recipients under, the grant program carried out under subsection (b).

''(2) ELIGIBLE CENTER.—To be eligible to receive a grant under this subsection, a center shall—

''(A) be an entity that is housed within an organization described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 that is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code;

''(B) have a minimum of 10 years experience operating a national program and support center with a focus on financial literacy; and

''(C) be primarily engaged in outreach and training activities designed to provide financial education and retirement planning for low- and moderate-income individuals, particularly with respect to women; and

''(D) have a demonstrated record of collaboration with organizations that focus on the needs of low- and moderate-income individuals and with national organizations serving the elderly, including those working with area agencies on aging and women, as well as organizations with expertise in financial services and related fields.

''(3) USE OF FUNDS.—A center that receives a grant under this subsection shall use the funds made available through the grant to—

''(A) design and conduct training (which may include providing training for trainers) related to financial literacy services;

''(B) provide curricula for financial literacy services;

''(C) develop and disseminate relevant information about financial literacy services;

''(D) conduct outreach to national, State, and community organizations through a series of strategic partnerships in order to improve financial literacy among older individuals and the family members and legal representatives of such individuals;

''(E) provide technical assistance to the grant recipients under subsection (b) with respect to the program; and

''(F) collect data from such grant recipients about the services provided under this section, and the impact of those services.

''(4) ADDRESSING CHALLENGES TO WOMEN IN SECURING ADEQUATE RETIREMENT INCOME.—In addition to the activities described in paragraph (3), a center that receives a grant under this subsection shall use the funds made available through the grant to conduct activities that are focused on addressing the challenges faced by older women, women of color, single women, and women who are heads of households to securing an adequate retirement income.

''(d) COORDINATION.—The Secretary shall ensure that the activities carried out under the grant program under subsection (b) and under a grant made under subsection (c) are

coordinated with the activities carried out by—

''(1) the Office of Financial Education of the Department of the Treasury; and

''(2) the Financial Literacy and Education Commission established under section 513 of the Financial Literacy and Education Improvement Act (20 U.S.C. 9702).

''(e) FUNDING.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall transfer to the Secretary of Health and Human Services from the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund established under section 201 such funds as are necessary for making grants under this section.''.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. SMITH):

S. 3055. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the rate of the excise tax on certain wooden arrows designed for use by children; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today, along with Senator SMITH, I am introducing a bill to exempt wooden practice arrows from the unfair impact of an excise tax designed for much more expensive hunter and professional arrows. The JOBS Act of 2004 changed the tax on all arrows from 12.4 percent of an arrow's value to a fixed amount, adjusted for inflation, that now stands at 39 cents per arrow. Under the prior law, wooden practice arrows that cost 30 cents paid a tax of 3.6 cents. Under the current fixed tax, the same practice arrows are now assessed a tax of 39 cents per arrow, more than doubling the arrows' cost to the camps, schools and Boy Scouts that use them. The fixed tax is suited to the higher cost of hunter and professional arrows, which sell for up to $100 apiece. It is not suited for the less costly practice arrows and these should be made exempt as our legislation would do. The Archery Trade Association, which represents arrow makers large and small, supports this bill and agrees that the newer fixed tax unfairly and unintentionally hurts the makers and users of wooden practice arrows. Moreover, there is a precedent for exempting practice arrows, because Code section 4161 exempts youth bows, defined by their draw weight, from taxes. The Joint Committee on Taxation puts the cost of this arrows bill as $2 million over 10 years. This seems a small price to pay to help wooden arrow manufacturers struggling to stay in business in Oregon and 9 other States: Washington, Wisconsin, Arizona, Minnesota, Indiana, Virginia, New York, Utah and Texas. I urge my colleagues to support reform of the arrow excise tax to help both the makers and users of children's wooden practice arrows.

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

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

S. 3055

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

SECTION 1. MODIFICATION OF RATE OF EXCISE TAX ON CERTAIN WOODEN ARROWS DESIGNED FOR USE BY CHILDREN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (2) of section 4161(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to arrows) is amended by redesignating subparagraph (B) as subparagraph (C) and by inserting after subparagraph (A) the following new subparagraph:

''(B) EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN WOODEN ARROW SHAFTS.—Subparagraph (A) shall not apply to any shaft consisting of all natural wood with no laminations or artificial means of enhancing the spine of such shaft (whether sold separately or incorporated as part of a finished or unfinished product) of a type used in the manufacture of any arrow which after its assembly—

''(i) measures 5/16 of an inch or less in diameter, and

''(ii) is not suitable for use with a bow described in paragraph (1)(A).''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to shafts first sold after the date of enactment of this Act.

By Mr. SMITH (for himself and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 3057. A bill to amend title 37, Unite States Code, to provide a special displacement allowance for members of the uniformed services without dependents, to provide for an annual percentage increase in the amount of the family separation allowance for members of the uniformed services, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to honor our Nation's veterans and their families. As we approach Memorial Day and reflect upon the countless sacrifices of our service men and women, we must also take a moment and remember our military families. These families have shouldered the burden of our military engagements, going extended periods, sometimes years, without seeing their spouse, their mother, or their father. To help alleviate this burden, Senator FEINSTEIN and I are introducing the Military Family Separation Benefit Enhancement Act.

The Military Family Separation Benefit Enhancement Act would peg the Family Separation Allowance to the Consumer Price Index, allowing for increases in the benefit, providing some additional relief to military families separated by deployments. The Family Separation Allowance is a benefit awarded to our military families when a service man or woman with dependents is deployed overseas for 30 days or more. The current amount of the Family Separation Allowance is only $250, which does not have much purchasing power in these days of high fuel and food prices. The Family Separation Allowance remains at $250, regardless of economic conditions.

When a service member is deployed, a family experiences new and unexpected costs. Oftentimes, the deployed service member is a vital part of a household, helping to raise children, perform various community services and complete chores around the house. Therefore, many of our military families are forced to seek additional help. Families must pay for extra child care or for a lawn care service, tasks that often are the deployed service member's responsibility.

Pegging the Family Separation Allowance to the Consumer Price Index will better reflect the economic burdens our military families encounter. The FSA will not be stuck at $250 a month when fuel costs are skyrocketing and food prices continue to rise.

The Military Family Separation Benefit Enhancement Act also creates a new Family Separation Allowance for those service members who do not have dependents. Just because a service member does not have dependents does not mean he or she will not need help at home while overseas. Many still need help maintaining their lawn, ensuring the upkeep of their house, or providing for the storage of their car.

Our bill is a means to help our military families and those who serve. Deploying overseas is a difficult adjustment for our military families and this legislation will provide some relief.

I ask my colleagues to join Senator FEINSTEIN and me to pass the Military Family Separation Benefit Enhancement Act.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Ms. SNOWE):

S. 3059. A bill to permit commercial trucks to use certain highways of the Interstate System to provide significant savings in the transportation of goods throughout the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Commercial Truck Fuel Savings Demonstration Act of 2008, which would help address the growing crisis of energy costs for our Nation's trucking industry.

Our Nation faces record high energy prices, affecting almost every aspect of daily life. The rapidly growing price of diesel is putting an increasing strain on our trucking industry. The U.S. average on diesel prices reached $3.50 a gallon in February 2008 and prices have not gone below this amount since that time. The average price of diesel this week is $4.50. Escalating fuel costs are especially devastating in states where the cost of diesel fuel is exacerbated by Federal weight limit restrictions that prohibit trucks that carry more than 80,000 pounds from traveling on the Federal interstate system.

For example, under current law, trucks weighing 100,000 pounds are allowed to travel on the portion of Interstate 95 designated as the Maine Turnpike, which runs from Maine's border with New Hampshire to Augusta, our capital city. At Augusta, the State Turnpike designation ends, but I–95 proceeds another 200 miles north to Houlton. At Augusta, however, heavy trucks must exit the modern four-lane, limited-access highway and are forced

onto smaller, two-lane secondary roads that pass through cities, towns, and villages.

The Commercial Truck Fuel Savings Demonstration Act of 2008, which I am introducing today, will provide immediate savings to our truckers. My bill creates a 2-year year pilot program that would permit trucks carrying up to 100,000 pounds to travel on the Federal interstate system whenever diesel prices are at or above $3.50 a gallon. This legislation does not mandate that each state participate in the pilot program, but gives each state the opportunity, during this time of high fuel costs, to offer relief to their trucking industries.

Permitting trucks to carry up to 100,000 pounds on Federal highways would lessen the fuel cost burden on truckers in three ways: First, raising the weight limit would allow trucking companies to put more cargo in each truck, thereby reducing the numbers of trucks needed to transport goods: Second, trucks carrying up to 100,000 pounds would no longer need to move off the main Federal highways where trucks are limited at 80,000 pounds and take less direct routes on local roads requiring considerably more diesel fuel and extended periods of idling during each trip; and third, trucks traveling on the interstate system would save on fuel costs due to the much superior road design of the interstate system as compared to the rural and urban state road systems.

I recently met with Kurt Babineau, a small business owner and second generation logger and trucker from my State who has been struggling with the increasing costs of running his operation. Mr. Babineau's operation works just east of central Maine on the outskirts of the town of Mattawamkeag. All of the pulpwood his business produces, which is roughly 50 percent of his total harvest, is transported to Verso Paper, which is located in the southwestern part of the State, in the town of Jay. The distance his trucks must travel is 165 miles and a round trip takes approximately 8 hours to complete.

If Mr. Babineau's trucks were permitted to use Interstate 95, this would reduce the distance his trucks must travel to approximately 100 miles and would shave one hour off the time it takes his trucks to make their delivery to Verso Paper, saving his operation both time and fuel.

The results of less fuel consumption from decreased distance traveled would create significant savings for Mr. Babineau's operation. His trucks average 4 miles to the gallon, which calculates to approximately 11.8 gallons an hour. Permitting trucks to travel on Interstate 95 would save Mr. Babineau 118 gallons of fuel each week. The current cost of diesel fuel in his area is approximately $4.42 per gallon, and therefore, combined with time saved on wages for drivers, his savings would estimate to nearly $697 a week.

If you applied this savings to one year of trucking for Mr. Babineau's company alone, it would save his operation over $33,400 a year and 5,664 gallons of fuel over the same period. These savings are not only beneficial to Mr. Babineau's business, his employees, and the consumer, but also to our Nation, as we look for ways to decrease on our overall fuel consumption.

Trucking is the cornerstone of our economy as most of our goods are transported by trucks at some point in the supply chain. Some independent truckers in my state already have been forced out of business due to rising fuel costs and more businesses are facing a similar fate if Congress does not act soon to address our growing energy crisis. The Commercial Truck Fuel Savings Demonstration Act offers an immediate and cost effective way to help our Nation's struggling trucking industry. I am pleased that Senator SNOWE has joined me as an original cosponsor of the bill, and I urge all my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today to commend my colleague from Maine, Senator COLLINS, in introducing legislation critical to rectifying not only a serious impediment to the movement of international commerce, but more importantly, will improve safety on our secondary roads and sustain a commercial trucking industry suffering from an astonishing rise in diesel prices.

There are some of our colleagues who believe that expanding upon the current Federal truck weight limitation of 80,000 pounds is dangerous, compromising the safety of passenger vehicles driver who may be faced with a truck weighing as much as 143,000 pounds, the limit on Interstates in Massachusetts and New York. I certainly concur that safety of such drivers is very important, and I have the record to back that up. Yet, in some areas the imposition of this outdated patchwork of weight limits puts the safety of pedestrians and the motor carrier operators themselves at risk.

Take the situation we face in Maine, where we currently have a limited exemption along the southern portion of the Maine turnpike. Many trucks traveling to or from the Canadian border or into upstate Maine are not able to travel on our Interstates as a result of the 80,000 pound weight limit. This forces many of them onto secondary roads, many of which are two-lane roads running through small towns and villages in Maine. Tanker trucks carrying fuel teeter past elementary schools, libraries, and weaving through traffic to reach locations like our Air National Guard station. Not only is that an inefficient method of bringing necessary fuel to Guardsmen that provide our national security, but imagine if you will one of those tanker trucks rupturing on Main Street, potentially causing serious damage to property, causing traffic chaos, and most importantly, killing or injuring drivers and pedestrians.

This is not a far-fetched scenario. In fact, two pedestrians were killed last year in Maine as a result of overweight trucks on local roadways, one tragic instance occurring within sight of the nearby Interstate. So I ask you, is the so-called safety argument truly a legitimate reason for opposition as my constituents and many others across small American communities are taking their lives in their hands when merely crossing Main Street?

As laid out in this legislation, it is obvious Senator COLLINS has a clear understanding of this safety issue, crafting a strategy that quantifies any potential risks to safety, and places the gathering of that data in the hands of the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office. It is my expectation that, like earlier studies that have indicated traffic fatalities involving trucks weighing 100,000 pounds are ten times greater on secondary roads than on exempted Interstates, the data collected by the GAO will point the way to a permanent solution that will enable America to harmonize the myriad weight limits across our Nation's highways.

This legislation also exhibits a true sensitivity to one of the greatest problems facing the domestic trucking industry, particularly our smaller operators: the cost of fuel. This is a problem that cannot be ignored. The price of diesel nationally as I make this statement is four dollars and 49 cents. One year ago today, it was two dollars and 82 cents! We must act.

As a result of this legislation, motor carriers will be able to expand their ability to carry loads when the price of diesel surpasses three dollars and fifty cents per gallon. While this will only affect some states that face a federal interstate system without a weight exemption, it will greatly facilitate the movement of goods across this country. Given that volume of goods projected to enter this country is forecast to increase by over 100 percent, we need a forward-thinking, intermodal plan in place. Having a greater synergy in terms of our weight limits will not only assist our Nation's struggling trucking industry, but will simplify the flow of goods moving across our country and augment our Nation's economy.

I would like to thank Senator COLLINS for her steadfast efforts and innovative thinking on this legislation as, side-by-side, we will continue to seek a resolution to this issue, which, to my eyes, is a simple matter of fairness.

By Mr. BIDEN (for himself and Mr. BROWNBACK):

S. 3061. A bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2008 through 2011 for the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, to enhance measures to combat trafficking in persons, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection

Reauthorization Act of 2008. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act was authored 8 years ago by Senator BROWNBACK and the late Senator WELLSTONE, and since then, through two re-authorizations, has been a tremendous asset in preventing and prosecuting human trafficking crimes. Today, I am honored to be able to introduce legislation to reauthorize these valuable programs with my distinguished colleague, Senator BROWNBACK.

Human trafficking is a major problem worldwide and the challenges remain great. According to the most recent State Department report, roughly 800,000 individuals are trafficked each year, the overwhelming majority of them women and children. The FBI estimates approximately $9.5 billion is generated annually for organized crime from trafficking in persons. The International Labor Organization estimates that, at present, 2.4 million persons have been trafficked into situations of forced labor.

These victims are trafficked in a variety of ways. Sometimes they are kidnapped outright, but many times they are lured with dubious job offers, or false marriage opportunities. The traffickers capitalize on the victims' desire to seek a better life, and trap them with lifetime debt bondages that degrade and destroy their lives.

Since 2000, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act has provided us effective tools, and in this reauthorization, our aim is to take the successes and lessons of eight years of progress and expand our abilities to combat human trafficking. In Title I, the legislation focuses on combating human trafficking internationally by broadening the U.S. interagency task force charged with monitoring and combating trafficking, and increasing the authority to the State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking. Because of the difficulty in accurately understanding the full scope of the problem globally, we also include provisions to coordinate our multiple federal databases, and set a reporting requirement to address forced labor and child labor.

Today's reauthorization bill also expands our ability to combat trafficking in the United States. We've provided for certain improvements to the T-visa program, which protects trafficking victims and their families from retaliation, so that we can have their help in bringing traffickers to justice, without the victim fearing harm to themselves or their loved ones. We also expand authority for U.S. Government programs to help those who have been trafficked, and require a study to outline any additional gaps in assistance that may exist. Finally, we establish some powerful new legal tools, including increasing the jurisdiction of the courts, enhancing penalties for trafficking offenses, punishing those who profit from trafficked labor and ensuring restitution of forfeited assets to victims.

Human trafficking is a daunting and critical global issue. I urge my colleagues to support this reauthorization and work with Senator BROWNBACK and me to pass it in the Senate as quickly as possible.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a section-by-section summary of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2008

SECTION-BY-SECTION DESCRIPTION

Section 1. Short title; table of contents

TITLE I—COMBATING INTERNATIONAL TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Section 101. Interagency task force to monitor and combat trafficking

Section 101 adds the Secretary of Education to the existing interagency task force to monitor and combat trafficking.

Section 102. Office to monitor and combat trafficking

Section 102 provides for several amendments to Section 105(b) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) related to the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking (the TIP Office) including mandating the office, conferring additional responsibility to the Director to work on public-private partnerships to combat trafficking and providing that the Director of the office have the ability to review and concur in State Department anti-trafficking programs that are not managed by the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking (TIP Office).

Section 103. Assistance for victims of trafficking in other countries

Section 103 amends section 107(a) of the TVPA, including ensuring that programs take into account the transnational aspects of trafficking, support increased protection for refugees, internally displaced persons and trafficked children and emphasize cooperative, regional efforts.

Section 104. Increasing effectiveness of anti-trafficking programs

Section 104 creates a new section to the TVPA to increase the effectiveness of anti-trafficking programs by providing that solicitation of grants be made publicly available and awarded by a transparent process with a review panel of Federal and private sector experts, when appropriate. The provision provides a mandated evaluation system for anti-trafficking programs on a program-by-program basis. It requires that priorities and country assessments contained in the most recent annual Report on Human Trafficking shall guide grant priorities. It provides that not more than 5 percent of the appropriations may be used for evaluations of specific programs or for evaluations of emerging problems or trends in the field of human trafficking.

Section 105. Minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking

Section 105 amends section 108(b) of the TVPA by clarifying that in evaluating whether a country's anti-trafficking efforts convictions of principal actors that result in suspended or significantly reduced sentences shall be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Section 106. Actions against governments failing to meet minimum standards

Section 106 amends Section 110 of the TVPA by providing that if a country has been on the special watch list for three consecutive years, such country shall be deemed to be not making significant efforts to combat trafficking and shall be included in the list of countries described in paragraph (1)(C). The subsection includes a Presidential waiver for up to one year if it would promote the purposes of the act or is in the national interest of the United States.

Section 107. Research on domestic and international trafficking in persons

Section 107 amends section 112A of the TVPA by requiring the establishment and maintenance of an integrated database within the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center, details the purposes of the database, and authorizes $3 million annually to the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center to carry out these activities.

Section 108. Presidential award for extraordinary efforts to combat trafficking in persons

Section 108 authorizes the President to establish a ''Paul D. Wellstone Presidential Award for Extraordinary Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons'' for persons who provided extraordinary service in efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

Section 109. Report on activities of the department of labor to monitor and combat forced labor and child labor

Section 109 requires that the Secretary of Labor provide a final report that describes the implementation of section 105 of the TVPRA of 2005, including a list of imported goods made with forced and/or child labor.

TITLE II—COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN THE UNITED STATES

Subtitle A—Ensuring Availability of Possible Witnesses and Informants

Section 201. Protecting trafficking victims against retaliation

Subsection (a) of Section 201 amends section 101(1)(15)(T) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) to provide for certain changes to the T visa for trafficking victims. Paragraph (1) allows persons who are brought into the country,for investigations or as witnesses to apply for such a visa. It also allows a T visa for persons who are not able to assist law enforcement because of the physical or psychological trauma; it also clarifies the existing language in the T Visa authorization and eliminates the ''unusual and severe harm'' standard.

Paragraph (2) allows parents and siblings who are in danger of retaliation to join the trafficking victims safely in the United States. Subsection (b) modifies certain requirements of the T Visa contained in section 214(o) of the INA, including allowing 2 the extension of time for a T Visa in exceptional circumstances and providing that the Secretary of Homeland Security may look at certain security and other conditions in the applicant's home country in making the determination that extreme hardship exists.

Subsection (d) provides for certain changes to section 245(1) of the INA relating to adjustment of status of T visa holders, including providing that the Secretary of Homeland Security may waive the restriction on disqualification for good moral character for T visa holders applying for permanent residence alien status if the actions that would have led to the disqualification are caused by or incident to the trafficking.

Section 202. Information for work-based non-immigrants on legal rights and resources

Section 202 requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to create an information pamphlet for work-based non-immigrant visa applications. The pamphlet will detail the illegality of human trafficking and reiterate worker rights and information for related services.

Section 203. Domestic worker protections

Section 203 sets forth new protections for trafficked domestic household workers and preventative measures to be followed by the State Department. Subsection (b) states that

the Secretary of State shall develop an information pamphlet for A–3 and G5 visa applicants and describes the required information to be included in the pamphlets. It mandates that the pamphlets be translated into at least ten languages and mailed to each A–3 or G–5 visa applicant in his/her primary language.

Subsection (c) provides the circumstances in which the Secretary may suspend a visa or renew a visa, as well as when the Secretary is not permitted to issue a visa.

Subsection (d) provides the protections and remedies for A–3 and G–5 visa holders working in the United States.

Subsection (e) ensures protection from removal for visa holders wanting to file a complaint regarding a violation of contract or some Federal, State, or local law to allow time sufficient to participate fully in all legal proceedings.

Subsection (f) requires that every two years the Secretary of State shall submit a report on the implementation of this section and describes the necessary content of the report.

Section 204. Relief for certain victims pending actions on petitions and applications for relief

Section 204 allows the Secretary of Homeland Security to stay the removal of an individual which has made a prima case for approval of a T Visa.

Section 205. Expansion of authority to permit continued presence in the United States

Section 205 expands the authority to permit the Secretary of Homeland Security to permit continued presence of trafficking victims, including if the alien has filed a civil action against the trafficking perpetrators (unless the alien is not showing due diligence in pursuing his civil action). It also allows for parole into the United States of certain relatives of trafficking victims with several limitations.

Section 206. Implementation of trafficking victims protection reauthorization act of 2005

Section 206 amends the Immigration and Nationality act and requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to issue interim regulations on the adjustment of status to permanent residence for T Visa holders.

Subtitle B—Assistance for Trafficking Victims

Section 211. Assistance for certain nonimmigrant status applicants

Section 211 clarifies that T-visa applicants have access to certain public benefits.

Section 212. Interim assistance for child victims of trafficking

Subsection (a) of Section 212 provides that if credible information is presented that a child has been a trafficking victim, the Secretary of HHS may provide interim assistance to the child for up to 90 days. Subsection (a) also provides that any federal official must notify HHS within 48 hours of coming into contact with such child and that State or local officials must notify HHS within 48 hours of coming into contact with such a child. Long term assistance determinations are to be made by the Secretary of HHS, the Attorney General and the Secretary of Department of Homeland Security.

Subsection (b) provides for education on identification of trafficking victims.

Section 213. Ensuring assistance for all victims of trafficking in persons

Subsection (a) of Section 213 amends the TVPA of 2000 to specifically authorize an assistance program for victims of severe forms of trafficking of persons and provides for establishing a system that refers such victims to existing programs at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice.

Subsection (b) requires a study on the gaps for assistance to women in prostitution victimized under chapter 117 of title 18.

Subtitle C—Penalties Against Traffickers and Other Crimes

Section 221. Restitution of forfeited assets; enhancement of civil action

Section 221 amends chapter 77 of title 18 by allowing the Attorney General in a prosecution brought under Federal law to grant restoration or remission of property to victims of severe forms of trafficking.

Section 222. Enhancing trafficking offenses

Section 222 amends title 18 of the U.S. Code to enhance existing penalties for trafficking offenses. Subsection (a) permits pretrial detention for trafficking offenders. Subsection (b) ensures that obstruction or attempts to obstruct or in any way interfere with enforcement of the trafficking statutes is a separate offense. Subsection (c) ensures that trafficking conspirators are punished as though they had completed a violation. Subsection (d) amends the trafficking statutes to hold accountable those who knowingly or in reckless disregard financially benefit from participation in a trafficking venture; it also amends the forced labor and sex trafficking statutes to clarify the definition of ''harm'' and ''abuse of the law or legal process.'' Subsection (e) tightens the immigration law to ensure that committing or conspiring to commit trafficking offenses are grounds of inadmissibility and removability. The provision also creates a new crime of sex tourism that punishes individuals who go abroad for sex tourism and sex tour operators that benefit from such promoting such travel.

Section 223. Jurisdiction in certain trafficking offenses

Section 223 amends chapter 77 of title 18 by increasing the jurisdiction of the courts to include any trafficking case found in or brought into the United States, even if the conduct occurred in a different country, as long as no more than ten years have passed.

Subtitle D—Activities of the United States Government

Section 231. Annual report by the Attorney General

Section 231 requires that the annual report by the Attorney General include activities by the Department of Defense to combat trafficking in persons, actions taken to enforce policies relating to contractors and their employees, actions by the Secretary of Homeland Security to waive restrictions on section 307 of the Tariff Act of 1930, and prohibitions on procurement of items or services produced by slave labor.

Section 232. Defense Contract Audit Agency audit

Section 232 requires the Defense Contract Audit Agency to conduct an audit of all Department of Defense contractors and subcontractors where there is substantial evidence to suggest trafficking in persons, notify congress of the findings of each audit, and certify that the contractor is no longer engaging in such activities.

Section 233. Senior policy operating group

Section 233 amends section 206 of the TVPRA of 2005 to ensure that the Senior Policy Operating Group reviews all anti-trafficking programs.

Section 234. Preventing United States travel by traffickers

Section 234 provides that the Secretary of State may prohibit the entry into the United States of traffickers.

Section 235. Enhancing efforts to combat the trafficking of children

Section 235 sets forth comprehensive protections for child victims of trafficking and other unaccompanied alien children, including the following the provisions: (1) Care and Custody of Unaccompanied Children: Care and custody of all unaccompanied alien children shall be the responsibility of Health and Human Services; (2) Transfer of Custody: Consistent with the Homeland Security Act of 2002, requires all departments or agencies of the federal government to notify the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) within 48 hours. The custody of most unaccompanied alien children encountered by immigration authorities must be transferred to the Secretary of Health and Human Services within 72 hours with special rules for children who have committed crimes or threaten national security; (3) Special Repatriation Procedures and Safeguards for Mexican and Canadian Nationals: Permits the Department of Homeland Security to repatriate promptly certain unaccompanied alien children from Canada or Mexico apprehended provided that those Canadian and Mexican unaccompanied alien children who are victims of severe forms of trafficking or have a fear of persecution; (4) Safe and Secure Placements: An unaccompanied alien child in the custody of HHS shall be placed in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interests of the child. Placement of child trafficking victims may include placement with competent adult victims of the same trafficking scheme in order to ensure continuity of support; (5) Standards for Placement: An unaccompanied child may not be placed with a person or entity unless HHS makes a determination that the proposed custodian is capable of providing for the child; (5) Representation: All unaccompanied alien children who are or have been in government custody, must have competent counsel to represent them in legal proceedings or matters and protect them from mistreatment, exploitation, and trafficking; (6) Special Immigrant Juvenile Status: Revises procedures for obtaining special immigrant juvenile status provided for under the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Section 236. Temporary increase in fee for certain consular services

Section 236 allows the Secretary of State to increase the fee for processing machine readable non-immigrant visas by two dollars. This increase shall be deposited in the Treasury and will terminate two years following the initial increase.

TITLE III—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

This title and the sections within it provide authorization of appropriations for various trafficking programs.

TITLE IV—CHILD SOLDIERS PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Section 401. Short title

Section 401 provides that this title may be referred to as the ''Child Soldier Prevention and Accountability Act of 2008''.

Section 402. Definitions

Section 402 provides for various definitions used throughout the Act.

Section 403. Prohibition

Subsection (a) of Section 403 prohibits military assistance, the transfer of excess defense articles, or licenses for direct sales of military equipment to governments that the State Department's annual human rights report indicates have governmental armed forces or government-supported armed forces, including paramilitaries, militias or civil defense forces that recruit or use child soldiers.

Subsection (b) provides that the Secretary of State formally notify any government of such prohibitions.

Subsection (c) provides that the President may waive the restriction in subsection (a) if doing so is in the national interest of the United States. The President must publish each waiver granted, and its justification, within 45 calendar days.

Subsection (d) provides that the President may reinstate assistance which is restricted if the Government has implemented measures to come into compliance with this title and has implemented policies to prohibit and prevent future governmentsupported use of child soldiers.

Subsection (e) provides that notwithstanding the restriction in subsection (a), assistance for international military education and training and nonlethal supplies may be provided for up to two years s/he certifies that the government of that country is taking steps to implement effective measures to demobilize child soldiers and the assistance is provided to directly support professionalization of the military.

Section 404. Reports

Subsection (a) of Section 404 provides that the Secretary of State and U.S. missions abroad thoroughly investigate reports of the use of child soldiers.

Subsection (b) clarifies that the Secretary of State, in the annual Human Rights Report, must include a description of the use of child soldiers, including trends toward improvement or the continued or increased tolerance of such practices and the role of the government in engaging in or tolerating the use of child soldiers.

Subsection (c) requires that the President submit an annual report to the appropriate congressional committees that contains a list of countries in violation of standards under this subtitle, a list of any waivers or exceptions, justification for any such waivers and exceptions, and a description of any assistance provided under this subtitle.

Subsection (d) provides that not less than 180 days after implementation of the Act, the Secretaries of State and Defense shall submit a strategy and a coordination plan for achieving the policy objectives described in this Act.

Section 405. Training for foreign service officers

Section 405 establishes a requirement for training relevant Foreign Service officers in the assessment of child soldier use and other matters related to child soldiers.

Section 406. Effective date; Applicability

Section 406 states that the amendments made under this section shall take effect 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Sec. 407. Accountability for the recruitment and use of child soldiers

Subsection (a)(1) of Section 407 amends chapter 118 of title 18 by adding the offense of recruiting persons less than 15 years of age into an armed force or knowingly using a person under 15 in hostilities, and provides for terms of imprisonment. This subsection also provides that anyone attempting or conspiring to commit an offense under this section shall be punished in the same manner as someone who completes the offense, establishes the jurisdiction of the code, and provides for definitions used in this section.

Subsection (a)(2) establishes a statute of limitations of 10 years for prosecution under this code.

Subsection (b) makes participation in recruiting or using child soldiers grounds for inadmissibility or deportation under U.S. immigration law.

By Mr. ALLARD:

S. 3062. A bill to amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to modify certain provisions relating to oil shale leasing; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, this weekend is the unofficial beginning of summer and the start of the summer driving season. This is as oil hits $135 per barrel and more and more cities and towns all over the country are seeing gasoline prices over $4 per gallon. In the face of these challenges to the American economy and consumer, we have failed to take the steps that are necessary to address this problem either in the short term or the long term.

Last week, the House and Senate voted to suspend filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. I voted against that effort as many on the other side hailed it as a major move that would help to alleviate ''pain at the pump.'' Instead, oil prices have continued to increase every day since that measure passed. I think this demonstrates that adding a mere 70,000 barrels a day to the marketplace means little when we consume 21 million barrels of oil per day in this country alone.

Oil shale can be a major part of addressing rising oil prices by potentially bringing over 1 trillion barrels of oil to the domestic market. There are enormous oil shale reserves located in Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah. Oil shale is energy we can develop here at home to lower gas prices, increase our Nation's security, and improve our balance of trade by keeping money and investment in the United States rather than sending hundreds of billions of dollars overseas—frequently to governments, I might add, that are unstable or whose interests are counter to those of this country. It will also bring in billions of dollars to the States and the Federal Treasury in the form of future royalties.

This bill is necessary because the fiscal year 2008 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill has language prohibiting funds from being used by the Department of the Interior to prepare final regulations and will set forth the requirements for a commercial leasing program for oil shale resources or to conduct an oil shale lease sale as provided in the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Without removing this moratorium—and it is a moratorium—companies will not know the rules of the road so they can make investment decisions, things such as what the length of the oil shale leases will be, the royalty rate, and reclamation and bonding requirements.

I have a letter from the Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals at the Department of the Interior, Stephen Allred, dated May 14 in support of removing the prohibition contained in last year's Interior bill on the Department of the Interior issuing oil shale regulations. I ask unanimous consent at this time to have the letter printed in the RECORD.

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

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, DC.

Hon. WAYNE ALLARD,
Ranking Minority, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR ALLARD: Section 433 of the FY 2008 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act prohibits our Department from issuing regulations related to oil shale leasing. This letter is to communicate our opposition to this prohibition and to urge its removal, so that the Administration can move forward and issue regulations.

As you know, in Section 369 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the Congress directed the Department to take the steps necessary to meet future requests for a commercial oil shale leasing program on Federal lands. In 2007, the Bureau of Land Management authorized six oil shale research, development, and demonstration projects on public lands in northwestern Colorado and northeastern Utah. These projects provide industry access to oil shale resources to further their development of oil shale technologies.

This type of research will require significant private capital, with an uncertain return on this investment in the immediate future. Part of the wisdom of Section 369 is that it envisions the private sector will lead this investment—not the American taxpayer. However, for these projects to be successful, companies will require a level playing field and a clear set of regulations or ''rules of the road.'' Developing a regulatory framework now will aid in facilitating a producing program in the future should oil shale development prove to be economic. Impeding the Federal Government's efforts at this stage could have serious consequences.

Moving forward with these regulations does not mean commercial oil shale production will take place immediately. To the contrary, with thoughtfully developed regulations, thoroughly vetted through a public process, we have only set the groundwork for the future commercial development of this resource in an environmentally sound manner. With the administrative and regulatory certainty that regulations will provide, energy companies will be encouraged to commit the financial resources needed to fund their RD&D projects, and the development of viable technology will continue to advance. Actual commercial development and production will be dependent upon the results of the RD&D efforts and more site-specific environmental evaluations.

Consistent with the language in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY 2008, the BLM is not spending FY 2008 funds to develop and publish final oil shale regulations; however, the agency is moving forward in a thoughtful, deliberative manner to publish proposed regulations on oil shale. These proposed regulations will reflect input already received from our partners in the states. The publication of the draft regulations will provide an opportunity for the public and interested parties to remain engaged on this important issue.

Given the Nation's projected future energy needs, it is incumbent on us to promote the development of oil shale for our national security and energy security. Declining domestic oil production and rising U.S. demand for oil increase the Nation's dependence on imports, and leave us vulnerable to rising energy costs. Households across America are struggling to deal with these additional costs and experts predict that the trend is

set to continue. In looking beyond traditional energy resources to unconventional and alternative fuels, the Department of the Interior has a key role to play in the development of oil shale.

I ask for your support for removal of the prohibition on issuing oil shale regulations in order that we may move forward with the public process of finalizing regulations for commercial oil shale development on Federal lands. I commit to working closely with the Congress throughout the development of this program.

A similar letter has been sent to the Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, the Honorable Norman D. Dicks, Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, and the Honorable Todd Tiahrt, Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

C. STEPHEN ALLRED,
Assistant Secretary,
Land and Minerals Management.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, Allred points out that issuing these regulations is critical to providing regulatory certainty for these oil shale projects to go forward. With the regulatory certainty these regulations will provide, companies will have an incentive to commit the resources necessary to develop this technology.

I also have a letter from Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne dated December 12, 2007, objecting to the inclusion of this moratorium that was in the House version of the fiscal year 2008 Interior appropriations. I ask unanimous consent to have this letter printed in the RECORD.

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

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, DC, December 12, 2007.

Hon. WAYNE ALLARD,
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR ALLARD: As the House and Senate consider the Fiscal Year 2008 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, I would like to voice my concern regarding efforts to prohibit our Department from issuing regulations related to oil shale leasing.

Section 606 of the House-passed Interior appropriations bill would prohibit the use of funds to prepare or publish final regulations regarding a commercial leasing program for oil shale resources on public lands. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAct) was enacted with broad bipartisan support. The EPAct included substantive and significant authorities for the development of alternative and emerging energy sources.

Oil shale is one important potential energy source. The United States holds significant oil shale resources, the largest known concentration of oil shale in the world, and the energy equivalent of 2.6 trillion barrels of oil. Even if only a portion were recoverable, that source could be important in the future as energy demands increase worldwide and the competition for energy resources increases.

The Energy Policy Act sets the timeframe for program development, including the completion of final regulations. The Department must be able to prepare final regulations in FY 2008 in order to meet the statutorily-imposed schedule.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in August 2007. The final EIS is scheduled for release in May 2008 and the effective date of the final rule is anticipated in November 2008. The final regulations will consider all pertinent components of the final EIS. Throughout this process BLM will seek public input and work closely with the States and other stakeholders to ensure that concerns are adequately addressed. The Department is willing to consider an extended comment period after the publication of the draft regulations in order to assure that all of the stakeholders have adequate time and opportunity to review and comment before publication of the final regulations.

The successful development of economically viable and environmentally responsible oil shale extraction technology requires significant capital investments and substantial commitments of time and expertise by those undertaking this important research. Our Nation relies on private investment to develop new energy technologies such as this one. Even though commercial leasing is not anticipated until after 2010, it is vitally important that private investors know what will be expected of them regarding the development of this resource. The regulations that Section 606 would disallow represent the critical ''rules of the road'' upon which private investors will rely in determining whether to make future financial commitments. Accordingly, any delay or failure to publish these regulations in a timely manner is likely to discourage continued private investment in these vital research and development efforts.

The Administration opposes the House provision that would prohibit the Department from completing its oil shale regulations. I would urge the Congress to let the administrative process work. It is premature to impose restrictions on the development of oil shale regulations before the public has had an opportunity to provide input.

Identical letters are being sent to Congressman Norm Dicks, Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives; Congressman Todd Tiahrt, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives; and Senator Dianne Feinstein, Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate.

Sincerely,

DIRK KEMPTHORNE.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, Secretary Kempthorne also indicates the critical nature of allowing the Department to issue these regulations in order to attract the private investment necessary to develop the oil shale resource.

Let me emphasize that this is not an environmental issue. No commercial lease sales are permitted under the provisions of this bill. In fact, commercial oil shale leases are banned for 2½ years because the technology for oil shale extraction is not yet economically viable on a wide scale. But, as I have said, the companies that invested tens of millions of dollars in this technology already need to have the Department of Interior issue the leasing ground rules so that they know what their costs will be for taking part in the Federal commercial leasing program when the time for leasing comes.

My bill also makes sure there is adequate public comment by requiring that final regulations not be issued for at least 90 days after they have been published in draft form.

When I offered this as an amendment in the Appropriations Committee, it was defeated by one vote and strictly along party lines. I heard from the other side of the aisle that because the Governor of Colorado and the junior Senator from Colorado opposed lifting this moratorium, Congress should not do so. I find this curious and incredibly inconsistent with prior debates over public lands policy. When we have debated drilling in the section 1002 area of ANWR, the other side seems to have little or no regard for the desires of Alaska's Governor, the people of the State of Alaska, or the entire congressional delegation about how they want their public lands managed.

On this side of the aisle—that is, the Republican side of the aisle—we have offered proposals to bring to market billions of barrels of domestic supply that are continually blocked. If we don't begin to put in place policies to enhance our domestic production, prices are only going to go higher and the American people are going to pay the price at the pump as well as suffer the consequences of a further drag on the economy.

In closing, I wish to state that increasing domestic energy production, including from oil shale, will strengthen this country's national security, lower gas prices, keep jobs and investments right here at home, and, in these tight budgetary times, bring in hundreds of billions of dollars to the States and the Federal Treasury through royalty collections.

Congress needs to take a good, hard look at what it has done as far as encouraging further supply of energy for this country. As was mentioned in a number of editorials that have shown up in the papers, it is easy to blame companies and the stock market, and it is easy to blame the futures market, but really the problem starts right here in the Congress. The Congress needs to come up with a solution to relieve the inadequate supply of oil and gas. If that solution is not arrived at soon, Americans are going to be put out of business. We already hear about airlines having to cut back on the number of employees they have because of the high cost of gasoline. So it is going to have a dramatic impact on the economy of this country.

Just think about how much land we have tied up because of previous action by this Congress—the billions of barrels of oil that potentially would be available in ANWR; the huge amount of reserves that we think is in the deep-sea portions that would be available off the coast of this country. We

are the only country in the world that restricts drilling out in the deep sea. There are potential reserves that would be available for consumers of this country with oil shale in Utah and Colorado and Wyoming. Now we have that tied up with a strict moratorium that tells the oil producers of this country: We want you to shut down. We don't want you to be able to move forward.

I think these are huge reserves, and if we had acted, actually, 10 years ago, we wouldn't now have a problem. We are going to have a problem for the next 10 years unless we do something quickly and drastically, and we need to do something more than just saying that the Strategic Oil Reserve can't purchase oil for 6 months or we wait until it drops to less than $75 a barrel.

I am calling on my colleagues to join us because this is a serious problem we are facing in this country, and the Congress needs to do something about it.

By Mrs. LINCOLN (for herself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. CARDIN, and Mr. SMITH):

S. 3063. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for S corporation reform, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I am very pleased to rise today to introduce the S Corporation Modernization Act of 2008 with my good friend, Senator ORRIN HATCH. I also want to say a special thanks to our cosponsors, Senators GORDON SMITH of Oregon and BEN CARDIN of Maryland. This legislation makes needed changes to the tax code to help small and family-owned businesses across this Nation. It is my hope that these policy changes will provide them the opportunity to grow their businesses, create jobs and stimulate the economy.

In my home State of Arkansas, as in so many rural States across the country, the vast majority of our businesse are small businesses. They are the local insurance agency, the flower shop, the coffee shop—and they are most often organized as so-called ''S corporations.'' In fact, our country has more than four million S corporations nationwide. These businesses and their employees are truly the engines of our rural economies. We must do all we can to ensure they can continue to compete in a global economy that is becoming steadily more competitive.

Because Congress has not updated many of the rules governing S corporations—such as allowing better access to capital—I am concerned that these privately-held businesses are not in the best position to deal with the current downturn in the economy. We must modify our outdated rules so that these businesses that are starved for capital have the means to expand and create jobs. Current law—particularly the punitive built-in gains tax penalty—not only limits the ability of S corporations to attract new equity investors, but also effectively forces businesses to sit on 'locked-up' capital that they cannot access and put to use to grow their business.

The S Corporation Modernization Act would update and simplify our S corporation tax rules. It increases access to capital, encourages family-owned businesses to stay in the family, eliminates tax traps that penalize unwary but well-meaning business owners, and encourages charitable giving.

A strong economic recovery will depend on the health and strength of our small business sector—our S corporations. It is absolutely imperative that we work to ensure our tax rules that govern this sector are fair, simple and encourage growth. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee to ensure these important changes are made.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. FEINGOLD, and Mr. CARDIN):

S. 3067. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the Dental Health Improvement Act; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleagues from Wisconsin and Maryland in introducing legislation to reauthorize the Collins-Feingold Dental Health Improvement Act, which was first signed into law as part of the Health Care Safety Net Act Amendments of 2002. The legislation we are introducing today will extend the authorization of this program, which provides grant funding to States to strengthen the dental workforce in our Nation's rural and underserved communities, for an additional 5 years.

While oral health in America has improved dramatically over the last 50 years, these improvements have not occurred evenly across our population, particularly among low-income individuals and families. Too many Americans today lack access to dental care. While there are clinically proven techniques to prevent or delay the progression of dental health problems, an estimated 47 million Americans live in areas lacking adequate dental services. As a consequence, these effective treatment and prevention programs are not being implemented in many of our communities. Astoundingly, as many as 11 percent of our Nation's rural population has never been to a dentist.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that our dental workforce is graying. More than 20 percent of dentists nationwide will retire in the next 10 years, and the number of dental graduates may not be enough to replace their retirees. As a consequence, many states are facing a serious shortage of dentists, particularly in rural areas.

In Maine, there is one general practice dentist for every 2,300 people in the Portland area. The numbers drop off dramatically, however, in other parts of our state. In Aroostook County, for example, where I am from, there is only one dentist for every 5,500 people. Of the 23 dentists practicing in Aroostook County, only a few are taking on any new cases.

The Collins-Feingold Dental Health Improvement Act, which is now Section 340G of the Public Health Service Act, authorized a State grant program administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration at the Department of Health and Human services that is designed to improve access to oral health services in rural and underserved areas. States can use these grants to fund a wide variety of programs. For example, they can use the funds for loan forgiveness and repayment programs for dentists practicing in underserved areas. They can also use the grant funds to establish or expand community or school-based dental facilities or to set up mobile or portable dental clinics. To assist in their recruitment and retention efforts, States can use the funds for placement and support of dental students, residents and advanced dentistry trainees. Or, they can use the grant funds for continuing dental education, through distance-based education and practice support through teledentistry.

Congress appropriated $2 million for this program for fiscal year 2006 and fiscal year 2007 and just under $5 million for fiscal year 2008.

Thirty-six States have applied for grants from this program, but so far, the funding available has only been sufficient to fund programs in 18 States. Clearly there is sufficient interest and need for this program to justify its extension, particularly given all of the recent reports documenting the very serious need to improve access to oral health care.

Those 18 States that have been awarded funding under this program are doing great things to improve access to oral health services. Colorado, Georgia and Massachusetts are using the grant funds for loan forgiveness and repayment programs for dentists who practice in underserved areas and who agree to provide services to patients regardless of their ability to pay. Arkansas, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi and a number of other states are using the funds for recruitment and retention efforts. Delaware, Rhode Island and Vermont, which, like Maine, don't have dental schools, are using the funds to expand dental residency programs in their States.

The legislation we are introducing today will authorize an additional $50 million over the next 5 years for this important program. The American Dental Association, the American Dental Education Association, and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry have all endorsed the legislation, and I encourage all of our colleagues to join us as cosponsors.

By Ms. SNOWE (for herself, Mr. REID, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. WARNER, Mr. KERRY, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. DODD, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mrs. LINCOLN, and Mr. MENENDEZ):

S. 3068. A bill to require equitable coverage of prescription contraceptive drugs and devices, and contraceptive services under health plans; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Coverage Act. I am pleased to be joined by my colleague from Nevada, Majority Leader REID. I originally authored this legislation in 1997, and I stand today to resolve the issue of inequity in prescription drug coverage and to make certain that all American women have access to contraception methods.

Without question, we have made remarkable progress in the number of employer sponsored health plans covering contraception. According to a study released in 2004, between 1993 and 2002, contraceptive coverage in employer-purchased plans covering the full range of reversible contraceptive methods tripled from 28 percent to 86 percent. Conversely, the proportion of employer plans covering no method at all dropped dramatically, from 28 percent to 2 percent. Yet despite these gains, women of reproductive age currently spend 68 percent more in out-of-pocket health care costs than men. Not surprisingly, this discrepancy is due in large part to reproductive health-related costs.

Women whose health plans do not cover the full range of reversible contraceptive methods often face high out-of-pocket costs. Yet covering prescription contraceptives results in cost-savings not only for women, but for society as a whole. There are three million unintended pregnancies every year in the United States, and almost half of these pregnancies result from women who do not use contraceptives. Equal treatment of prescription contraceptives will reduce costs to Americans by preventing these unintended pregnancies, which can range anywhere from $5,000 to almost $9,000 in medical costs.

The Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Coverage Act will eliminate the disparate treatment of prescription contraception coverage. Simply put, if an employer provides insurance coverage for all other prescription drugs, they must also provide coverage for FDA approved prescription contraceptives. Our bill will ensure that women have comprehensive reproductive health coverage, and lower costs to society by preventing unintended pregnancies and thus reducing the need for abortion.

I urge my colleagues to join with me in fixing the inequity in prescription contraception coverage to make certain that all American women have access to this most basic health need.

By Mr. BARRASSO:

S. 3071. A bill to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to temporarily prohibit the Secretary of the Interior from considering global climate change as a natural or manmade factor in determining whether a species is a threatened or endangered species, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, today I am introducing legislation to address the reality of the needs of species and the global nature of climate change.

Recently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decided to list the polar bear as a threatened species. The reason for the listing is the loss of sea ice habitat. They say the ice will be subjected to ''increased temperatures, earlier melt periods, increased rain-snow events, and shifts in atmospheric and marine surface patterns.'' Essentially, they are saying it is due to the effects of global climate change.

Without the cooperation of other countries, the United States cannot reverse global climate change. If we are truly going to recover species—species that are being impacted by climate change—we would need to have an international agreement in place, an international agreement among all of the major emitting countries. All of those countries would have to comply with the treaty in order for species to receive any tangible environmental benefit. This is what people who care about the polar bear need to see happen.

Unfortunately, global warming activists are looking to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and to the Endangered Species Act as a means for widespread regulation. This would be a complete departure from the intent of the law.

The Secretary of Interior, Secretary Kempthorne, has stated that he is providing additional guidance to ensure that there are no negative, unintended consequences to the legislation.

Unfortunately, such guidance will likely not survive judicial challenge or perhaps even the next administration.

For the first time ever, lawsuits could be filed to block economic growth and the creation of jobs all across America.

It has been suggested that any economic activity that emits greenhouse gases which then contributes to global warming and to the melting of the polar icecaps must be stopped. Why? Because it might cause polar bears to become extinct.

Think about that for a minute: Buildings could not be expanded or built; new roads could not be built or improved; local governments would be forced up to adopt onerous new zoning requirements; energy development projects would be brought to a standstill; and virtually any economic development activity one can think of could be challenged by anyone. Volumes of new rules and regulations from Washington, DC, would control everything we do.

This action would harm individual freedom, would raise energy costs, and would affect consumers across the board in all 50 States. This action would dramatically hurt our economy.

Frankly, when I see groups publicly stating that they intend to use the polar bear listing as a hammer to stop fossil fuel use, such as even driving your car to work, I am skeptical about their real concern for the polar bear.

In a recent Baltimore Sun article, the Center for Biological Diversity said:

> Once protection for the polar bear is finalized, federal agencies and other large greenhouse gas emitters will be required by law to ensure that their emissions do not jeopardize the species.

Some want to limit how much we drive or how we heat our homes. Wyoming residents and Americans in general do not believe in such a culture of limits. That is perhaps why activists need to use and choose to use the courts to impose them.

We can provide cleaner cars and be more efficient in heating our homes, but there is a line of individual liberty and personal choice that we should not cross.

Yes, we are all concerned about protecting the environment, and as a Senator, I am also concerned about placing dramatic burdens on our economy and on our American citizens.

Very soon, without legislative action by Congress, the Endangered Species Act will be transformed from a tool to recover species into a climate change bill. This will not only shortchange truly endangered species, it will also impact working families who are already struggling with high energy bills.

The beneficiaries will not be the polar bears. Instead, it will be environmental lawyers who will reap the financial windfall through endless lawsuits.

That is why today I have introduced legislation that says that the Secretary of Interior cannot consider global climate change as a natural or a manmade factor in terms of listing species as endangered. Under this bill, no species would be listed as threatened and endangered because of global warming until an international agreement is signed by all the major emitting nations.

The Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency would have to certify that such an agreement is in place and that countries are in compliance with the treaty for such a listing to occur. This bill specifies that China and India would both have to be part of the agreement.

This is not designed to give the power of legislating or listing species into the hands of foreign nations. The bottom line is, species will not receive the help they need until other countries comply. Plain and simple. To assert otherwise is to give false hope that those who care most about protecting species actually get protection.

We do not need symbolic gestures in addressing climate change. While the symbolism may appease some, it does not address the very real impact of ordinary folks in my home State of Wyoming or anywhere across the Nation.

We are saddled with high gas prices and high energy prices already.

Lawsuits blocking any new coal-fired powerplants can wreak havoc on Wyoming's economy before we have had a chance to finish developing the clean coal technologies of the 21st century. Clean coal technologies truly will address climate change.

Mr. President, all regions that depend on coal, particularly the Midwest, the South, and the Rocky Mountain West, would be the hardest hit. But we need real solutions to address species issues, while at the same time ensuring that we protect working Americans.

You want to drive your family to the beach or drive them to the mountains? Don't be surprised that in the not too distant future you need to get a government permit to do so.

I urge all Members of this body to consider cosponsoring this important bill.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Mr. VITTER, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. CRAIG, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. ENSIGN, Mr. MARTINEZ, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. BUNNING, Mr. KYL, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. ENZI, Mr. WICKER, Mr. COBURN, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. BOND, Mr. LUGAR, and Mr. THUNE):

S. 3073. A bill to amend the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act to improve procedures for the collection and delivery of absentee ballots of absent overseas uniformed services voters, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the right to participate in democratic elections and vote for candidates of your choice is fundamental to the American experience. That right to vote is safeguarded by our men and women in uniform, often at great personal cost to them and their loved ones.

As the Global War on Terror continues, the need for overseas service by our troops is unlikely to let up any time soon. They routinely find themselves deployed to far-away battlefields in the Middle East, on ships at sea all across the globe, or assigned to overseas postings in Korea, Europe, or elsewhere.

What's more, the decisions of elected leaders of the Federal Government impact our troops often in a very direct and personal way. As a result of decisions made by those elected leaders, our troops can be called to deploy to a combat zone at virtually any time.

Statistics on overseas military voting in the 2006 election, compiled by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, show that there is clearly a problem of disenfranchisement of our troops. It is absolutely despicable that, of our overseas troops who asked for mail-in ballots for 2006, less than half, 47.6, percent of their completed ballots actually arrived at the local election office. Many of those arrived too late, and were therefore not even counted.

To me, that is an appalling failure of our current absentee voting system. We need to take action now, before the problem rears its ugly head again, to safeguard the right of our troops to vote and have their votes count.

I believe Congress has a duty to ensure these men and women in uniform, selflessly serving abroad, have a voice in choosing their elected leaders. They serve not only in the defense of freedom and the American way of life, but also in defense of the very system of government in which I and my Senate colleagues have the honor to serve.

These military service members have already given up so much for this country—often being apart from their families, living in the face of constant danger, and standing on the front lines of our defense. We must not allow one of their most fundamental rights as Americans to fall victim to an antiquated and inefficient system of absentee voting and slow—sometimes painfully slow—methods of delivering their marked ballots.

One of the biggest problems in absentee balloting for our overseas troops has been this inadequate delivery system for completed ballots.

The simple fact is that, for many overseas military voters, their marked ballots arrived at the local election office too late to be counted. There is no excuse for allowing inefficiency to disenfranchise our military men and women serving abroad.

That is why I have decided to introduce the Military Voting Protection Act of 2008, or MVP Act. This bill will improve the absentee voting system for our overseas troops by expediting the delivery of their marked ballots to ensure they are delivered in a timely manner and, at the same time, electronically tracked to provide accountability and allow for verification that completed ballots actually arrived at their local election office.

First and foremost, this bill would expedite the process by directing the Pentagon to make use of express delivery services, which many of us use on a regular basis, to get the completed absentee ballots of our overseas troops to election officials here at home. At the same time, it would require the DOD to take a more active role in organizing the collection, transportation, and tracking of these ballots.

We have at our disposal the tools necessary to more efficiently collect and deliver our troops' ballots to help make their votes count. We simply need to start utilizing more capable and expedited delivery methods to ensure that our troops' voices are heard.

This bill also urges the DOD to make better use of modern technology to improve the ability of our troops to participate in elections. At the same time, the bill recognizes the clear importance of preserving the privacy and integrity of the voting system by calling on DOD to focus its efforts on secure, efficient systems that would also achieve these important goals.

In this day and age, it is inexcusable for our troops to be shut out of the democratic process merely because they are far away from their homes as a result of their military service. We should not sit idly by and watch another election pass with a large portion of our brave military men and women being left out of our democratic process.

For far too long in this country we have failed to adequately safeguard the right of our troops to participate in our democratic process. We have allowed slow delivery methods, confusing absentee voting procedures, and myriad other obstacles to disenfranchise many of our overseas troops. We must put those days behind us.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in addressing this important issue and protecting for our troops the very rights they fight to safeguard for us. Join me in cosponsoring the MVP Act. I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass this important bill quickly.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 574—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA SHOULD IMMEDIATELY RELEASE FROM CUSTODY THE CHILDREN OF REBIYA KADEER AND CANADIAN CITIZEN HUSEYIN CELIL AND SHOULD REFRAIN FROM FURTHER ENGAGING IN ACTS OF CULTURAL, LINGUISTIC, AND RELIGIOUS SUPPRESSION DIRECTED AGAINST THE UYGHUR PEOPLE

Mr. BROWN submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 574

Whereas the protection of the human rights of minority groups is consistent with the actions of a responsible stakeholder in the international community and with the role of a host of a major international event such as the Olympic Games;

Whereas recent actions taken against the Uyghur minority by authorities in the People's Republic of China and, specifically, by local officials in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, have included major violations of human rights and acts of cultural suppression;

Whereas the authorities of the People's Republic of China have manipulated the strategic objectives of the international war on terror to increase their cultural and religious oppression of the Muslim population residing in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region;

Whereas an official campaign to encourage Han Chinese migration into the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region has resulted in the Uyghur population becoming a minority in their traditional homeland and has placed immense pressure on those who are seeking to preserve the linguistic, cultural, and religious traditions of the Uyghur people;

Whereas a new policy now actively recruits young Uyghur women and forcibly transfers