

Whereas public charter schools improve the achievement of students enrolled in the charter schools and collaborate with traditional public schools to improve public education for all students;

Whereas public charter schools—
(1) give parents the freedom to choose public schools;

(2) routinely measure parental satisfaction levels; and

(3) must prove the ongoing success of the charter schools to parents, policymakers, and the communities served by the charter schools or risk closure;

Whereas, between 2010 and 2015, research studies have found that students attending public charter schools perform better academically than their peers;

Whereas at least 500,000 students are on waiting lists to attend public charter schools across the country before the start of the 2014–2015 school year; and

Whereas the 16th annual National Charter Schools Week is scheduled to be celebrated the week of May 3 through May 9, 2015: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—
(1) congratulates the students, families, teachers, administrators, and staff of public charter schools across the United States for—

(A) making ongoing contributions to public education;

(B) making impressive strides in closing the academic achievement gap in schools in the United States, particularly in schools with some of the most disadvantaged students in both rural and urban communities; and

(C) improving and strengthening the public school system throughout the United States;

(2) supports the ideals and goals of the 16th annual National Charter Schools Week, a week-long celebration to be held May 3 through May 9, 2015, in communities throughout the United States; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States to hold appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities during National Charter Schools Week to demonstrate support for public charter schools.

SENATE RESOLUTION 172—HONORING THE VITAL ROLE OF SMALL BUSINESSES AND THE PASSION OF ENTREPRENEURS IN THE UNITED STATES DURING “NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK”, FROM MAY 4, THROUGH MAY 8, 2015

Mr. VITTER (for himself, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. ENZI, Mr. PETERS, Mr. RUBIO, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. GARDNER, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. COONS, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. RISCH, Mr. SCOTT, Mrs. FISCHER, and Mr. HOEVEN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 172

Whereas 2015 marks the 52nd anniversary of “National Small Business Week”, a designation that every President since 1963 has endorsed;

Whereas, as of 2008, the approximately 28,400,000 small businesses in the United States, the leading force of the economy of United States, created 63 percent of net new private sector jobs and generated close to 50 percent of the private, non-farm gross domestic product of the United States;

Whereas 22,735,915 of the small businesses of the United States have no employees, and 86 percent are sole proprietorships;

Whereas, as of 2007, 2,450,000 veterans were small business owners, which accounted for

9.3 percent of all businesses in the United States;

Whereas, in 2013, veteran small business owners accounted for 9 percent of all business owners and 9 percent of the adult population in the United States;

Whereas small businesses owned by women increased as a share of total businesses in the United States from 26.4 percent in 1997 to 29.6 percent in 2007, and, as of 2007, totaled nearly 7,800,000 businesses;

Whereas small businesses employ about 56,100,000 million people of the United States, which is approximately half of the private workforce of the United States;

Whereas small businesses account for 37 percent of employment in the high-tech sector;

Whereas high-patenting small businesses produce 16 times more patents per employee than large patenting firms;

Whereas small businesses in the United States represent nearly 98 percent of all exporters and produce 33 percent of the export value of the United States;

Whereas, on July 30, 1953, Congress created the Small Business Administration to aid, counsel, assist, and protect the interests of small businesses in order to preserve free and competitive enterprise, to ensure that a fair proportion of the total sales of Federal Government property are made to small businesses, and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of the United States;

Whereas, for more than 50 years, the Small Business Administration has helped more than 10,000,000 entrepreneurs reach the dream of creating and maintaining a small business, and has played a key role in fostering local and national economic growth; and

Whereas the President has designated the week beginning May 4, 2015, as “National Small Business Week”: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) honors the vital role of small businesses and entrepreneurs in the United States during “National Small Business Week”;

(2) supports the designation of “National Small Business Week”;

(3) recognizes the important role of the Small Business Administration as a valuable resource for entrepreneurs in the United States;

(4) supports and encourages young entrepreneurs to pursue their passions and create more start-up businesses;

(5) recognizes the importance of creating policies that promote a business-friendly environment for small business owners that is free of unnecessary and burdensome regulations and red tape;

(6) recognizes the National Small Business Person of the Year and the National Lender of the Year; and

(7) supports efforts to—

(A) encourage consumers to shop locally; and

(B) increase awareness of the value of locally-owned small businesses and the impact of locally-owned small businesses on the economy of the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 173—CONDEMNING ATROCITIES COMMITTED BY BASHAR AL-ASSAD OF SYRIA AND HIS REGIME, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Mr. REID (for himself, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. MENENDEZ, and Mr. CASEY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 173

Whereas Bashar al-Assad, through his actions and decisions, has lost his legitimacy as a leader of the Syrian people;

Whereas forces loyal to the Assad regime have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, including starvation, systematic murder, torture, rape and sexual violence, enforced disappearance, and used weapons of mass destruction including chemical weapons;

Whereas the actions of the Assad regime have egregiously violated international laws of war and shocked the global conscience;

Whereas the United Nations has documented the Assad regime’s campaign to defeat opposition forces by starving rebels and civilians through calculated efforts to cut off food supplies in opposition-controlled areas such as eastern Aleppo and Homs;

Whereas there is evidence that the Assad regime conducted systematic torture and killing of people who were detained by regime forces;

Whereas rape and sexual violence against civilians by regime forces has been cited as a primary reason families flee Syria;

Whereas it has been reported that more than 11,000 people have disappeared after being taken into custody by forces loyal to the Assad regime;

Whereas the Assad regime continues to use helicopters to indiscriminately drop barrel bombs, even after the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2139 on February 22, 2014, that “[d]emands that all parties immediately cease all attacks against civilians, as well as the indiscriminate employment of weapons in populated areas, including shelling and aerial bombardment, such as the use of barrel bombs. . .”;

Whereas Syria once possessed one of the most advanced chemical weapons programs in the Middle East;

Whereas there were multiple documented cases of chemical attacks committed by the Assad regime, including the deployment of sarin gas in Aleppo in March and April 2013, as well as the devastating sarin and conventional attack committed near Damascus in August 2013 that killed more than 1,400 innocent civilians, including 426 children;

Whereas sarin is banned under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, done at Paris January 13, 1993, and entered into force April 29, 1997 (commonly known as the “Chemical Weapons Convention”);

Whereas, in September 2013, the Assad regime agreed to eliminate its chemical weapons stockpile by handing over all of its chemical weapons to international control, providing inspectors immediate and unfettered access to all suspected sites, and allowing international forces to destroy the entire stockpile and production facilities;

Whereas the September 2013 agreement mandated that Syria accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention;

Whereas, after Syria’s accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, there continue to be numerous documented reports that the Assad regime has repeatedly attacked civilians, including women and children, and armed opposition groups with chlorine gas, a substance that is banned for use as a weapon under the Chemical Weapons Convention;

Whereas, on March 6, 2015, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 2209 by a vote of 14 in favor, zero against, and 1 abstention condemning in the strongest terms the use of chlorine as a weapon in Syria and vowing that any future use would result in the imposition of Chapter VII measures;