

(Mr. KENNEDY) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 1014, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make grants to eligible organizations to provide service dogs to veterans with severe post-traumatic stress disorder, and for other purposes.

S. 1024

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1024, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to reform the rights and processes relating to appeals of decisions regarding claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 1182

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the names of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) were added as cosponsors of S. 1182, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative coins in recognition of the 100th anniversary of The American Legion.

S. 1311

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1311, a bill to provide assistance in abolishing human trafficking in the United States.

S. 1343

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1343, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code to extend and modify certain charitable tax provisions.

S. 1353

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1353, a bill to require States to automatically register eligible voters to vote in elections for Federal offices, and for other purposes.

S. 1453

At the request of Mr. DONNELLY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1453, a bill to allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services to designate certain substance use disorder treatment facilities as eligible for National Health Service Corps service.

S. 1520

At the request of Mr. WICKER, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1520, a bill to expand recreational fishing opportunities through enhanced marine fishery conservation and management, and for other purposes.

S. 1562

At the request of Mr. GARDNER, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr.

CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1562, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and any enablers of the activities of that Government, and for other purposes.

S. 1564

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1564, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permit legally married same-sex couples to amend their filing status for returns outside the 3-year limitation.

S. 1595

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1595, a bill to amend the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015 to impose additional sanctions with respect to Hizballah, and for other purposes.

S. 1598

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the names of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) were added as cosponsors of S. 1598, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 1615

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1615, a bill to authorize the cancellation of removal and adjustment of status of certain individuals who are long-term United States residents and who entered the United States as children and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 17

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 17, a joint resolution approving the discontinuation of the process for consideration and automatic implementation of the annual proposal of the Independent Medicare Advisory Board under section 1899A of the Social Security Act.

S.J. RES. 47

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 47, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to "Arbitration Agreements".

S. CON. RES. 6

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Con. Res. 6, a concurrent resolution supporting the Local Radio Freedom Act.

S. RES. 75

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the names of the Senator from Arkansas

(Mr. BOOZMAN) and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 75, a resolution recognizing the 100th anniversary of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the largest organization of food and nutrition professionals in the world.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Mr. TESTER, Mr. JOHNSON, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mr. TILLIS, Ms. HEITKAMP, and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 1617. A bill to designate the checkpoint of the United States Border Patrol located on United States Highway 77 North in Sarita, Texas, as the "Javier Vega, Jr. Border Patrol Checkpoint"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. CORNYN, 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. 1617

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 "Javier Vega, Jr. Memorial Act of 2017".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) A native of La Feria, Texas, Border Patrol Agent Javier Vega, Jr. served his country first a member of the United States Marines Corps and then proudly as a border patrol agent in the canine division with his dog, Goldie.

(2) Agent Vega was assigned to the Kingsville, Texas Border Patrol Station as a canine handler and worked primarily at the Sarita Border Patrol Checkpoint.

(3) On August 3, 2014, Agent Vega was on a fishing trip with his family near Raymondville, Texas, when 2 criminal aliens attempted to rob and attack them.

(4) Agent Vega was shot and killed while attempting to subdue the assailants and protecting his family.

(5) Agent Vega is survived by his wife, parents, 3 sons, brother, sister-in-law, niece, and dog, Goldie.

SEC. 3. DESIGNATION.

The checkpoint of the United States Border Patrol located on United States Highway 77 North in Sarita, Texas, shall be known and designated as the "Javier Vega, Jr. Border Patrol Checkpoint".

SEC. 4. REFERENCES.

Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the checkpoint described in section 3 shall be deemed to be a reference to the "Javier Vega, Jr. Border Patrol Checkpoint".

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself and Ms. DUCKWORTH):

S. 1619. A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to extend the interest rate limitation on debt entered into during military service to debt incurred during military service to consolidate or refinance student loans incurred before military

service; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. DURBIN. 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. 1619

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

SECTION 1. INTEREST RATE LIMITATION ON DEBT ENTERED INTO DURING MILITARY SERVICE TO CONSOLIDATE OR REFINANCE STUDENT LOANS INCURRED BEFORE MILITARY SERVICE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 207 of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 527) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting “ON DEBT INCURRED BEFORE SERVICE” after “LIMITATION TO 6 PERCENT”;

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (2) and (3) as paragraphs (3) and (4), respectively;

(3) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

“(2) LIMITATION TO 6 PERCENT ON DEBT INCURRED DURING SERVICE TO CONSOLIDATE OR REFINANCE STUDENT LOANS INCURRED BEFORE SERVICE.—An obligation or liability bearing interest at a rate in excess of 6 percent per year that is incurred by a servicemember, or the servicemember and the servicemember's spouse jointly, during military service to consolidate or refinance one or more student loans incurred by the servicemember before such military service shall not bear an interest at a rate in excess of 6 percent during the period of military service.”;

(4) in paragraph (3), as redesignated by paragraph (2) of this subsection, by inserting “or (2)” after “paragraph (1)”;

(5) in paragraph (4), as so redesignated, by striking “paragraph (2)” and inserting “paragraph (3)”.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF LIMITATION.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “the interest rate limitation in subsection (a)” and inserting “an interest rate limitation in paragraph (1) or (2) of subsection (a)”;

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in the paragraph heading, by striking “EFFECTIVE AS OF DATE OF ORDER TO ACTIVE DUTY” and inserting “EFFECTIVE DATE”;

(B) by inserting before the period at the end the following: “in the case of an obligation or liability covered by subsection (a)(1), or as of the date the servicemember (or servicemember and spouse jointly) incurs the obligation or liability concerned under subsection (a)(2)”.

(c) STUDENT LOAN DEFINED.—Subsection (d) of such section is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(3) STUDENT LOAN.—The term ‘student loan’ means the following:

“(A) A Federal student loan made, insured, or guaranteed under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070 et seq.).

“(B) A private student loan as that term is defined section 140(a) of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1650(a)).”.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 229—RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE MONTAGNARD INDIGENOUS TRIBESPEOPLE OF THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS OF VIETNAM TO THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES DURING THE VIETNAM WAR, AND CONDEMNING THE ONGOING VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Mr. BURR (for himself and Mr. TILLIS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

S. RES. 229

Whereas the Montagnards are an indigenous tribespeople living in Vietnam's Central Highlands region;

Whereas the Montagnards were driven into the mountains by invading Vietnamese and Cambodians in the 9th century;

Whereas French Roman Catholic missionaries converted many of the Montagnards in the 19th century and American Protestant missionaries subsequently converted many to various Protestant sects;

Whereas, during the 1960s, the United States Mission in Saigon, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and United States Army Special Forces, also known as the Green Berets, trained the Montagnards in unconventional warfare;

Whereas an estimated 61,000 Montagnards, out of an estimated population of 1,000,000, fought alongside the United States and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces against the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong;

Whereas the CIA, United States Special Forces, and the Montagnards cooperated on the Village Defense Program, a forerunner to the War's Strategic Hamlet Program, and an estimated 43,000 Montagnards were organized into Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDGs) to provide protection for the areas around the CIDGs' operational bases;

Whereas, at its peak, the CIDGs had approximately 50 operational bases, with each base containing a contingent of two United States Army officers and ten enlisted men, and an ARVN unit of the same size, and each base trained 200 to 700 Montagnards or “strikers”;

Whereas another 18,000 Montagnards were reportedly enlisted into mobile strike forces and various historical accounts describe a strong bond between the United States Special Forces and the Montagnards, in contrast to Vietnamese Special Forces and ARVN troops;

Whereas the lives of thousands of members of the United States Armed Forces were saved as a result of the heroic actions of the Montagnards, who fought loyally and bravely alongside United States Special Forces in the Vietnam War;

Whereas, after the fall of the Republic of Vietnam in 1975, thousands of Montagnards fled across the border into Cambodia to escape persecution;

Whereas the Government of the reunified Vietnamese nation, renamed the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, deeply distrusted the Montagnards who had sided with the United States and ARVN forces, and subjected them to imprisonment and various forms of discrimination and oppression after the Vietnam War ended;

Whereas, after the Vietnam War, the United States Government resettled large

numbers of Montagnards in several States and an estimated several thousand Montagnards currently reside in North Carolina, which is the largest population of Montagnards residing outside of Vietnam;

Whereas the Socialist Republic of Vietnam currently remains a one-party state, ruled and controlled by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), which continues to restrict freedom of religion, movement, land and property rights, and political expression;

Whereas some Montagnard-Americans have shared their personal stories about Vietnamese authorities either preventing them from visiting Vietnam or subjecting them to interrogation upon re-entering the country on visits;

Whereas the Department of State's 2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices documents the Government of Vietnam's claim that Montagnards fleeing to Cambodia and Thailand are illegal migrants in pursuit of economic opportunities, and human rights groups assess that the Government has pressured Cambodian and Thai authorities to refuse Montagnards refugee or temporary asylum-seeker status and repatriate them to Vietnam;

Whereas the Department of State's 2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices states that, although Vietnamese law prohibits discrimination against ethnic minorities and despite Vietnam's significant economic growth, the economic gap between many ethnic minority communities and ethnic Vietnamese (Kinh) communities persisted as a result of longstanding and persistent discrimination;

Whereas the Department of State's 2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices further states that ethnic minority populations in Vietnam also experienced significant health challenges as maternal and child mortality rates were significantly higher in ethnic minority areas, in comparison with urban and coastal areas;

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in its 2016 Annual Report states that “Montagnards, many of whom are Protestant, face numerous restrictions” such as being prevented from holding religious ceremonies, harassed or punished, and “many are summoned to meet with local authorities and pressured to cease practicing their ‘poisonous’ faith”;

Whereas Montagnards have stated that this kind of ongoing social and religious persecution drove them to flee to Cambodia;

Whereas USCIRF reports that, since October 2014, “up to 300 Montagnards have fled Vietnam to Cambodia, many because of religious persecution” but “only 13 have been granted refugee status with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as countless others are waiting for Cambodia to process their asylum claims, and dozens have been returned to Vietnam, often at great risk of reprisals”;

Whereas USCIRF recommends that Vietnam be designated a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) as a means to facilitating reforms: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the contributions of the Montagnards who fought loyally and bravely with United States Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and who continue to suffer persecution in Vietnam as a result of this relationship;

(2) condemns ongoing actions by the Government of Vietnam to suppress basic human rights and civil liberties of its citizens;

(3) calls on the Government of Vietnam to allow human rights groups access to all regions of the country and to end restrictions of basic human rights, including the right for Montagnards to practice their Christian