

MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3467, a bill to permanently reauthorize mandatory funding programs for historically Black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions.

S. 3476

At the request of Mr. CORKER, the names of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 3476, a bill to extend certain authorities relating to United States efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria globally, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 61

At the request of Mr. PERDUE, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 61, a resolution calling on the Department of Defense, other elements of the Federal Government, and foreign governments to intensify efforts to investigate, recover, and identify all missing and unaccounted-for personnel of the United States.

S. RES. 168

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 168, a resolution supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia.

S. RES. 481

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 481, a resolution calling upon the leadership of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to dismantle its labor camp system, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 527

At the request of Mr. PERDUE, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 527, a resolution congratulating the people of Georgia on the 100th anniversary of its declaration of independence as a democratic republic and reaffirming the strength of the relationship between the United States and Georgia.

S. RES. 631

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 631, a resolution recognizing the 50th anniversary of the Indian Civil Rights Act and voting rights for American Indian and Alaska Native communities across the country.

S. RES. 632

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY), the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Washington

(Mrs. MURRAY) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 632, a resolution designating September 2018 as "National Workforce Development Month".

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 632, supra.

S. RES. 633

At the request of Mrs. MCCASKILL, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 633, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that Congress should take all appropriate measures to ensure that the United States Postal Service remains an independent establishment of the Federal Government and is not subject to privatization.

#### STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DAINES (for himself and Mr. KING):

S. 3497. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to eliminate a provision under the Medicare Advantage program that inadvertently penalizes Medicare Advantage plans for providing high quality care to Medicare beneficiaries; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, the Medicare Advantage Quality Payment Relief Act will protect and enhance Medicare benefits by reversing a damaging policy created by the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare.

Obamacare attempted to provide better benefits for seniors and people with disabilities who are enrolled in the highest rated Medicare Advantage plans. But Obamacare also inadvertently limited these bonus payments from ever reaching beneficiaries by putting a cap on the payments, or benchmarks, that these Medicare plans receive. Now, 17,000 Montanans, and millions of Americans across the country—are being denied the full scope of the Medicare benefits that they should be receiving.

I'm glad to join with Senator Angus King of Maine to introduce legislation that reverses this ill-advised policy. Our bill protects Medicare benefits by removing the damaging limitation on payments to Medicare Advantage plans with a 4-star rating or higher. This legislation is crucial to ensuring that these top-rated Medicare Advantage plans are offered throughout Montana and our country. Nearly 20% of Medicare beneficiaries in Montana, and one-

third of Medicare enrollees nationwide, receive their Medicare coverage through Medicare Advantage plans.

I'm pleased that our legislation enjoys strong support from diverse stakeholders, and I will continue to champion this issue on behalf of seniors and people with disabilities in Montana who rely on Medicare Advantage for their Medicare coverage.

#### SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

#### SENATE RESOLUTION 646—RECOGNIZING THE LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE ON ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. MARKEY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 646

Whereas the Senate recognizes the invaluable contributions to the advancement of civil rights made by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice on the occasion of its 50th anniversary;

Whereas the Boston, Massachusetts-based Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice was the first of 8 affiliated local committees of the national Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (referred to in this resolution as the "Lawyers' Committee") and was followed by local affiliates in the cities of Chicago, Illinois, Denver Colorado, Jackson, Mississippi, Los Angeles, California, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, San Francisco, California, and Washington, District of Columbia;

Whereas the Lawyers' Committee was founded in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to enlist the leadership and resources of private bars in combating racial discrimination and the resulting inequality of opportunity;

Whereas Senator Robert F. Kennedy, assassinated 50 years ago as of June 2018, was also critical and central to the launch of the Lawyers' Committee;

Whereas the Lawyers' Committee and its local affiliates organize pro bono services from private law firms to fight for numerous causes, including voting rights, criminal justice, economic justice, environmental justice, educational opportunities, fair housing and community development, and other civil rights matters;

Whereas the Lawyers' Committee and its local affiliates form the largest pro bono civil rights network in the world, working with over 150 national, regional, statewide, and local grassroots organizations and over 150 law firms;

Whereas over the past 5 decades, the Lawyers' Committee and its local affiliates have been on the front lines of the struggle for equal justice in the United States and around the world, with notable contributions including—

(1) advancing the cause of the civil rights movement by pursuing cases involving voting rights, racial segregation, education, economic justice, fair housing, criminal justice, hate crimes, and more;

(2) contributing to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C. 10301 et seq.) and the authorization of its subsequent extensions;

(3) leading Election Protection, the Nation's oldest and largest nonpartisan voter protection program to ensure greater access

to the ballot box for all people of the United States;

(4) contributing to the enactment and enforcement of the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.);

(5) working to combat the scourge of hate crimes and racially motivated violence impacting communities;

(6) joining the movement to end apartheid in the Republic of South Africa by fighting against human rights abuses and representing political dissidents in the courts for more than 30 years and through the open elections in 1994;

(7) working to develop and enact the Civil Rights Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-166; 105 Stat. 1071), which advanced the rights of workers in employment discrimination claims; and

(8) joining relief efforts during the humanitarian crisis caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 by helping survivors navigate legal matters, including government disaster assistance and insurance claims; and

Whereas the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, in collaboration with its 8 local affiliates across the country, continues to spearhead the struggle against hatred and oppression and pursue equal justice for all through the rule of law, particularly disenfranchised communities that are disproportionately comprised of the economically disadvantaged and people of color: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) commemorates the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Boston, Massachusetts-based Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice; and

(2) expresses gratitude to the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and all of its 8 local affiliates for their work to advance civil rights and their dedication to the pursuit of equal justice under the law.

#### SENATE RESOLUTION 647—CALLING FOR THE GLOBAL REPEAL OF BLASPHEMY, HERESY, AND APOSTASY LAWS

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

S. RES. 647

Whereas Article 18 of the International Declaration of Human Rights states that “[e]veryone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance”;

Whereas many countries continue to have criminal blasphemy laws and punish people who engage in expression deemed by the government to be blasphemous, heretical, apostate, defamatory of religion, or insulting to religion or to religious symbols, figures, or feelings, and such punishment can include fines, imprisonment, and capital punishment including by beheading;

Whereas blasphemy laws have affected Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Baha'i, secularists, and many other groups, and are inconsistent with international human rights standards because they establish and promote official religious orthodox and dogma over individual liberty, and often result in violations of the freedoms of religion, thought, and expression that are protected under international instruments, including Articles 18 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);

Whereas the United Nations Human Rights Committee stated in General Comment 34 that “[p]rohibitions of displays of lack of respect for a religion or other belief system, including blasphemy laws, are incompatible with the [ICCPR]”;

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has found that blasphemy charges are often based on false accusations, are used for sectarian or political purposes, and foster religious intolerance, discrimination, and violence;

Whereas the Pew Research Center has found that 44 countries had blasphemy laws as of 2012;

Whereas these laws were present in 14 Middle East and North African countries, 11 countries in the Americas, 9 Asia-Pacific countries, 7 European countries, and 3 Sub-Saharan African countries;

Whereas the Pew Research Center also found that countries with laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion were more likely to have severe governmental restrictions on religion, and to experience social hostilities based on religion, than countries that did not have such laws;

Whereas an international group of experts convened by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recommended in 2012 that “[s]tates that have blasphemy laws should repeal the[m] as such laws have a stifling impact on the enjoyment of freedom of religion or belief and healthy dialogue and debate about religion”;

Whereas blasphemy laws are inconsistent with United Nations resolutions adopted by consensus since 2011 recognizing that religious intolerance is best fought through positive measures, such as education, outreach, and counter-speech, and that criminalization of speech is warranted only for the prevention of imminent violence;

Whereas, according to the annual religious freedom report published by the Department of State in 2015, attackers in Bangladesh killed five allegedly anti-Islamic or secularist writers and publishers, and injured three others;

Whereas, in response to these killings, the Home Minister of Bangladesh, rather than condemning the murders, called on bloggers and others to refrain from writings that could hurt the religious feelings of others and added that violators of the warning would be subject to prosecution under the restrictive religious freedom laws of Bangladesh;

Whereas a 2016 report by USCIRF on Bangladesh found that religious and civil society groups fear that increasing religious extremism will result in more criminal attacks and threats;

Whereas restrictive religious freedom laws validate and promote social violence targeted at religious minorities and dissenters, whether Christian, Muslim, secularist, or other;

Whereas USCIRF has found that in Pakistan, blasphemy laws have been used to prosecute and persecute Muslims, Christians, secularists, and others;

Whereas, according to a Pew Center report on religion and public life, Pakistan stands out for having one of the highest levels of restrictions on religion when both government restrictions and social hostilities are taken into account;

Whereas USCIRF has found egregious examples of the enforcement of blasphemy laws and vigilante violence connected to blasphemy allegations in Pakistan, where blasphemy charges are common and numerous individuals are in prison, with a high percentage sentenced to death or to life in prison;

Whereas, as of February 2015, USCIRF is aware of 18 individuals on death row for blasphemy in Pakistan and 20 serving life sentences;

Whereas Asia Bibi was sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2010, and the Lahore High Court upheld the conviction in late 2014, and her case is on appeal to the Supreme Court of Pakistan;

Whereas blasphemy laws in Pakistan have fostered a climate of impunity, as those who falsify evidence go unpunished and allegations often result in violent mob attacks or assassinations, with little to no police response;

Whereas, in 2017, the Christian Governor of Jakarta, Indonesia, was convicted for blasphemy of Islam and sentenced to two years in jail;

Whereas the application of blasphemy laws is on the rise in Europe;

Whereas blasphemy laws in the United States were invalidated by the adoption of the First Amendment to the Constitution, which protects the freedoms of thought, conscience, expression, and religious exercise; and

Whereas the United States has become a beacon of religious freedom and tolerance around the world: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes that blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws inappropriately position governments as arbiters of religious truth and empower officials to impose religious dogma on individuals or minorities through the power of the government or through violence sanctioned by the government;

(2) calls on the President and the Secretary of State to make the repeal of blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws a priority in the bilateral relationships of the United States with all countries that have such laws, through direct interventions in bilateral and multilateral fora;

(3) encourages the President and the Secretary of State to oppose—

(A) any efforts, by the United Nations or by other international or multilateral fora, to create an international anti-blasphemy norm, such as the “defamation of religions” resolutions introduced in the United Nations between 1999 and 2010; and

(B) any attempts to expand the international norm on incitement to include blasphemy or defamation of religions;

(4) supports efforts by the United Nations to combat intolerance, discrimination, or violence against persons based on religion or belief without restricting expression, including United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 (2011) and the Istanbul Process meetings pursuant to such resolution, that are consistent with the First Amendment to the Constitution;

(5) calls on the President and the Secretary of State to designate countries that enforce blasphemy, heresy, or apostasy laws as “countries of particular concern for religious freedom” under section 402(b)(1)(A)(ii) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6442(b)(1)(A)(ii)) for engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom, as a result of the abuses flowing from the enforcement of such laws and from unpunished vigilante violence often generated by blasphemy allegations;

(6) urges the governments of countries that enforce blasphemy, heresy, or apostasy laws to amend or repeal such laws, as they provide pretext and impunity for vigilante violence against religious minorities; and

(7) urges the governments of countries that have prosecuted, imprisoned, and persecuted people on charges of blasphemy, heresy, or apostasy to release such people unconditionally and, once released, to ensure their safety and that of their families.