

Whereas, “[f]rom its birth to this day, the United States has prized this legacy of religious freedom and honored this heritage by standing for religious freedom and offering refuge to those suffering religious persecution”, as noted in section 2(a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401(a));

Whereas Thomas Jefferson wrote—

(1) in 1798 that each right encompassed in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States is dependent on the other rights described in that Amendment, “thereby guarding in the same sentence, and under the same words, the freedom of religion, of speech, and of the press: inasmuch, that whatever violated either, throws down the sanctuary which covers the others”; and

(2) in 1822 that the constitutional freedom of religion is “the most inalienable and sacred of all human rights”;

Whereas religious freedom “has been integral to the preservation and development of the United States”, and “the free exercise of religion goes hand in hand with the preservation of our other rights”, as expressed by the 41st President of the United States in a Presidential proclamation on Religious Freedom Day in 1993; and

Whereas we “continue to proclaim the fundamental right of all peoples to believe and worship according to their own conscience, to affirm their beliefs openly and freely, and to practice their faith without fear or intimidation”, as expressed by the 42nd President of the United States in a Presidential proclamation on Religious Freedom Day in 1998: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress—

(1) on Religious Freedom Day on January 16, 2020, honors the 234th anniversary of the enactment of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom; and

(2) affirms that—

(A) for individuals of any faith and individuals of no faith, religious freedom includes the right of an individual to live, work, associate, and worship in accordance with the beliefs of the individual;

(B) all people of the United States can be unified in supporting religious freedom, regardless of differing individual beliefs, because religious freedom is a fundamental human right; and

(C) “the American people will remain forever unshackled in matters of faith”, as expressed by the 44th President of the United States in a Presidential proclamation on Religious Freedom Day in 2012.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I have 5 requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to Rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today’s session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing in executive session.

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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my fellow Nitzta Sola-Rotger have privileges of the floor for the balance of the day.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOTICE: REGISTRATION OF MASS MAILINGS

The filing date for the 2019 fourth quarter Mass Mailing report is Monday, January 27, 2020. An electronic option is available on Webster that will allow forms to be submitted via a fillable PDF document. If your office did no mass mailings during this period, please submit a form that states “none.”

Mass mailing registrations or negative reports can be submitted electronically at http://webster.senate.gov/secretary/mass_mailing_form.htm or delivered to the Senate Office of Public Records, 232 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510-7116.

The Senate Office of Public Records is open from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. when the Senate is not in session). For further information, please contact the Senate Office of Public Records at (202) 224-0322.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 336, H.R. 133.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 133) to promote economic partnership and cooperation between the United States and Mexico.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee

on Foreign Relations, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “United States-Mexico Economic Partnership Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) *The United States and Mexico have benefited from a bilateral, mutually beneficial partnership focused on advancing the economic interests of both countries.*

(2) *In 2013, Mexico adopted major energy reforms that opened its energy sector to private investment, increasing energy cooperation between Mexico and the United States and opening new opportunities for United States energy engagement.*

(3) *On January 18, 2018, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs at the Department of State stated, “Our exchange programs build enduring relationships and networks to advance U.S. national interests and foreign policy goals . . . The role of our exchanges . . . in advancing U.S. national security and economic interests enjoys broad bipartisan support from Congress and other stakeholders, and provides a strong return on investment.”*

(4) *According to the Institute of International Education, in the 2015–2016 academic year, more than 56,000 United States students studied in other countries in the Western Hemisphere region while more than 84,000 non-United States students from the region studied in the United States, but only 5,000 of those United States students studied in Mexico and only 16,000 of those non-United States students were from Mexico.*

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States—

(1) *to continue deepening economic cooperation between the United States and Mexico;*

(2) *to seek to prioritize and expand educational and professional exchange programs with Mexico, including through frameworks such as the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Initiative, the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative, Jóvenes en Acción (Youth in Action), the Fulbright Foreign Student Program, and the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program; and*

(3) *to promote positive cross-border relations as a priority for advancing United States foreign policy and programs.*

SEC. 4. STRATEGY TO PRIORITIZE AND EXPAND EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS WITH MEXICO.

(a) *IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State shall develop a strategy to carry out the policy described in section 3, to include prioritizing and expanding educational and professional exchange programs with Mexico through frameworks such as those referred to in section 3(2).*

(b) *ELEMENTS.—The strategy required under subsection (a) shall—*

(1) *encourage more academic exchanges between the United States and Mexico at the secondary, post-secondary, and post-graduate levels;*

(2) *encourage United States and Mexican academic institutions and businesses to collaborate to assist prospective and developing entrepreneurs in strengthening their business skills and promoting cooperation and joint business initiatives across the United States and Mexico;*

(3) *promote energy infrastructure coordination and cooperation through support of vocational-level education, internships, and exchanges between the United States and Mexico; and*

(4) *assess the feasibility of fostering partnerships between universities in the United States and medical school and nursing programs in Mexico to ensure that medical school and nursing programs in Mexico have comparable accreditation standards as medical school and*