

in establishing the program, which was to ensure that Native American veterans enjoy the same access to VA home loan benefits as other veterans, especially when one considers the fact that refinancing is authorized under other VA loan programs.

This bill will correct this inequity and, hopefully, encourage other Native Americans to utilize the direct loan program.

It is important to point out that VA will not incur additional costs if this refinancing option is adopted, since the agency will be permitted to charge an administrative refinancing fee. In fact, it is possible that the refinancing provision will save the department money as well, by allowing veterans to lower their mortgage payments and thus reduce the likelihood of default.

CENTERS FOR MINORITY AND WOMEN VETERANS

Mr. President, S. 1711 also contains improvements to the Centers for Minority and Women Veterans as well as the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans that were enacted as part of Public Law 103-446. These provisions are derived from S. 749, legislation I introduced with Senator ROCKEFELLER last year.

Among other initiatives, Public Law 103-446 established within VA a Center for Minority Veterans, a Center for Women Veterans, and an Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans. These provisions were adopted in order to ensure that VA appropriately addresses the special needs and concerns of veterans who are women or members of minority groups. S. 1711 makes the following modifications to these initiatives:

First, it allows the directors of the Center for Minority Veterans and the Center for Women Veterans to have either career or noncareer status. Under the legislation adopted 2 years ago, both directors are required to be non-career appointees. I believe the Secretary should have the discretion to appoint either career or noncareer individuals to these jobs. This bill restores that option so that the Secretary will have the flexibility to appoint directors with career status so as to be able to consider the widest possible field of qualified candidates.

Second, it adds an additional function to the list of statutory functions of the Center for Minority Veterans. Specifically, the legislation requires the center to advise the Secretary of the effectiveness of VA's efforts to include minority groups in clinical research and on the particular health conditions affecting the health of minority group members. This provision is consistent with the goals set forth in section 492B of the Public Health Service Act. The Center for Women Veterans is already mandated by law to carry out a similar function with respect to the health of women veterans.

Third, it explicitly requires that the Center for Minority Veterans provides support and administrative services to the Advisory Committee on Minority

Veterans. This provision is consistent with the traditional agency role of providing professional and technical support to advisory entities. Again, this provision parallels existing law requiring that the Center for Women Veterans provide support to the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans.

Fourth, it defines the minority veterans for whom the Center for Minority Veterans has responsibility. The law establishing the Center neglected to provide such a definition. This bill defines minority veterans as individuals who are Asian American, Black, Hispanic, Native American—including American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian—and Pacific-Islander American. This definition is identical to the definition included in current law with respect to the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.

Fifth, the legislation extends the termination date of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans an additional 2 years, from December 31, 1997, to December 31, 1999. This provision is necessary because delays in establishing the Advisory Committee have reduced its potential working life to significantly less than the three years authorized by Congress. Extending the life of the Advisory Committee to December 1999 is not unreasonable, given that all other statutory VA advisory boards, including the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, the Advisory Committee on Former Prisoners of War, and the Advisory Committee on Prosthetics and Special-Disabilities Programs, are authorized permanently. In fact, I hope that Congress will in the future consider an initiative to authorize the Advisory Committee on a permanent basis.

Finally, S. 1711 contains a provision that gives the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans and the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the respective activities of the Center for Minority Veterans and the Center for Women Veterans. Insofar as the Advisory Committees were established to oversee all of the activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs with respect to minorities and women, they necessarily should be tasked with overseeing the work of the very offices that are chiefly responsible for ensuring that the special needs of minority and female veterans are accommodated by VA.

Mr. President, I am deeply grateful to Senator SIMPSON and Senator ROCKEFELLER for including the home loan and minority provisions in the pending measure. I also wish to thank their respective Committee staffs, including Bill Tuerk and Tom Harvey for the majority and Bill Brew and Jim Gottlieb for the minority, for working so hard on a bipartisan basis to help me develop and refine these initiatives. Together, our efforts will significantly improve access by minority and women veterans to VA benefits and services.

Thank you, Mr. President. I urge swift passage of this important measure.●

TENNESSEE ALLOYS CO.

● Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and pay tribute to Tennessee Alloys Co. of Bridgeport, AL, for their remarkable health and safety record. On April 19, 1996, the Tennessee Alloys Co. plant reached the 4-year mark without a single lost time accident. During this time period, the plant worked a total of 678,585 hours. Mr. President, this is an outstanding accomplishment.

Tennessee Alloys Co. is a producer of ferroalloys, and employs nearly 80 people. It is a joint venture of Applied Industrial Materials Corp., the managing partner, and Allegheny Ludlum Corp. Specifically, Tennessee Alloys Co. manufactures 50 percent ferrosilicon, 75 percent ferrosilicon, and high purity ferrosilicon. These products are a critical element used in the production of iron castings and steel and have special application in high performance generators, transformers, and motors.

Bridgeport plant manager Jerry Rich and his management team deserve special recognition on this occasion, as do the Tennessee Alloys Co.'s other hard working employees. Tennessee Alloys Co. sets a fine example by demonstrating the importance of high productivity balanced with concern for the health and safety of employees. This balance is not possible without the total commitment of both employees and management who take great pride in their work and their company. I would therefore like to recognize Tennessee Alloys Co. for its outstanding health and safety record and wish them continued success in the future.●

ACCELERATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AIDS DRUG

● Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today in appreciation of the leadership of Senator ROTH, chairman of the Finance Committee, and Senator MOYNIHAN, who brought to the Senate and secured passage of miscellaneous tariff legislation. The legislation takes a number of important steps and deserves our support.

I am particularly pleased Senator ROTH and Senator MOYNIHAN were able to incorporate S. 2021, a bill I introduced earlier this year which would reduce tariffs for certain chemicals used in a new AIDS drug that has shown encouraging test results. Upon approval, the Finance Committee bill will take an important step to reduce tariffs for these chemicals, which are not available in the United States.

We must do everything we can to find a cure for HIV/AIDS. However, until we have a cure for this urgent health priority, we need to find effective treatments and put them in the hands of people with needs. This provision will accelerate the manufacturing and final

testing for a new protease inhibitor and deserves the full support of Congress.

S. 2021, legislation I introduced with my colleague Senator BOXER, would eliminate the tariff for several chemical compounds which are required for the manufacture of an AIDS drug, nelfinavir mesylate, which has produced promising test results.

PROTEASE INHIBITORS

Nelfinavir is one of a new class of AIDS drugs called protease inhibitors. These drugs are designed to block an enzyme, called protease, that appears to play a crucial role in the replication of HIV.

During the 11th International Conference on AIDS in Vancouver, British Columbia, researchers released evidence that protease inhibitor drugs, when taken in combination with existing therapies, can reduce levels of the AIDS-causing virus in blood to levels so low that the virus is undetectable by even the most sensitive tests. AIDS researchers at the conference describe this new drug therapy as a major and unprecedented step in combating AIDS, one that may represent a treatment approach that may delay the onset of AIDS, extend patients' lives, and transform AIDS into a long-term, manageable disease.

Mr. President, HIV/AIDS is a critical public health issue, requiring the Nation's full attention. In America today, AIDS is the leading cause of death for young Americans between the ages of 25 and 44.

In my State of California, 1 out of every 200 Californians is HIV positive, while one of every 25 is HIV positive in my home of San Francisco.

More than 220,700 American men, women and children died of AIDS by the end of 1993. While the number of deaths trails other urgent health priorities such as cancer or heart disease, AIDS is nearly equally debilitating to the Nation when measured by the years of potential and productive life lost due to the disease.

AIDS is a paramount public health concern and every effort should be made to ensure that drugs are made available as swiftly and at as low a cost as possible. We simply cannot delay or waste time in providing drugs, treatments or materials needed to fight this disease. This tariff legislation represents a modest, but important, step.

ZERO TARIFF FOR PHARMACEUTICALS

Under the 1994 GATT agreement, most pharmaceutical products are entitled to enter the country without a tariff. However, the zero tariff does not apply to many new pharmaceutical products or their chemical ingredients. As a result, the chemicals needed to make nelfinavir mesylate, an AIDS protease inhibitor currently undergoing research testing, but not yet a recognized pharmaceutical product under GATT, would be ineligible for the pharmaceutical zero tariff.

During negotiations with World Trade Organization nations to imple-

ment the pharmaceutical zero tariff, the administration successfully added the chemical compounds needed to manufacture the AIDS drug. As a result, the tariff will drop to zero on April 1, 1997.

Nelfinavir is on the Food and Drug Administration's fast-track approval process for AIDS drugs. Commercial production of the drug will begin well before April 1, in order that the drug can be immediately available to AIDS patients upon FDA approval. Although currently imported duty-free for use in clinical research trials, the imported chemicals will soon be used for commercial production. During the period of commercial production prior to April 1, the chemical compounds will face a 12 percent tariff, which will only add to the cost and delay the drug's production and distribution to individuals in need.

Fifteen days after enactment, this bill will eliminate the tariff for two of the essential and unique chemical inputs, as well as for the active ingredient nelfinavir, acid chloride, chloroalcohol and AG 1346, until April 1, 1997. On April 1, the tariff drops to zero under the WTO pharmaceutical agreement. Without this legislation, the manufacturer would face a 12 percent tariff for its chemicals, which are not available in the United States, as the drug proceeds into production. This tariff reduction will allow for the acceleration of drug production, providing more timely relief for the public.

The Congressional Budget Office reviewed S. 2021, concluding the legislation will have only a de minimis impact on tariff revenue. However, for AIDS patients, their families and those at risk, the impact may be profound. Congress should take this opportunity to reduce tariffs for these AIDS chemicals.

As a matter of public policy, we should do everything we can to develop AIDS drugs and treatments. Without this legislation to remove the tariff, we will be tolerating needless hurdles and delay, rather than expediting needed relief. Patients and their families do not have time to wait for the next round of drugs to be approved and added to the zero-tariff list, which is scheduled for review in 1999. By importing the chemical compounds without a tariff, we can accelerate the drug development process.

Ambassador Barshefsky and others in the Administration deserve tremendous credit for extending a zero tariff for these chemical components through international negotiations. I am pleased to support Chairman ROTH and Senator MOYNIHAN, the Finance Committee bill. I also wish to thank California Representatives BILL THOMAS, ROBERT MATSUI and BRIAN BILBRAY for their bipartisan efforts to build support on the House. The legislation represents an encouraging step forward.●

DAVIS-BACON REFORM IN THE 105TH CONGRESS

● Mr. HATFIELD. Mr. President, throughout the 104th session, Congress and the American people sought new ways to enhance the training, health care, and retirement security of the Nation's workforce. Statistics tell us that our economy is healthy, stronger than it has been for years, yet, our sense of personal economic security has been shaken. News articles of corporate downsizing and consolidations have disturbed the confidence in the American economy.

Under a much harsher economic umbrella, Congress, 64 years ago, intent on sustaining a construction industry already ravaged by the economic instability of the Great Depression, reasoned that the destructive practices of the Southern contractors would be best resolved by requiring that Federal contracted labor be paid the locally prevailing wage, thereby halting the tendency of Government contractors to drive down workers' wages in order to win lucrative projects. Thus, I believe today, more than ever, we need the Davis-Bacon Act to enhance the training, health care, and retirement security of the Nation's work force. The dividends of the Davis-Bacon Act are pervasive: a ready pool of trained and highly skilled construction workers, decreased construction accidents and the injuries and fatalities that are caused thereby, and the contributions to local, State, and Federal tax revenues that can only be made by working men and women.

As Governor of Oregon, I signed that State's little Davis-Bacon Act into law 37 years ago, and I have supported the intelligent use of the prevailing wage standard in Government contracts since.

Mr. President, Davis-Bacon has been debated year after year, and I do agree with opponents of Davis-Bacon that it needs revision. I emphasize that we need reform of Davis-Bacon and not repeal, as my colleagues agreed on May 22 of this year when 99 Senators voted in support of Davis-Bacon reform and not repeal. As my colleagues well know, it has been my objective during the 104th Congress to enact several long overdue changes to the 65-year-old Davis-Bacon Act, which enforces a prevailing wage standard on Federal construction projects. In the final hours of the 104th Congress, I ask the Members of the 105th Congress to reflect on the progress that was made under my Davis-Bacon reform bill, S. 1183. For example, 7 Republican cosponsors and 19 Democrats cosponsoring S. 1183 for a total of 26 cosponsors serves as a simple illustration of the progress that was made under the 104th Congress toward Davis-Bacon reform and not repeal.

Mr. President, I ask those who adamantly support Davis-Bacon repeal to harken to the cry of Davis-Bacon reform. The Davis-Bacon Act as it now stands, indeed deserves some of the