

DODD, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. KERRY, Mr. KOHL, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Ms. SNOWE, and Ms. STABENOW):

S. 675. A bill to provide competitive grants for training court reporters and closed captioners to meet requirements for realtime writers under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, today I am introducing legislation, the Training for Realtime Writers Act of 2007, on behalf of myself and my colleagues, Senators GRASSLEY, COCHRAN, DODD, DURBIN, KERRY, KOHL, MURRAY, ROCKEFELLER, SNOWE and STABENOW.

The 1996 Telecom Act required that all television broadcasts were to be captioned by 2006 and all Spanish language programming was to be captioned by 2010. This was a much needed reform that has helped millions of deaf and hard-of-hearing Americans to be able to take full advantage of television programming. And now the first deadline has passed. On January 1, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) began fining stations for not captioning.

Unfortunately, the United States has fallen behind in training captioners. We must jump start training programs to supply captioning for the many broadcasters just realizing their obligation now. And looking forward, we need to get students in the pipeline now to begin to address the need for Spanish language broadcasting.

This is an issue that I feel very strongly about because my late brother, Frank, was deaf. I know personally that access to culture, news, and other media was important to him and to others in achieving a better quality of life. More than 30 million Americans are considered deaf or hard of hearing and many require captioning services to participate in mainstream activities. In 1990, I authored legislation that required all television sets to be equipped with a computer chip to decode closed captioning. This bill completes the promise of that technology, affording deaf and hard of hearing Americans the same equality and access that captioning provides.

With baby boomers aging, the percentage of the population with hearing loss is increasing dramatically and will continue to outpace population growth for the next decade. But let me emphasize that the deaf and hard of hearing population is only one of a number of groups that will benefit from the legislation. The audience for captioning also includes individuals seeking to acquire or improve literacy skills, including approximately functionally illiterate adults, immigrants learning English as a second language, and children learning to read. Empirical research studies have been conducted repeatedly since 1988 to demonstrate that captions improve the performance of individuals learning to read English.

I see people using closed captioning to stay informed everywhere—from the gym to the airport. Here in the Senate, I would wager that many individuals on our staff have the captioning turned on right now to follow what is happening on the Senate floor while they go about conducting the meetings and phone calls that advance legislation. Captioning helps people educate themselves and helps all of us stay informed and entertained when audio isn't the most appropriate medium.

Although the 2006 deadline has passed, our nation is facing a serious shortage of captioners. The rate of job placement upon graduation nears 100 percent. In addition, the majority of closed captioners are independent contractors. They are the small businesses that run the American economy and we should do everything we can to promote the creation and support of those businesses.

That is why my colleagues and I are re-introducing this vital piece of legislation. The Training for Realtime Writers Act of 2007 would establish competitive grants to be used toward training real time captioners. This is necessary to ensure that we meet the promises we made in the 1996 Telecom Act.

The Senate Commerce Committee reported this bill unanimously in the last two sessions, the full Senate has passed this Act without objection three times now, and we stand here today, once again at the beginning of the process. I am hopeful that this will be the Congress moves our country forward on this accessibility issue. I ask my colleagues to join us once again in support of this legislation and join us in our effort to win its passage into law.

#### SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

#### SENATE RESOLUTION 85—EX-PRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE CREATION OF REFUGEE POPULATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND THE PERSIAN GULF REGION AS A RESULT OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself, Mr. LOTT, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. COLEMAN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 85

Whereas armed conflicts in the Middle East have created refugee populations numbering in the hundreds of thousands and comprised of peoples from many ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds;

Whereas Jews and other ethnic groups have lived mostly as minorities in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf region for more than 2,500 years;

Whereas the United States has long voiced its concern about the mistreatment of minorities and the violation of human rights in the Middle East and elsewhere;

Whereas the United States continues to play a pivotal role in seeking an end to con-

flict in the Middle East and continues to promote a peace that will benefit all the peoples of the region;

Whereas a comprehensive peace in the Middle East region will require the resolution of all outstanding issues through bilateral and multilateral negotiations involving all concerned parties;

Whereas the United States has demonstrated interest and concern about the mistreatment, violation of rights, forced expulsion, and expropriation of assets of minority populations in general, and in particular, former Jewish refugees displaced from Arab countries, as evidenced by—

(1) a statement made by President William J. Clinton in an interview after Camp David II in July 2000, at which the issue of Jewish refugees displaced from Arab lands was discussed, where he said that “[t]here will have to be some sort of international fund set up for the refugees. There is, I think, some interest, interestingly enough, on both sides, in also having a fund which compensates the Israelis who were made refugees by the war, which occurred after the birth of the State of Israel. Israel is full of people, Jewish people, who lived in predominantly Arab countries who came to Israel because they were made refugees in their own land.”;

(2) a statement made by President Carter after negotiating the Camp David Accords, the Framework for Peace in the Middle East, where he stated in a press conference on October 27, 1977, that “Palestinians have rights . . . obviously there are Jewish refugees . . . they have the same rights as others do”;

(3) section 620 of H.R. 3100, 100th Congress, which states that Congress finds that “with the notable exceptions of Morocco and Tunisia, those Jews remaining in Arab countries continue to suffer deprivations, degradations, and hardships, and continue to live in peril” and that Congress calls upon the governments of those Arab countries where Jews still maintain a presence to guarantee their Jewish citizens full civil and human rights, including the right to lead full Jewish lives, free of fear, with freedom to emigrate if they so choose; and

(4) Senate Resolution 76, 85th Congress, introduced by Senator William E. Jenner on January 29, 1957, which—

(A) noted that individuals in Egypt who are tied by race, religion, or national origin with Israel, France, or the United Kingdom have been subjected to arrest, denial or revocation of Egyptian citizenship, expulsions, forced exile, sequestration and confiscation of assets and property, and other punishments without being charged with a crime; and

(B) requested the President to instruct the chief delegate to the United Nations to urge the prompt dispatch of a United Nations observer team to Egypt with the objective of obtaining a full factual report concerning the violation of rights;

Whereas the international definition of a refugee clearly applies to Jews who fled the persecution of Arab regimes, where a refugee is a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, done at Geneva July 28, 1951, and entered into force April 22, 1954 (189 UNTS 150));

Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) determined that Jews fleeing from Arab countries were refugees that fell within the mandate of the UNHCR, namely—

(1) when in his first statement as newly elected High Commissioner, Mr. Auguste Lindt, at the January 29, 1957, meeting of the United Nations Refugee Fund (UNREF) Executive Committee in Geneva, stated, "There is already now another emergency problem arising. Refugees from Egypt. And there is no doubt in my mind that those of those refugee who are not able or not willing to avail themselves of the protection of the Government of their nationality, they might have no nationality or they may have lost this nationality, or, for reasons of prosecution may not be willing to avail themselves of this protection, fall under the mandate of the High Commissioner." (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Report of the UNREF Executive Committee, Fourth Session—Geneva 29 January to 4 February, 1957); and

(2) Dr. E. Jahn, on behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, wrote to Daniel Lack, Legal Adviser to the American Joint Distribution Committee, stating, "I refer to our recent discussion concerning Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries in consequence of recent events. I am now able to inform you that such persons may be considered *prima facie* within the mandate of this Office." (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Document No. 7/2/3/Libya);

Whereas the seminal United Nations resolution on the Arab-Israeli conflict and other international initiatives refer generally to the plight of "refugees" and do not make any distinction between Palestinian and Jewish refugees, such as—

(1) United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967, which calls for a "just settlement of the refugee problem" without distinction between Palestinian and Jewish refugees, and this is evidenced by—

(A) a failed attempt by the United Nations delegation of the Soviet Union to restrict the "just settlement" mentioned in Resolution 242 solely to Palestinian refugees (S/8236, discussed by the Security Council at its 1382nd meeting on November 22, 1967, notably at paragraph 117, in the words of Ambassador Kouznetsov of the Soviet Union), which signified the international community's intention of having the resolution address the rights of all Middle East refugees; and

(B) a statement by Justice Arthur Goldberg, the Chief Delegate of the United States to the United Nations at that time, who was instrumental in drafting the unanimously adopted United Nations Resolution 242, where he observed, "The resolution addresses the objective of 'achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem'. This language presumably refers both to Arab and Jewish refugees, for about an equal number of each abandoned their homes as a result of the several wars.";

(2) the Madrid Conference, which was first convened in October 1991 and was co-chaired by President of the United States, George H.W. Bush, and President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, and included delegations from Spain, the European community, the Netherlands, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, as well as a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, where in his opening remarks before the January 28, 1992, organizational meeting for multilateral negotiations on the Middle East in Moscow, United States Secretary of State James Baker made no distinction between Palestinian refugees and Jewish refugees in articulating the mission of the Refugee Working Group, stating that "[t]he refugee group will consider practical ways of improving the lot of people throughout the region who have been displaced from their homes"; and

(3) the Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, which refers in Phase III to an "agreed, just, fair, and realistic solution to the refugee issue", language that is consistent with United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, which applied equally to Arab and Jewish peoples;

Whereas Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinians have affirmed that a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict will require a just solution to the plight of all "refugees", as evidenced by—

(1) the 1978 Camp David Accords, the Framework for Peace in the Middle East, which includes a commitment by Egypt and Israel to "work with each other and with other interested parties to establish agreed procedures for a prompt, just and permanent resolution of the implementation of the refugee problem";

(2) the Treaty of Peace between Israel and Egypt, signed at Washington March 26, 1979, which provides in Article 8 that the "Parties agree to establish a claims commission for the mutual settlement of all financial claims" and makes general references to United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 as the basis for comprehensive peace in the region; and

(3) Article 8 of the Treaty of Peace Between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, done at Arava/Araba Crossing Point October 26, 1994, entitled "Refugees and Displaced Persons", refers to "the massive human problems caused to both Parties by the conflict in the Middle East";

Whereas the call to secure rights and redress for Jewish and other minorities who were forced to flee Arab countries is not a campaign against Palestinian refugees;

Whereas the international community should be aware of the plight of Jews and other minority groups displaced from the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf;

Whereas the history and legacy of Jewish refugees from Arab countries must be preserved;

Whereas no just and comprehensive Middle East peace can be reached without recognition of, and redress for, the uprooting of centuries-old Jewish communities in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf; and

Whereas it would be appropriate and just for the United States, while recognizing rights for Palestinian refugees, to recognize equal rights for former Jewish, Christian, and other refugees from Arab countries: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved,*

**SECTION 1. SENSE OF THE SENATE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES.**

It is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the United States deplores the past and present ongoing violation of the human rights and religious freedoms of minority populations in Arab and Muslim countries throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf; and

(2) with respect to Jews, Christians, and other populations displaced from countries in the region, for any comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace agreement to be credible, durable, enduring, and constitute an end to conflict in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf, the agreement must address and resolve all outstanding issues, including the legitimate rights of all refugees of the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf.

**SEC. 2. UNITED STATES POLICY ON REFUGEES OF THE MIDDLE EAST.**

The Senate urges the President to—

(1) instruct the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations and all

representatives of the United States in bilateral and multilateral fora that, when considering or addressing resolutions that allude to the issue of refugees in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf, they should ensure that—

(A) relevant text refers to the fact that multiple refugee populations have been created by the Arab-Israeli conflict; and

(B) any explicit reference to the required resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue is matched by a similar explicit reference to the resolution of the issue of Jewish, Christian, and other refugees from Arab and Muslim countries throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf region; and

(2) make clear that the United States Government supports the position that, as an integral part of any comprehensive peace, the issue of refugees and the mass violations of human rights of minorities in Arab and Muslim countries throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf must be resolved in a manner that includes—

(A) consideration of the legitimate rights of all refugees displaced from Arab and Muslim countries throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf; and

(B) recognition of the losses incurred by Jews, Christians, and other minority groups as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

**NOTICES OF HEARINGS/MEETINGS**

**COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that an oversight hearing has been scheduled before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The hearing will be held on Wednesday, February 28, 2007, at 9:45 a.m., in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The purpose of the hearing is to consider the President's fiscal year 2008 budget request for the USDA Forest Service.

Because of the limited time available for the hearing, witnesses may testify by invitation only. However, those wishing to submit written testimony for the hearing record should send two copies of their testimony to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510-6150.

For further information, please contact Scott Miller at 202-224-5488 or Rachel Pasternack at 202-224-0883.

**COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that an oversight hearing has been scheduled before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The hearing will be held on Thursday, March 1, 2007, at 9:30 a.m., in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The purpose of the hearing is to receive testimony on the Energy Information Administration's Annual Energy Outlook.

Because of the limited time available for the hearing, witnesses may testify