MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:01 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Chiappardi, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:


H.R. 1873. An act to reauthorize the programs and activities of the Small Business Administration relating to procurement, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1864. An act to authorize appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for fiscal year 2008, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 1873. An act to reauthorize the programs and activities of the Small Business Administration relating to procurement, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. STEVENS (for himself and Ms. MINK): S. 368. A bill to amend the Denali Commission Act of 1998 to modify the authority of the Commission; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KYL, and Mr. LIEBERMAN): S. 1369. A bill to grant immunity from civil liability to any person who voluntarily notifies appropriate security personnel of suspicious activity believed to threaten transportation safety or security; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. SMITH, and Mr. KERRY): S. 1370. A bill to add title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide coverage for cardiac rehabilitation and pulmonary rehabilitation services; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. PAYNE: S. 1371. A bill to establish a program to award innovation prizes to individuals and entities for researching and developing innovative technologies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. PRYOR: S. 1372. A bill to provide for a Center for Nanotechnology Research and Engineering; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. PRYOR: S. 1373. A bill to provide grants and loan guarantees for the development and construction of science parks to promote the clustering of innovation through high technology activities; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. CASEY: S. 1374. A bill to assist States in making voluntary high quality full-day prekindergarten programs available and economically affordable for the families of all children for at least 1 year preceding kindergarten; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. BROWN, Mr. DOGG, and Mr. LAUTENBERG): S. 1375. A bill to ensure that new mothers and their families are educated about postpartum depression, screened for symptoms, and provided with essential services, and to increase research at the National Institutes of Health on postpartum depression; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. KENNEDY (for himself and Mr. SMITH): S. Res. 194. A resolution commemorating the 46th anniversary of the landmark case Roe v. Wade, et. al., in which the Supreme Court held that all children accused of delinquent acts and facing a proceeding in which their freedom may be curtailed have a right to counsel in the proceedings against them; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. SMITH (for himself and Mr. WYDEN): S. Res. 195. A resolution commending the Oregon State University College of Forestry on the occasion of its centennial; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 329. At the request of Mrs. LINCOLN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 329, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide coverage for cardiac rehabilitation and pulmonary rehabilitation services.

S. 430. At the request of Mr. BOND, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 430, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to enhance the national defense through empowerment of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau and the enhancement of the functions of the National Guard Bureau, and for other purposes.

S. 543. At the request of Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, the names of the Senator from
projects.

S. 759  At the request of Mr. Reid, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. Pryor), the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. Landrieu) were added as cosponsors of S. 543, a bill to improve Medicare coverage by extending the 60 percent compliance threshold used to determine whether a hospital or unit of a hospital is an inpatient rehabilitation facility under the Medicare program.

S. 761  At the request of Mr. Menendez, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. Lieberman) was added as a cosponsor of S. 919, a bill to reauthorize Department of Agriculture conservation and energy programs and certain climate change programs of the Department, to modify the operation and administration of these programs, and for other purposes.

S. 762  At the request of Mrs. Boxer, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. Boxer) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1175, a bill to protect, consistent with Roe v. Wade, a woman's freedom to choose to bear a child or terminate a pregnancy, and for other purposes.

S. 1173  At the request of Mr. Menendez, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. Lieberman) was added as a cosponsor of S. 919, a bill to reauthorize Department of Agriculture conservation and energy programs and certain climate change programs of the Department, to modify the operation and administration of these programs, and for other purposes.

S. 1174  At the request of Mr. Menendez, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. Lieberman) was added as a cosponsor of S. 919, a bill to reauthorize Department of Agriculture conservation and energy programs and certain climate change programs of the Department, to modify the operation and administration of these programs, and for other purposes.
At the request of Mr. MCCONNELL, the names of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL) were added as cosponsors of S. 1323, a bill to prevent legislative and regulatory functions from being usurped by civil liability actions brought or continued against food manufacturers, marketers, distributors, advertisers, sellers, and transporters for claims of injury relating to a person’s weight gain, obesity, or any health condition associated with weight gain or obesity.

At the request of Mr. DODD, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1334, a bill to amend section 2306 of title 38, United States Code, to make permanent authority to furnish government headstones and markers for graves of veterans at private cemeteries, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1349, a bill to ensure that the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs provide to veterans with traumatic brain injury the services that best meet their individual needs, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. SOWEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 192, a resolution recognizing National Nurses Week on May 6 through May 12, 2007.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. STEVENS (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 1368. A bill to amend the Denali Commission Act of 1998 to modify the authority of the Commission; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to introduce S. 1368, a bill to reauthorize a Federal-State partnership known as the Denali Commission. This Commission plays a crucial role in the development of basic infrastructure for communities in rural Alaska.

The Denali Commission is originally established by Congress in 1998. The unique structure of the Commission ensures the most efficient allocation of Federal funds, as it caps administrative expenses at 5 percent and capitalizes on the use of strategic partnerships. Over the course of the past decade, the Commission has partnered with Federal and State agencies, tribal organizations, and local communities to address the unique challenges associated with living in Alaska. In just a short period of time, the Commission has improved the living conditions of rural Alaska by providing job training, teacher housing and funds to improve options for handling solid waste. The bulk fuel projects undertaken by the Commission have reduced the costs of rural energy. The health clinics have increased the availability of health services to rural villages that are isolated from metropolitan areas. There are 240 Alaska Native Villages, and over 100 health facilities have been served by the Denali Commission.

Although the Denali Commission has made tremendous strides to ensure rural Alaska has basic living conditions, there still is work to be done. Many of the rural communities have no roads and their transportation infrastructure is deteriorating. Numerous villages can only be accessed by water, and the docks in the communities are in desperate need of repair. The Denali Commission not only keep communities connected to mainstream Alaska, projects also foster economic growth. The unemployment rates in many villages remain above 50 percent. The high cost of basic needs, such as milk and oil, coupled with public infrastructure that is comparable to developing nations create difficult circumstances in rural Alaska. The Denali Commission is our best hope for properly addressing these issues and meeting the needs of Alaska’s communities.

The continuation of the Denali Commission’s presence in rural Alaska is of critical importance to the future of rural Alaska. The bill I introduce today would reauthorize the Denali Commission for 5 years, through fiscal year 2014.

Other provisions of this bill would also amend the Denali Commission Act of 1998 to make the Commission stronger and more efficient.

Senator MURKOWSKI introduced an original cosponsor of this legislation, and it is our hope the Senate will act quickly to reauthorize the Denali Commission.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KYL, and Mr. LIEBERMAN):

S. 1369. A bill to grant immunity from civil liability to any person who voluntarily notifies appropriate security personnel of suspicious activity believed to threaten transportation safety or security or takes reasonable action to mitigate such activity; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise to introduce legislation that would provide immunity to individuals who report suspicious activities that may reflect terrorist threats to our transportation system. I am very honored that Senators KYL and LIEBERMAN have joined me in introducing this important bill.

The recent arrest in New Jersey of six men charged with conspiring to murder American soldiers at Fort Dix underscores the need for this bill. Law enforcement officials have noted that their investigation was triggered by the report of an alert store clerk who said a customer had brought in a video that showed men firing weapons and shouting in Arabic. This reminded the store clerk of the 9/11 terrorists. But the report of the store clerk, it is unlikely this potential plot against Fort Dix—a plot that if executed would have caused the loss of lives—would have been uncovered. That store clerk’s story has saved literally hundreds of lives and represents a core truth of the dangerous times in which we live. Our safety depends on more than just police officers, intelligence analysts, and soldiers. It also depends on the alertness and civil responsibility of ordinary American citizens, including the peaceful and tolerant people who form the vast majority of America’s Muslim communities.

We must encourage average citizens to be watchful and report behavior that appears to be suspicious or threatening. That imperative is especially strong in the area of mass transportation, where there is the potential for mass casualties, where vehicles and airplanes can be used as weapons, and where there is often only a brief period of time for assessing and reacting to alarming behavior. That is why the slogan “See something, say something,” is used in the New York subway.

Unfortunately, we have seen that plaintiffs can misuse our legal system to chill the willingness of average citizens to come forward and report possible dangers. As was widely reported last fall, six Islamic clerics were removed from a US Airways flight after other passengers expressed concerns that some of the clerics had moved out of their assigned seats and had requested, but apparently were not using, seatbelt extenders that could possibly double as weapons.

As a result of that incident, what happened? Well, the US Airways officials decided to remove these individuals from the plane so they could further investigate. What happened to the individuals who courageously came forward and reported this suspicious behavior? Unbelievably, they were sued into silence by the threat of litigation. This illustrates how unfair it is to allow plaintiffs to misuse our legal system to chill the willingness of average citizens to come forward and report possible dangers. As was widely reported last fall, six Islamic clerics were removed from a US Airways flight after other passengers expressed concerns that some of the clerics had moved out of their assigned seats and had requested, but apparently were not using, seatbelt extenders that could possibly double as weapons.

The existence of this lawsuit clearly illustrates how unfair it is to allow private citizens to possibly be intimidated into silence by the threat of litigation. Would that alert store clerk have come forward if he thought there was a chance he was going to be sued? Would the passengers have spoken up if they had anticipated there would be a lawsuit filed against them? Even if such suits fail, they can expose citizens to heavy costs in time and legal fees. Our bill would provide civil immunity to American citizens in courts for citizens...