

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 624, *supra*.

S. RES. 625

At the request of Mr. HAGEL, the names of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VOINOVICH) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 625, a resolution designating August 16, 2008, as National Airborne Day.

S. RES. 627

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 627, a resolution welcoming home Keith Stansell, Thomas Howes, and Marc Gonsalves, three citizens of the United States who were held hostage for over five years by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) after their plane crashed on February 13, 2003.

S. RES. 630

At the request of Mrs. CLINTON, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 630, a resolution recognizing the importance of connecting foster youth to the workforce through internship programs, and encouraging employers to increase employment of former foster youth.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. NELSON of Florida (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. CARDIN, and Mr. MARTINEZ):

S. 3366. A bill to protect, conserve, and restore native fish, wildlife, and their natural habitats at national wildlife refuges through cooperative, incentive-based grants to control, mitigate, and eradicate harmful nonnative plant species, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce legislation that will address the growing harm that nonnative or "invasive" species are inflicting on the wildlife and environment of our National Wildlife Refuge System.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt issued an executive order that designated Pelican Island, located in my home State of Florida, as a Federal bird reservation. This designation was intended to protect the numerous species of waterfowl that called Indian River Lagoon and Pelican Island home, including the last known brown pelican rookery on the East Coast of Florida. President Roosevelt's action marked the first time that our Federal Government set aside land for the sake of wildlife.

In the century that followed, the Pelican Island reservation, 27 additional sites in Florida, and other areas nationwide were set aside by the Federal Government and grew into a vast net-

work that is now the National Wildlife Refuge System. Today, this system is comprised of 540 wildlife refuges and 3,000 waterfowl production areas, spanning 95 million miles across all 50 States and several U.S. territories. These refuges are home to 700 bird species, more than 200 mammal species, 250 reptile and amphibian species, and more than 200 types of fish—including one-fourth of all federally recognized threatened and endangered species. The habitat afforded by our refuges will become even more critical to the survival of wildlife, which is already being forced to adapt to a rapidly changing climate.

As if encroaching human development, water and air pollution, and climate change weren't great enough challenges, our wildlife refuges and other protected areas are also threatened by a more insidious and persistent problem: invasive species. These nonnative plant and animal species compete for habitat, food, and other resources that are essential to native wildlife, including endangered and threatened species.

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, over 400 nonnative animals and nearly 1,200 exotic plant species have been documented in the State, with more arriving each day. The old world climbing fern, *Lygodium*, poses a greater threat than any other nonnative plant to south Florida's natural areas, including one of our national treasures, the Everglades. This plant currently infests over 70 percent of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge near Boyton Beach, Florida. The Everglades' tree islands, which are a unique and extremely rare habitat for nesting wading birds and terrestrial wildlife, are particularly vulnerable to *Lygodium*. This invader first surrounds the islands' hardwood trees and dry ground, then grows over the tree canopy, and eventually smothers the native plants. This process essentially eliminates all of the ecological services that the tree islands once provided to native wildlife.

The threats posed by nonnative species are not confined to my home State of Florida—this is truly a national problem. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, invasive species are one of the most significant problems facing the National Wildlife Refuge System. Resource managers cite nonnative species as the single greatest threat to the refuges' biological and ecological functions, and as one of their most pressing management challenges. Currently, experts estimate that nonnative plant species infest more than 2 million acres in the Refuge System, and that nearly 4,500 invasive animal populations are established.

Efforts are underway to control or eradicate harmful, nonnative species in our wildlife refuges and other conservation areas. For example, the Fish and Wildlife Service treated 2,500 acres of *Lygodium* on tree islands in the

Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in fiscal year 2006. The South Florida Water Management District has partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service to develop a sustained population of natural enemies, known as biological controls, to reduce the spread of invasive plants. The district has funded a biological control program for *Lygodium* since 1997, and has been working to find a natural enemy for the Brazilian pepper, one of the most noxious, widespread weeds in Florida. Projects like these are having a positive impact on the Everglades restoration, and show why it is important that all levels of government work together to combat harmful, nonnative species.

While these and other invasive species control efforts have yielded promising results, the job is far from complete. In the current fiscal year, approximately \$8.7 million was budgeted for treatment and control of nonnative plants in the Refuge System. That may sound like a lot of money, but it represents a mere drop in the bucket: the Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that the total cost of managing invasive species on refuges nationwide is in excess of \$300 million. Clearly, we need to dramatically increase the resources we devote to combating harmful, nonnative species if we expect our refuges to fulfill the wildlife conservation purposes for which they were set aside.

That is why I have worked with Senators STABENOW, COLLINS, CARDIN, and MARTINEZ to develop and introduce the Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, and Immediate Response Act, or REPAIR Act. The primary purpose of this act is to protect, enhance, and restore habitats for native fish and wildlife within the National Wildlife Refuge System. The REPAIR Act would establish within the Fish and Wildlife Service a grant program to support projects to assess, monitor, and manage harmful, nonnative species.

Specifically, REPAIR grants would be available to States, tribes, and territories to assess invasive plant and animal species that may threaten refuge resources, and to prioritize restorations needs and activities. Grants would also be available to State and local governments, universities, conservation organizations, and others to implement control projects to eradicate harmful, nonnative plants on refuges and adjoining, nonfederal lands and waters. Volunteer and public-interest groups would also be eligible for grants to conduct habitat surveys and monitor invasive plant and animal species. The REPAIR Act would also give the Secretary of the Interior the authority to provide financial assistance to States to respond quickly to outbreaks of invasive plants at a stage when complete eradication is possible and more affordable.

The Fish and Wildlife Service would be responsible for awarding REPAIR grants on a peer-reviewed, competitive

basis. For control projects, we establish numerous criteria that give priority to efforts that aid threatened and endangered species, encourage increased coordination among Federal, State, and local agencies, nongovernmental groups, and private entities, and that contain a comprehensive plan to prevent reintroduction of target species. All projects include monitoring and reporting elements, with oversight provided by the Fish and Wildlife Service. These provisions will help ensure that we achieve the greatest return on our investments to restore and maintain native habitat in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The assessments and control projects authorized by the REPAIR Act will most certainly be of benefit to native wildlife living in and around our refuges, including the numerous threatened and endangered species that we have worked hard to protect. The restoration and preservation of native habitats and wildlife provided by the REPAIR Act will also benefit the 37 million people who visit our refuges each year and take advantage of fishing, hunting, and other recreational and educational opportunities that these special places provide.

In closing, I would like to recognize the efforts of Congressman RON KIND of Wisconsin, who introduced and championed the REPAIR Act in the U.S. House of Representatives. The House passed this important legislation in October of last year. I hope that we can find a way for the companion measure that I introduced today to pass the Senate and become the law of the land. I look forward to working with Chairman BOXER and the other members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works to debate this important legislation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 3366

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, and Immediate Response Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) The National Wildlife Refuge System is the premier land conservation system in the world.

(2) Harmful nonnative species are the leading cause of habitat destruction in national wildlife refuges.

(3) More than 675 known harmful nonnative species are found in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

(4) Nearly 8,000,000 acres of the National Wildlife Refuge System contain harmful nonnative species.

(5) The cost of early identification and removal of harmful nonnative species is dramatically lower than removing an established invasive population.

(6) The cost of the backlog of harmful nonnative species control projects that need to be carried out in the National Wildlife Refuge System is over \$361,000,000, and the failure to carry out such projects threatens the ability of the System to fulfill its basic mission.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to encourage partnerships among the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, other Federal agencies, States, Indian tribes, and other interests for the following objectives:

(1) To protect, enhance, restore, and manage a diversity of habitats for native fish and wildlife resources within the National Wildlife Refuge System through monitoring and management of harmful nonnative species, including control of harmful nonnative plant species.

(2) To promote the development of voluntary State assessments to establish priorities for controlling harmful nonnative plant and animal species that threaten or negatively impact refuge resources.

(3) To promote greater cooperation among Federal, State, and local land and water managers, and owners of private land, water rights, or other interests, to implement ecologically based strategies to eradicate, mitigate, and control harmful nonnative plant species that threaten or negatively impact refuge resources through a voluntary and incentive-based financial assistance grant program.

(4) To establish an immediate response capability to combat incipient harmful nonnative plant species invasions.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

For the purposes of this Act:

(1) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES.—The term "appropriate Committees" means the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate.

(2) CONTROL.—The term "control" means, as appropriate, eradicating, suppressing, reducing, or managing harmful nonnative species from areas where they are present; taking steps to detect early infestations on at-risk native habitats; and restoring native species and habitats to reduce the effects of harmful nonnative species.

(3) ENVIRONMENTAL SOUNDNESS.—The term "environmental soundness" means the extent of inclusion of methods, efforts, actions, or programs to prevent or control infestations of harmful nonnative species, that—

(A) minimize adverse impacts to the structure and function of an ecosystem and adverse effects on nontarget species and ecosystems; and

(B) emphasize integrated management techniques.

(4) HARMFUL NONNATIVE SPECIES.—The term "harmful nonnative species" means, with respect to a particular ecosystem in a particular region, any species, including its seeds, eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species, that is not native to that ecosystem and has a demonstrable or potentially demonstrable negative environmental or economic impact in that region.

(5) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term "Indian tribe" has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b).

(6) NATIONAL MANAGEMENT PLAN.—The term "National Management Plan" means the management plan referred to in section 5 of Executive Order No. 13112 of February 3, 1999, and entitled "Meeting the Invasive Species Challenge".

(7) REFUGE RESOURCES.—The term "refuge resources" means all land and water, including the fish and wildlife species and the ecosystems and habitats therein, that are

owned, leased, managed through easement or cooperative agreement, or otherwise managed by the by the Federal Government through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and located within the National Wildlife Refuge System administered under the National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.), including any waterfowl production area.

(8) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(9) STATE.—The term "State" means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, any other territory or possession of the United States, and any Indian tribe.

SEC. 4. REFUGE ECOLOGY PROTECTION, ASSISTANCE, AND IMMEDIATE RESPONSE (REPAIR) GRANT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may provide—

(1) a grant to any eligible applicant to carry out a qualified plant control project in accordance with this section; and

(2) a grant to any State to carry out an assessment project consistent with relevant State plans that have been developed in whole or in part for the conservation of native fish, wildlife, and their habitats, and in accordance with this section, to—

(A) identify harmful nonnative plant and animal species that occur in the State that threaten or negatively impact refuge resources;

(B) assess the needs to restore, manage, or enhance native fish and wildlife and their natural habitats and processes in the State to complement activities to control, mitigate, or eradicate harmful nonnative plant and animal species negatively impacting refuge resources;

(C) identify priorities for actions to address such needs;

(D) identify mechanisms to increase capacity building in a State or across State lines to conserve and protect native fish and wildlife and their habitats and to detect and control harmful nonnative plant and animal species that might threaten or negatively impact refuge resources within the State; and

(E) incorporate, where applicable and to the extent consistent with this Act, the guidelines of the National Management Plan.

The grant program under this section shall be known as the "Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, and Immediate Response Grant Program" or the "REPAIR Program".

(b) FUNCTIONS OF THE SECRETARY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall—

(A) publish guidelines for and solicit applications for grants under this section not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act; and

(B) receive, review, evaluate, and approve applications for grants under this section.

(2) DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may delegate to another Federal instrumentality the authority of the Secretary under this section, other than the authority to approve applications for grants and make grants.

(c) ELIGIBLE APPLICANT.—To be an eligible applicant for purposes of subsection (a)(1), an applicant shall—

(1) be a State, local government, interstate or regional agency, university, conservation organization, or private person;

(2) have adequate personnel, funding, and authority to carry out and monitor or maintain a control project; and

(3) have entered into an agreement with the Secretary or a designee of the Secretary,

for a national wildlife refuge or refuge complex.

(d) QUALIFIED CONTROL PROJECT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—To be a qualified control project under this section, a project shall—

(A) control harmful nonnative plant species on the lands or waters on which it is conducted;

(B) include a plan for monitoring the project area and maintaining effective control of harmful nonnative plant species after the completion of the project, that is consistent with standards for monitoring developed under subsection (i);

(C) be conducted in partnership with a national wildlife refuge or refuge complex;

(D) be conducted on land or water, other than national wildlife refuge land or water, that, for purposes of carrying out the project, are under the control of the eligible applicant applying for the grant under this section, on land or water on which the eligible applicant has permission to conduct the project, or on adjacent national wildlife refuge land or water administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service referred to in subparagraph (C); and

(E) encourage public notice and outreach on control project activities in the affected community.

(2) OTHER FACTORS FOR SELECTION OF PROJECTS.—In ranking qualified control projects, the Director may consider the following:

(A) The extent to which a project would address the operational and maintenance backlog attributed to harmful nonnative plant species on refuge resources.

(B) Whether a project will encourage increased coordination and cooperation among one or more Federal agencies and State or local government agencies or nongovernmental or other private entities to control harmful nonnative plant species threatening or negatively impacting refuge resources.

(C) Whether a project fosters public-private partnerships and uses Federal resources to encourage increased private sector involvement, including consideration of the amount of private funds or in-kind contributions to control harmful nonnative species or national wildlife refuge lands or non-Federal lands in proximity to refuge resources.

(D) The extent to which a project would aid the conservation of species that are listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

(E) The extent to which a project would aid the conservation of—

(i) species listed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as birds of management concern; and

(ii) species identified by the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as imperiled or at-risk species.

(F) The extent to which a project would aid the conservation of species identified as a “Species of Greatest Conservation Need” in a comprehensive wildlife conservation plan developed under the State wildlife grants program.

(G) The extent to which a project would contribute to the restoration and protection of terrestrial, freshwater aquatic, estuarine, coastal, and marine ecosystems, such as the Everglades, the Great Lakes, and the Mississippi River, that are determined to be priorities by the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(H) Whether a project includes pilot testing or a demonstration of an innovative technology having the potential for improved cost-effectiveness and reduced environmental risks when controlling harmful nonnative plant species.

(I) The extent to which a project minimizes adverse impacts of control methods on ecosystems affected by the project.

(J) Whether a project includes a comprehensive plan to prevent reintroduction of harmful nonnative plant species controlled by the project.

(e) DISTRIBUTION OF CONTROL GRANT AWARDS.—In making grants for control projects under this section the Secretary shall, to the greatest extent practicable, ensure—

(1) a balance of smaller and larger projects conducted with grants under this section; and

(2) an equitable geographic distribution of projects carried out with grants under this section, among all regions and States within which such projects are proposed to be conducted.

(f) GRANT DURATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each grant under this section shall be to provide funding for the Federal share of the cost of a project carried out with the grant for up to 2 fiscal years.

(2) RENEWAL.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary, after reviewing the reports under subsection (g) regarding a control project, finds that the project is making satisfactory progress, the Secretary may renew a grant under this section for the project for an additional 3 fiscal years.

(B) MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE PLAN.—The Secretary may renew a grant under this section to implement the monitoring and maintenance plan required for a control project under subsection (d)(1)(B) for up to 5 fiscal years after the project is otherwise completed.

(g) REPORTING BY GRANTEE.—

(1) CONTROL PROJECTS; ASSESSMENT PROJECTS.—

(A) CONTROL PROJECTS.—A grantee carrying out a control project with a grant under this section shall report to the Secretary every 24 months or at the expiration of the grant, whichever is of shorter duration.

(B) ASSESSMENT PROJECTS.—A State carrying out an assessment project with a grant under this section shall submit the assessment pursuant to subsection (a)(2) to the Secretary no later than 24 months after the date on which the grant is awarded.

(2) REPORT CONTENTS.—Each report under this subsection shall include the following information with respect to each project covered by the report:

(A) In the case of a control project—

(i) the information described in subparagraphs (B), (D), and (F) of subsection (j)(2);

(ii) specific information on the methods and techniques used to control harmful nonnative plant species in the project area; and

(iii) specific information on the methods and techniques used to restore native fish, wildlife, or their habitats in the project area.

(B) A detailed report of the funding for the grant and the expenditures made.

(3) INTERIM UPDATE.—Each grantee under paragraph (1)(A) shall also submit annually to the Secretary a brief synopsis and chronological list of projects showing progress as a percentage of completion and use of awarded funds.

(h) COST SHARING FOR PROJECTS.—

(1) FEDERAL SHARE.—Except as provided in paragraphs (2) and (3), the Federal share of the cost of a project carried out with a grant under this section shall not exceed 75 percent of such cost.

(2) INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY COSTS.—The Federal share of the incremental additional cost of including in a control project any pilot testing or a demonstration of an innovative technology described in subsection (d)(2)(H) shall be 85 percent.

(3) PROJECTS ON REFUGE LANDS OR WATERS.—The Federal share of the cost of the portion of a control project funded with a

grant under this section that is carried out on national wildlife refuge lands or waters, including the cost of acquisition by the Federal Government of lands or waters for use for such a project, shall be 100 percent.

(4) APPLICATION OF IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS.—The Secretary may apply to the non-Federal share of costs of a control project carried out with a grant under this section the fair market value of services or any other form of in-kind contribution to the project made by non-Federal interests that the Secretary determines to be an appropriate contribution equivalent to the monetary amount required for the non-Federal share of the activity.

(5) DERIVATION OF NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—The non-Federal share of the cost of a control project carried out with a grant under this section may not be derived from a Federal grant program or other Federal funds.

(i) MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE OF CONTROL GRANT PROJECTS.—

(1) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall develop requirements for the monitoring and maintenance of a control project to ensure that the requirements under subparagraphs (A) and (B) of subsection (d)(1) are achieved.

(2) DATABASE OF GRANT PROJECT INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall develop and maintain an appropriate database of information concerning control projects carried out with grants under this subsection, including information on project techniques, project completion, monitoring data, and other relevant information.

(3) USE OF EXISTING PROGRAMS.—The Secretary shall use existing programs within the Department of the Interior to create and maintain the database required under this subsection.

(4) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The Secretary shall make the information collected and maintained under this subsection available to the public.

(j) REPORTING BY THE SECRETARY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall, by not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act and biennially thereafter in the report under section 8, report to the appropriate Committees on the implementation of this section.

(2) REPORT CONTENTS.—A report under paragraph (1) shall include an assessment of—

(A) trends in the population size and distribution of harmful nonnative plant species in the project area for each control project carried out with a grant under this section, and in the adjacent areas as defined by the Secretary;

(B) data on the number of acres of refuge resources and native fish and wildlife habitat restored, protected, or enhanced under this section, including descriptions of, and partners involved with, control projects selected, in progress, and completed under this section;

(C) trends in the population size and distribution in the project areas of native species targeted for restoration, and in areas in proximity to refuge resources as defined by the Secretary;

(D) an estimate of the long-term success of varying conservation techniques used in carrying out control projects with grants under this section;

(E) an assessment of the status of control projects carried out with grants under this section, including an accounting of expenditures by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, State, regional, and local government agencies, and other entities to carry out such projects;

(F) a review of the environmental soundness of the control projects carried out with grants under this section;

(G) a review of efforts made to maintain an appropriate database of grants under this section; and

(H) a review of the geographical distribution of Federal money, matching funds, and in-kind contributions for control projects carried out with grants under this section.

(k) COOPERATION OF NON-FEDERAL INTERESTS.—The Secretary may not make a grant under this section for a control project on national wildlife refuge lands or lands in proximity to refuge resources before a non-Federal interest has entered into a written agreement with a national wildlife refuge or refuge complex under which the non-Federal interest agrees to—

(1) monitor and maintain the control project in accordance with the plan required under subsection (d)(1)(B); and

(2) provide any other items of cooperation the Secretary considers necessary to carry out the project.

SEC. 5. CREATION OF AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CAPABILITY TO HARMFUL NONNATIVE SPECIES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary may provide financial assistance for a period of not more than 3 fiscal years to enable an immediate response to outbreaks of harmful nonnative plant species that threaten or may negatively impact refuge resources that are at a stage at which rapid eradication or control is possible, and ensure eradication or immediate control of the harmful nonnative plant species.

(b) REQUIREMENTS FOR ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary, after consulting with the Governor of the State, shall provide assistance under this section to local and State agencies, universities, or nongovernmental entities for the eradication of an immediate harmful nonnative plant species threat only if—

(1) there is a demonstrated need for the assistance;

(2) the harmful nonnative plant species is considered to be an immediate threat to refuge resources, as determined by the Secretary; and

(3) the proposed response to such threat—

(A) is technically feasible; and

(B) minimizes adverse impacts to the structure and function of national wildlife refuge ecosystems and adverse effects on nontarget species.

(c) AMOUNT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall determine the amount of financial assistance to be provided under this section with respect to an outbreak of a harmful nonnative species, subject to the availability of appropriations.

(d) COST SHARE.—The Federal share of the cost of any activity carried out with assistance under this section may be up to 100 percent.

(e) MONITORING AND REPORTING.—The Secretary shall require that persons receiving assistance under this section monitor and report on activities carried out with assistance under this section in accordance with the requirements that apply with respect to control projects carried out with assistance under section 4.

SEC. 6. COOPERATIVE VOLUNTEER HARMFUL NONNATIVE SPECIES MONITORING AND CONTROL PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Consistent with the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-242), the Secretary shall establish a cooperative volunteer monitoring and control program to administer and coordinate projects implemented by partner organizations concerned with national wildlife refuges to address harmful nonnative species that threaten national wildlife refuges or adjacent lands.

(b) ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES.—Each project administered and coordinated under this sec-

tion shall include 1 of the following activities:

(1) Habitat surveys.

(2) Detection and identification of new introductions or infestations of harmful nonnative plant and animal species.

(3) Harmful nonnative plant species control projects.

(4) Public education and outreach to increase awareness concerning harmful nonnative species and their threat to the refuge system.

SEC. 7. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER AUTHORITIES.

(a) AUTHORITIES, ETC. OF SECRETARY.—Nothing in this Act affects authorities, responsibilities, obligations, or powers of the Secretary under any other statute.

(b) STATE AUTHORITY.—Nothing in this Act preempts any provision or enforcement of State statute or regulation relating to the management of fish and wildlife resources within such State.

SEC. 8. BIENNIAL REPORT.

Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act and biennially thereafter, the Secretary shall prepare and submit to Congress and the National Invasive Species Council—

(1) a comprehensive report summarizing all grant activities relating to invasive species initiated under this Act including—

(A) State assessment projects;

(B) qualified control projects;

(C) immediate response activities; and

(D) projects identified in the Refuge Operations Needs database or the Service Asset and Maintenance Management System database of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service;

(2) a list of grant priorities, ranked in high, medium, and low categories, for future grant activities in the areas of—

(A) early detection and rapid response;

(B) control, management, and restoration;

(C) research and monitoring;

(D) information management; and

(E) public outreach and partnership efforts; and

(3) information required to be included under section 4(k).

SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act such sums as may be necessary.

(b) ALLOWANCE FOR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE.—Of the amounts appropriated to carry out this Act no more than 25 percent shall be available in any fiscal year for financial assistance under section 5.

(c) CONTINUING AVAILABILITY.—Amounts appropriated under this Act may remain available until expended.

(d) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—Of amounts available each fiscal year to carry out this Act, the Secretary may expend not more than 3 percent or up to \$100,000, whichever is greater, to pay the administrative expenses necessary to carry out this Act.

By Mr. SMITH (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. INOUE, Mr. TESTER, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. BARRASSO, and Mr. COCHRAN):

S. 3367. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to revise the timeframe for recognition of certain designations in certifying rural health clinics under the Medicare program; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize an outstanding health care hero from Oregon, Maria Loreda. Through her hard work and tireless dedication to her community, Maria has played a critical role in cre-

ating access to health care for those in need in Washington County, OR.

Maria Loreda is the chief operating officer for the Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center, named for a 6-year-old migrant farmworker girl who moved from Mission, TX, to work with her family in Washington County's strawberry harvest. Tragically, Virginia Garcia died from a simple foot wound, but her death inspired a committed group of individuals to improve health care access in the community.

Like 6-year-old Virginia Garcia, Maria Loreda also hails from Mission, TX, and as a young person worked with her family throughout Texas following crops. Eventually the family migrated to Oregon and settled there in 1966. Maria began her work with the fledgling Virginia Garcia Clinic in 1978 when it was only 3 years old. Her own experience as a migrant worker has helped her develop the programs and services of the clinic so that they are most effective in reaching the farmworker community.

Maria has been instrumental in growing the health center from a clinic operating out of a three-car garage to an organization with four primary care clinics serving over 30,000 people in Washington and Yamhill Counties, OR. Her commitment to the community has enabled the organization to develop a farmworker outreach program that operates from a mobile clinic and provides medical and dental services in over 20 migrant camps throughout the region.

In her role as chief operating officer, Maria has helped establish clinics in McMinnville, Hillsboro, and Beaverton serving a diverse community that includes patients who not only speak English and Spanish, but Vietnamese, Russian, Swahili, Chinese, and Farsi.

She has helped Virginia Garcia develop critically needed dental, pharmacy, and behavioral health care with an integrated approach to health care delivery that always remains sensitive to the language and cultural background of the patients. Most recently, Maria has helped pave the way to a new access point at the Tigard School Based Clinic and also to the implementation of electronic health records.

While working full-time developing Virginia Garcia's programs, Maria found time to pursue her education and graduated with her B.A. from Portland State University in 2003. Once a migrant worker, she has gone on to not only serve her community, but inspire others to achieve a better, healthier life for themselves and their children.

Because she has dedicated the last 30 years of her life to the mission of the Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center and made a significant difference in the lives of so many, I recognize her as an Oregon health care hero and thank her for her ongoing work.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

S. 3367

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. REVISION OF THE TIMEFRAME FOR THE RECOGNITION OF CERTAIN DESIGNATIONS IN CERTIFYING RURAL HEALTH CLINICS UNDER THE MEDICARE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The second sentence of section 1861(aa)(2) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395x(aa)(2)) is amended by striking “3-year period” and inserting “4-year period” in the matter in clause (i) preceding subclause (I).

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

By Mr. BROWN (for himself and Ms. SNOWE):

S. 3368. A bill to promote industry growth and competitiveness and to improve worker training, retention, and advancement, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, today, Senator SNOWE of Maine and I are introducing a workforce development bill—the Strengthening Employment Clusters to Organize Regional Success, or SECTORS Act.

Over the last 16 months, I have held 110 roundtable discussions in communities all over Ohio.

One of the themes that have recurred in the roundtables—from workers and employers, business and labor, teachers and professors—is that we need to do a better job connecting workers with the middle and high skills needed for careers that are growing in Ohio.

Today, Ohio has an unemployment rate above the national average. It was 6.3 percent in June.

Between 2000 and 2007, Ohio experienced a 24.3 percent drop in manufacturing employment, shedding nearly 230,000 jobs. Overall employment dropped by nearly 3.6 percent in the same time period.

That said, employers throughout the state talk about jobs gone begging, and not being able to fill middle and high skilled positions. There are open jobs in high-tech, healthcare, and even manufacturing that are going unfilled.

A recent report by labor economists Harry Holzer and Robert Lerman found that substantial demand remains in today's labor market for skilled workers. This is particularly true for “middle-skill” jobs that require more than a high school degree but less than a 4-year college degree. These jobs make up nearly half of America's labor market and provide good compensation for workers.

The approach Senator SNOWE and I take in this bill is to organize training around industry clusters.

Silicon Valley, the Research Triangle in North Carolina, Route 128 around Boston—these are examples of clusters.

But it is not just high tech jobs either.

Think of tourism in Florida, or insurance in Connecticut, or food packaging in Pennsylvania. These are successful clusters that build around a skilled labor force.

The Ohio Workforce Board has compiled great information about emerging industries and skills programs needed to see people fill these jobs.

Ohio Governor Ted Strickland and Chancellor Eric Fingerhut are giving workforce training a high priority.

This bill complements those efforts, and builds on great examples of cluster partnerships around the country.

The National Governors Association has been promoting this model, and it really will be the way we successfully train our workers and promote regional economic development.

Nobody wants lack of training to be the constraint on Ohio's economic growth.

So the SECTORS Act focuses on targeted training, with multiple stakeholders in the same industry. The bill right now requires four principal stakeholders to be part of a training program: industry, labor unions, workforce investment boards, and community colleges.

We want to build in a process that makes a training program sustainable and not just a one-time infusion of money. With that in mind, Senator SNOWE and I have written in our bill a matching funds requirement.

The legislation builds in rigorous evaluation so lawmakers and policymakers know how tax dollars are being spent, something that has not been the cause under President Bush's Department of Labor's training initiatives.

The Government Accountability Office found in May 2008 that the Labor Department's demand-driven workforce training programs have often been awarded through a non-competitive process, and have lacked accountability and evaluation so that Americans know how their tax dollars are being spent.

We need to break clean from this approach. I plan to work with Senator SNOWE and colleagues in both chambers to authorize an industry clusters skills training program that builds in accountability and sustainability, and helps workers and businesses thrive in Ohio, Maine, and throughout the country.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 3368

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Strengthening Employment Clusters to Organize Regional Success Act of 2008” or the “SECTORS Act of 2008”.

SEC. 2. INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIP GRANT.

Subtitle D of title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (29 U.S.C. 2911 et seq.) is

amended by inserting after section 174 the following:

“SEC. 174A. INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIP GRANT PROGRAM.

“(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to create designated capacity to promote industry or sector partnerships that lead collaborative planning, resource alignment, and training efforts across multiple firms for a range of workers employed or potentially employed by a targeted industry cluster, in order to encourage industry growth and competitiveness and to improve worker training, retention, and advancement in targeted industry clusters, including by developing—

“(1) immediate strategies for regions and communities to fulfill pressing skilled workforce needs;

“(2) long-term plans to grow targeted industry clusters with better training and a more productive workforce;

“(3) core competencies and competitive advantages for regions and communities undergoing structural economic redevelopment; and

“(4) cross-firm skill standards, career ladders, job redefinitions, employer practices, and shared training and support capacities that facilitate the advancement of workers at all skill levels.

“(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) CAREER LADDER.—The term ‘career ladder’ means an identified series of positions, work experiences, and educational benchmarks or credentials that offer occupational and financial advancement within a specified career field or related fields over time.

“(2) ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY.—The term ‘economic self-sufficiency’ means, with respect to a worker, earning a wage sufficient to support a family adequately, based on factors such as—

“(A) family size;

“(B) the number and ages of children in the family;

“(C) the cost of living in the worker's community; and

“(D) other factors that may vary by region.

“(3) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible entity’ means—

“(A) an industry or sector partnership; or

“(B) an eligible State agency.

“(4) ELIGIBLE STATE AGENCY.—The term ‘eligible State agency’ means a State agency designated by the Governor of the State for the purposes of the grant program under this section.

“(5) HIGH-PRIORITY OCCUPATION.—The term ‘high-priority occupation’ means an occupation that—

“(A) has a significant presence in an industry cluster;

“(B) is in demand by employers;

“(C) pays family-sustaining wages that enable workers to achieve economic self-sufficiency, or can reasonably be expected to lead to such wages;

“(D) has a documented career ladder; and

“(E) has a significant impact on a region's economic development strategy.

“(6) HIGH ROAD EMPLOYER.—The term ‘high road employer’ means an employer interested in advancing workers through processes and investments in education, training, and research and development.

“(7) INDUSTRY CLUSTER.—The term ‘industry cluster’ means a concentration of interconnected businesses, suppliers, service providers, and associated institutions in a particular field that are linked by common workforce needs.

“(8) INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIP.—The term ‘industry or sector partnership’ means a workforce collaborative that—

“(A) organizes key stakeholders in a targeted industry cluster into a working group that focuses on the human capital needs of a targeted industry cluster and that includes, at the appropriate stage of development of the partnership—

“(i) representatives of multiple firms or employers, including workers, in a targeted industry cluster, including small- and medium-sized employers when practicable;

“(ii) 1 or more representatives of State labor organizations or central labor coalitions;

“(iii) 1 or more representatives of local boards;

“(iv) 1 or more representatives of postsecondary educational institutions or other training providers; and

“(v) 1 or more representatives of State workforce agencies or other entities providing employment services; and

“(B) may include representatives of—

“(i) State or local government;

“(ii) State or local economic development agencies;

“(iii) other State or local agencies;

“(iv) chambers of commerce;

“(v) nonprofit organizations;

“(vi) industry associations; and

“(vii) other organizations, as determined necessary by the members comprising the industry or sector partnership.

“(9) TARGETED INDUSTRY CLUSTER.—The term ‘targeted industry cluster’ means an industry cluster that has—

“(A) economic impact in a local or regional area;

“(B) immediate workforce development needs; and

“(C) documented career opportunities.

“(c) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—From amounts appropriated under subsection (i), the Secretary shall award, on a competitive basis, planning grants described in paragraph (3) and implementation grants described in paragraph (4) to eligible entities, to enable the eligible entities to plan and implement, respectively, the eligible entities’ strategic objectives in accordance with subsection (f).

“(2) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—

“(A) PLANNING GRANTS.—A planning grant awarded under paragraph (3) shall not exceed \$250,000.

“(B) IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.—An implementation grant awarded under paragraph (4)(A) shall not exceed a total of \$2,500,000 for a 3-year period.

“(C) RENEWAL GRANTS.—A renewal grant awarded under paragraph (4)(C) shall not exceed a total of \$1,500,000 for a 3-year period.

“(3) PLANNING GRANTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may award a planning grant under this section to an eligible entity that—

“(i) is a newly formed industry or sector partnership; and

“(ii) has not received a grant under this section.

“(B) DURATION.—A planning grant shall be for a duration of 1 year.

“(4) IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may award an implementation grant under this section to—

“(i) an eligible entity that has already received a planning grant under this section; or

“(ii) an eligible entity that is an established industry or sector partnership.

“(B) DURATION.—An implementation grant shall be for a duration of not more than 3 years, and may be renewed in accordance with subparagraph (C).

“(C) RENEWAL.—The Secretary may renew an implementation grant for not more than 3 years. A renewal of such grant shall be sub-

ject to the requirements of this section, except that the Secretary shall—

“(i) prioritize renewals to eligible entities that can demonstrate the long-term sustainability of an industry or sector partnership funded under this section;

“(ii) as a condition of renewing the grant, and notwithstanding subsection (d), decrease the amount of the Federal share and increase the amount of the non-Federal share required for the grant, which must include at least a 25 percent cash match from the State, the industry cluster, or some combination thereof; and

“(iii) require assurances that the eligible entity will leverage, each year, additional funding sources in accordance with subparagraph (D)(ii) than the eligible entity provided for the preceding year of the grant.

“(D) FEDERAL AND NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—

“(i) FEDERAL SHARE.—Except as provided in subparagraph (C)(ii), the Federal share of an implementation grant under this section shall be—

“(I) 90 percent of the costs of the activities described in subsection (g), in the first year of the grant;

“(II) 80 percent of such costs in the second year of the grant; and

“(III) 70 percent of such costs in the third year of the grant.

“(ii) NON-FEDERAL.—The non-Federal share of an implementation grant under this section may be in cash or in-kind, and may come from State, local, philanthropic, private, or other sources.

“(5) FISCAL AGENT.—Each eligible entity receiving a grant under this section that is an industry or sector partnership shall designate an entity in the partnership as the fiscal agent for purposes of this grant.

“(6) USE OF GRANT FUNDS DURING GRANT PERIODS.—An eligible entity receiving grant funds under a planning grant, implementation grant, or a renewal grant under this section shall expend grant funds or obligate grant funds to be expended by the last day of the grant period.

“(d) APPLICATION PROCESS.—

“(1) IDENTIFICATION OF A TARGETED INDUSTRY CLUSTER.—In order to qualify for a grant under this section, an eligible entity shall identify a targeted industry cluster that could benefit from such grant by—

“(A) working with businesses, industry associations and organizations, labor organizations, State boards, local boards, economic development agencies, and other organizations that the eligible entity determines necessary, to identify an appropriate targeted industry cluster based on criteria that include, at a minimum—

“(i) data showing the competitiveness of the industry cluster;

“(ii) the importance of the industry cluster to the economic development of the area served by the eligible entity;

“(iii) the identification of supply and distribution chains within the industry cluster; and

“(iv) research studies on industry clusters; and

“(B) working with appropriate employment agencies, workforce investment boards, economic development agencies, community organizations, and other organizations that the eligible entity determines necessary to ensure that the targeted industry cluster identified under subparagraph (A) should be targeted for investment, based primarily on the following criteria:

“(i) Demonstrated demand for job growth potential.

“(ii) Competitiveness.

“(iii) Employment base.

“(iv) Wages and benefits.

“(v) Demonstrated importance of the targeted industry cluster to the area’s economy.

“(vi) Workforce development needs.

“(2) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity desiring to receive a grant under this section shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require. An application submitted under this paragraph shall contain, at a minimum, the following:

“(A) A description of the eligible entity, evidence of the eligible entity’s capacity to carry out activities in support of the strategic objectives identified in the application under subparagraph (D), and, if the eligible entity is an industry or sector partnership, a description of the expected participation and responsibilities of each of the mandatory partners described in subsection (b)(8)(A).

“(B) A description of the targeted industry cluster for which the eligible entity intends to carry out activities through a grant under this section, and a description of how such targeted industry cluster was identified in accordance with paragraph (1).

“(C) A description of the workers that will be targeted or recruited by the partnership, including an analysis of the existing labor market, a description of potential barriers to employment for targeted workers, and a description of strategies that will be employed to help workers overcome such barriers.

“(D) A description of the strategic objectives that the eligible entity intends to carry out for the targeted industry cluster, which objectives shall include—

“(i) recruiting key stakeholders in the targeted industry cluster, such as businesses and employers, labor organizations, industry associations, local boards, State boards, and education and training providers, and regularly convening the stakeholders in a collaborative structure that supports the sharing of information, ideas, and challenges common to the targeted industry cluster;

“(ii) identifying the training needs of multiple businesses, especially skill gaps critical to competitiveness and innovation to the targeted industry cluster;

“(iii) facilitating economies of scale by aggregating training and education needs of multiple employers;

“(iv) helping postsecondary educational institutions and training institutions align curricula and programs to industry demand, particularly for higher skill, high-priority occupations validated by the industry;

“(v) ensuring that the State agency that administers the Wagner-Peyser Act program shall inform recipients of unemployment insurance and trade adjustment assistance under chapter 2 or 6 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq., 2401 et seq.) of the job and training opportunities that may result from the implementation of this grant;

“(vi) informing and collaborating with organizations such as youth councils, business-education partnerships, apprenticeship programs, secondary schools, and postsecondary educational institutions, and with parents and career counselors, for the purpose of addressing the challenges of connecting disadvantaged adults as defined in section 132(b)(1)(B)(v) and disadvantaged youth as defined in section 127(b) to careers;

“(vii) helping companies identify, and work together to address, common organizational and human resource challenges, such as—

“(I) recruiting new workers;

“(II) implementing effective workplace practices;

“(III) retaining dislocated and incumbent workers;

“(IV) implementing a high-performance work organization;

“(V) recruiting and retaining women in nontraditional occupations;

“(VI) adopting new technologies; and

“(VII) fostering experiential and contextualized on-the-job learning;

“(viii) developing and strengthening career ladders within and across companies (in cooperation with labor organizations if the labor organizations represent employees engaged in similar work in the industry cluster), in order to enable dislocated, incumbent and entry-level workers to improve skills and advance to higher-wage jobs;

“(ix) improving job quality through improving wages, benefits, and working conditions;

“(x) helping partner companies in industry or sector partnerships to attract potential employees from a diverse job seeker base, including individuals with barriers to employment (such as job seekers who are economically disadvantaged, youth, older workers, and individuals who have completed a term of imprisonment), by identifying such barriers through analysis of the existing labor market and implementing strategies to help such workers overcome such barriers; and

“(xi) strengthening connections among businesses in the targeted industry cluster, leading to cooperation beyond workforce issues that will improve competitiveness and job quality, such as joint purchasing, market research, or centers for technology and innovation.

“(E) A description of the manner in which the eligible entity intends to make sustainable progress toward the strategic objectives described in subparagraph (D).

“(F) Performance measures, with quantifiable benchmarks, for measuring progress toward the strategic objectives. Such measures shall consider, at a minimum, the benefits provided by the grant activities funded under this section for—

“(i) workers employed in the targeted industry cluster, disaggregated by gender and race, including—

“(I) the number of workers receiving portable industry-recognized credentials;

“(II) the number of workers with increased wages, the percentage of workers with increased wages, and the average wage increase; and

“(III) for dislocated or nonincumbent workers, the number of workers placed in sector-related jobs; and

“(ii) firms and industries in the targeted industry cluster, including—

“(I) the creation or updating of an industry plan to meet current and future workforce demand;

“(II) the creation or updating of published industry-wide skill standards or career pathways;

“(III) the creation or updating of portable, industry-recognized credentials, or where there is not such a credential, the creation or updating of a training curriculum that can lead to the development of such a credential;

“(IV) in the case of an eligible entity that is an industry or sector partnership, the number of firms, and the percentage of the local industry, participating in the industry or sector partnership; and

“(V) the number of firms, and the percentage of the local industry, receiving workers or services through the grant funded under this section.

“(G) A timeline for achieving progress toward the strategic objectives.

“(H) In the case of an eligible entity desiring an implementation grant under this section, an assurance that the eligible entity will leverage other funding sources, in addition to the amount required for the non-Fed-

eral share under subsection (d), to provide training or supportive services to workers under the grant program. Such additional funding sources may include—

“(i) funding under this title used for such training and supportive services;

“(ii) funding under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998 (20 U.S.C. 9201 et seq.);

“(iii) funding under chapter 2 or 6 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.);

“(iv) economic development funding;

“(v) employer contributions to training initiatives; or

“(vi) providing employees with employee release time for such training or supportive services.

“(e) AWARD BASIS.—

“(1) GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION.—The Secretary shall award grants under this section in a manner to ensure geographic diversity.

“(2) PRIORITIES.—In awarding grants under this section, the Secretary shall give priority to eligible entities that—

“(A) work with high road employers within a targeted industry cluster to retain and expand employment in high wage, high growth areas;

“(B) focus on helping workers move toward economic self-sufficiency and ensuring the workers have access to adequate supportive services;

“(C) address the needs of firms with limited human resources or in-house training capacity, including small- and medium-sized firms; and

“(D) coordinate with entities carrying out State and local workforce investment, economic development, and education activities.

“(f) ACTIVITIES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity receiving a grant under this section shall carry out the activities necessary to meet the strategic objectives described in the entity’s application in a manner that—

“(A) integrates services and funding sources in a way that enhances the effectiveness of the activities; and

“(B) uses grant funds awarded under this section efficiently.

“(2) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—An eligible entity may retain a portion of a grant awarded under this section for a fiscal year to carry out the administration of this section in an amount not to exceed 10 percent of the grant amount.

“(g) EVALUATION AND PROGRESS REPORTS.—

“(1) ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT AND EVALUATION.—Not later than 1 year after receiving a grant under this section, and annually thereafter, an eligible entity shall—

“(A) report to the Secretary, and to the Governor of the State that the eligible entity serves, on the activities funded pursuant to a grant under this section; and

“(B) evaluate the progress the eligible entity has made toward the strategic objectives identified in the application under subsection (d)(2)(D), and measure the progress using the performance measures identified in the application under subsection (d)(2)(F).

“(2) REPORT TO THE SECRETARY.—An eligible entity receiving a grant under this section shall submit to the Secretary a report containing the results of the evaluation described in subparagraph (B) at such time and in such manner as the Secretary may require.

“(h) ADMINISTRATION BY THE SECRETARY.—

“(1) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—The Secretary may retain not more than 10 percent of the funds appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under subsection (j) for each fiscal year to administer this section.

“(2) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND OVERSIGHT.—The Secretary shall provide technical assistance and oversight to assist the eligible State and local agencies or eligible entities in applying for and administering grants awarded under this section. The Secretary shall also provide technical assistance to eligible entities in the form of conferences and through the collection and dissemination of information on best practices developed by eligible partnerships. The Secretary may award a grant or contract to 1 or more national or State organizations to provide technical assistance to foster the planning, formation, and implementation of industry cluster partnerships.

“(3) PERFORMANCE MEASURES.—The Secretary shall issue a range of performance measures, with quantifiable benchmarks, and methodologies that eligible entities may use to evaluate the effectiveness of each type of activity in making progress toward the strategic objectives described in subsection (d)(2)(D). Such measures shall consider the benefits of the industry or sector partnership and its activities for workers, firms, industries, and communities.

“(4) DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall—

“(A) coordinate the annual review of each eligible entity receiving a grant under this section and produce an overview report that, at a minimum, includes—

“(i) the critical learning of each industry or sector partnership, such as—

“(I) the training that was most effective;

“(II) the human resource challenges that were most common;

“(III) how technology is changing the targeted industry cluster; and

“(IV) the changes that may impact the targeted industry cluster over the next 5 years; and

“(ii) a description of what eligible entities serving similar targeted industry clusters consider exemplary practices, such as—

“(I) how to work effectively with postsecondary educational institutions;

“(II) the use of internships;

“(III) coordinating with apprenticeships and cooperative education programs;

“(IV) how to work effectively with schools providing vocational education;

“(V) how to work effectively with adult populations, including—

“(aa) dislocated workers;

“(bb) women in nontraditional occupations; and

“(cc) individuals with barriers to employment, such as job seekers who—

“(AA) are economically disadvantaged;

“(BB) have limited English proficiency;

“(CC) require remedial education;

“(DD) are older workers;

“(EE) are individuals who have completed a sentence for a criminal offense; and

“(FF) have other barriers to employment;

“(VI) employer practices that are most effective;

“(VII) the types of training that are most effective; and

“(VIII) other areas where industry or sector partnerships can assist each other;

“(B) make resource materials, including all reports published and all data collected under this section, available on the Internet; and

“(C) conduct conferences and seminars to—

“(i) disseminate information on best practices developed by eligible entities receiving a grant under this section; and

“(ii) provide information to the communities of eligible entities.

“(5) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall transmit a report to Congress on the industry or sector partnership

grant program established by this section. The report shall include a description of—

“(A) the eligible entities receiving funding;“(B) the activities carried out by the eligible entities;“(C) how the eligible entities were selected to receive funding under this section; and“(D) an assessment of the results achieved by the grant program including findings from the annual reviews described in paragraph (4)(A).

“(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—“(1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2009 and for each succeeding fiscal year.

“(2) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under paragraph (1) for the fiscal year shall remain available until the end of the second fiscal year following the fiscal year in which such amounts were first appropriated.”.

SEC. 3. FEDERAL AGENCY COORDINATION.

(a) INTERAGENCY COOPERATION.—The head of each Federal department or agency whose funding, regulations, or other policies impact workers shall cooperate with the Secretary of Labor to—

(1) maintain up-to-date information on jobs, wages, benefits, skills, and careers of workers impacted by the actions of such agency or department;

(2) develop and implement policies that would improve the jobs and careers of workers impacted by the actions of such agency or department; and

(3) report the department or agency's job creation and economic development strategies to the Secretary.

(b) ALIGNMENT.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary and the heads of other Federal departments or agencies shall work together to align existing education and training programs with the demonstrated needs of industry or sector partnerships, as defined in section 174A(b) of the Workforce Investment Act. These collaborative efforts shall include the following:

(1) DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE.—The Secretary of Commerce shall advise the Secretary of Labor of the Department of Commerce's workforce and economic development strategies, programs, and initiatives.

(2) JUSTICE DEPARTMENT.—The Attorney General shall—

(A) align federally funded programs offering training for inmates with industry clusters (as defined in section 174A(b) of the Workforce Investment Act) and high-priority occupations, and annually review these training programs to assure that the training programs prepare individuals for high-priority occupations; and

(B) align federally funded reentry programs to take advantage of information and career opportunities provided by industry and sector partnerships.

(3) DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.—The Secretary of Education shall—

(A) develop and support career ladders for high-priority occupations critical to targeted industry clusters served by a grant under section 174A of the Workforce Investment Act;

(B) develop and support innovative programs to address literacy (including English as a second language) and numeracy shortcomings, especially in those occupations critical to such targeted industry clusters;

(C) develop and support programs and strategies to reduce barriers to adult education;

(D) develop and support career education initiatives in middle and high schools; and

(E) support initiatives to develop industry-recognized credentials and new credit-bearing

programs in public and private postsecondary educational institutions, especially in occupations critical to such targeted industry clusters.

(4) DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall—

(A) develop and support innovative programs that connect qualified individuals receiving assistance under the State temporary assistance for needy families program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) with employment opportunities in the targeted industry clusters served by a grant under section 174A of the Workforce Investment Act;

(B) develop and support strategies to prepare individuals receiving assistance under the State temporary assistance for needy families programs funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) for success in postsecondary education and training programs; and

(C) develop and support career education initiatives that provide such individuals with information to guide the clients' education and training plans.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today, with Senator SHERROD BROWN, to introduce the Selecting Employment Clusters to Organize Regional Success, SECTORS, Act. This legislation would amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and establish a new industry or sector partnership grant program administered by the Department of Labor.

As Co-Chair of the bipartisan Senate Task Force on Manufacturing, one of my key goals is to ensure that manufacturers are able to find a capable workforce. Unfortunately, many manufacturers across the country have raised significant concerns about whether the next generation of workers is being trained to meet the needs of an increasingly high-tech workplace. It is critical that we ensure that our Nation has a sufficient workforce to meet the needs of the U.S. manufacturing sector.

This legislation provides grants to help industry clusters—which are interrelated group of businesses, service providers, and associated institutions—establish and expand industry partnerships. Existing partnerships, which are similar to those created by this bill, have long been recognized as key strategic elements within some of the most successful economic development initiatives throughout the country. Unfortunately, current Federal policy does not provide sufficient support for these critical ventures.

In my home State of Maine, the number of manufacturing jobs has dropped dramatically over the past decade. Between 1998 and 2008, manufacturing employment in Maine went from 81,000 to 59,000, a 27 percent decrease! A key reason manufacturing job losses have dramatically affected Maine is that the average manufacturing salary is \$10,000 more than the average annual State wage. The statistics for the whole of New England are no better. From January 1998 through December 2006, the region witnessed a decline of roughly 25 percent of its manufacturing workforce.

For those who have lost manufacturing jobs, it is vital to help improve

their skills, preparing them for available U.S. jobs. This legislation provides a crucial link between establishing worker training programs and fostering new employment opportunities for those who have been affected by the manufacturing industry's decline. By promoting this innovative partnership we will take a crucial step toward rejuvenating our economy.

Groups, such as the National Governors Association, the Aspen Institute, and the National Network of Sector Partners have promoted and documented the success of sector partnerships. Throughout the country, sector partnerships are being used to promote the long-term competitiveness of industries and advancing employment opportunities. For example, the State of Maine has recently created the North Star Alliance Initiative. The alliance has brought together Maine's boat builders, the University of Maine's Advanced Engineered Wood Composites Centers, Maine's marine and composite trade association, economic development groups, and investment organizations for the purpose of advancing workforce training.

Out Nation's capacity to innovate is a key reason why our economy continues to grow and remains the envy of the world. Ideas by innovative Americans in the private and public sector have paid enormous dividends, improving the lives of millions throughout the world. We must continue to encourage all avenues for advancing this vital sector if America is to compete at the forefront of innovation.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 632—CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO USE THE UPCOMING OLYMPIC GAMES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PUSH FOR THE PARTIES TO THE CONFLICTS IN SUDAN, CHAD, AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC TO CEASE HOSTILITIES AND REVIVE EFFORTS TOWARD A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THEIR NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONFLICTS

Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. CARDIN, Ms. LANDRIEU, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. KERRY, Mr. BROWNBACK, and Mr. JOHNSON) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 632

Whereas, since the conflict in Darfur, Sudan, began in 2003, hundreds of thousands of people across the region have been murdered, tortured, and raped, with more than 2,500,000 people driven from their homes as a result of ongoing violence, and all parties to the conflict continue to attack civilians throughout the region, while impeding access of humanitarian workers;