S. 1238

At the request of Mr. REED, the names of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. COWAN) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) were added as cosponsors of S. 1238, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to extend the current reduced interest rate for undergraduate Federal Direct Stafford Loans for 1 year, to modify required distribution rules for pension plans, and for other purposes.

S. 1241

At the request of Mr. MANCHIN, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1241, a bill to establish the interest rate for certain Federal student loans, and for other purposes.

S. 1251

At the request of Mr. REED, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1251, a bill to establish programs with respect to childhood, adolescent, and young adult cancer.

S. RES. 151

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 151, a resolution urging the Government of Afghanistan to ensure transparent and credible presidential and provincial elections in April 2014 by adhering to internationally accepted democratic standards, establishing a transparent electoral process, and ensuring security for voters and candidates.

S. RES. 191

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 191, a resolution designating July 27, 2013, as ''National Day of the American Cowboy''.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. HATCH:

S. 1270. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for reform of public and private pension plans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the pension reform legislation I am introducing today. I am taking this step for a simple reason: America cannot continue sleepwalking into the financial disaster that awaits us if we do not get the public pension debt crisis under control.

The bill I introduce today is called The Secure Annuities for Employee Retirement Act of 2013—the SAFE Retirement Act, for short. In addition to public pension underfunding, the SAFE Retirement Act addresses two other critically important aspects of retirement policy: 401(k) plan coverage and access to professional investment advice for workers and retirees. I will briefly address each part in turn.

I have been working on the public pension underfunding problem, which I call the pension debt crisis, for some time. Two years ago, I stood before this Senate and described the financial challenge public pension plans pose to Americans. I described how the gap between the pensions that have been promised to workers by State and local governments and the money set aside was as much as $4.4 trillion short by some estimates, more than the total amount of municipal bond debt nationwide.

I explained that the problem of public pension underfunding existed before the 2008 recession and any attempt to lay blame for the problem at the feet of Wall Street or big business or some other group was just blame shifting.

I observed how the business world long ago recognized that traditional pension plans—defined benefit plans—had become unsustainable for most private companies and that most had moved toward 401(k)-style plans—or defined contribution plans—because costs are lower and more predictable and they fit well within an increasingly mobile and dynamic workforce. As usual, governments have been slow to innovate, slow to adapt, and when they have acted, their actions have been too limited to solve the problem.

I said at the time I had not settled on the best solution, but that I was working hard and talking to the experts about the best way to proceed. That is what we did.

Last year, after extensive study, I delivered a report about the public pension debt problem titled ''State and Local Government Defined Benefit Plans: The Pension Debt Crisis that Threatens America.'' The study showed that public pension underfunding is a longstanding problem and that thecurrent pension debt crisis goes back more than a decade, if not further. The report explained why public pension debt is a Federal concern, reviewed previous Federal attempts at legislation and more recent State legislative measures focused almost exclusively on new employees and the attempt by the Government Accounting Standards Board to restore a level of discipline to public pension accounting.

At the end of the report, I laid out four essential goals for public pension reform. First, public pension plans must be affordable for public employers and taxpayers. Second, plans must be structured so taxpayers in the future have no liability for past years of employee service. Third, public plans should provide retirement income security for employees. Finally, fourth, a Federal bailout of the States must he avoided at all costs.

As you will see, I listened to people on all sides of the public pension debate, including employee groups who want public plans to provide lifetime income. I could have merely recommended that State and local governments move to a 401(k)-style plan, but I settled instead on a policy of trying to achieve retirement income security as well.

Despite numerous legislative initiatives enacted at the State and local level, the public pension debt crisis has gotten worse, not better. In my report, I warned that examples such as Prichard, AL, Vallejo, CA, and Central Falls, RI, were only the beginning. Sadly, I was right. Since that time, we have witnessed the pension debt crisis descend on much larger cities such as San Jose, CA, Stockton, CA, San Bernardino, CA, and Detroit, MI. Does anyone doubt that a State could be next? How many times does the credit rating of Illinois have to be downgraded before we act? How long can Rhode Island hold out when it is expected to save its struggling cities while it struggles with its own State pension crisis?

The problem is getting more serious every day, and the four goals I outlined in my report cannot be reached merely by fine-tuning the existing pension structures available to public employers. A new public pension design is needed, one that provides cost certainty for State and local taxpayers, retirement income security for State and local employees, and does not include an explicit or implicit government guarantee.

I am pleased to say I believe I have designed such a plan. Title I of the SAFE Retirement Act creates a new pension plan called an annuity accumulation retirement plan. I call it the SAFE Retirement Plan.

The concept of the SAFE Retirement Plan is simple: take advantage of the lifetime income that fixed annuities can provide while mitigating the volatile effect of interest rates on pension levels by purchasing an annuity contract for each worker every year during their career so a worker builds a solid pension year by year during their entire working life.

With a SAFE Retirement Plan, employees receive a secure pension at retirement for life that is 100-percent vested, fully portable, and cannot be underfunded. Employers and taxpayers receive stable, predictable, and affordable pension costs. Underfunding is not possible. The life insurance industry pays the pensions and bears all of the investment risk. Unlike current public pension plans, the SAFE Retirement Plan will be protected by a robust and multi-faceted State insurance regulatory system built to ensure financial strength and solvency and backed by a State law-based consumer safety net. Rather than repairing their pension plans, States that adopt the SAFE Retirement Plan will be upgrading their pension plans.

Remember, there is no Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation backing State and local pension plans, and there never will be. Corporations that sponsor pension plans pay premiums to the PBGC, and their workers and retirees receive a level of insurance in the event the plan does not have assets sufficient to pay promised benefits.

State and local workers enjoy no such protection, so another solution is

needed. The SAFE Retirement Plan, in my opinion, is the answer. It is supported by a well-regulated, highly solvent State insurance system and has a built-in financial backstop that does not rely on State or Federal taxes. Honestly, regardless of which side of the debate Senators have been on to date, they must acknowledge that from a solvency perspective, this is a big improvement over the current public pension system.

I know some will argue my bill will give too much new business to the life insurance industry. That is not how I look at it. The way I see it, my bill takes advantage of the life insurance industry to help Americans solve a serious pension problem. After all, the life insurance industry is the only industry in the world designed from the ground up to manage longevity risk.

Annuity contracts purchased through a SAFE Retirement Plan will be competitively bid upon, on a group contract basis, so the workers receive the highest possible pension in retirement. Government finance officers will be involved in the bidding process to ensure best practices, and life insurance companies will be supervised by their respective State insurance departments. The life insurance industry is reliably solvent because State insurance regulations are strict, with stringent reserve requirements and conservative investment standards. In fact, State-licensed life insurance carriers survived the 2008 stock market meltdown in far better condition than any other part of the financial sector.

The status quo is no longer acceptable. In fact, maintaining the status quo comes with a very high cost. In 2011, S&P downgraded the United States in part because of the enormous debt represented by underfunded State and local pension plans. The credit rating agencies have downgraded Illinois multiple times, and Moody's has begun scrutinizing State and local pension obligations more closely. What will happen when the credit rating agencies see that most State and local governments have no serious plan to address the crisis?

A pension is insurance against outliving the money you have available to pay your monthly bills. It cannot be denied that people are living longer. As wonderful as that is, it also means we need to find new ways to stretch our monthly pension dollars over longer lifetimes. The SAFE Retirement Plan can meet the test.

In addition to public pension reform, title II of the legislation I introduce today has several important private pension reforms. The centerpiece is the Starter 401(k), a new type of 401(k) plan that allows employees to save for retirement while placing minimal burdens on employers. Starter 401(k) plans allow employees to save up to $8,000 each year but do not require employer contributions. This plan will be especially useful to small companies that do not have a retirement plan and startup companies that must devote all of their resources to building their business in the early years.

The Finance Committee has received evidence in hearings that access to a retirement plan at work is the best way to ensure that individuals save for retirement. The policy goal of Congress, therefore, should be to encourage employers to establish and maintain a workplace retirement plan. The corollary is that Congress should not adopt policies that discourage employers from maintaining a retirement plan.

The Starter 401(k) is a winner on all counts. It is targeted at businesses that do not already have a plan for their employees, it allows employers to help employees save their own money in amounts greater than they could on their own, and it has none of the expensive and burdensome testing and contribution obligations for employers associated with other retirement plans. As one of the many supporters of this bill told me: '' [T]he Starter 401(k) is an idea whose time has come.''

In addition to the Starter 401(k), the private pension reforms I introduce today will help employers by simplifying reporting rules, easing discrimination testing safe harbor rules, allowing modernized electronic disclosure options, and encouraging the provision of lifetime income options for employees. These are commonsense and long-overdue reforms to our Nation' s retirement savings laws, especially with regard to small-and mid-sized employers.

Last but not least, title III of the legislation I introduce today will ensure that retirees continue to have affordable access to professional investment advice.

The Acting Secretary of Labor is set to rewrite a 1975 regulation and dramatically expand the ERISA fiduciary duty and prohibited transaction rules applicable to 401(k) plans. The Acting Secretary also intends to apply the new and restrictive rules to IRAs, which will cause investment advisers to stop providing advice to many IRA owners.

I have written to the Secretary of Labor in the past about the issue, but my concerns have not been addressed. In fact, there have been a number of letters from Members in both Houses of Congress and on both sides of the aisle imploring the Department of Labor to reconsider the issuance of the expansive and burdensome regulations. Forty Members of Congress have written the Labor Secretary on this issue just since February, to no avail. In light of the DOL's—the Department of Labor's—intransigence, my bill includes a legislative solution to the problem.

The IRA prohibited transaction rules are codified solely in the Internal Revenue Code and address transactions that involve self-dealing and conflicts of interest. Prior to the issuance of a 1978 Executive Order, Treasury had jurisdiction over the IRA prohibited transaction rules governing investment advice. The 1978 order transferred Treasury' s jurisdiction to the DOL.

The SAFE Retirement Act restores jurisdiction for IRA prohibited transaction rules to the Treasury Department. In addition, Treasury will be required to consult with the Securities and Exchange Commission when prescribing rules relating to the professional standard of care owed by brokers and investment advisers to IRA owners.

The 1978 Executive Order also transferred to the DOL some of the Treasury Department's joint jurisdiction over the prohibited transaction rules applicable to retirement plans. The bill I introduce today restores joint jurisdiction to Treasury and the DOL.

Joint jurisdiction makes sense in light of the DOL proposal to expand the 1975 regulation because Treasury must enforce prohibited transaction violations through the assessment of excise taxes. Treasury should have a role to play in any expansion of the rules because expanded rules will mean more excise tax cases for the IRS to process.

If the Acting Secretary of Labor believes that the 1975 fiduciary regulation that has governed retirement investment advice for nearly four decades should be revisited, then the 1978 decision to grant the Secretary of Labor additional ERISA regulatory authority also should be revisited.

After all, we do not know that the DOL would have been granted additional authority in 1978 if the sensible 1975 regulations had not been issued.

Make no mistake, the position I take today regarding IRA investment advice is not a partisan position. In the last Congress, 124 Members from both sides of the aisle and from both Chambers—including 75 Democrats, I might add—wrote to the Labor Secretary asking her not to take this course of action. The Secretary finally withdrew the proposal last year. But now that the Acting Secretary is again threatening to introduce this ill-conceived rule, dozens of Members of Congress have again written the Acting Secretary asking that IRAs be protected.

I ask unanimous consent that I be able to complete my remarks.

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

Mr. HATCH. I would like to submit for the RECORD two letters written in March and June of this year by a total of 40 Members of the House Democrat caucus once again asking the DOL to avoid the mistake it is about to make.

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

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, March 15, 2013.

Hon. SETH D. HARRIS,
Acting Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY HARRIS: As Members of the Congressional Black Caucus and the House Financial Services Committee, we are following-up on the Department of Labor's

progress on a re-proposal defining the term ''fiduciary'' under the Employment Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA). We appreciate the Department's efforts to examine this issue and protect investors from misleading investment advice. However, we maintain concerns that if the re-proposal reflects the Department's initial fiduciary proposal it could disparately impact retirement savers and investment representatives in the African American community.

The African American community has been hurt to a larger degree by the economic crisis and the challenge of day-to-day expenses is making long-term saving difficult. The service that an investment representative provides to these traditionally underserved families is critical for them to feel confident to understand and invest in the long-term retirement vehicles intended by Congress to help them. In fact, a Prudential study finds that for those African Americans who use a financial advisor, ''product ownership and detailed financial planning increase, and confidence in meeting key financial goals typically doubles.''

We are particularly concerned about the effects these regulations will have on savers in individual retirement accounts (IRAs). If brokers who serve these accounts are subject to ERISA's strict prohibitions on third-party compensation, they may choose to exit the market rather than risk the potentially severe penalties under ERISA for violations. If that occurs, it could cause IRA services to be unattainable by many retirement savers in the African American community.

Due to these concerns, we urge the Department to take full consideration of the rule's impact on African American communities in its economic impact study. Also, it is critical that the Department continue to work together with appropriate agencies and stakeholders on a balanced approach to both protect investors and maintain affordable access to retirement savings products during this time of economic uncertainty.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. We look forward to continue working with you on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Gregory W. Meeks; Gwen Moore; Emanuel Cleaver; Al Green; Maxine Waters; Wm. Lacy Clay; Terri Sewell; David Scott.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, June 14, 2013.

Hon. SETH HARRIS,
Acting Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY HARRIS: We are writing to discuss the Department of Labor's proposed rule to amend the definition of ''fiduciary'' for purposes of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ER1SA). We applaud the Department's efforts to engage on this important subject, but we arc concerned that the re-proposal will disadvantage those it aims to help.

One of our goals as Members of Congress is to work together on issues that affect the minority communities we represent. We write this letter because of our joint concern the re-proposed fiduciary definition could restrict our constituents' access to professional financial advisors.

At a time when many Americans arc struggling to ensure a secure retirement, we have concerns that the Department's re-proposal could severely limit access to low cost investment advice. After years of hard work, often for long hours and at low wages, many of our constituents face the challenge of planning for their retirement without access to professional investment advice and services. We are concerned that a new, more restrictive definition of fiduciary would add yet another barrier to accessing qualified retirement planning services. As you know, studies have shown that even savers with small IRA and 401k balances benefit greatly from the ability to sit with a trusted adviser to help plan for their future. We believe the Department should adopt policies that expand access to advice, particularly in light of the racial and gender disparities that currently exist in retirement savings.

We cannot overstate our desire to ensure that this re-proposed rule enhances investor protection without reducing investor access to affordable retirement advice, products and services. As many of us have expressed to the Department, any attempt to change the existing regulatory structure governing the fiduciary standard should be executed carefully, prudently, and in conjunction with the SEC to avoid uncertainty and disruption in the marketplace. We encourage the Department to learn from its earlier experience by ensuring that the reproposal addresses the concerns raised by a bipartisan, bicameral Congress that caused the Department to withdraw the original proposal in September 2011.

Thank you for consideration of our concerns, and we look forward to closely working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

Frederica S. Wilson; Corrine Brown; Barbara Lee; Wm. Lacy Clay; Danny K. Davis; Donna M. Christensen; Cedric L. Richmond; Emanuel Cleaver; James E. Clyburn; Bobby L. Rush; Hakeem Jeffries; Gregory W. Meeks; Scott DesJarlais; Maxine Waters; Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.; Bennie G. Thompson.

Hank Johnson; Robin L. Kelly; Marcia L. Fudge; Karen Bass; Joyce Beatty; Jim Costa; Elijah E. Cummings; David Scott; G.K. Butterfield; Yvette D. Clarke; Charles B. Rangel; Eleanor H. Norton; Pedro R. Pierluisi; Ed Pastor; Terri Sewell; Tulsi Gabbard.

Mr. HATCH. These letters are proof positive that opposition to the Labor Department's fiduciary regulation continues to be both bipartisan and bicameral.

As I close, I also wish to have printed in the RECORD copies of the many letters I have received in support of the SAFE Retirement Act of 2013.

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

AMERICAN BENEFITS COUNCIL,
July 8, 2013.

Re SAFE Retirement Act of 2013.

Hon. ORRIN G. HATCH,
Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HATCH: On behalf of the American Benefits Council, I am writing to thank you for your leadership regarding the critical challenges facing our private employer-sponsored retirement plan system. Your bill, the SAFE Retirement Act of 2013, includes many provisions that would address important private retirement plan issues and builds on the success of the current system.

Your bill contains provisions that would broaden coverage, increase retirement adequacy, and make plan delivery of information more effective. In particular, the bill provision facilitating electronic communication would allow employers to use forms of disclosure that are far more effective in communicating with participants. Your bill would also facilitate greater use of automatic enrollment, which is critical to increasing the level of retirement savings. There are also many provisions that would broaden plan coverage among small employers, including an enhanced credit for establishing a plan. We believe these proposals are important to further strengthening the private employer-sponsored retirement system and helping workers obtain personal financial security.

We applaud your leadership and we look forward to the opportunity to work with you on this bill.

Sincerely,

LYNN D. DUDLEY,
Senior Vice President, Retirement and International Benefits Policy.

ALLIANCE BENEFIT GROUP—ROCKY MOUNTAIN,
June 24, 2013.

Hon. ORRIN HATCH,
Senate Finance Committee, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HATCH: On behalf of the Alliance Benefit Group (ABG), Alliance Benefit Group—Rocky Mountain (ABGRM), and our affiliates, we hereby would like to offer our sincere support of the SAFE Pension Act of 2013.

ABG is a national association of record keepers, third party administrators, and financial advisors dedicated to the goal of helping Americans securely retire through a strong system of public and private retirement programs. Alliance Benefit Group works with over 14,000 Defined Contribution and Defined Benefit plans across the country representing over $51 Billion in retirement savings and 1 million plan participants. We have been serving retirement and welfare plan participants in Utah since our foundation locally in 1980.

As a trusted service provider we deal firsthand with the challenges facing plan sponsors, plan fiduciaries, and plan participants across a wide spectrum. Many of these concerns are addressed by your legislation. We are especially encouraged by the provisions of the Act designed to increase auto enrollment and auto escalation, allow for new timing allowances designed to increased adoption of qualified plans, increase portability, address longevity risks, and provide for a more flexible safe harbor 401k environment.

Thank you for supporting the retirement system that all Americans depend on for their future to come.

Sincerely,

W. JEFFREY ZOBELL, QPA, QKA,
Chief Executive Officer, Alliance Benefit Group—Rocky Mountain.

ACLI,
July 3, 2013.

Re Safer Pension Act of 2013.

Hon. ORRIN G. HATCH,
U.S. Senate, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HATCH: We want to express our appreciation for your leadership on retirement security issues. ACLI member companies offer insurance contracts and other investment products and services to qualified retirement plans, including defined benefit pension, 401(k) and 403(b) arrangements, and to individuals through individual retirement arrangements (IRAs) or on a non-qualified basis. For many years our members and their products have helped Americans accumulate retirement savings and turn those savings into guaranteed lifetime income.

Our members will be eager to study the provisions of the Safer Pension Act of 2013. We support enhancements to the current employer sponsored system with the goal of increasing simplification, coverage, and facilitating lifetime income options. We look forward to working with you on a number of enhancements including:

Facilitating electronic delivery of participant statements;

Expanding the ability of employers to offer annuities in defined contribution plans;

Encouraging multiple employer defined contribution plans; and

Expanding autoenrollment/autoescalation opportunities for workers.

As Congress considers tax reform, we appreciate your continued support of the current retirement security system. ACLI and its member companies look forward to working with you and your staff to improve retirement security for all Americans.

Sincerely,

WALTER C. WELSH.

ASPPA—WORKING FOR AMERICA'S RETIREMENT,

June 24, 2013.

Re Letter of Support for the SAFE Retirement Act of 2013

Hon. ORRIN HATCH,
Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee, Washington, DC.

DEAR RANKING MEMBER HATCH: On behalf of the American Society of Pension Professionals & Actuaries (ASPPA) and its affiliates, we hereby express our strong support for the SAFE Retirement Act of 2013.

ASPPA is a national organization of more than 15,000 retirement plan professionals who provide consulting and administrative services for qualified retirement plans covering millions of American workers. ASPPA members are retirement professionals of all disciplines including consultants, investment advisors, administrators, actuaries, accountants, and attorneys. The large and broad-based ASPPA membership gives it unusual insight into current practical problems with the Employee Retirement Income Security Act and qualified retirement plans with a particular focus on the issues faced by small- to medium-sized employers. ASPPA membership is diverse and united by a common dedication to the private retirement plan system.

The private retirement system provisions in Title II of the SAFE Act will dramatically simplify the operation of qualified retirement plans by eliminating unnecessary paperwork and traps for the unwary, as well as providing new approaches to expanding the availability of workplace savings through qualified retirement plans, especially small business retirement plans. These common sense proposals will go a long way toward improving the retirement security of millions of working Americans.

ASPPA commends your offering of these proposals, and applauds your commitment to enhancing the private retirement system and the retirement security of our nation's workers.

Sincerely,

BRIAN H. GRAFF, ESQ., APM,
ASPPA Executive Director/CEO.

AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORMS,

JUNE 26, 2013.

Hon. ORRIN HATCH,
United States Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HATCH: On behalf of Americans for Tax Reform, I write today in support of your new bill, the ''Secure Annuities for Employees (SAFE) Retirement Act of 2013.'' I would urge all senators to support this common-sense, job-creating legislation.

The SAFE Retirement Act provides net tax relief for retirement savings. Title II of the legislation spells out a host of common-sense and long-overdue reforms to our nation's retirement savings laws, especially with regard to small- and mid-sized employers. Pending a final score from the Joint Committee on Taxation, it seems self-evident that this section alone makes the SAFE Retirement Act a net tax cut for American families and employers.

The SAFE Retirement Act is good public policy for state and local taxpayers. Title I of the bill allows states to opt into an annuity-based alternative (a ''SAFE Retirement Plan'') to today's under-funded legacy defined benefit pension regime. A state wisely choosing to do so would give taxpayers the assurance that government employees won't strain state government funding obligations into perpetuity—the harsh reality facing many states today as they struggle with meeting the pension promises of an earlier era.

The SAFE Retirement Act builds upon the modernization efforts of the Pension Protection Act of 2006. This bill gives ordinary employers what they've been looking for—a cost-effective, easy to administer, and lower-hassle retirement planning structure they can work with. Common sense reforms like extending elective dates, providing safe harbors, and simplifying paperwork should be able to get broad support. In particular, the ''Starter 401(k)'' is an idea whose time has come.

The ''Secure Annuities for Employees (SAFE) Retirement Act of 2013'' is a great example of good, solid legislative blocking and tackling. I look forward to working with you on this legislation as it winds its way through the lawmaking process.

Sincerely,

GROVER NORQUIST.

Mr. HATCH. These letters come from businesses and organizations representing employers, life insurance companies, State insurance commissioners, State guarantee associations, and tax policy groups. These letters demonstrate that the SAFE Retirement Act is good policy and will make good law. America's retirement system deserves no less.

NOTICE OF HEARING

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I would like to announce that the Committee on Indian Affairs will meet during the session of the Senate on July 17, 2013, in room SD–628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a legislative hearing to receive testimony on the following bills: S. 235, to provide for the conveyance of certain property located in Anchorage, Alaska, from the United States to the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and S. 920, to allow the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in the State of Minnesota to lease or transfer certain land.

Those wishing additional information may contact the Indian Affairs Committee at (202) 224–2251.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on July 9, 2013, at 10:30 a.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on July 9, 2013, at 10 a.m., in room SD–226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Nominations.''

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on July 9, 2013, at 2:30 p.m.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 192, 193, 194; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Daniel R. Russel, of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (East Asian and Pacific Affairs).

Geoffrey R. Pyatt, of California, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counsler, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Ukraine.

Tulinabo Salama Mushingi, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Burkina Faso.

ELECTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 94, S. Res. 151.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 151) urging the Government of Afghanistan to ensure transparent and credible presidential and provincial elections in April 2014 by adhering to internationally accepted democratic standards, establishing a transparent electoral process, and ensuring security for voters and candidates.