MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2091, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the processing by the Department of Veterans Affairs of claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 2105

At the request of Mr. COCHRAN, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2105, a bill to prohibit the Federal funding of a State firearms ownership database.

S. 2118

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2118, a bill to protect the separation of powers in the Constitution of the United States by ensuring that the President takes care that the laws be faithfully executed, and for other purposes.

S. CON. RES. 33

At the request of Mr. COCHRAN, the names of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL) and the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) were added as cosponsors of S. Con. Res. 33, a concurrent resolution celebrating the 100th anniversary of the enactment of the Smith-Lever Act, which established the nationwide Cooperative Extension System.

S. RES. 377

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the names of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER), the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 377, a resolution recognizing the 193rd anniversary of the independence of Greece and celebrating democracy in Greece and the United States.

AMENDMENT NO. 2807

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2807 intended to be proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2808

At the request of Mr. MURPHY, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2808 intended to be proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2810

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2810 intended to be proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2822

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2822 proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2834

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2834 proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2835

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2835 intended to be proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2839

At the request of Mr. BENNET, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2839 proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2842

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2842 proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2843

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2843 intended to be proposed to S. 1086, a bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota:

S. 2125. A bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to ensure the integrity of voice communications and to prevent unjust or unreasonable discrimination among areas of the United States in the delivery of such communications; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss a widespread problem affecting rural communities in South Dakota and across our country. This issue represents both a public safety and economic issue for rural America.

For far too long, rural communities have experienced problems with long-distance or wireless telephone calls that are not being properly connected. The call completion problem extends beyond South Dakota and has affected telephone customers in dozens of states. These call failures create frustration and concern for family members trying to connect with friends and family, as well as small businesses losing business because they miss calls from customers. The problem also poses a serious public safety threat, such as when a police dispatcher cannot reach law enforcement or when a doctor cannot call a patient regarding follow-up care. Rural telephone customers affected by this problem are rightfully frustrated and demand a solution.

I first learned about this issue from the manager of a rural health clinic in Canistota, SD. The clinic has experienced a decline in business as a result of the call completion problems. Incoming calls regularly do not reach the clinic and therefore go unanswered. Additionally, some patients have heard misleading messages about the clinic's number being disconnected, which leads them to believe the clinic has closed. This is just one example of the negative impact this problem is having on communities and Main Street businesses across rural America.

To be honest, I could barely believe it when I first learned about this issue. Today, we should be worried about narrowing the digital divide not worrying whether rural communities have access to basic telephone service. While many factors could be at play, the Federal Communications Commission believes the use of third-party ''least cost routers'' to connect calls is a leading cause of the problem. It appears that some of these intermediate providers are failing to properly complete calls to avoid the higher access charges associated with rural telephone networks. It is particularly challenging to resolve the problem because calls are often dropped before they reach the rural telephone network, making it difficult for rural providers to pinpoint when and where problems occur.

Over the past few years, I have worked with many of my Senate colleagues, the FCC, telephone providers, and consumers to fix this problem and hold those causing this problem accountable. I would like to say a special thank you to Senators AMY KLOBUCHAR and DEB FISCHER for joining me in introducing a Sense of the Senate resolution last May that directed the FCC to take action to end these discriminatory practices. Since our resolution

was introduced, the commission unanimously approved rules to strengthen its ability to monitor and enforce the delivery of calls to rural areas. Although the commission's rulemaking and ongoing investigation represent a step in the right direction, a more immediate resolution is needed.

Today, I introduced the Public Safety and Economic Security Communications Act. This legislation takes immediate action to stop the bad actors that are failing to complete calls to rural areas. The bill includes common sense reforms that will help end the discriminatory delivery of calls by requiring voice providers to register with the FCC and comply with basic service quality standards. The legislation will help ensure that small businesses, families, and emergency responders in every corner of South Dakota and across our country can once again rely upon connection of their incoming telephone calls.

I invite my colleagues to join me in stopping this problem by cosponsoring the Public Safety and Economic Security Communications Act.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 2128. A bill to name the Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Waco, Texas, as the ''Doris Miller Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center''; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. CORNYN. 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. 2128

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

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) On October 12, 1919, Doris Miller was born in Waco, Texas.

(2) On September 16, 1939, Miller enlisted in United States Navy as mess attendant, third class at Naval Recruiting Station, Dallas, Texas to serve for a period of six years.

(3) On February 16, 1941, Miller received a change of rating to mess attendant, second class.

(4) On June 1, 1942, Miller received a change of rating to mess attendant, first class.

(5) On June 1, 1943, Miller received a change of rating, to cook, third class.

(6) On November 25, 1944, Miller was presumed dead by the Secretary of the Navy a year and a day after being carried as missing in action since November 24, 1943 while serving aboard U.S.S. Liscome Bay when that vessel was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean.

(7) Miller was awarded the Navy Cross Medal, Purple Heart Medal, American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and World War II Victory Medal.

(8) Miller's citation for the Navy Cross said ''for distinguished devotion to duty, extraordinary courage and disregard for his own personal safety during the attack on the Fleet in Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, by Japanese forces on December 7, 1941. While at the side of his Captain on the bridge, Miller, despite enemy strafing and bombing and in the face of a serious fire, assisted in moving his Captain, who had been mortally wounded, to a place of greater safety, and later manned and operated a machine gun directed at enemy Japanese attacking aircraft until ordered to leave the bridge.''.

(9) On June 20, 1973, the U.S.S. Miller (FF-1091), a Knox-class frigate, was named in honor of Doris Miller.

SEC. 2. NAME OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER, WACO, TEXAS.

The Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Waco, Texas, shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known and designated as the ''Doris Miller Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center''. Any reference to such medical center in any law, regulation, map, document, record, or other paper of the United States shall be considered to be a reference to the Doris Miller Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

By Mr. UDALL of New Mexico:

S. 2129. A bill to amend the Department of Energy Organization Act to improve technology transfer at the Department of Energy by reducing bureaucratic barriers to industry, entrepreneurs, and small businesses, as well as ensure that public investments in research and development generate the greatest return on investment for taxpayers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, New Mexico is blessed with some of the world's finest scientists. Each day, brilliant researchers at our universities and national labs go to work, and the results are amazing. At the same time, entrepreneurs in New Mexico and across the country are looking for opportunities to leverage innovation and to create new high-tech products and applications.

I rise to introduce the Accelerating Technology Transfer to Advance Innovation for the Nation—what we are calling the ATTAIN Act. That is a long title and an important goal: to improve the Department of Energy's technology transfer mission and to move innovation from the lab to the market. This grows our economy and creates a greater impact from our research and development dollars.

But before I talk to my colleagues about what the bill does, I wish to explain why it is so important. Tech transfer may seem to be just some technical issue, affecting bureaucratic rules or regulations, but it is more. It is how innovation in the lab today helps create jobs tomorrow.

In the 21st century, our national labs are the birthplace of innovation that creates new products and businesses and entire industries. Scientists are developing cutting-edge ways to power computers, to transmit new information, to heal the body. These innovations have great market potential in aviation, the military, medicine. They can be spun into high-tech businesses, changing the world, putting people to work.

In New Mexico, many companies have been formed as a result of discoveries at Los Alamos and Sandia National Labs. For example, Mustomo, Inc., a startup using technology developed at LANL, provides 3D ultrasound tomography for the detection of breast cancer, and technology from Sandia, used by TEAM Technologies, has created a device that can disable improvised explosive devices. Since 2010 over 4,000 units have been deployed and are saving lives in war zones right now.

But despite these amazing successes, we are operating at just a fraction of the potential. My home State could do so much more. New Mexico has all the ingredients to become a high-tech powerhouse. There are great minds at our national labs and military bases. We have fantastic universities and a booming energy industry. We need to create an environment to allow it to reach that potential. This is a major initiative of mine to help create the right formula to help industry take off in New Mexico. That is the purpose of my bill.

Almost a decade ago Congress created a Department of Energy Technology Transfer Coordinator to move innovation from the lab bench to the marketplace, to spur businesses and cutting-edge product development in New Mexico and across the Nation, to help entrepreneurs outside of the big-city powerhouses on the coasts get access to capital, to help them find partners in industry. But the Department has not come close to meeting its potential. A recent inspector general's report tells the story. It cited numerous deficiencies at DOE. The Department is over 7 years delinquent in finalizing its Technology Transfer Execution Plan, nor has DOE implemented a forward-looking process for its commercialization fund—over 2 years after being directed to do so by the former Secretary. In addition, the Technology Transfer Coordinator post at the Department has been vacant since April 2013. That is nearly 1 year after the previous Coordinator's departure. This position should be filled as quickly as possible with a qualified and motivated candidate.

Technology transfer is important in New Mexico and to the Nation, and the Department's failure to perform is unacceptable. My bill addresses these shortfalls. We can do better, and we have to. The first step is to make tech transfer a priority. Our goals are clear: consolidate bureaucracy, streamline contracting, and use models that have proven successful.

There are three key elements to my legislation.

First, it permanently authorizes new tools for the Secretary of Energy's new Department-wide technology transfer office to enable DOE and DOE's new Tech Transfer Coordinator to meet their responsibilities and to measure and report their progress. Better coordination is absolutely crucial so we can reduce barriers and efficiently use

the limited resources available. My bill requires that this office be accountable and responsible, that it work with the national labs and with industry in the right way at the Department and fully implement the EPACT Energy Technology Commercialization Fund—something DOE has yet to do according to Congress's original intent.

Second, the bill authorizes a new tech transfer corps, modeled on the National Science Foundation's Innovation Corps, to support investments in entrepreneurs, mentors, scientists, and engineers. It authorizes technology commercialization challenges that push—getting innovative technologies into the market—and also pull—enabling partnerships with industry to identify and focus on common challenges. It will also improve coordination of technology transfer and entrepreneurship priorities with universities, foundations, and nonprofits, both regionally and nationally.

Third, we adapt an existing public-private partnership model used by the Small Business Administration and apply it to technology transfer to increase access to capital for promising startup companies.

We are not asking for more money. We need to do more with what we have. We are not asking—and I want to emphasize that—we are not asking for more money. We need to do more with what we have. The bill requires DOE and SBA to work together, to use the strengths of each agency—DOE's innovative technology and SBA's financial acumen—and it increases investment in new technologies via the SBIC Impact and Early Stage Initiatives. The Impact Initiative includes SBA matching funds of up to $1 billion, and the Early Stage Initiative includes $1 billion more.

This collaboration addresses an important concern. Since 2008 less than 6 percent of these venture capital funds have been invested in seed funds and tech maturation, and 70 percent of that went into just three States—California, New York, and Massachusetts. There are great opportunities outside these three States. This bill will help those funds find them. States such as New Mexico have a surplus of innovative ideas and a lack of investment dollars. With this bill we can balance that equation.

The benefits are clear: new technology, new partnerships, and new opportunities. Cutting-edge research today means high-paying jobs tomorrow. American inventions and intellectual property fuel our economy. Mr. President, 75 U.S. industries are classified as intellectual property intensive. They added $5.8 trillion to U.S. output last year. They are 38 percent of our GDP. They directly or indirectly supply over 55 million jobs—jobs that on average pay 30 percent higher wages. These IP companies account for 74 percent of our exports.

We need to do all we can to support innovation and to improve technology transfer—the bridge between new discovery and new opportunity—to grow our economy, to create high-paying jobs. I believe this is something we can all support.

Last August I cohosted a tech transfer conference in Santa Fe. I met with nearly 200 of New Mexico's most successful entrepreneurs, innovators, and investors. We talked about the challenges and opportunities of technology transfer and how important it is to the future.

We have always succeeded by being one step ahead of the competition. American innovation has led the world in industry, in health care and transportation, in science and technology. The ATTAIN Act will help move that innovation from the lab to the marketplace, helping businesses grow, creating jobs, and keeping us competitive in a global marketplace.

For a student with a bright idea, for an entrepreneur with the drive to chase their dream, it can be a long road. Fortunately, they do not give up easily. They are as tough as they come. They are already giving so much with hard work, with taking risks. They do their part. DOE needs to do its part as well.

We all want to move innovation forward and to better coordinate the handoffs. I am committed to working with the Department of Energy to make this a reality. This is an important goal, and it should be an equally important priority. That is why I am introducing this bill today.

By Mr. BARRASSO (for himself, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. THUNE, and Mr. ENZI):

S. 2132. A bill to amend the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act of 2005, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce S. 2132, the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act Amendments of 2014.

In recent years, the Committee on Indian Affairs has received concerns from Indian tribes and the energy industry that the Federal laws governing the development of tribal energy resources are complex and often lead to significant costs, delays, and uncertainty for all parties. These costs, delays, and uncertainties discourage development of tribal energy resources and drive investments away from tribal lands.

According to the National Congress of American Indians, Indian tribes hold nearly a quarter of American onshore oil and gas reserves. Yet, existing tribal energy production represents less than 5 percent of the current national production. If we can remove the costs and delays of developing energy on Indian lands, we could potentially see the country's energy production, and thus energy independence, increase significantly.

Over 8 years ago, Congress passed the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act. This act created a new, alternative process for Indian tribes to take control of developing their energy resources on their own lands without the burdens of administrative review, approval, and oversight. This approach gives Indian tribes the option to enter into tribal energy resource agreements with the Secretary of the Interior. Once an Indian tribe enters into this agreement, it has the authority to enter into subsequent leases, business agreements, and rights-of-way affecting energy development, without further review and approval by the Secretary—a significant departure from the standard laws, and consequent bureaucracy, applicable to tribal contracts. That approach was a step in the right direction.

However, the agreements and process authorized under the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act have not been utilized to the extent that they could be, primarily because the implementation of the act has been made more complex than it should be. It is time we make key improvements to the law so that Indian tribes can take advantage of these agreements and significantly reduce bureaucratic burdens to energy development. Years of consultation and outreach to Indian tribes have produced targeted solutions to address the concerns about the process for entering these agreements.

The bill that I am introducing today, S. 2132, would streamline the process for approving the tribal energy resource agreements and make it more predictable for Indian tribes.

I would like to highlight some of the key provisions in this bill. This bill includes a number of amendments to improve the review and approval process for the tribal energy resource agreements. For example, the bill provides clarity regarding the specific information required for tribal applications for these agreements. In addition, the bill sets forth specific timeframes for Secretarial determinations on the agreement applications. Moreover, if an application is disapproved, this bill would require the Secretary of the Interior to provide detailed explanations to the Indian tribe and steps for addressing the reasons for disapproval.

This bill also has various provisions that would improve technical assistance and consultation with Indian tribes during their energy planning and development stages. The bill also includes an amendment to the Federal Power Act that would put Indian tribes on a similar footing with States and municipalities for preferences when preliminary permits or original licenses for hydroelectric projects are issued.

Additionally, S. 2132 would allow Indian tribes and third parties to perform appraisals to help expedite the Secretary's approval process for tribal agreements for mineral resource development. This bill does not focus on only traditional resource development,

but includes renewal resource development components as well. For example, the bill would create tribal biomass demonstration projects to provide Indian tribes with more reliable and potentially longterm supplies of woody biomass materials.

My bill is intended to provide Indian tribes with the tools to develop and use energy more efficiently. In passing this bill, Congress will enhance the ability of Indian tribes to exercise self-determination over the development of energy resources located on tribal lands, thereby improving the lives and economic well-being of Native Americans.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank Senators ENZI, THUNE, HOEVEN, and MCCAIN for joining me in cosponsoring the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act Amendments of 2014. I urge my colleagues to join me in advancing S. 2132 expeditiously.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. REID, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 2145. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to permit facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs to be designated as voter registration agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise to reintroduce the Veteran Voting Support Act, which is cosponsored by Senators LEAHY, DURBIN, and REID.

Almost 7 years ago, during the previous administration, I learned that a Department of Veterans Affairs facility in California had barred voter registration groups from accessing veterans in the facility. Similar reports emerged in other parts of the country.

This was unacceptable. Therefore, then-Senator Kerry and I worked with the VA to establish a fair, nonpartisan policy to facilitate voter registration and voting for veterans who receive services at VA facilities.

We held a hearing in the Rules Committee on a previous version of this bill on September 15, 2008, when I was Chairman of that committee.

One week before that hearing, the VA issued a directive that created a new and substantially improved policy to permit state and local election officials, as well as nonpartisan groups, to access VA facilities.

Yet many expressed concerns that it did not go far enough. For example, the Brennan Center for Justice, American Association for People with Disabilities, Common Cause, Demos, and the League of Women Voters sent me a letter stating that the directive was ''an important step in the right direction'' but stressed ''that the VA's recent directive will not be sufficient to protect the voting rights of the men and women served by the VA.''

Paul Sullivan, then Executive Director of Veterans for Common Sense, said: ''There is a veteran voting rights crisis. As many as 100,000 of our veterans living in VA facilities may not be able to vote in our November 4 election.''

Mr. Sullivan also explained a key problem facing veterans who live at a VA facility: ''When a veteran moves into a VA facility, the veteran's old registration becomes invalid. The veteran must re-register before he or she can vote again.''

In short, while many believed the VA's directive was not perfect, they also acknowledged it was an improvement.

I am sad to report that the 2008 voting assistance directive expired at the end of September 2013. That means no voting assistance directive is in place at the VA, with the mid-term elections only a few months away.

This is unacceptable. There is no justification for it. Veterans' voting rights, like the voting rights of others, do not have an expiration date.

There is no question about the continuing need for VA action in this area.

While the VA's directive was in place, from 2008 to 2012, veteran voter registration ticked up only slightly, from 77 to 78 percent, according to the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

But during the same period, actual voting by veterans dropped as a percentage of the veteran population—from 70.9 percent to 70.3 percent.

In raw numbers, there remain over 4.6 million veterans who either are unregistered or for whom the Census Bureau's data reports no response.

In the 2012 election, there were over 6.2 million veterans who either did not vote or for whom the Census data reports no response.

Thus, there is much more to do to help our veterans register and cast their ballots.

The VA is the agency best suited to do the job because it comes into contact with several million veterans each year.

In fact, in 2013, according to the VA's latest statistics, there were over 6.41 million unique patients in the VA health care system, up from 5.65 million in 2008, a 15 percent increase.

Today, I am reintroducing the Veteran Voting Support Act, which, unlike a VA directive, cannot be rescinded by the VA and would not expire.

This bill would take important steps to improve veterans' ability to register and vote.

First, the bill would require the VA to provide a veteran seeking to enroll in the VA health care system with a mail-in voter registration form. Such a form would also have to be provided to currently enrolled veterans upon a change of address or enrollment status.

The VA would be required to send such forms to the appropriate state election official within 10 days, or within five days if the form is received within five days before a registration deadline.

Second, the VA would be required to provide assistance to veterans seeking to register to vote using the mail-in form. Such assistance would be nonpartisan.

Third, the bill would require the director of a VA community living center, domiciliary, or medical center to provide assistance to veterans with respect to voting by absentee ballot, consistent with state and local laws. This section is limited to residents of a community living center or domiciliary and inpatients of a medical center.

Fourth, the bill would ensure that the VA provides access for nonpartisan organizations to provide voter registration and assistance at VA facilities.

This is subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions, including limiting activities to regular business hours and requiring advance notice to the facility.

Fifth, the bill would prevent the VA from prohibiting access to VA facilities by election administration officials at the state and local levels, as long as the officials provide only nonpartisan information about voting, such as voter registration, voting systems, absentee balloting, and polling locations. This is also subject to reasonable, time, place, and manner restrictions.

Finally, the bill would require the VA to report annually on the number of veterans helped by this bill.

We owe our veterans a great debt. That debt includes a promise we will not deny them the right to vote and will commit to involving them in the process of choosing leaders who may send Americans into harm's way. This bill would help veterans register to vote, and it would help veterans living in VA facilities cast their ballots.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Veteran Voting Support Act.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. COBURN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mr. FLAKE):

S. 2146. A bill to establish a United States Patent and Trademark Office Innovation Promotion Fund, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to protect and secure the user fees paid by America's inventors and businesses to the Patent and Trademark Office, and to stabilize that Office's funding, by introducing the Patent Fee Integrity Act. I want to thank my co-sponsors on this bill, Senators COBURN, KLOBUCHAR, and FLAKE.

Throughout most of its history, taxpayers supported the operations of the Patent and Trademark Office, or PTO, through appropriations from general funds. However, in 1990, Congress established a 69 percent user fee ''surcharge,'' so that the PTO became funded entirely through fees paid by its users, the American inventors who make our country the world's technological leader.

Unfortunately, almost immediately, Congress began using the funds that inventors paid to protect their inventions for other purposes. In 1992, $8.1

million in user fees were diverted. In 1993, $12.3 million was diverted. In 1994, $14.7 million. So it continued, growing each year, until what started as a trickle became a flood in 1998, with $199 million in PTO user fees diverted.

PTO user fees continued to be diverted in most of the following years, at varying levels. In fiscal year 2011, as Congress was finishing its work on major patent reform, a new fee diversion record was set, a staggering $209 million in user fees diverted from the PTO that year.

Meanwhile, at the same time that these fees were being taken away, the length of time that it took to get a patent out of the Patent Office steadily increased. In fiscal year 1991, average patent pendency was 18.2 months. By fiscal year 1999, it had increased to 25 months. By fiscal year 2010, average patent pendency had increased all the way to 35.3 months.

These are not just numbers. This is innovation being stifled from being brought to market. The longer it takes to get a patent approved, the longer a new invention, a potential technological breakthrough, sits on the shelf, gathering dust instead of spurring job growth and scientific and economic progress.

Ultimately, this dulls our country's competitive edge in the global economy. America's record of innovation is the envy of the world; it has provided us a marked competitive edge over the decades and even centuries. When we stifle the progress of our innovation within the PTO, we lose some of this competitive advantage, and the jobs and other economic benefits that accompany it.

Obviously, there is a direct relationship between fee diversion and patent pendency. The more fees that are diverted away from the PTO, the fewer patent examiners they can hire, the more patents each examiner has to process, and the longer it takes them to get to any individual patent—a longer patent pendency.

But it is not just the time that it takes to get a patent that is hurt by diversion of resources. The quality of the patents issued is harmed as well.

As members of this body know, the Senate Judiciary Committee is actively considering legislation to address abuses of the patent system, and the House of Representatives passed its own legislation on the subject by a strong bipartisan vote of 325–91.

A variety of businesses all over the country are being sued and subjected to letters demanding payment, often based on very questionable patents that should never have been issued by the Patent Office in the first place.

Businesses and lawyers have asserted patents for, by way of example: Scanning and e-mailing a document; completing a purchase on a website with one click, as opposed to multiple clicks; and e-mailing a press release, something that I think it's safe to say that every member of this body does many times each month.

When there aren't enough patent examiners to give patent applications sufficient attention, bad patents get issued.

As the President and CEO of the Internet Association, which represents leading Internet companies like Amazon, eBay, Expedia, Facebook, Hotels.com, Netflix, Twitter, and Yahoo!, puts it: ''the Patent Fee Integrity Act . . . would provide the Patent and Trademark Office with adequate funding and resources to improve overall patent quality. Improving patent quality is an essential step in improving the entire patent ecosystem by shutting off the supply of low-quality patents that fuel litigation by patent trolls.'' The Coalition for Patent Fairness, which includes such major companies as Blackberry, Cisco, Dell, Google, Oracle, and Verizon, notes that ''When patent quality suffers, innovation throughout America's economy is stymied, and patent trolls are able to prosper.''

To make sure the Patent and Trademark Office has the resources it needs to issue patents in a timely manner and to improve patent quality, in 2011, in the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act, we gave the PTO the authority to increase its user fees.

Some of us fought at that time to end the practice of fee diversion, led by my co-sponsor Senator COBURN, to make sure that the users got the full benefit of their increased fees. Unfortunately, our colleagues on the other side of the Capitol watered down the language that the Senate passed to accomplish this purpose.

One of the sponsors defended that language when it came back to the Senate, arguing that the bill ''creates a PTO reserve fund for any fees collected above the appropriated amounts in a given year—so that only the PTO will have access to these fees.''

I warned then that the House's changes provided no assurance that that is what would actually happen.

So what happened? Well, the PTO went ahead and raised its fees, as expected.

Did it get to keep all those new fees?

Unfortunately, the government wasted little time in diverting the new fees. In fiscal year 2013, $121 million in PTO user fees were diverted, due to sequestration. This pushed the total of PTO user fees diverted since PTO was made self-sufficient in 1990 to over $1 billion, $171 million, to be exact.

Requiring the payment of higher patent fees which are then used for general government purposes really amounts to a tax on innovation which is the last thing we should be burdening in today's technology-driven economy.

The fact that this latest round of fee diversion occurred through sequestration provides another reason why the legislation we are introducing today is needed. PTO never should have been subject to sequestration in the first place. As I have described, it is not supported at all by taxpayer funds—it is completely funded by user fees. These users pay for a service when they send in their fees: the timely consideration and processing of their patent or trademark application or renewal. They are entitled to have the benefit of what they paid for. These funds should not be sequestered, to pay for other government services, for which there is a deficit. The PTO does not contribute at all to the deficit, and that has been the case for more than 20 years.

As a result of PTO's budgetary shortfall, in which sequestration played a significant part: information technology modernization was scaled back significantly; the process of opening new PTO satellite offices, called for in the America Invents Act, was frozen; hiring of most support personnel was stopped; and travel and training was virtually eliminated.

Last fall brought another unfortunate budgetary disruption: the shutdown of the federal government. Fortunately, the PTO was able to keep operating for that limited time, with the balances it had in its account. However, had the shutdown continued, PTO, too, would have been forced to close up—despite the fact that it collects fees that make it self-sustaining.

There is no good reason why PTO should be subject to sequestration and shutdown. As the Business Software Alliance states in their supporting letter, ''This bill would ensure the USPTO can continue conducting self-funded operations that produce tremendous economic and social value for the United States.''

The Patent Fee Integrity Act strikes current language that makes PTO subject to the appropriations process, which has been the principal avenue through which its funding has been diverted, and ensures that it can keep its funding. However, we also include measures to maintain accountability for the agency; the bill: requires the PTO Director to submit an annual report and operations plan to Congress; requires the PTO Director to submit an annual spending plan to the Appropriations Committees; and requires an annual independent financial audit.

This bill is supported across the width and breadth of the patent user community. It is endorsed by: Bayer Corporation; Biocom; The Biotechnology Industry Organization; BSA, The Software Alliance; The Coalition for Patent Fairness; The Coalition for 21st Century Patent Reform, which represents a broad group of nearly 50 global corporations who employ hundreds of thousands of Americans in a variety of sectors, including 3M, Caterpillar, General Electric, General Mills, Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, Medtronic, and Northrop Grumman; Fallbrook Technologies; The Innovation Alliance, which includes innovative small, medium, and large businesses, including Dolby Laboratories and QUALCOMM; the Intellectual Property Owners Association, which

represents more than 200 companies and 12,000 individuals in the U.S. who own intellectual property; The Internet Association; Mattel; Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association; National Association of Manufacturers; Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America; and Xerox.

Many of these groups disagree vehemently with each other about patent reform. However, they all come together to unite in support of the bill we are introducing today, the Patent Fee Integrity Act.

BSA, The Software Alliance aptly observes, ''with their funds constantly under attack, the USPTO faces an endless and unnecessary challenge to provide the services for which American innovators have already paid. The Patent Fee Integrity Act will help the USPTO continue to increase patent quality, provide critical, time-sensitive services, and guarantee continuity of its operations independent of continually-shifting political considerations.''

I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this critical bill. As the Coalition for 21st Century Patent Reform and others observed in the letter they sent to me in support of this bill: ''Your legislation would empower the USPTO to fully support America's innovators without adding a single penny to the deficit.''

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that letters of support be printed in the RECORD.

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

BSA/THE SOFTWARE ALLIANCE,
Washington, DC, March 13, 2013.

Hon. DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FEINSTEIN: On behalf of BSA/The Software Alliance and its members, which are among the world's most innovative companies, I write to express strong support for the Patent Fee Integrity Act, which would remove the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) from the congressional appropriations process. This bill would ensure the USPTO can continue conducting self-funded operations that produce tremendous economic and social value for the United States.

The USPTO plays an indispensable role in sparking the growth of America's economy by protecting intellectual property (IP) and promoting innovation. Over the last two decades, however, the federal government has withheld, diverted, or sequestered more than $1 billion in USPTO user fee collections. This bill recognizes that with their funds constantly under attack, the USPTO faces an endless and unnecessary challenge to provide the services for which American innovators have already paid.

The Patent Fee Integrity Act will help the USPTO continue to increase patent quality, provide critical, time-sensitive services, and guarantee continuity of its operations independent of continually-shifting political considerations. Moreover, it will protect against reducing the USPTO's operating capacity at a time when it needs to expand to enable American businesses to bring new innovations to market.

We commend you for your leadership in introducing the Patent Fee Integrity Act and look forward to working with you and others to ensure it garners the broad bipartisan support it deserves.

Sincerely,

VICTORIA A. ESPINEL,
President and CEO.

MARCH 13, 2014.

Hon. DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FEINSTEIN: We commend you for introducing the Patent Fee Integrity Act and we offer our full support.

America's economic future depends on our continued ability to innovate and commercialize new products and processes. American businesses are among the most dynamic and innovative in the world. We develop the technology that creates jobs and stimulates our economy. Our nation's universities partner with business to conduct the ground-breaking research, as well as educate the creative people, that fuel the innovative dynamism of the business sector. Such investment is not without risk, which is why the Patent Fee Integrity Act has never been more critical.

U.S. innovators rely on patents to protect their investment in the research and development of breakthrough innovations such as manufacturing and product technologies and life-saving drugs. Valid and enforceable patent rights are essential in this process and enable the United States to maintain its competitive edge. An adequately funded United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is vital in ensuring that high quality patent rights are promptly granted. Yet, the precarious funding situation of the USPTO makes the realization of this essential mission impossible.

Over the last two decades, the government has withheld, diverted, or sequestered hundreds of millions of USPTO user fee dollars. With uncertain and insufficient funding, the USPTO faces an endless and unnecessary challenge in providing the services for which American innovators have requested and paid. The Patent Fee Integrity Act would end this problem by removing the USPTO from the Congressional appropriations process and allow all of its user fees to fund its operations. Your legislation would empower the USPTO to fully support America's innovators without adding a single penny to the deficit.

Our innovation based economy demands a fully-funded USPTO. The USPTO needs predictability and certainty in its budgeting so that it can provide the patent protection needed champion America's innovators. We support quick passage of the Patent Fee Integrity Act.

American Intellectual Property Law Association (AIPLA); Bayer Corporation; Biocom; Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO): Boston Scientific Corporation; Bristol-Myers Squibb Company; Caterpillar Inc.; Corning Incorporated; The Cummins Allison Corporation; Cummins Inc.; DuPont; Eli Lilly and Company; Greatbatch, Inc.; IBM Corporation; Illinois Tool Works (ITW); International Test Solutions Inc.; Johnson & Johnson; Leggett & Platt; The Manitowoc Company, Inc.; Mattel, Inc.; Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association; National Association of Manufacturers (NAM); Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America; PPG Industries, Inc.; The Procter & Gamble Company; Smiths Group; United Technologies Corporation; Xerox Zimme.

COALITION FOR
PATENT FAIRNESS
Washington, DC, March 13, 2014.

Statement on the Patent Fee Integrity Act,

The Coaliton for Patent Fairness (CPF) thanks Senator Dianne Feinstein (D–CA) for introducing the Patent Fee Integrity Act.

As patent holders, CPF members recognize the importance of an adequately funded U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO). We applaud Senator Feinstein for taking steps to ensure that the PTO has the resources it needs to fulfill its essential mission and to maintain patent quality.

Improving patent quality is a vital piece of the patent puzzle. When patent quality suffers, innovation throughout America's economy is stymied, and patent trolls are able to prosper. Quite clearly, patent reviews conducted today will have a lasting impact in the future; by helping to establish adequate funding of the PTO, the Patent Fee Integrity Act will support innovation.

The U.S. patent system plays an important role in helping America's economy flourish, and abuses of that system pose a significant threat to innovation and economic growth. We thank Senator Feinstein for her leadership and will continue to work with her and her colleagues toward the passage of patent litigation reform.

FALLBROOK TECHNOLOGIES,
Cedar Park, TX, March 13, 2014.

Hon. DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FEINSTEIN: As CEO of an emerging technology company with roots in California, I write to enthusiastically endorse your effort to introduce patent legislation that is critically important to America's innovation ecosystem and the U.S. economy, the Patent Fee Integrity Act. Although Fallbrook Technologies cautions the Senate to tread extremely cautiously with other proposed patent legislation, the Patent Fee Integrity Act represents the only patent reform bill which advances the one issue that unifies intellectual property stakeholders across the innovation spectrum and thus should be advanced by the Senate without delay.

Fallbrook is an emerging manufacturing and technology development company dedicated to improving the flexibility of power transmission within a wide variety of mechanical devices. Currently, Fallbrook is located in Texas, but we have California ties as our technology was invented in Fallbrook, California, a large number of our investors are in California and some key employees currently reside in San Diego. Our core technology is the patented and award-winning NuVinci® continuously variable planetary (CVP) transmission system. Fallbrook's NuVinci CVP technology is a standard component on more than 60 major bicycle brands throughout Europe, and can improve the performance and efficiency of products that use a transmission, such as automobiles, agricultural equipment, light electric vehicles, outdoor power equipment and wind turbines. Fallbrook employs over 130 people in the U.S. (as of the date of this letter), including about 30 of the best engineers in the transmission sector. We currently hold over 600 patents and pending applications worldwide and are working with our key automotive licensees to bring gas-saving vehicles to the marketplace.

As you are aware, for more than a decade, American innovators like Fallbrook have had our U.S. Patent and Trademark Office user fees diverted by Congress for other purposes. Essentially, such fee diversion has worked as an innovation tax which slows the technology development process and hinders job creation. The Patent Fee Integrity Act will repeal this innovation tax and is long overdue. Full USPTO funding will provide the USPTO the resources it needs to improve patent quality while Congress determines whether further actions may be needed to improve the patent system.

We applaud you and your bipartisan cosponsors for introducing the bill and stand ready to assist you in any way necessary.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM KLEHM,
Chairman and CEO.

INNOVATION ALLIANCE,
MARCH 13, 2014.

Hon. DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
U.S Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FEINSTEIN: The Innovation Alliance, a coalition of research and development-focused companies, thanks you and your cosponsors for introducing the Patent Fee Integrity Act, which will put an end to fee diversion once and for all. We have long maintained that ending fee diversion, and thereby giving the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office (''USPTO'') all of the fees it is paid by patent applicants, is the single most important change policymakers can make to improve the U.S. patent system.

Over the last 20 years, approximately $1 billion in fees paid by patent applicants has been diverted from its proper use at the USPTO. This unwarranted diversion of fees has resulted in more than 600,000 unexamined patent applications and more than 28 months in the average patent pendency time. Ending this tax on innovation is perhaps the one change to the patent law that unites stakeholders from all parts of the innovation ecosystem in the United States.

The Innovation Alliance thanks you for your leadership on this critically important issue for the patent system. We look forward to working with you and your cosponsors to pass the Patent Fee Integrity Act into law as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

BRIAN POMPER,
Executive Director.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
OWNERS ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, March 12, 2014.

Hon. DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
U.S. Senate, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FEINSTEIN: Intellectual Property Owners Association (IPO) writes to express its strong support for the Patent Fee Integrity Act, to provide for the permanent funding of the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).

IPO is a trade association representing companies and individuals in all industries and fields of technology who own or are interested in intellectual property rights. IPO's membership includes more than 200 companies and more than 12,500 individuals who are involved in the association either through their companies or as inventor, author, law firm, or attorney members. Our members all agree that the United States needs a fully-funded USPTO to keep our nation competitive, encourage innovation and create new jobs.

Over the last two decades the government has withheld, diverted or sequestered about $1 billion in USPTO user fee collections. Removing the USPTO from the congressional appropriations process is the most promising approach we know for stopping the hemorrhaging of USPTO fees. We hope the Senate will move ahead with the bill as soon as possible.

Thank you for your help in securing full, permanent funding for the USPTO. We stand ready to assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,

HERBERT C. WAMSLEY,
Executive Director.

THE INTERNET ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, March 13, 2014.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL BECKERMAN, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE INTERNET ASSOCIATION, ON SENATOR FEINSTEIN'S INTRODUCTION OF THE PATENT FEE INTEGRITY ACT

The Internet Association commends Senator Feinstein's introduction of the Patent Fee Integrity Act, which would provide the Patent and Trademark Office with adequate funding and resources to improve overall patent quality. Improving patent quality is an essential step in improving the entire patent ecosystem by shutting off the supply of low-quality patents that fuel litigation by patent trolls. That is why The Internet Association also supports an expanded review of the covered business method patent program to eliminate patents that never been granted in the first instance. An expanded review program, coupled with strong fee shifting and discovery provisions, make up the necessary components of a meaningful response to the patent troll epidemic. We look forward to working with Senator Feinstein and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee as they prepare to address these important issues in the coming weeks.

ABOUT THE INTERNET ASSOCIATION

The Internet Association, the unified voice of the Internet economy, represents the interests of the leading Internet companies including Airbnb, Amazon, AOL, eBay, Expedia, Facebook, Gilt, Google, IAC, Linkedln, Lyft, Monster Worldwide, Netflix, Practice Fusion, Rackspace, reddit, Salesforce.com, SurveyMonkey, TripAdvisor, Twitter, Uber Technologies, Inc., Yelp, Yahoo!, and Zynga. The Internet Association is dedicated to advancing public policy solutions to strengthen and protect Internet freedom, foster innovation and economic growth, and empower users. http://www.internetassociation.org.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 383—DESIGNATING MARCH 2014 AS ''NATIONAL MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION MONTH''

Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. WALSH) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 383

Whereas the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Association for Middle Level Education, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals have declared March 2014 as ''National Middle Level Education Month'';

Whereas schools that educate middle level students are responsible for educating nearly 24,000,000 young adolescents between the ages of 10 and 15, in grades 5 through 9, who are undergoing rapid and dramatic changes in their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development;

Whereas young adolescents deserve challenging and engaging instruction, knowledgeable teachers and administrators who are prepared to provide young adolescents with a safe, challenging, and supportive learning environment, and organizational structures that banish anonymity and promote personalization, collaboration, and social equity;

Whereas the habits and values established during early adolescence have a lifelong influence that directly affects the future health and welfare of the United States;

Whereas research indicates that the academic achievement of a student in eighth grade has a larger impact on the readiness of that student for college at the end of high school than any academic achievement of that student in high school; and

Whereas in order to improve graduation rates and prepare students to be lifelong learners who are ready for college, a career, and civic participation, the people of the United States must have a deeper understanding of the distinctive mission of middle level education: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates March 2014 as ''National Middle Level Education Month'';

(2) honors and recognizes the importance of middle level education and the contributions of the individuals who educate middle level students; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States to observe National Middle Level Education Month by visiting and celebrating schools that are responsible for educating young adolescents in the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 384—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE CONCERNING THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN SYRIA AND NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, RESULTING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES, AND THE URGENT NEED FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS

Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. CARDIN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. CASEY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. WARNER, Mr. KIRK, Mr. KING, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. CRUZ) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 384

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 2139, adopted on February 22, 2014, expresses grave alarm at the significant and rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, in particular the dire situation of hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in besieged areas, most of whom are besieged by the Syrian armed forces and some by opposition groups, as well as the dire situation of over 3,000,000 people in hard-to-reach areas, and deplores the difficulties in providing, and the failure to provide, access for the humanitarian assistance to all civilians in need inside Syria;

Whereas widespread and systematic attacks on civilians, schools, hospitals, and other civilian infrastructure, in violation of international humanitarian law, continue in Syria, and parties to the conflict are blocking humanitarian aid delivery, including food and medical care from many civilian areas;

Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 70 percent of Syria's health professionals, up to 80,000 people, have fled the country, cases of typhoid, tuberculosis, polio and other diseases are rampant and increasing, and medical personnel inside Syria are deliberately targeted by parties to the conflict;

Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered