To postpone the extension of normal trade relations to the products of Laos.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 18, 2004

Mr. COLEMAN (for himself and Mr. FEINGOLD) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance

A BILL

To postpone the extension of normal trade relations to the products of Laos.

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Laotian Democracy
Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Lao People’s Democratic Republic is
an authoritarian, Communist, one-party state.
(2) The Government of Laos has a poor human rights record, particularly with regard to its treatment of minorities.

(3) The United States Central Intelligence Agency trained and armed approximately 60,000 Hmong guerrillas to disrupt Viet Cong supply lines and rescue downed pilots during the Vietnam war.

(4) In 1975, the Kingdom of Laos was overthrown by the Communist Pathet Lao regime, and tens of thousands of Laotians, including the Hmong, were killed or died at the hands of Communist forces while attempting to flee the Lao Communist regime, and many others perished in reeducation and labor camps.

(5) Tens of thousands of Hmong became refugees, eventually resettling in the United States, where they now reside as American citizens and lead constructive lives as members of our communities.

(6) Remnants of former Hmong insurgent groups and their families who once fought with the Central Intelligence Agency and the Royal Lao Government still remain in remote areas of Laos, including Xaisomboun Special Zone and the Luang Prabang Province.
(7) In August 2003 the United Nations Committee to Eliminate Racial Discrimination strongly criticized the Lao People’s Democratic Republic for failing to honor its obligations, expressed its grave concerns regarding reports of human rights violations, including brutalities inflicted on the Hmong, and deplored the measures taken by the Lao authorities to prevent any reporting of the situation of the Hmong.

(8) In October 2003, Amnesty International issued a statement detailing its concern about the use of starvation by the Lao Government as a “weapon of war against civilians” in Laos and the deteriorating situation facing thousands of family members of ethnic minority groups.

(9) The Department of State reported in its most recent Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Laos that the “Government’s human rights record remained poor,” and highlighted press reports that one group of Hmong in Xaisomboun Special Zone, mostly women and children, was being systematically hunted down and attacked by government air and ground forces and that it was at the point of starvation.
(10) International organizations, the Department of State, and Members of Congress have received reports of mistreatment over the past 6 months of Hmong in Laos emerging from remote areas of Laos, including the Xaisomboun Special Zone, the Luang Prabang-Xieng Khouang border area.

(11) The Lao Government has not allowed independent organizations to monitor the treatment of the Hmong emerging from remote areas of Laos.

(12) In September 2004, Amnesty International issued a statement expressing its horror at recent reports that Lao soldiers murdered 5 Hmong children, raping 4 girls, who were foraging for food close to their camp, and called it a war crime.

(13) The United States has an obligation to defend human rights of all people, including in particular those whose daily lives are endangered as a result of their support for the United States.

(14) The Lao People’s Democratic Republic has failed to substantially improve the status of human rights for its citizens.
SEC. 3. POSTPONEMENT OF EXTENSION OF NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS TO LAOS.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the United States Trade Representative may not enter into a trade agreement obligating reciprocal most-favored-nation treatment between the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and the United States.