

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED
BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. LUGAR:

S. 2562. A bill to authorize the extension of nondiscriminatory treatment (normal trade relations treatment) to the products of Kazakhstan; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce legislation designed to extend permanent normal trade relations to Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is still subject to the provisions of the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the Trade Act of 1974, which sanctions nations for failure to comply with freedom of emigration requirements. This bill would repeal permanently the application of Jackson-Vanik to Kazakhstan.

In the post-Cold-War era, Kazakhstan has demonstrated a commitment to meet these requirements, and in addition, has expressed a strong desire to abide by free market principles and good governance. Since 1992, Kazakhstan has been certified annually as meeting the Jackson-Vanik requirements. This legislation would make this trade relationship permanent and, in so doing, stimulate further market reforms and encourage a commitment to safeguarding individual liberties.

The U.S. has a long record of cooperation with Kazakhstan through the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction. Kazakhstan inherited the fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world with the fall of the Soviet Union. Through the Nunn-Lugar Program the United States has assisted Kazakhstan in eliminating this deadly arsenal and joining the Nonproliferation Treaty as a nonnuclear state.

Earlier this month, a team of American scientists working under the Nunn-Lugar Program quietly entered Kazakhstan in sub-zero temperatures to begin the careful packaging of bubonic and pneumonic plague samples in accordance with international safety standards for the transport of dangerous biological materials. I am pleased to inform my Senate colleagues that the samples have been safely transported on a U.S. Air Force C-17 cargo plane to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Fort Collins, Colorado. It marked the successful completion of a 5-year negotiation to secure, transport and develop a research program for the pathogens.

Cooperative research by American and Kazakhstani scientists will develop prevention and cure possibilities for this deadly plague. It provides new hope for places where the disease is naturally occurring and helps deter the plague's use as a bio-terror weapon. As many may know, Plague is a highly lethal disease spread from rodents to humans by fleas. It caused the Black Death which swept across Europe in the 14th century. It is estimated that 20-30 million Europeans died—perhaps

as much as half of the continent's population at the time. An estimated 75 million people worldwide died from the Black Plague.

Kazakhstani and American plague experts will conduct joint research on the samples at Federal labs in Fort Collins, CO. They will develop advanced diagnostics and treatments for plague. This cooperative public health research funded through the U.S. Department Health and Human Services Biotechnology Engagement Program will yield valuable scientific insights into a potentially devastating disease, which is endemic throughout Central Asia. The aim of such cooperation is to improve the protection of Kazakhstani and global populations against a naturally occurring disease that could also be exploited by terrorists.

U.S. strategic and economic interests intersect in Central Asia. With Russia to the north and Iran and Afghanistan to the south, energy-rich Central Asia is at the frontline of American national security priorities. We have tremendous opportunities in the region, but it will take time and consistent high-level effort to build constructive relationships. This region needs to have a much higher priority on America's foreign policy agenda. In Kazakhstan, we have a record of 15 years of collaboration on weapons destruction through the Nunn-Lugar program. This is a solid foundation on which to continue building our relationship.

I recently traveled to Kazakhstan and met with senior government officials and discussed opportunities for expanding cooperation with the United States, including energy security. In my conversations with Kazakh leaders I encouraged the government to pursue trans-Caspian transportation options for oil and gas. At the current time, Kazakhstan relies almost exclusively upon Russia to transport oil and gas to world markets. In turn, Russia has occasionally demonstrated willingness to use its control over these supplies for political gain at the expense of our European allies. Opening trans-Caspian export routes will dilute Russia's control over energy supplies. Likewise, having multiple export options will reinforce the political independence of Kazakhstan. I was pleased that Kazakh officials indicated a willingness to work with the U.S. and their neighbors on these issues.

There are areas in which Kazakhstan needs to continue to improve. These include market access, democratic and human rights reforms. The U.S. must remain committed to assisting Kazakhstan in pursuing these reforms. The government in Astana still has important work to do in these critical areas. The permanent waiver of Jackson-Vanik and establishment of permanent normal trade relations will be the foundation on which further progress

in a burgeoning partnership can be made.

I am hopeful that my colleagues will join me in supporting this important legislation. It is essential that we act promptly to bolster this burgeoning democracy and promote stability and in this region.

By Mr. LUGAR:

S. 2563. A bill to authorize the extension of nondiscriminatory treatment (normal trade relations treatment) to the products of Azerbaijan; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce legislation designed to extend permanent normal trade relations to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is still subject to the provisions of the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the Trade Act of 1974, which sanctions nations for failure to comply with freedom of emigration requirements. This bill would repeal permanently the application of Jackson-Vanik to Azerbaijan.

In the post-Cold-War era, Azerbaijan allows its citizens the right and opportunity to emigrate and has demonstrated a commitment to meet these requirements. In addition, Azerbaijan has expressed a strong desire to abide by free market principles and good governance. Since 1992, Azerbaijan has been certified annually as meeting the Jackson-Vanik requirements. This legislation would make this trade relationship permanent and, in doing so, stimulate further market reforms and encourage its continued commitment to safeguarding individual liberties.

The U.S. has a long record of cooperation with Azerbaijan through the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction. Through the Nunn-Lugar Program the U.S. has assisted Azerbaijan in safely securing dangerous stockpiles of deadly pathogens and infectious diseases and improving its ability to interdict weapons and materials of mass destruction. In 2005 the Nunn-Lugar Program in close coordination with Government of Azerbaijan transported 124 samples of 62 unique strains of plague, anthrax, cholera, and other dangerous diseases from Baku to the U.S. Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Washington, DC. These strains were collected over many years from environmental, human, and animal sources in Azerbaijan. The strains will be studied in joint research programs with the U.S. Department of Defense and Azerbaijan medical researchers.

Earlier this month I traveled to Azerbaijan and met with President Aliyev and the First Lady of Azerbaijan. We had an interesting discussion on the important role Azerbaijan is playing in energy recovery and transportation. It is a tribute to Azerbaijan that they are using their energy resources to the benefit of global security. Building

pipelines and opening energy production to foreign markets requires difficult foreign policy decisionmaking. Azerbaijan is located in a tough neighborhood, and countries there are under tremendous pressure to keep their distance from the U.S. I thanked President Aliyev for taking concrete steps to affirm his country's strategic partnership with the U.S.

I discussed at length with the President and members of his Government the possibility of connecting Azerbaijan's energy infrastructure with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. I encouraged continued progress on rapprochement between Governments in Baku and Ashgabat. I heard encouraging statements toward improved relations and cooperation on energy in both Ashgabat and Baku. It is clear that there is willingness for progress.

Integrating some oil and gas production in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan would diversify export routes for those countries and import sources for European nations. Successful integration of such trans-Caspian transport routes is a vital contribution to international peace and security. In some countries oil and gas revenues are a curse, leading to corruption and conflict. Two years ago President Aliyev pledged to me that Azerbaijan would follow the Norway model in managing its oil and gas revenues. As reflected by the State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan's receipt in 2007 of the United Nations Public Service Award, it is now on a path of transparency and is investing for development today and for future generations. I am hopeful that progress in Azerbaijan will continue and other emerging countries learn from Azerbaijan's example.

One of the areas where we can deepen U.S.-Azerbaijan relations is bilateral trade. In light of its adherence to freedom of emigration requirements, compliance with threat reduction and unwavering cooperation in the production and delivery of energy supplies, the products of Azerbaijan should not be subject to the sanctions of Jackson-Vanik. The U.S. must remain committed and engaged in assisting Azerbaijan in pursuing democratic and human rights reforms. The Government in Baku still has important work to do in these critical areas, including in the area of media freedom and freedom of assembly. I discussed the ongoing democratic reforms with President Aliyev during my visit and was assured that they are proceeding. Azerbaijan faces an important Presidential election this October. The support and encouragement of the U.S. and the international community will be key to encouraging the Government of Azerbaijan to hold free and fair elections. The permanent waiver of Jackson-Vanik and establishment of permanent normal trade relations will be the foundation on which further progress in a

burgeoning economic and energy partnership can be made.

I am hopeful that my colleagues will join me in supporting this important legislation. It is essential that we act promptly to bolster this important relationship and promote stability in this region.

By Mr. BIDEN (for himself, Mr. SUNUNU, and Mr. SPECTER):

S. 2565. A bill to establish an awards mechanism to honor exceptional acts of bravery in the line of duty by Federal law enforcement officers; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, the Federal Law Enforcement Congressional Badge of Bravery Act of 2007 establishes an award to honor exceptional acts of bravery in the line of duty by Federal law enforcement officers. This bipartisan bill is cosponsored by Senators ARLEN SPECTER and JOHN SUNUNU and it is supported by the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association along with other law enforcement groups.

An "ABC Nightly News" series last November reported that 2007 may turn out to be one of the deadliest years in history for law enforcement officers. That sour prediction has come to pass. The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund—which commemorates the service and sacrifice of law enforcement officers and helps promote law enforcement safety—found that officer deaths were up sharply nationwide last year. There were 194 fatalities—34 percent more than the year before.

Unfortunately, with crime on the rise around the country the increase in fallen officers should be no surprise. The FBI's Uniform Crime Report for 2006—the gold standard of crime reports in our country—must be taken seriously. Murders were up 1.9 percent on top of the previous year's increases—these were the largest increases in 15 years. What's more, violent crime rose 1.9 percent.

Clearly, our Federal law enforcement officers are doing their jobs in an environment more fraught with danger than ever. Police departments around the country are scrambling in an arms race to match the firepower of the bad guys. In my view, we should give special recognition to those Federal law enforcement officers who are going above and beyond to protect us in this kind of environment.

With this bill Congress can continue its support of the brave men and women law enforcement officers who risk their lives every day making sure our communities are safe. I hope this bill will be accepted by the full Senate.

By Mrs. BOXER (for herself, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. TESTER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. OBAMA):

S. 2569. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the Di-

rector of the National Cancer Institute to make grants for the discovery and validation of biomarkers for use in risk stratification for, and the early detection and screening of, ovarian cancer; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today I am joined by my colleagues Senators DOLE, TESTER, MURRAY, WYDEN, CANTWELL, STABENOW, and OBAMA to introduce the Ovarian Cancer Biomarker Research Act of 2008—legislation that supports the research of early detection and screening of ovarian cancer.

For many years, ovarian cancer has been called the "silent killer" because the list of symptoms women are warned to look out for are merely whispers about the dangers of this deadly disease.

There is currently no effective screening test available for ovarian cancer and the disease is difficult to identify because symptoms are easily misdiagnosed. Without an effective screening test most women who have ovarian cancer are diagnosed too late to be saved.

A woman's chance of surviving ovarian cancer is considerably greater if she is diagnosed early. When ovarian cancer is diagnosed early, more than 93 percent of women survive longer than 5 years. Unfortunately, 4 out of 5 ovarian cancer cases in the U.S. are diagnosed in the later stages, when a woman's chance of surviving that long drops to about 30 percent.

Though only one in 69 women will face ovarian cancer, this disease ranks fifth in cancer deaths among women and causes more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system. In the last year alone, the National Cancer Institute, (NCI), estimated there were 15,280 deaths from ovarian cancer in the U.S.

Developing the tools to detect ovarian cancer early is critical to improving the rate of survival for women struck by this disease—that is why this legislation is so necessary.

Specifically, the Ovarian Cancer Biomarker Research Act would authorize NCI to make grants for public or non-profit entities to establish research centers focused on ovarian cancer biomarkers. Biomarkers are biochemical features within the body that can be used to measure the progress of a disease and predict the effects of treatment. This legislation also authorizes funding for a national clinical trial that will enroll at-risk women in a study to determine the clinical utility of using these validated ovarian cancer biomarkers.

I urge my colleagues to join me as well as the Society of Gynecologic Oncologists, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance, and the American College of Surgeons in supporting the Ovarian Cancer Biomarker Research Act of 2008.

This legislation is of vital importance to the health of thousands of women across our Nation. I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass this critical investment in the fight against ovarian cancer.

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

S. 2570. A bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to authorize waivers by the Commissioner of Social Security of the 5-month waiting period for entitlement to benefits based on disability in cases in which the Commissioner determines that such waiting period would cause undue hardship to terminally ill beneficiaries; to the Committee on Finance.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to discuss legislation that I have introduced that will fix an inequity in the Social Security disability insurance system. This inequity rises from Federal law that places an arbitrary 5-month waiting period on when an individual who has been diagnosed with a terminal illness is eligible for disability compensation provided through Social Security benefits.

Currently, under title II of the Social Security Act, Federal law requires a 5-month waiting period from when the patient is diagnosed until the disability benefits begin. Monthly cash benefits, about \$980 on average, will be provided to the disabled individual to help offset medical or any other expenses and will also help diminish the financial hardships that are faced by those workers.

The monthly cash benefits that are available to the individuals can help not only offset the medical or other expenses, but they can really help to diminish financial hardships that are faced by the workers, by the families, who really may have very little or oftentimes no resources to fall back upon during the early months of a disability.

This legislation came about as a result of a telephone call received in my Anchorage office to the head of my constituent services. She received a call from a constituent in Alaska by the name of Robert James. He indicated he had been diagnosed in November with stage 4 lung cancer, and he was given, at that time, 3 to 6 months to live. He called my office asking for help.

He wanted to know how, as someone who had just been diagnosed with a terminal illness, he might be eligible for disability compensation provided through Social Security benefits.

And so my constituent service director, after listening to his story, went through everything to try to figure out a way to help this individual, only to learn that the process, the law as it sets out now, provides for a 5-month waiting period.

Although Mr. James has insurance coverage through his employer, he is unable to work because of his disability. He is going to incur thousands of dollars, probably hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical bills because of this arbitrary 5-month waiting period.

If he had only been given the opportunity to demonstrate his case for financial hardship to the Social Security Commissioner, he and his family may have qualified for this cash benefit offset. What my legislation would do is give the Social Security Commissioner the ability to waive the 5-month waiting period on a case-by-case basis for terminally ill individuals who would have to demonstrate the financial hardship.

In Mr. James's case, as I indicated, he is employed, works for the cargo department of a major airline in Alaska, but he would have to demonstrate there is financial hardship as a consequence of this terminal diagnosis.

It makes you wonder why this 5-month period. The capriciousness of a 5-month waiting period is evidenced by looking at the legislative history. In 1972, the House Ways and Means Committee report sought to reduce the waiting period from at that time 6 months to 5 months. At the time the Senate Finance Committee was pushing for a shorter period. They were pushing for a 4-month period.

So back in 1972, you had a 6-month period. Some wanted it to go to 4 months. Eventually they agreed upon a 5-month waiting period. But it begs the question: Should it be 4 months, 5 months? Should it only be 1 month?

My legislation would give the Social Security Commissioner the discretion to waive the waiting period if the terminally ill individual can demonstrate a financial hardship. This will alleviate the financial burden or help to offset the financial burden of a terminal illness on the disabled individuals and their families and will also provide for a financial offset for paying medical bills after he or she is deceased.

I would ask that in honor of my constituent, Mr. JONES, my colleagues support this bill because there are people who become disabled. We know they are unable to work. They need that monthly support to help offset the costs of their terminal illness.

For this reason, it is imperative that the Social Security Commissioner have that ability on a case-by-case basis to make a determination for disability benefits. Mr. James's chemotherapy costs, we understand, are about between \$10,000 and \$15,000 per monthly session, and this does not include the other medical bills he is facing.

I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation so that Robert James and Americans like Mr. James have the ability to qualify for disability benefits to offset these cost-

ly expenses without having to complete an arbitrary 5-month waiting period.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 433—HONORING THE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD WHOSE TIRELESS WORK, DEDICATION, AND SELFLESS SERVICE TO THE UNITED STATES HAVE LED TO MORE THAN 1 MILLION LIVES SAVED OVER THE COURSE OF ITS LONG AND STORIED 217-YEAR HISTORY

Mr. STEVENS (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 433

Whereas, since 1867 the United States Coast Guard has been a vital piece of Alaskan history, providing lifesaving medical treatment to native villages along its coasts, protecting its fisheries resources, and courageously rescuing those who face peril on the seas;

Whereas, in 2007 the men and women of the United States Coast Guard stationed in Alaska valiantly responded to 696 calls for assistance and saved the lives of 463 mariners in distress;

Whereas, the actions of Petty Officer Willard L. Milam personify the proud history of courage and public service of the United States Coast Guard on the 10th of February, 2007, when, on a pitch-black winter morning, Petty Officer Milam launched aboard a Coast Guard HH-65 helicopter in near-zero visibility to locate the source of a distress signal approximately 50 miles southwest in Makushin Bay, Alaska;

Whereas, Petty Officer Milam bravely deployed into storm tossed, 40-degree seas and swam to a life raft to find four survivors hypothermic and soaked in unprotected clothing;

Whereas, Petty Officer Milam heroically overcame exhaustion and hypothermia to pull each survivor from a life raft and assist them through the raging seas, placing them into a rescue basket to be hoisted into the rescue helicopter;

Whereas, Petty Officer Milam's courageous rescue off the coast of Alaska has earned him the 2007 Coast Guard Foundation Award for Heroism and the 2007 Captain Frank Erickson Aviation Rescue Award;

Whereas, through extraordinary teamwork, airmanship, and courage, the crew of the Coast Guard rescue helicopter saved four lives from the treacherous Bearing Sea: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) honors the heroic accomplishments of Petty Officer Willard Milam, who represented the finest traditions of the United States Coast Guard during the dramatic rescue of four survivors from the treacherous Bering Sea; and

(2) honors the United States Coast Guard, America's lifesavers and guardians of the sea, for its unflinching determination and proud 217-year history of maritime search and rescue resulting in over 1 million lives saved; and

(3) recognizes the tireless work, dedication, and commitment of Coast Guard men and women, many of them stationed in Alaska,