

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, the Finance Committee requests unanimous consent to conduct a hearing on Thursday, April 17, 1997, beginning at 10 a.m. in room 215 Dirksen.

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, April 17, 1997, at 10 a.m. to hold a hearing.

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

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent on behalf of the Governmental Affairs Committee to meet on Thursday, April 17, 1997, at 9:15 a.m. for a hearing on public education improvement opportunities for the District of Columbia.

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, the Committee on the Judiciary would like to request unanimous consent to hold an executive business meeting on Thursday, April 17, 1997, at 10 a.m., in Room 226 of the Senate Dirksen Office Building.

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

COMMITTEE ON RULE AND ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Rules and Administration be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, April 17, 1997, beginning at 9:30 a.m. to consider the course of action regarding petitions in connection with a contested U.S. Senate election held in Louisiana in November 1996.

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

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs would like to request unanimous consent to hold a hearing to hear the testimony of Gen. Colin Powell on Persian Gulf War issues. The hearing will be held on April 17, 1997, at 9:30 a.m., in room 216 of the Hart Senate Office Building.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, April 17, 1997, at 2:30 p.m. to hold a closed hearing on intelligence matters.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EASTERN AND SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Sub-

committee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 15, 1997, at 2 p.m. to hold a hearing.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Labor and Human Resources be authorized to meet for a Employment and Training Subcommittee Hearing on Innovations in Youth Training, during the session of the Senate on Thursday, April 17, 1997, at 9:30 a.m.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, SECURITY, PROLIFERATION, AND FEDERAL SERVICES

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent on behalf of the Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation, and Federal Services to meet on Thursday, April 17, at 10:30 a.m. for a classified hearing on "Proliferation: Chinese Case Studies."

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee of Readiness of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet at 10 a.m. on Thursday, April 17, 1997, in open session, to receive testimony on the status of the operational readiness of the U.S. Military Forces in review of S. 450, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1998 and 1999.

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

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AND EFFICIENCY ACT

• Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I am pleased to join 31 of my fellow Senators in introducing a reauthorization of our Nation's transportation legislation, the Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act [ISTEA]. This bill commits our country to sound transportation planning and development and reflects the vital role transportation plays in our expanding economy.

In 1991, I was proud to be a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee and an original author of ISTEA. This innovative law has resulted in the development of efficient and effective transportation throughout our country. ISTEA shifted decision making from Washington to local communities, enhanced air quality health standards, increased mobility and allowed our economy to grow in an intelligent manner.

Today, I am equally honored to be involved in the introduction of ISTEA WORKS, the continuation of this suc-

cessful law. This bill retains the basic structure of ISTEA, preserving the role of States and local communities in deciding transportation policies, continuing the emphasis on intermodalism and maintaining support for strong environmental provisions. The bill protects the important enhancements programs, expands the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program and improves safety.

This legislation also addresses an issue important to Vermont and the Nation. As we have heard recently, Amtrak continues to struggle with its finances. Although I know Amtrak will survive, action must be taken to improve the system now. ISTEA WORKS grants States the flexibility to use Federal transportation dollars for operating and maintaining passenger service. This flexibility is important to Vermont, where we are running two of the most successful passenger trains in the Nation. The new authority will also enable our State to expand passenger rail and upgrade rail lines to benefit freight rail traffic.

Mr. President, this is a historic occasion. With the introduction of this legislation, we begin to raise the awareness of the success of ISTEA and the urgent need to reauthorize this important legislation with few major changes.●

NOMINATION OF PETE PETERSON TO BE AMBASSADOR TO VIETNAM

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I was pleased to see the Senate consider the President's nomination of Douglas "Pete" Peterson to be the United States Ambassador to Socialist Republic of Vietnam late last week. I supported this nomination in the Foreign Relations Committee. But I did so after careful consideration of the symbolism of this vote and of the signal it sends to Americans.

Mr. President, the appointment of an ambassador is a normal consequence of having full diplomatic relations with a given country. And we have had diplomatic relations with Vietnam since July 1995 when the President signed an executive order establishing such ties. So, technically, the Senate's view on this nominee does not represent a statement of policy. It simply represents the normal procedure by which the Senate provides its advice and consent to a Presidential nomination.

There has never been any serious question raised regarding the President's selection of Mr. Peterson to fill this position. Mr. Peterson is an outstanding citizen and public servant. He spent nearly 30 years in the U.S. Air Force, including 6½ years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, and has received numerous awards for his valiant service. As a three-term Member of Congress from the second district in Florida, Mr. Peterson also has devoted significant energies to working with both the Bush administration and the Clinton Administration to bolster the U.S.

search program for POW/MIA's. There are few people who have as deep of an understanding of the uniqueness of America's relationship with Vietnam, so I fully support the President's choice.

This does not mean that there do not remain myriad outstanding questions and issues in our bilateral relations with Vietnam. One issue that is of particular concern to me is the human rights record of the Vietnamese Government which remains poor. According to the most recent State Department Report on Human Rights Practices, the Government of Vietnam continues to restrict basic freedoms; of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of privacy, and of religion. Citizens can be arbitrarily arrested or detained for trying to express political or religious objections to government policies. And although the Vietnamese Constitution provides for the right to privacy, according to the State Department, the Vietnamese Government continues to operate a "nationwide system of surveillance and control through * * * block wardens who use informants to keep track of individuals' activities." The Vietnamese Government also has in place a policy of forced family planning.

Mr. President, this is not a country that shares with the United States the principle that government should exist to promote the general welfare of its people. Nor is it one that has respect for the rule of law.

But, as I said in 1995 when the President first announced his decision to restore diplomatic relations with Vietnam, I believe that diplomatic relations actually enhance our ability to advocate for issues such as human rights and political freedoms. Through a permanent, high-level presence in the country, I believe the United States can intensify the dialog on human rights, work more closely with Vietnamese reformers, and more effectively monitor developments in the human rights situation.

Now I have listened carefully to the veterans in Wisconsin and to the national veterans' organizations. I recognize that the veterans themselves have differing opinions on the issue of diplomatic relations, in general, and of Senate confirmation of this nomination, in particular. The concerns are two-fold: Does having an ambassador on the ground in Vietnam actually help advance the accounting of POW and MIA cases? Or does the dispatching of a President's representative with ambassadorial rank imply that the United States no longer thinks we have reason to withhold a special privilege for Vietnam?

Mr. President, it is my view that having an ambassador resident in Hanoi can serve to better advance U.S. interests, in human rights, as I said earlier, and on issues related to the continued accounting of our POW's and MIA's. I salute the efforts of all those who have tirelessly sought details

about missing U.S. service men and women, and, from most of their testimony, I am inclined to believe that we will enhance our ability to collect more information about the remaining POW and MIA cases through fulfilling the President's commitment to full diplomatic relations.

On the other hand, I think it is equally important to acknowledge that sending a Presidential representative of ambassadorial rank does indicate a symbolic change in our relationship with Vietnam that I know some observers still are hesitant to send. It is my view, however, that the United States can serve two purposes by that change: Better advance our interests as described above, and better indicate our concerns about Vietnam or its government through other actions. For example, that is why I voted against lifting the trade embargo against Vietnam and why I have supported congressional efforts to limit United States assistance to Vietnam.

However, I believe that in an era of global engagement and integration, it usually makes little sense to refuse diplomatic relations with a country in the international community. Vietnam is a large presence in a fast-growing region where the United States has ever-increasing interests. We can no longer hope to isolate it, nor will isolation serve to advance any of our goals.

To reiterate, Mr. President, I support the President's choice of Pete Peterson to be Ambassador to Vietnam because I believe that the United States best serves its citizens by having a Presidential representative of the highest order resident in the country. Nevertheless, I remain concerned about other aspects of our bilateral relations in that country and I will continue to scrutinize carefully the President's policies in that regard.●

COMMENDATION OF LT. COL. STEPHEN G. GRESS, JR.

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Lt. Col. Stephen G. Gress, Jr., who recently retired from the U.S. Air Force. A native of Pittsburgh, PA, Lieutenant Colonel Gress has served his country with valor and distinction for more than 22 years as an instructor pilot, a combat pilot, and as a member of the Air Force legislative liaison.

One needs only to look at Steve's academic credentials to see that he is a man of exceptional achievement. In addition to graduating from the Air Force Academy, Lieutenant Colonel Gress earned a masters degree in operation research from the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Likewise, Steve became a distinguished graduate of the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base in 1987.

Mr. President, Lieutenant Colonel Gress was one of the military's premier pilots. He served as an instructor pilot for the T-38 at Webb Air Force Base,

and later, for the T-41 at his alma mater, the U.S. Air Force Academy. In 1979, the Air Force chose Steve from a very select few to become an F-15 fighter pilot. Steve also distinguished himself in the Air Force Special Programs Office, where he managed the development of future fighter weapons systems. During his tenure at Bitburgh Air Force Base, Steve's extensive knowledge of fighter combat operations led to an appointment as the chief of wing inspections, a position that is critical to the combat effectiveness of all Air Force organizations.

I would also note that Lieutenant Colonel Gress is a war hero. As an F-15 flight leader, he flew 19 combat missions in Operation Desert Storm.

Later in 1991, Steve returned to the Pentagon. Once again, the Air Force came to rely upon his keen understanding of fighter combat. As the branch chief for both air to air weapons and fighter development, he worked to ensure that the next generation of fighter systems would secure American air dominance.

Steve moved to the Office of the Air Force Legislative Liaison in 1993. He worked his way up from the branch chief for fighter and fighter weapons to the division chief of the weapons systems division. As always, Steve took tremendous pride in his work. He strove to ensure that critical military issues were presented to Congress in a clear and nonparochial manner. Over the years, many congressional staff members have come to know Steve both as a serious professional and as a man of integrity.

As Lt. Col. Stephen G. Gress, Jr. retires to private life, I ask my colleagues will join me in commending the outstanding service he has given this country. On behalf of the Senate, I would like to wish Lieutenant Colonel Gress and his family the very best.

FENTON A.J. PHILLIPS LIBRARY

● Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the Fenton A.J. Phillips Library as it celebrates the 10th anniversary of operations in its current building. The history of the library dates back to 1906, when local industrialist A.J. Phillips bequeathed his old office building to the community for use as a library. Since then, the library has experienced many changes, but it has never stopped serving the residents of Fenton. In order to properly celebrate this achievement, the city of Fenton and the Fenton Library Board is holding a gala event which will include some of Neil Simon's hilarious sketches. These will be presented by the actors of the Readers Theatre at the library. Mayor Patricia Lockwood has proclaimed April 17, "Pride in the Fenton A.J. Phillips Library Day."

The Fenton Library is one of 18 libraries in the Genesee County Library System. It serves over 10,000 residents of Fenton, Fenton Township, and Tyronne Township. It contains over 55,000