

Administration priorities—providing parity to Central Americans and Haitians under NACARA and changing the registry date to allow certain long-term migrants to adjust to legal permanent resident status. These proposals are much-needed and would restore fairness to our immigration system and American families. The registry date and the Central American and Haitian Parity Act proposals would provide good people who have developed ties to this country—families, homes, and roots in their communities—the opportunity to adjust their status. I am extremely disappointed that many in the Congressional majority seem intent on refusing to pass or even vote on these important immigration provisions. One way or another, however, the Congressional majority has an obligation to allow a vote on these issues and to join us in passing these measures of basic justice and fairness. The migrants and their families who would benefit from the registry date proposal have been in immigration limbo for up to two decades and are in desperate need of a resolution to their efforts to become full members of American society. In the case of Central Americans and Haitians, the parity provision would not only provide compassion and fairness for the affected immigrants, but also contribute to the stability and development of democracy and peace in their native countries.

I also urge Congress to pass and fund other Administration priorities that would address the needs of immigrants. Reinstatement of section 245(i) would allow families to stay together while an adjustment of status application is pending. The Administration's FY 2001 budget proposal would fund programs to ensure that immigrants' services have the resources needed to reduce the backlog of applications from people seeking naturalization and adjustment of status.

Finally, I urge Congress to fully fund the Administration's \$75 million request for the English Language/Civics and Lifeskills Initiative that will allow communities to provide more English language courses that are linked to civics and lifeskills instruction to adults with limited English language proficiency. Immigrants are eager to learn English and all about civic responsibility, but the demand for programs outweighs the supply. We need to provide opportunities for these new Americans to become full participants in our society.

For these reasons, Congress should consider and enact these legislative proposals and fund the programs we requested. I commend your leadership in this area, and I look forward to working closely with you to enact these important immigration measures.

Sincerely,

AL GORE.

65TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, for more than 60 years, the Social Security program has been one of the most successful governmental initiatives this country has ever witnessed. August 14, 2000 marks the 65th anniversary of the Social Security Act, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1935. This historic event in 1935 changed the face of America by providing protections for retired workers and for those who face loss of income due to disability or death of the family breadwinner. We must look to the future to ensure a strong Social Security program for every individual in America.

During the time of the Great Depression, jobs were scarce and many were

unable to compete for new employment. President Roosevelt recognized that a change was needed, he called for reform and the Social Security Act was born.

Social Security has changed remarkably over the past six decades. Under the 1935 law, Social Security only paid retirement benefits to the primary worker. A 1939 change in the law added survivor benefits and benefits for the retiree's spouse and children. In 1956 disability benefits were added. Thus, we have seen how Social Security has grown to meet the needs of not only retirees, but also their families.

For many Americans, Social Security has become a crucial component of their financial well-being. In fact, an estimated 42% of the elderly are kept out of poverty because of their Social Security checks. Today more than 44 million people receive retirement, survivor, and disability benefits through the Social Security program, 1.6 million in Michigan. Social Security has had an enormous effect on the lives of millions of working Americans and their families.

As we celebrate this historic event, we remember what America was and how Americans have shaped their country into the prosperous nation that it is today. Since 1935 Social Security has served the American people well and will continue to do so into the future.

VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, it has been more than a year since the Columbine tragedy, but still this Republican Congress refuses to act on sensible gun legislation.

Since Columbine, thousands of Americans have been killed by gunfire. Until we act, Democrats in the Senate will read some of the names of those who lost their lives to gun violence in the past year, and we will continue to do so every day that the Senate is in session.

In the name of those who died, we will continue this fight. Following are the names of some of the people who were killed by gunfire one year ago today.

July 27: Jesus Campos, 19, Chicago, IL; Steven Conley, 29, Memphis, TN; Stephen Daniels, Jr., 24, Miami-Dade County, FL; Willie G. Dulaney, 68, Memphis, TN; George Julian, 83, Hollywood, FL; Javier Marrero, 18, Chicago, IL; Eric McAlister, 33, Dallas, TX; Charles Oliver, 50, Atlanta, GA; Deondra Stokes, 21, Detroit, MI; Barreto P. Williams, 26, Chicago, IL; Unidentified male, 25, Newark, NJ.

We cannot sit back and allow such senseless gun violence to continue. The deaths of these people are a reminder to all of us that we need to enact sensible gun legislation now.

WELCOMING ZELL MILLER TO THE U.S. SENATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today we welcome a new colleague to this body,

former Governor, now Senator ZELL MILLER. We welcome Senator MILLER at the same time that we mourn the passing of his predecessor, PAUL COVERDELL. So it is a bittersweet moment.

ZELL MILLER isn't replacing PAUL COVERDELL. He can't be replaced, rather, I prefer to think he is following the footsteps of a consummate and formidable legislator. I worked closely with Senator COVERDELL to move legislation when people thought legislation couldn't be moved. And I look forward to working with Senator MILLER in that same vain.

In thinking about what I would say about Senator MILLER's arrival to the senate, I ran across a quote by the great Senator J. William Fulbright. He talked about what it takes to be both a legislator and an executive and I think it is a fitting characterization of the work of both PAUL COVERDELL and ZELL MILLER.

Fulbright said: "The legislator is an indispensable guardian of our freedom." "It is true," he said, "that great executives have played a powerful role in the development of civilization, but such leaders appear sporadically, by chance. They do not always appear when they are most needed. The great executives have given inspiration and push to the advancement of human society, but it is the legislator who has given stability and continuity to that slow and painful progress."

ZELL MILLER, to borrow Senator Fulbright's eloquent words, appeared in Georgia when he was most needed. As Governor, he advanced the prospects of the people of Georgia by creating the HOPE scholarship program. The initiative was so successful that President Clinton and the Congress made the HOPE scholarship initiative a national program. As a result, not only do Georgians have the opportunity to pursue their dreams through higher education, so do millions of Americans.

Looking at his career, you learn that ZELL MILLER also understands Sam Rayburn's dictum that "you cannot be a leader, and ask other people to follow you, unless you know how to follow too." Whether it was his service in Marine Corps, his tenure in the Georgia State Senate or as Lieutenant Governor or Governor, he learned leadership by following those who walked the walk before him and then by focusing on what matters most to the American people. The central focus of ZELL MILLER's career has been on what he aptly calls "kitchen table issues." The issues that affect the daily lives of the American people—education, taxes, crime, and health care.

Some may be surprised to learn that ZELL is fulfilling a childhood ambition of serving in the U.S. Senate. According to a recent news report, he wrote to his boyhood friend, Ed Jenkins, in their high school yearbook that "we will be friends forever until and unless you decide to run against me for the

U.S. Senate." His friendship with Ed Jenkins, someone with whom I served in the House, is still intact, and ZELL will start a new chapter in what has been an extraordinary career.

Finally, Mr. President, ZELL brings the attributes of both a legislator and an executive to the Senate and I believe they will serve him well. And like PAUL COVERDELL, who through his work brought stability and continuity to the Senate, I know that ZELL will bring great credit to this institution and will serve the people of Georgia well. We welcome him to the U.S. Senate.

H-1B VISAS

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today to express my frustration over the inability of the Senate to reach a unanimous consent agreement in regard to legislation that addresses the critical shortage of highly skilled workers in the information technology fields. On April 11, 2000, the Senate's Judiciary Committee favorably reported out S. 2045, The American Competitiveness in the 21st Century Act, by a vote of 16-2. I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of this important legislation. Unfortunately, this legislation is now being held hostage because some of my colleagues in the Senate wish to attach unrelated amendments to the bill.

There are very few remaining days left in this Congress. Before Congress adjourns for the year, we must pass the remaining appropriations bills, and have them signed into law. In addition, legislation extending Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China, and legislation reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, must be considered. Consequently, there simply is just not enough time for the Senate to debate numerous unrelated amendments on the H-1B visa bill.

Mr. President, our country's burgeoning economy has resulted in an extremely low unemployment rate nationwide. While I am proud of our economy, and our low nationwide unemployment rate, there does exist a tight labor market in many fields, especially the information technology fields. One need only look in the classified section of the Washington Post to see how many high-tech jobs are available in Northern Virginia. This tight labor market makes it difficult for the high-tech industry to fill job openings, and this difficulty is compounded by the fact that our American education system, for one reason or another, is not producing enough individuals with the interest and skills for employment in the information technology fields. If these jobs are not filled, our economy will suffer, and these American companies will move overseas to fill their jobs.

In 1998, Congress and the President recognized the serious effects that the tight labor market could have on the

high-tech industry and our economy. In that year, Congress passed, and the President signed into law, legislation increasing the annual ceiling for admission of H-1B nonimmigrants from 65,000 to 115,000 in fiscal year 1999 and fiscal year 2000, and 107,500 in fiscal year 2001. This 1998 act also imposed a \$500 per visa fee to fund training and scholarships for U.S. workers and students.

Nevertheless, despite increasing the H-1B ceiling just two years ago, that increase has proved to be woefully inadequate. In 1999, the H-1B visa ceiling was reached at the end of 9 months. This fiscal year, the ceiling was reached 6 months into the fiscal year. The effect of the H-1B ceiling being reached before the year's end is that these jobs will remain unfilled, which in turn will only hurt our economy.

The Senate Judiciary's Committee Report on S. 2045 states that the, "shortage of skilled workers throughout the U.S. economy will result in a 5-percent drop in the growth rate of the GDP. That translates into approximately \$200 billion in lost output, nearly \$1,000 for every American." The Committee cites other studies that indicate that a shortage of information technology professionals is costing the U.S. economy as a whole \$105 billion a year. I also found Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan's testimony before the Senate's Banking Committee quite compelling. Mr. Greenspan endorsed S. 2045 in response to a question from Senator PHIL GRAMM, and then stated that, "The benefits of bringing in people to do the work here, rather than doing the work elsewhere, to me, should be pretty self-evident."

Now, let me state clearly, it is my preference that these jobs in the information technology fields would be filled with Americans. However, due to the low unemployment rate and the lack of unemployed educated high-tech workers, filling the numerous openings in the information technology fields with Americans is simply not realistic. Therefore, to continue to propel our economy forward, we must pass legislation such as S. 2045 to fill these critical positions in our information technology sector.

This legislation, though, does more than just increase the number of H-1B visas to temporarily fill the job openings in the high-tech industry that cannot be filled by Americans. This bill contains very important provisions that continue the imposition of a \$500 fee per H-1B visa petition. It is estimated that this fee, with the increase in the H-1B ceiling, will raise roughly \$450 million over three years. This money will create 40,000 scholarships for U.S. workers and U.S. students, thereby helping them to choose education in these important fields. Our goal should be to fill these American jobs with trained American workers. These provisions of S. 2045 takes us toward that goal.

Mr. President, in closing, I cannot overstate how important it is for our

country's economy to raise the ceiling on H-1B visas, and to provide funding for the training of Americans to fill these jobs. I implore my colleagues to reconsider their demand for votes on unrelated amendments on this legislation. At this late stage in the Congress, demanding votes on unrelated amendments on this legislation will kill this important bill, leave very important jobs in the information technology sector unfilled, and ultimately, hurt our economy.

VISA WAIVER PILOT PROGRAM

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I wish to explain to my colleagues the reasons for my objection to a unanimous consent request for the Senate to adopt legislation to make the Visa Waiver Pilot Program permanent, H.R. 3767. I do so consistent with the commitment I have made to explain publicly any so-called "holds" that I may place on legislation.

I regret that I am compelled to object to this measure at this point but I do so for reasons similar to those given previously. I believe the Senate should not allow the security of millions of rural Americans to be ignored while we press ahead with legislation to take care of immigration matters.

Since April, a prominent Senate Republican leader has had a de facto hold on a bipartisan bill of critical importance to the security of those who live in rural counties, S. 1608, The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. But time is running out. It is the end of July; there are fewer than 26 legislative days left. People in rural counties across America who have strained under dwindling Federal resource funds need this legislation. They should not be made to wait.

S. 1608 addresses the problems 709 rural counties in 42 states face in trying to fund schools, roads and other basic county services with drastically declining Federal timber payments. These problems affect some 800,000 school children and millions of people. For example, Grant County in eastern Oregon has lost 90 percent of its timber receipts, forcing it to turn to a four-day school week as a cost-saving measure.

This bipartisan bill provides a balanced solution to the problem. The Energy and Natural Resources Committee reported it by voice vote, and it is supported by hundreds of counties, labor organizations, education groups, and the National Association of Counties. I regret having to take this action but am compelled at this point in the legislative year to seek every opportunity to move this critically important legislation.

RURAL AMERICA PROSPERITY ACT OF 2000

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support of the