

LaFayette Collins, of Texas, to be United States Marshal for the Western District of Texas for the term of four years.

Ronald J. Tenpas, of Illinois, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois for a term of four years.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. CARPER, and Mr. PRYOR):

S. 2163. A bill to establish a national health program administered by the Office of Personnel Management to offer health benefits plans to individuals who are not Federal employees, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. REID:

S. 2164. A bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to authorize local educational agencies in rural areas to obtain a limited waiver of certain requirements relating to the employment of highly qualified teachers; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. NELSON of Florida, and Mrs. CLINTON):

S. 2165. A bill to specify the end strength for active duty personnel of the Army as of September 30, 2005; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mrs. BOXER (for herself, Ms. SNOWE, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. COLLINS, Mrs. CLINTON, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. 2166. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to exempt abortions of pregnancies in cases of rape and incest from a limitation on use of Department of Defense funds; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. SMITH, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 2167. A bill to establish the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in the States of Washington and Oregon, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, and Mr. LEAHY):

S. 2168. A bill to extend the same Federal benefits to law enforcement officers serving private institutions of higher education and rail carriers, that apply to law enforcement officers serving units of State and local government; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. GRAHAM of Florida (for himself and Mr. NELSON of Florida):

S. 2169. A bill to modify certain water resources projects for the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee, and Flint Rivers, Georgia, Florida, and Alabama; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mrs. HUTCHISON:

S. 2170. A bill to establish the Weather Modification Operations and Research Board and outline its duties and responsibilities; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mrs. BOXER:

S. 2171. A bill to establish a first responder and terrorism preparedness grant information hotline, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. CAMPBELL (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. HATCH, and Mr. ALLARD):
S. Res. 310. A resolution commemorating and acknowledging the dedication and sacrifice made by the men and women who have lost their lives while serving as law enforcement officers; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BROWNBACK:

S. Res. 311. A resolution calling on the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to immediately and unconditionally release Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 161

At the request of Mr. HOLLINGS, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. STEVENS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 161, a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to require that violent video programming is limited to broadcast after the hours when children are reasonably likely to comprise a substantial portion of the audience, unless it is specifically rated on the basis of its violent content so that it is blockable by electronic means specifically on the basis of that content.

S. 473

At the request of Mr. FEINGOLD, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 473, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to clarify the jurisdiction of the United States over waters of the United States.

S. 480

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 480, a bill to provide competitive grants for training court reporters and closed captioners to meet requirements for realtime writers under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and for other purposes.

S. 683

At the request of Mr. FEINGOLD, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. CORZINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 683, a bill to amend the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to provide entitlement to leave to eligible employees whose spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty in support of a contingency operation or notified of an impending call or order to active duty in support of a contingency operation.

S. 784

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KYL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 784, a bill to revise the boundary of the Petrified Forest National Park in the State of Arizona, and for other purposes.

S. 874

At the request of Mr. TALENT, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr.

FITZGERALD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 874, a bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to include primary and secondary preventative medical strategies for children and adults with Sickle Cell Disease as medical assistance under the medicaid program, and for other purposes.

S. 1180

At the request of Mr. SANTORUM, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1180, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the work opportunity credit and the welfare-to-work credit.

S. 1452

At the request of Mr. DODD, the names of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1452, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act with respect to the H-1B and L-1 visa programs to prevent unintended United States job losses, to increase the monitoring and enforcement authority of the Secretary of Labor over such programs, and for other purposes.

S. 1630

At the request of Mrs. DOLE, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. CAMPBELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1630, a bill to facilitate nationwide availability of 2-1-1 telephone service for information and referral services, and for other purposes.

S. 1645

At the request of Mr. CRAIG, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. AKAKA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1645, a bill to provide for the adjustment of status of certain foreign agricultural workers, to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to reform the H-2A worker program under that Act, to provide a stable, legal agricultural workforce, to extend basic legal protections and better working conditions to more workers, and for other purposes.

S. 1949

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the names of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) and the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD) were added as cosponsors of S. 1949, a bill to establish The Return of Talent Program to allow aliens who are legally present in the United States to return temporarily to the country of citizenship of the alien if that country is engaged in post-conflict reconstruction, and for other purposes.

S. 2088

At the request of Mr. LEVIN, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2088, a bill to restore, reaffirm, and reconcile legal rights and remedies under civil rights statutes.

S. 2099

At the request of Mr. MILLER, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2099, a bill to amend title 38,

United States Code, to provide entitlement to educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill for members of the Selected Reserve who aggregate more than 2 years of active duty service in any five year period, and for other purposes.

S. 2100

At the request of Mr. MILLER, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2100, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to increase the amounts of educational assistance for members of the Selected Reserve, and for other purposes.

S. 2157

At the request of Mr. BAUCUS, the names of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. DASCHLE) and the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) were added as cosponsors of S. 2157, a bill to amend the Trade Act of 1974 to extend the trade adjustment assistance program to the services sector, and for other purposes.

S. 2158

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the names of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. SARBANES) were added as cosponsors of S. 2158, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to increase the supply of pancreatic islet cells for research, and to provide for better coordination of Federal efforts and information on islet cell transplantation.

S.J. RES. 28

At the request of Mr. CAMPBELL, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. CHAFEE), the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. COLEMAN), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. DOMENICI), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. GREGG) and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 28, a joint resolution recognizing the 60th anniversary of the Allied landing at Normandy during World War II.

S. CON. RES. 8

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Con. Res. 8, a concurrent resolution designating the second week in May each year as "National Visiting Nurse Association Week".

S. CON. RES. 81

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the names of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN), the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. GREGG) were added as cosponsors of S. Con. Res. 81, a concurrent resolution expressing the deep concern of Congress regarding the failure of the Islamic Republic of Iran to adhere to its obligations under a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the engagement by Iran in activities that appear to be designed to develop nuclear weapons.

S. RES. 299

At the request of Mr. CAMPBELL, the names of the Senator from Massachu-

setts (Mr. KERRY) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 299, a resolution recognizing, and supporting efforts to enhance the public awareness of, the social problem of child abuse and neglect.

AMENDMENT NO. 2642

At the request of Mrs. LINCOLN, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. BREAUX) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2642 intended to be proposed to S. 1637, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to comply with the World Trade Organization rulings on the FSC/ETI benefit in a manner that preserves jobs and production activities in the United States, to reform and simplify the international taxation rules of the United States, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2643

At the request of Mrs. LINCOLN, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAIG) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2643 intended to be proposed to S. 1637, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to comply with the World Trade Organization rulings on the FSC/ETI benefit in a manner that preserves jobs and production activities in the United States, to reform and simplify the international taxation rules of the United States, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2663

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2663 intended to be proposed to S. 1637, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to comply with the World Trade Organization rulings on the FSC/ETI benefit in a manner that preserves jobs and production activities in the United States, to reform and simplify the international taxation rules of the United States, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2671

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) and the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BOND) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2671 intended to be proposed to S. 1637, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to comply with the World Trade Organization rulings on the FSC/ETI benefit in a manner that preserves jobs and production activities in the United States, to reform and simplify the international taxation rules of the United States, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS OF INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. CARPER, and Mr. PRYOR):

S. 2163. A bill to establish a national health program administered by the Office of Personnel Management to offer health benefits plans to individ-

uals who are not Federal employees, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today I am introducing legislation along with my colleague, Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN, which will help small businesses struggling to make health insurance available to their employees.

Health insurance premiums have risen as much as six times the rate of inflation in the past decade. Last year they rose by 13.9 percent, the fourth consecutive year of double-digit increases. Some small businesses in Illinois are facing increases as high as 40 percent annually.

According to a survey conducted by Mercer Consulting, worker health care costs have overtaken taxes as the biggest concern among small business owners; and two-thirds of them are shopping for a new health plan every year in an effort to save money.

The Conference Board, an executive research firm, conducts an annual survey of 120 CEOs. One of the questions they ask is how big an obstacle health care costs are in hiring new workers. This year, 78 percent said it was an obstacle, 35 percent said it was a major obstacle.

Health care costs are hurting small businesses, workers and the economy; and fixing this problem should be a national priority.

There are two main problems for small businesses in obtaining affordable insurance. First, there aren't many insurers offering affordable products to small groups. Many small businesses only have access to one insurer in their area, which make it hard to comparison shop. The second problem is that because of their limited size, small business don't have the purchasing or negotiating power of a big company.

The Small Employers Health Benefits Program Act of 2004 (SEHBP) will address both of these problems while maintaining insurance solvency and benefit standards.

Our bill will create a program based on the successful Federal Employees Health Benefits Program or "FEHBP," which offers Federal employees a range of private sector options at affordable prices. This new program would draw from FEHBP's strengths: plan choice, group purchasing savings, comprehensive benefits, low administrative costs and nationwide availability.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), which has forty years of experience running FEHBP, would set up a separate SEHBP national purchasing pool open to businesses with 100 employees or less. OPM would annually negotiate benefit packages with private health insurers interested in offering an insurance plan through the SEHBP program. OPM would send out summaries of health plans available to all participating and interested employers during an annual open enrollment season. Plan guides would include a description of each plan offered and