S. 2082

At the request of Mr. SUNUNU, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2082, a bill to amend the USA PATRIOT ACT to extend the sunset of certain provisions of that Act and the lone wolf provision of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 to March 31, 2006.

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the names of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) and the Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID) were added as cosponsors of S. 2082, supra.

S.J. RES. 22

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 22, a joint resolution proclaiming Casimir Pulaski to be an honorary citizen of the United States posthumously.

S. CON. RES. 64

At the request of Mr. CRAIG, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. Con. Res. 64, a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress regarding oversight of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers.

S. RES. 180

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the names of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID) and the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. COLEMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 180, a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of a National Epidermolysis Bullosa Awareness Week to raise public awareness and understanding of the disease and to foster understanding of the impact of the disease on patients and their families.

S. RES. 320

At the request of Mr. ENSIGN, the names of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. SUNUNU) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 320, a resolution calling the President to ensure that the foreign policy of the United States reflects appropriate understanding and sensitivity concerning issues related to human rights, ethnic cleansing, and genocide documented in the United States record relating to the Armenian Genocide.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. NELSON of Florida:

S. 2084. A bill to direct the Consumer Product Safety Commission to issue regulations concerning the safety and labeling of portable generators; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, over the last several years, hundreds of Americans have died from the poisonous carbon monoxide emitted from portable gas generators. Congress needs to step in and act quickly to stop these needless deaths. That is why today I am introducing the Portable Generator Safety Act.

As most of us know, portable generators are frequently used to provide electricity during temporary power outages. These generators use fuel-burning engines that give off poisonous carbon monoxide gas in their exhaust.

Every hurricane season, news stories come from Florida and elsewhere about people injured or killed by poisoning caused by portable gas generators. From 1998 to 2003, the most recent year of official statistics, at least 228 carbon monoxide poisoning deaths were reported to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. At least one person was killed and seven were hospitalized near Miami, FL, this fall after being overcome by carbon monoxide fumes. And over the last two hurricane seasons in Florida, at least twelve people died from poisoning caused by poorly ventilated portable generators. These people died because portable generators are not manufactured to automatically cut off when high carbon monoxide rates are reached and because many manufacturers fail to place adequate warning labels on generators.

Here is what is especially troubling about these senseless deaths: The Consumer Product Safety Commission has known for years that people were dying from carbon monoxide poisoning at an increasingly alarming rate. In study after study, the Commission has recognized the high death rate from portable generators, and Commission staff has found that portable generator warning labels are often inconsistent, vague, and incomplete. Yet the Commission has continued to let the generator industry police itself—without any mandatory Federal safety standards.

Enough is enough. Industry self-regulation—which works in some settings—clearly is not working here. Congress must now step in and do its part to eliminate these tragic and avoidable deaths.

My bill—the Portable Generator Safety Act—takes some simple, commonsense steps. The bill requires the Consumer Product Safety Commission to pass tough Federal regulations within 180 days of the passage of the bill. The new regulations would have three components.

First, every portable generator must have a sensor that automatically shuts off the generator before lethal levels of carbon monoxide are reached. Other products, such as portable heaters, already contain these types of sensors, which save lives.

Second, every portable generator must have clearly written warning labels on the packaging and on the generator itself. These labels must include a pictogram that visually depicts the safety hazard from carbon monoxide. What I am talking about here is labels that are easy to read and can quickly be understood by people who are desperate for power in emergency circumstances.

Third, every instruction manual that accompanies a portable generator must clearly explain the safety hazards associated with operating the generator.

How many more innocent people must needlessly die before we require the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the portable generator industry to take some sensible, pro-consumer steps? It is my goal that after the next hurricane season, we will not be back here asking these same questions.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 2084

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Portable Generator Safety Act''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

(1) Portable generators are frequently used to provide electricity during temporary power outages. These generators use fuel-burning engines that emit carbon monoxide gas in their exhaust.

(2) In the last several years, hundreds of people nationwide have been seriously injured or killed due to exposure to carbon monoxide poisoning from portable generators. From 1990 through 2003, 228 carbon monoxide poisoning deaths were reported to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

(3) Virtually all of the serious injuries and deaths due to carbon monoxide from portable generators were preventable. In many instances, consumers simply were unaware of the hazards posed by carbon monoxide.

(4) Since at least 1997, a priority of the Consumer Product Safety Commission has been to reduce injuries and deaths resulting from carbon monoxide poisoning. Although the Commission has attempted to work with industry to devise voluntary standards for portable generators, and despite Commission staff statements that voluntary standards were ineffective, the Commission has not promulgated mandatory rules governing safety standards and labeling requirements.

(5) The issuance of mandatory safety standards and labeling requirements to warn consumers of the dangers associated with portable generator carbon monoxide would reduce the risk of injury or death.

SEC. 3. SAFETY STANDARD.

Not later than 180 days after the enactment of this Act, the Consumer Product Safety Commission shall promulgate regulations, pursuant to section 7 of the Consumer Product Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2056), requiring, at a minimum, that every portable generator sold to the public for purposes other than resale shall be equipped with an interlock safety device that detects the level of carbon monoxide in the areas surrounding such portable generator and automatically turns off power to the portable generator before the level of carbon monoxide is capable of causing serious bodily injury or death to people.

SEC. 4. LABELING AND INSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS.

Not later than 180 days after the enactment of this Act, the Consumer Product Safety Commission shall promulgate regulations, pursuant to section 7 of the Consumer

Product Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2056), requiring, at a minimum, the following:

(1) WARNING LABELS.—Each portable generator sold to the public for purposes other than resale shall have a large, prominently displayed warning label on the exterior packaging, if any, of the portable generator and permanently affixed on the portable generator regarding the carbon monoxide hazard posed by incorrect use of the portable generator. The warning label shall include the word ''DANGER'' printed in a large font, and shall include the following information, at a minimum, presented in a clear manner:

(A) Indoor use of a portable generator can kill quickly.

(B) Portable generators should be used outdoors only and away from garages and open windows.

(C) Portable generators produce carbon monoxide, a poisonous gas that people cannot see or smell.

(2) PICTOGRAM.—Each portable generator sold to the public for purposes other than resale shall have a large pictogram, affixed to the portable generator, which clearly states ''POISONOUS GAS'' and visually depicts the harmful effects of breathing carbon monoxide.

(3) INSTRUCTION MANUAL.—The instruction manual, if any, that accompanies any portable generator sold to the public for purposes other than resale shall include detailed, clear, and conspicuous statements that include the following elements:

(A) A warning that portable generators emit carbon monoxide, a poisonous gas that can kill people.

(B) A warning that people cannot smell, see, or taste carbon monoxide.

(C) An instruction to operate portable generators only outdoors and away from windows, garages, and air intakes.

(D) An instruction to never operate portable generators inside homes, garages, sheds, or other semi-enclosed spaces, even if a person runs a fan or opens doors and windows.

(E) A warning that if a person begins to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a portable generator, that person should shut off the portable generator, get to fresh air immediately, and consult a doctor.

By Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself and Mr. SMITH):

S. 2086. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue code of 1986 to modify the definition of compensation for purposes of determining the limits on contributions to individual retirement accounts and annuities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, today I am joined by Senator SMITH in introducing the IRA Equity Act of 2005, which would allow the disabled and those who temporarily leave the workforce to continue to save for their retirement.

We should be encouraging responsible behavior. When those whose income is slashed because they become disabled—or because they take time off to care for a child, volunteer for a good cause, or go to school—want to continue to save for retirement, that is commendable, it is responsible, and we ought to do everything we can to make it easier.

Yet today, people who are injured and have their income replaced by workers' compensation or Social Security disability suddenly are no longer able to contribute to their IRAs. That's because under current law, income contributed to IRAs must be ''compensation,'' or earned through work. Under the current rules, disability income doesn't qualify.

We know that those who become disabled will still need to support themselves in their old age; we know that they may even need to spend more because of their disability; and we know that because of their disability, they have less earning power and that makes it harder to save. So why in the world would we further penalize them for being disabled by taking away one of the most effective savings tools they have? It just doesn't make any sense.

My legislation would fix this problem by allowing wage replacement income, including Social Security disability and workers' compensation, to be contributed to IRAs. Additionally, my legislation would permit those who take up to two years away from the workforce to contribute earnings from prior years to their IRAs so that they can continue to save. Federal law should not force people to break good savings habits.

In the name of fairness and retirement security, I urge my colleagues to support this common-sense legislation.

By Mr. CHAMBLISS:

S. 2087. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide for the employment of foreign agricultural workers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise to introduce the Agricultural Employment and Workforce Protection Act. My home State of Georgia is one of the most diversified agricultural producing States east of the Mississippi. The livelihood of many of my constituents and many Americans across the country depends on the quality of the crop, the bounty of the harvest, and the health of the livestock.

In drafting this legislation I am introducing today, I was guided by four principles:

1. Prevention—if we do not stem the tide of illegal immigrants coming into our country then there is no point in Congress attempting to have a positive impact on our immigration policy. Strict enforcement of our immigration laws is essential and we should demand no less.

2. Protection—the United States has always been a welcoming country to immigrants, and many non-immigrants are admitted for temporary periods to perform necessary jobs—particularly in the field of agriculture—that employers cannot fill. However, any temporary worker program must provide adequate protections for American jobs. Employers should not view alien workers as a way to get cheaper labor—it is not fair to Americans willing to work hard and looking for a well-paying job and it is not fair to the aliens who are exploited by working for sub-standard wages.

3. Accountability—if Congress, through reform legislation, provides employers with an avenue to obtain legal temporary workers, there should be no tolerance for employers who hire illegal aliens. We all know that many illegal immigrants come to the United States seeking employment. Employers who flaunt the rule of law by hiring illegally are hampering our efforts to secure the border by providing incentives for people to illegally come to the United States, and they must be held accountable.

4. Compassion—We are a Nation of immigrants and immigrants have made many wonderful contributions to our country—not the least of which is helping ensure there is a stable supply of food in the grocery stores for all Americans. We need to ensure that those workers who come to the United States on a temporary basis to perform agricultural work are not exploited and are treated with fairness and respect. The best way to show compassion for illegal immigrants is to stop illegal immigration.

I know the Senate is planning to take up debate on comprehensive immigration reform early next year, and I think it is important that we engage in this discussion. The purpose of my legislation is to ensure that reform for the agricultural community is included in whatever reforms Congress considers. The agricultural sector of our economy has been historically plagued by illegal immigration. We already have an avenue for agricultural employers to obtain legal temporary workers—the H–2A program. However, many agricultural employers do not use the program because its bureaucracy is difficult to navigate, it is costly, and it is litigious. In addition, it excludes certain occupations from agriculture. My legislation provides needed reforms to the H–2A program, provides for the creation of a temporary blue card program, establishes an H–2AA worker program for cross-border commuter workers, and, above all, provides for increased border security.

First, it mandates that the Department of Homeland Security establish and present to Congress a comprehensive plan for increased border security and stricter enforcement of our Nation's immigration laws, including detailed strategies, timelines, and estimated costs. Until such time the Secretary presents and Congress approves the plan, some interim measures would apply.

Second, the legislation streamlines and modernizes the H–2A program. H–2A is not a new guestworker program. It has been around for many years, but underutilized because of its high costs, red tape, and risks of drawn out litigation. To increase the use of the program, the bill expands the definition of ''agriculture'' to include industries that have been excluded from use of the program previously—industries such as poultry, seafood, and meat processors, landscapers, and reforestation contractors. The bill also bases the definition ''temporary'' on the duration a worker is allowed to be in the

United States rather than tying it to seasonality. Some agricultural occupations, like poultry producers and dairy producers, do not follow seasons but require workers year round. If these employers in occupations previously excluded from the H–2A program were offered a viable alternative to an illegal workforce, I have no doubt they would seize it.

Third, my legislation creates a cross-border commuter worker program, called the H–2AA program. This program is modeled after the H–2A program, but recognizes that many farms located close to the Canadian and Mexican borders seek to employ workers who prefer to live in their home countries and simply come to the U.S. each day. The H–2AA program exempts farmers who employ these H–2AA workers from the housing and transportation requirements of the H–2A program, and requires those who use it to enter and exit the United States each day. It allows these agricultural operations to attract workers who live close to the borders but do not desire to move to the United States.

Finally, my legislation establishes a blue card program. This is a temporary program that provides for the transition of employees who are currently here in an undocumented status filling needed jobs. To qualify for a blue card, aliens must have worked at least 1600 hours in agriculture in 2005, have never been convicted or a felony or a misdemeanor in the United States, and must have a petition filed on their behalf by their employer. Only after a background check is conducted by the Department of Homeland Security would these blue card workers be allowed to work in the United States for a period of 24 months before they must return to their home country. The blue card allows employers who are currently utilizing an illegal workforce to transition their workforce into a legal one by having their employees leave the country and return on the legal H–2A temporary worker program without experiencing a complete work stoppage. There is no amnesty with the blue card program—all workers must return to their home country.

The underlying premise of any guestworker program and explicitly provided for in my proposed legislation is that United States employers should not be allowed to utilize a guestworker program unless and until they have actively recruited American workers and are unable to find enough to fill needed jobs. We don't want to stifle American businesses but more importantly we don't want to disadvantage American workers.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting practical needed reforms for the agricultural community and I look forward to the time early next year in which this vital issue will be debated here in the United States Senate.

By Mr. ALLARD (for himself and Mr. ENZI):

S. 2088. A bill to assist low-income families, displaced from their residences in the States of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi as a result of Hurricane Katrina, by establishing within the Department of Housing and Urban Development a homesteading initiative that offers displaced low-income families the opportunity to purchase a home owned by the Federal Government, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise to introduce the Hurricane Katrina Recovery Homesteading Act of 2005. Modeled on the United States' 19th century homesteading initiatives and similar urban programs in the 1970s, this legislation will help us begin to rebuild the Gulf Coast areas destroyed by the hurricane and flooding, providing a fresh start for families victimized by this tragedy.

The new urban homesteading proposal will serve several purposes. First, it is an initial step towards rebuilding and revitalizing the hurricane ravaged Gulf Coast. While we have spent recent months appropriately focusing on rescue and clean up, we must now examine the long term need to rebuild and revitalize.

Second, the new urban homestead initiative will be one way to begin to address the housing needs of those displaced by Hurricane Katrina. But I want to make it clear that this program is not being introduced as the sole answer to all of the housing problems faced by hurricane victims. Getting all of those individuals back on their feet will require multiple efforts on a significant scale. This is one component of a comprehensive response to the housing needs of the Gulf Coast region. I believe the initiative is a very good start.

Third, the Hurricane Katrina Recovery Homesteading Act is a productive way of dealing with government owned properties. Through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Veterans' Administration (VA), and other programs, the Federal Government holds title to thousands of properties in the Gulf Coast region. Vacant government owned properties have the potential to be a blight on their neighborhoods, diminishing property values and acting as a magnet for crime and vandalism. Following Hurricane Katrina, vacant properties can also present health and safety dangers. Unless the properties are rebuilt and have families living in them, they will likely be a significant drag on the efforts to rebuild the region. The homesteading initiative will address the health and safety concerns and further the revitalization effort while putting the property to productive use.

I would like to briefly describe how the initiative will work. I am pleased that it is based on a Federal-local partnership, as well as a partnership between government, non-profits, and the private-sector. HUD will identify potential government owned property for transfer without cost to units of local government. The local government would establish an equitable procedure for selecting low income families affected by the hurricane for participation. HUD and the local government would work with partners, such as Habitat for Humanity, mortgage lenders, and others, to help the new urban homesteaders find resources to construct their new homes.

Participating families must agree to occupy the property for five years as their principal residence, to bring the property up to health and safety codes within one year, and to build a house to applicable code standards within three years. They must also agree to periodic compliance inspections. In exchange, the family would receive title to the property.

I would like to thank President Bush, Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson, and House sponsor Representative JINDAL for working with me on this effort. I look forward to continuing to work with them, long with the rest of my colleagues, to enact the Hurricane Katrina Recovery Homesteading Act of 2005.

By Mr. BAUCUS:

S. 2092. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to authorize review by the Joint Committee on Tax of Federal income tax returns of United States Supreme Court nominees, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. BAUCUS. The Greek philosopher Plato warned, ''where there is an income tax, the just man will pay more, and the unjust man will pay less on the same amount of income.'' This phrase is telling.

The way people fill out their tax returns is an important window into their private ethical conduct. And it is a good barometer of their integrity, character, and suitability for office. Paying one's fair share of the tax burden is one of an American's most important patriotic duties. Americans from all walks of life pay their taxes out of obligation and fidelity to their country. Isn't it fair to know whether individuals who have been nominated for lifetime positions to the highest court in the land have faithfully paid their taxes?

The legislation that I introduce today, The Supreme Court Tax Accountability Act of 2005, would require that nominees to the Supreme Court—including Judge Samuel Alito—provide 3 years of tax returns for an independent review to ensure compliance with the law. Specifically, the legislation would require the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation to review a Supreme Court nominee's returns and report on the nominee's tax compliance to the Judiciary and Finance Committees. The bill does not extend the power to inspect tax returns to any persons who do not currently

have such authority. And the bill ensures that private taxpayer information is not shared unscrupulously. Certainly, these returns would not be released to the public.

This approach has precedent. Thirty years ago, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas retired from the bench. Within days, President Ford nominated John Paul Stevens for the vacancy. The President hoped that the nomination of a moderate who had been given the American Bar Association's highest rating would help restore confidence in government in the wake of the Watergate scandals. As the confirmation hearings drew near, six members of the Senate Judiciary Committee wrote Chairman Eastland requesting ''the most thorough practicable investigation of the nominee.'' The Senators' letter requested full disclosure of Stevens' personal health and finances, including a complete and thorough review of his Federal and state tax returns. Stevens promptly complied.

When the full Senate took up the nomination, Chairman Eastland urged the confirmation of Stevens saying, ''his personal integrity, as reflected in his financial statements and income tax returns, is of the highest order.'' The Senate confirmed Stevens by a vote of 98 to 0 and he took the oath of office 2 days later at the age of 55.

Washington is now under a similar ethical cloud. But the White House has resisted my efforts to have the Joint Committee on Taxation review the tax returns of Chief Justice John Roberts, Ms. Harriet Miers, and Judge Samuel Alito. The administration's decision to put its Supreme Court nominees' tax returns off limits is consistent with its penchant for secrecy.

Its refusal to heed this most basic document request, however, is a barrier to the rigorous due diligence process required for prospective Government officials that come before the Senate Committee on Finance. All nominees, from Cabinet secretaries to Tax Court judges, have their tax returns scrutinized. On more than one occasion, the Finance Committee has admonished the administration for failing to do a better job of determining a candidate's compliance with the tax laws. In some cases, tax issues have contributed to the withdrawal of nominees who were before the Senate.

Despite these warnings and withdrawals, the administration still doesn't do a particularly good job of catching nominees' tax problems. Therefore, it is vital to the constitutional process of advice and consent for the Senate to have the information necessary to ensure fitness to serve. The Senate must not rely on the executive branch to provide oversight.

Finally, I am introducing this bill today to apply to all nominees—those nominated by Democratic Presidents and Republican Presidents. Careful oversight of nominees to the highest Court in the land should not be a partisan issue. It was Ronald Reagan who famously said, ''trust, but verify.'' This bill aims to embody President Reagan's maxim. Trust in government is an issue that Republicans, Democrats, and Independents value.

The noted Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis said that ''secrecy necessarily breeds suspicion.'' The American people have a right to know that public officials—particularly those appointed for life—have faithfully and fully paid their taxes. Blocking Congressional access to Supreme Court nominees' returns creates questions that can breed public distrust in government. Providing access to those returns can help to provide the transparency and trust Americans deserve in the Supreme Court nomination process. I look forward to working with my colleagues to get this bill enacted.

By Mr. BIDEN:

S. 2095. A bill to ensure payment of United States assessments for United Nations peacekeeping operations in 2005 and 2006; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, today I introduce legislation to ensure that the United States does create new arrears at the United Nations. At a time when our Government is seeking important reforms at the United Nations, it would be a mistake for us to fall short on our dues at the U.N. But unless Congress acts promptly, that is what we are about to do.

Here's why.

In 1994, Congress passed a law limiting U.S. payments for U.N. peacekeeping at 25 percent after 1995. At the time, the United States was assessed by the U.N. at a rate of about 31 percent for peacekeeping. Thus, the United States incurred arrears because of the 25 percent limitation—that is, the gap between the 25 percent and 31 percent.

In 1999, Congress approved the Helms-Biden law. It authorized the repayment of U.S. arrears to the U.N. conditioned on certain reforms in the U.N. system. One of those reforms was a negotiated reduction in the United Nations of the U.S. peacekeeping rate down to 25 percent. Through negotiations in 2000, U.S. Ambassador Holbrooke succeeded in reducing the U.S. assessments for peacekeeping to just over 27 percent.

In 2001, Congress amended the Helms-Biden law to allow the arrears payments to be provided to the U.N. at the higher rate—27 percent—that Ambassador Holbrooke negotiated. But the original 1994 law limiting our payments to 25 percent was never repealed.

In the past few years, Congress has amended the 1994 law on a temporary basis by raising the 25 percent limitation to conform it to the rate negotiated by Ambassador Holbrooke. That temporary change in law lasted through fiscal year 2005. But it has now expired.

Therefore, the law today is this: the United States may not pay more than 25 percent for peacekeeping—even though the United Nations assesses the United States at the rate of roughly 27 percent. In the coming weeks, we are scheduled to pay a bill of about $344 million that has come due since October 1. Under U.S. law, we will only be able to pay about $319 million, leaving a shortfall of about $25 million. At a time when our diplomats are in the final stages of negotiating important reforms in the U.N. system, it would be a mistake unilaterally to withhold payments to the U.N. Rather than encourage reform, it may cause an adverse reaction by other nation and undermine our reform agenda.

Earlier this year, the Bush administration recognized this coming train wreck. On March 1, the Department of State transmitted to Congress its official request for the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for fiscal year 2006 and 2007. Section 401 of that legislation would amend current law and raise the limitation on U.S. payments to 27.1 percent through calendar year 2007. The summary of the request said as follows: ''Without further relief, the U.N. peacekeeping cap would revert to 25% and the United States would go into arrears. The proposed section would . . . enable the United States to pay U.N. assessments at the rate assessed by the U.N. up to a rate of 27.1% . . . [t]his would allow the United States to pay its peacekeeping assessment in full, including funding for a new peace support operation in Sudan . . .''

Since then, however, the administration has done little to secure enactment of this provision. On December 1, 2005, the Secretary of State requested by letter to the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations several ''critical legislative proposals that are of a time sensitive nature and warrant enactment prior to the Congress' adjournment in mid-October.'' The request contains four provisions but does not include the provision required to assure full payment of U.N. peacekeeping assessments.

Mr. President, I realize that the Congress has a lot on its agenda in the final days of the first session. But we have a responsibility to ensure payment of our obligations to the United Nations—and to ensure that we do not undermine the negotiations on U.N. reform now underway.

AUTHORITIES FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 13, 2005, at 10:15 a.m., in executive session, to consider the nomination of J. Dorrance Smith to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs.

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