

By Mr. OBAMA (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. CLINTON, and Mr. KERRY):

S. 2506. A bill to require Federal agencies to support health impact assessments and take other actions to improve health and the environmental quality of communities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, this is National Public Health Week, and the American Public Health Association and its over 200 partner organizations and sponsors have organized events to raise awareness about the importance of public health in this nation. This year, the theme of National Public Health Week, "Designing Healthy Communities: Raising Healthy Kids," focuses on building healthy communities to promote and protect the health of our children.

This focus on building healthy communities is both timely and critical. We are losing ground with respect to the health of our Nation's children. Studies have found that the percentage of overweight children and adolescents has more than doubled in the last few decades; without intervention, 1 in 3 children born in 2000 can expect to develop diabetes in their lifetime. My home State of Illinois has the unfortunate distinction of having the highest number of lead-poisoned children. And other diseases and conditions, including high blood pressure and asthma, are on the rise in young populations.

As bleak as the health situation is for so many children, there is good news. Many of these diseases and health conditions are completely preventable or can be delayed for many, many years. The American Public Health Association and countless other expert organizations have told us, and shown us, that if we make a real commitment to and investment in building healthy communities, we can substantially improve the health of our children and adults. Today I am introducing the Healthy Places Act of 2006, which will do just that.

The Healthy Places Act of 2006 focuses on the built environment, which includes our homes, schools, workplaces, parks and recreation areas, business areas, and transportation systems. Where we work, live, and play has tremendous implications for our health, and improvements to these environments will lead to: greater opportunities for physical activity and a reduction in injuries because of safe sidewalks, biking paths, and parks; less reliance on personal automobiles which reduces toxic emissions; better access to fresh fruits and vegetables which leads to healthier nutrition; and the planning and building of "green" homes and buildings which decreases energy consumption.

Like many other States, Illinois has already begun to take steps to improve the environment. City leaders in Chicago have recognized that many low-income families have no access to fresh

foods and medicine because there are no grocery stores and pharmacies in their neighborhoods. Retail Chicago, an initiative of the city's Department of Planning and Development, is now using redevelopment funds to entice local developers to bring grocery stores and pharmacies into these neighborhoods.

The Lieutenant Governor's initiative "Six Weeks to a Greener Illinois" is another fine example. Now in its 4th week, this effort has encouraged Illinoisans to participate in making the State a healthier place to live, and rewarded those communities that are already taking steps to do so.

The Healthy Places Act of 2006 would expand these and other efforts to improve the planning and design of communities that can promote healthier living. It establishes and supports health impact assessment programs, which would assist States and local communities in examining potential health effects of major health policy or programmatic changes. The newly created Interagency Working Group on Environmental Health would facilitate communication and collaboration on projects among the agencies in order to better address environmental health issues. In addition, the bill creates a grant program to address environmental health hazards, particularly those that contribute to health disparities. Finally, the Healthy Places Act provides additional support for research on the relationship between the built environment and the health status of residents as recommended by two Institute of Medicine's reports: "Does the Built Environment Influence Physical Activity?" and "Rebuilding the Unity of Health and the Environment: A New Vision of Environmental Health for the 21st Century".

As the health of our children continues to decline, and our health expenditures continue to soar, it is imperative that the Congress take action, and focusing on building healthier communities is a necessary step in this regard. I encourage all of my colleagues to join me and support passage of this bill.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 421—CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN TO UPHOLD FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND URGING THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. KERRY, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. INHOFE, and Mr. COLEMAN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 421

Whereas under the Taliban Government of Afghanistan, individuals convicted of pro-

moting faiths other than Islam, or expressing interpretations of Islam differing from the prevailing orthodoxy, could be imprisoned and those converting from Islam could be tortured and publicly executed;

Whereas the United States has more than 22,000 members of the Armed Forces stationed in Afghanistan and whereas 282 members of the Armed Forces have given their lives in Afghanistan since Operation Enduring Freedom began in that country;

Whereas Abdul Rahman, a citizen of Afghanistan, was arrested and accused of apostasy for converting to Christianity 16 years ago and threatened with execution;

Whereas the prosecutor in this case, Abdul Wasi, stated in court that Abdul Rahman "is known as a microbe in society, and he should be cut off and removed from the rest of Muslim society and should be killed.";

Whereas, while it was a welcome development that charges against Abdul Rahman were dropped, he was forced to seek asylum in Italy;

Whereas, despite his release, religious freedom and those who would practice it in Afghanistan remain in jeopardy;

Whereas religious freedom is a fundamental principle of democracy;

Whereas the Constitution of Afghanistan does not fully guarantee freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief;

Whereas, on several occasions throughout Afghanistan's constitution drafting process, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom raised concerns that the constitution's ambiguity on issues of conversion and religious expression could lead to unjust criminal accusations against Muslims and non-Muslims alike;

Whereas charges of blasphemy since 2002 have justified those concerns;

Whereas the International Religious Freedom Report 2005 published by the Department of State does not list Afghanistan among those countries cited for "State Hostility Toward Minority or Nonapproved Religions", "State Neglect of Societal Discrimination or Abuses Against Religious Groups", or "Discriminatory Legislation or Policies Prejudicial to Certain Religions" and notes that "[t]he new Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice";

Whereas the International Religious Freedom Report 2005 states that conversion from Islam is "in theory – punishable by death" in Afghanistan;

Whereas the case of Abdul Rahman, other instances of religious persecution or discrimination against minorities, and ambiguities within the Constitution of Afghanistan appear to warrant closer scrutiny in the International Religious Freedom Report 2006; and

Whereas Afghanistan is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which reads in part, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the Senate—

(A) recognizes freedom of religion as a central tenet of democracy;

(B) respects the right of the people of Afghanistan to self-government, while strongly urging the Government of Afghanistan to respect all universally recognized human rights;

(C) condemns the arrest of Abdul Rahman and other instances of religious persecution in Afghanistan;

(D) commends the dropping of charges against Abdul Rahman; and

(E) strongly urges the Government of Afghanistan to consider the importance of religious freedom for the broader relationship between the United States and Afghanistan; and

(2) it is the sense of the Senate that the President and the President's representatives should—

(A) in both public and private fora, raise concerns at the highest levels with the Government of Afghanistan regarding the violations of internationally recognized human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, in Afghanistan; and

(B) ensure that the International Religious Freedom Report 2006 for Afghanistan fully addresses the issue of religious persecution in that country, including the arrest of Abdul Rahman.

SENATE RESOLUTION 422—DESIGNATING APRIL 21, 2006, AS “NATIONAL AND GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY”, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. BAYH, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BUNNING, Mr. BURR, Ms. CANTWELL, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. COLEMAN, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. DODD, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. KERRY, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. LOTT, Mr. MARTINEZ, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. SANTORUM, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. SPECTER, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. STEVENS) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 422

Whereas National and Global Youth Service Day is an annual public awareness and education campaign that highlights the valuable contributions that young people make to their communities throughout the year;

Whereas the goals of National and Global Youth Service Day are to—

(1) mobilize the youth of the United States to identify and address the needs of their communities through service and service-learning;

(2) encourage young citizens to embark on a lifelong path of service and civic engagement; and

(3) educate the public, the media, and policymakers about contributions made by young people as community leaders throughout the year;

Whereas National and Global Youth Service Day, a program of Youth Service America, is the largest service event in the world and is being observed for the 18th consecutive year in 2006;

Whereas young people in the United States and in many other countries are volunteering more than any other generation in history;

Whereas the children and youth of the United States not only represent the future of the Nation, but also are leaders and assets today;

Whereas the children and youth of the United States should be valued for the idealism, energy, creativity, and unique perspective that they use when addressing challenges found in their communities;

Whereas a fundamental and conclusive correlation exists between youth service, lifelong adult volunteering, and philanthropy;

Whereas through community service, young people of all ages and backgrounds build character and learn valuable skills sought by employers, including time management, decision-making, teamwork, needs-assessment, and leadership;

Whereas service-learning, an innovative teaching method that combines community service with curriculum-based learning, increases student achievement while strengthening civic responsibility;

Whereas several private foundations and corporations in the United States support service-learning because they understand that educated, civically-engaged communities tend to be economically prosperous and good places to do business;

Whereas sustained investments by the Federal Government, business partners, schools, and communities fuel the positive, long-term cultural change that will make service and service-learning a common expectation and a common experience for all young people;

Whereas National and Global Youth Service Day, with the support of 51 lead agencies, hundreds of grant winners, and thousands of local partners, engages millions of young people worldwide;

Whereas National and Global Youth Service Day will involve 38 international organizations and 110 national partners, including 8 Federal agencies and 6 organizations that offer grants to support National and Global Youth Service Day;

Whereas National Youth Service Day has inspired Global Youth Service Day, which occurs concurrently in more than 100 countries and is now in its 7th year; and

Whereas both young people and their communities will benefit greatly from expanded opportunities to engage the youth of the United States in meaningful volunteer service and service-learning: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes and commends the significant contributions of United States youth and encourages the cultivation of a common civic bond between young people dedicated to serving their neighbors, their communities, and the Nation;

(2) designates April 21, 2006, as “National and Global Youth Service Day”; and

(3) calls on the citizens of the United States to—

(A) observe the day by encouraging and engaging youth to participate in civic and community service projects;

(B) recognize the volunteer efforts of the young people of the United States throughout the year; and

(C) support the volunteer efforts of young people and engage them in meaningful decision-making opportunities today as an investment for the future of the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 423—DESIGNATING APRIL 8, 2006, AS “NATIONAL CUSHING’S SYNDROME AWARENESS DAY”

Mr. INHOFE (for himself and Mr. COBURN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 423

Whereas Cushing’s Syndrome annually affects an estimated 10 to 15 people per million, most of whom are currently between the ages of 20 and 50;

Whereas Cushing’s Syndrome is an endocrine or hormonal disorder caused by pro-

longed exposure of the body’s tissue to high levels of the hormone cortisol;

Whereas exposure to cortisol can occur by overproduction in the body or by taking glucocorticoid hormones, which are routinely prescribed for asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, or as an immunosuppressant following transplantation;

Whereas the syndrome may also result from pituitary adenomas, ectopic ACTH syndrome, adrenal tumors, and Familial Cushing’s Syndrome;

Whereas Cushing’s Syndrome can cause abnormal weight gain, skin changes, and fatigue and ultimately lead to diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, osteoporosis, and death;

Whereas Cushing’s Syndrome is diagnosed through a series of tests, often requiring x-ray examinations of adrenal or pituitary glands to locate tumors;

Whereas many people who suffer from Cushing’s Syndrome are misdiagnosed or go undiagnosed for years because many of the symptoms are mirrored in milder diseases, thereby delaying important treatment options;

Whereas treatments for Cushing’s Syndrome include surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, cortisol-inhibiting drugs, and reducing the dosage of glucocorticoid hormones;

Whereas Cushing’s Syndrome was discovered by Dr. Harvey Williams Cushing, who was born on April 8th, 1869;

Whereas the Dr. Harvey Cushing stamp was part of the United States Postal Service’s “Great American” series, initiated in 1980 to recognize individuals for making significant contributions to the heritage and culture of the United States;

Whereas President Ronald Reagan spoke on April 8, 1987, in the Rose Garden at a White House ceremony to unveil the commemorative stamp honoring Dr. Harvey Cushing;

Whereas following the ceremony, President Reagan hosted a reception in the State Dining Room for Mrs. John Hay Whitney, Dr. Cushing’s daughter, and representatives of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons; and

Whereas the Senate is an institution that can raise awareness in the general public and the medical community of Cushing’s Syndrome; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates April 8, 2006, as “National Cushing’s Syndrome Awareness Day”;

(2) recognizes that all Americans should become more informed and aware of Cushing’s Syndrome;

(3) calls upon the people of the United States to observe the date with appropriate ceremonies and activities; and

(4) directs the Secretary of the Senate to transmit a copy of this resolution to the Cushing’s Understanding, Support & Help Organization.