

savings accounts, to allow the rollover of unused funds from health reimbursement arrangements to health savings accounts, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. DODD (for himself and Mr. BURR):

S. 3489. A bill to provide loans and grants for fire sprinkler retrofitting in nursing facilities; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 635

At the request of Mr. SANTORUM, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KYL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 635, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve the benefits under the medicare program for beneficiaries with kidney disease, and for other purposes.

S. 2278

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2278, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to improve the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases in women.

S. 2599

At the request of Mr. VITTER, the names of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT) and the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) were added as cosponsors of S. 2599, a bill to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to prohibit the confiscation of firearms during certain national emergencies.

S. 2635

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2635, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the transportation fringe benefit to bicycle commuters.

S. 2658

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2658, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to enhance the national defense through empowerment of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau and the enhancement of the functions of the National Guard Bureau, and for other purposes.

S. 2831

At the request of Mr. LUGAR, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2831, a bill to guarantee the free flow of information to the public through a free and active press while protecting the right of the public to effective law enforcement and the fair administration of justice.

S. 3114

At the request of Mr. NELSON of Florida, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3114, a bill to establish a bipartisan commission on insurance reform.

S. 3486

At the request of Mr. ROCKEFELLER, the names of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN) were added as cosponsors of S. 3486, a bill to protect the privacy of veterans, spouses of veterans, and other persons affected by the security breach at the Department of Veterans Affairs on May 3, 2006, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 494

At the request of Mr. SANTORUM, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 494, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the creation of refugee populations in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf region as a result of human rights violations.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DODD (for himself and Mr. BURR):

S. 3489. A bill to provide loans and grants for fire sprinkler retrofitting in nursing facilities; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise to introduce bipartisan legislation with my colleague from North Carolina, Senator BURR, that seeks to protect nursing home residents, staff, and visitors from the dangers associated with fire.

In February, 2003, a multialarm fire at a nursing home in Hartford, CT, took the lives of 16 residents. It was the worst nursing home fire in Connecticut's history. The tragic loss of life was made worse by the fact that the nursing home lacked an automatic sprinkler system—a defect disturbingly present in many nursing homes across the country.

I believe many Americans—especially those with a loved one in a nursing home facility—would be shocked to learn that, according to the Government Accountability Office, GAO, between 20 and 30 percent of the country's 17,000 nursing homes lack an automatic sprinkler system. In its 2004 report, the GAO found that “the substantial loss of life in the [Hartford fire] could have been reduced or eliminated by the presence of properly functioning automatic sprinkler systems.” Furthermore, the report concluded that “the Federal oversight of nursing home compliance with fire safety standards is inadequate.”

Responding to the fire in Hartford and a similar tragedy in Nashville, TN, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS, required that nursing homes without automatic sprinkler systems install battery-operated smoke detectors. While this new requirement was viewed as a positive step, it was largely criticized by fire and patient-safety advocates because smoke detectors are often not wired to a central alarm system or a fire department.

I believe it is safe to assume that nursing home directors do not choose freely to operate their facilities without automatic sprinkler systems. According to the GAO and American Health Care Association, most nursing homes simply cannot afford the cost incurred by installing an automatic sprinkler system. Furthermore, almost all of these facilities cannot afford the cost because of forces beyond their control. Today, nursing homes—including many in Connecticut—are financially strained by inadequate reimbursement rates from Medicare and Medicaid, rising insurance premiums, rising energy costs, and the general cost of care for some of our country's sickest patients.

That is why Senator BURR and I are introducing this legislation. The Nursing Home Fire Safety Act of 2006 contains two principal components.

First, the legislation includes a resolution expressing the sense of Congress that, within 5 years, every nursing home facility in the United States should be equipped with an automatic sprinkler system. The resolution also urges CMS to adopt the National Fire Protection Association's Life Safety Code, a nationally-renowned set of criteria addressing “construction, protection, and occupancy features necessary to minimize danger to life from fire, including smoke, fumes, or panic.”

Second, the legislation provides low-interest loans and grants to nursing homes in proven need of financial assistance. The larger loan initiative assists nursing homes that cannot afford the upfront costs of installing automatic sprinkler systems but can afford to pay back a low-interest Government loan. The smaller grant initiative would assist qualified nursing homes that lack any ability to pay for the installation of an automatic sprinkler system. Together, these initiatives would provide critical resources to prevent tragedies like those seen in Hartford and Nashville from occurring again.

I thank my colleague from North Carolina, Senator BURR, for introducing this bipartisan measure with me. I also thank Congressmen JOHN LARSON from Connecticut and PETER KING from New York for spearheading companion legislation in the House. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues to protect nursing home residents, staff, and visitors from the dangers associated with fire.

I ask unanimous consent that the full text of the legislation be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

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

S. 3489

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 “Nursing Home Fire Safety Act of 2006”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND SENSE OF CONGRESS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) An estimated 1,500,000 Americans reside in approximately 16,300 nursing facilities nationwide, an estimated 20 to 30 percent of which lack an automatic fire sprinkler system.

(2) In a July 2004 report, the Government Accountability Office found that “the substantial loss of life in [recent nursing home] fires could have been reduced or eliminated by the presence of properly functioning automatic sprinkler systems” and that “Federal oversight of nursing home compliance with fire safety standards is inadequate”.

(3) Many nursing facilities lack the financial capital to install sprinklers on their own and must consider closure as an alternative to taking on large loans or other financing options in order to install sprinklers.

(4) Recognizing that automatic fire sprinkler systems greatly improve the chances of survival for older adults in the event of a fire, the National Fire Protection Association, with the support of the American Health Care Association, the fire safety community, and the nursing facility profession, recently issued the 2006 edition of the Life Safety Code which requires automatic sprinklers in all existing nursing facilities.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) within 5 years, every nursing facility in America should be equipped with automatic fire sprinklers in order to ensure patient, resident, and staff safety;

(2) the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) should quickly adopt the 2006 edition of the Life Safety Code, recently issued by the National Fire Protection Association with the support of the nursing home industry, which includes the requirement that all nursing facilities be fully sprinklered; and

(3) the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, in collaboration with Congress, should take into consideration the costs of retrofitting existing nursing home facilities and commit itself to providing facilities with the critical financial resources necessary to ensure the speedy and full installation of life saving sprinkler systems.

SEC. 3. DIRECT LOANS FOR FIRE SPRINKLERS RETROFITS.

(a) AUTHORITY.—Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall establish a program of direct loans to existing nursing facilities to finance retrofitting the facilities with an automatic fire sprinkler system. Such loans shall be made under terms and conditions specified by the Secretary.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2011.

SEC. 4. SPRINKLER RETROFIT ASSISTANCE GRANTS.

(a) AUTHORITY.—Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall establish a program to award grants to nursing facilities for the purposes of retrofitting them with an automatic fire sprinkler system. Such grants shall be awarded under terms and conditions specified by the Secretary.

(b) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this section, the Secretary shall give a priority to applications that demonstrate a need or hardship. In determining hardship, the Secretary may take into account factors such as the number of residents who are entitled to or enrolled in the medicare program under title 18 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.) or receiving assistance under the medicaid program under title 19 of

such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.), the age and condition of the facility, and the need for nursing facility beds in the community involved.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2011.

EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES TO FAMILIES OF VICTIMS OF INDO-NESIAN EARTHQUAKE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 503, and the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 503) mourning the loss of life caused by the earthquake that occurred on May 27, 2006, in Indonesia, expressing condolences of the American people to the families of the victims, and urging assistance to those affected.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating thereto be printed in the RECORD.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 503) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 503

Whereas, on May 27, 2006, a powerful earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale occurred in Indonesia, centered near the City of Yogyakarta;

Whereas the earthquake and continuing aftershocks have caused more than 5,000 deaths, resulted in serious injuries to additional tens of thousands of people, and left hundreds of thousands of people with damaged or destroyed homes;

Whereas thousands of people in the affected region are living in temporary shelter or lack basic services, such as clean water and sanitation, thereby increasing the risk of additional suffering and death; and

Whereas the United States and donors from at least 20 other countries have, to date, pledged several millions of dollars in emergency and long-term reconstruction assistance, and have begun to deliver humanitarian supplies to survivors of the earthquake: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) mourns the tragic loss of life and horrendous suffering caused by the earthquake that occurred on May 27, 2006, in Indonesia;

(2) expresses the deepest condolences of the people of the United States to the families, communities, and government of the thousands of individuals who lost their lives in the earthquake;

(3) expresses sympathy and compassion for the hundreds of thousands of people who have been left with destroyed or damaged homes or have been seriously affected by this earthquake;

(4) welcomes and commends the prompt international humanitarian response to the earthquake by the governments of many countries, the United Nations and other international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations;

(5) expresses gratitude and respect for the courageous and committed work of all individuals providing aid, relief, and assistance, including civilian and military personnel of the United States, who are working to save lives and provide relief in the devastated areas;

(6) urges the President and the Government of the United States to provide all appropriate assistance to the Government of Indonesia and people of the affected region; and

(7) recognizes the lead role of the Government of Indonesia in providing assistance and promoting recovery for the affected population.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, JUNE 12, 2006

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand in adjournment until 2 p.m. on Monday, June 12; I further ask that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved, and the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each until 3 p.m., when the Senate will proceed to consideration of S. 2766, the Defense authorization bill, as under the previous order.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, on Monday, the Senate will be considering the Defense authorization bill. Following opening remarks and recognition of Chairman WARNER and Senator LEVIN, amendments may be debated and offered. The first vote of next week will occur on Tuesday morning before the Senate recesses for the weekly policy luncheons. This vote could be on a Defense amendment or a nomination. We will alert Members when that vote is scheduled. The Senate will also have a cloture vote at 3:30 on Tuesday afternoon on the nomination of Richard Stickler to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health. The conference report to the emergency supplemental appropriations bill has been filed, and we expect to vote on that early in the week. Senators are reminded that the official photograph of the 109th Congress will occur at 2:15 on Tuesday. Senators should be seated at their desks no later than 2:15.

FAREWELL AND EXPRESSION OF THANKS TO SENATE PAGES

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, finally, let me say thank you to our spring semester pages. Today is their final day in the Senate. I join all of my colleagues