

about two dollars to process a paper return. In addition, the error rate for electronic returns is one percent while the error rate for paper returns is 20 percent.

We have an obligation to make free electronic filing available to all individual taxpayers. Electronic filing benefits both taxpayers and the IRS. I have appreciated the attention paid to this issue by Senator BAUCUS and Senator GRASSLEY. I will continue to work with my colleagues to enact the Free Internet Filing Act.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD. I also ask unanimous consent that a letter of support from the Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development be included in the RECORD. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that a letter of support from the National Consumer Law Center, Consumer Federation of America, U.S. Public Interest Research Group, California Reinvestment Coalition, Center for Economic Progress, Consumer Action, and the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project, be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 1074

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 "Free Internet Filing Act".

SEC. 2. DIRECT ACCESS TO E-FILE FEDERAL INCOME TAX RETURNS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall provide individual taxpayers with the ability to electronically file their Federal income tax returns through the Internal Revenue Service website without the use of an intermediary or with the use of an intermediary which is contracted by the Internal Revenue Service to provide free universal access for such filing (hereafter in this section referred to as the "direct e-file program") for taxable years beginning after the date which is not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATION OF PROGRAM.—In providing for the development and operation of the direct e-file program, the Secretary of the Treasury shall—

(1) consult with nonprofit organizations representing the interests of taxpayers as well as other private and nonprofit organizations and Federal, State, and local agencies as determined appropriate by the Secretary;

(2) promulgate such regulations as necessary to administer such program, and

(3) conduct a public information and consumer education campaign to encourage taxpayers to use the direct e-file program.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry out the direct e-file program. Any sums so appropriated shall remain available until expended.

(d) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—

(1) REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall report to the Committee on Finance of the Senate and the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives every 6 months regarding the status of the implementation of the direct e-file program.

(2) REPORT ON USAGE.—The Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Na-

tional Taxpayer Advocate, shall report to the Committee on Finance of the Senate and the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives annually on taxpayer usage of the direct e-file program.

MARCH 28, 2007.

Hon. DANIEL K. AKAKA,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR AKAKA: The National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients), Consumer Federation of America, Consumer Action, U.S. Public Interest Research Group, California Reinvestment Coalition, Center for Economic Progress, and the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project write to support your bill entitled the "Free Internet Filing Act." Consumer groups have long advocated for what the Free Internet Filing Act would provide—the ability of taxpayers to electronically file their returns without the need for a third party intermediary.

Enabling taxpayers to file electronically directly with the Internal Revenue Service will benefit taxpayers tremendously. It will save taxpayers the fees charged by some commercial preparers for electronic filing. Unlike the current Free File program established by the IRS, the Free Internet Filing Act will provide taxpayers with free electronic filing without the potential of being subject to cross-marketing pitches for financial products which may not be in their best interests. While the marketing pitches for refund anticipation loans and other ancillary products were dropped this year from the Free File program, such a limitation is not enshrined in law or regulation.

The Free Internet Filing Act will also help taxpayers to keep their information private. By allowing free direct electronic filing with the IRS, taxpayers will have the ability to bypass commercial preparers that might exploit or share their personal, confidential tax information for non-tax purposes.

We believe the IRS should have been required a long time ago to establish free direct electronic filing. For many years, Americans have been able to apply for federal student financial aid on www.fafsa.ed.gov and Social Security retirement benefits at www.ssa.gov. A free direct electronic filing program at www.irs.gov is long overdue.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Chi Chi Wu. Thank you again for all your efforts to protect taxpayer rights.

Sincerely,
Chi Chi Wu, Staff Attorney, National Consumer Law Center; Jean Ann Fox, Director of Consumer Protection, Consumer Federation of America; David Marzahl, Executive Director, Center for Economic Progress; Ed Mierzwinski, Consumer Program Director, U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG); Linda Sherry, Director, National Priorities, Consumer Action; Rhea L. Serna, Policy Advocate, California Reinvestment Coalition; Chris Keeley, Campaigns Organizer, Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project (NEDAP).

HAWAII ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
Honolulu, HI, March 22, 2007.

Hon. DANIEL K. AKAKA,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR AKAKA: The Hawai'i Alliance for Community Based Economic Development (HACBED) is writing in support of the "Free Internet Filing Act."

HACBED is a statewide 501(c)3 organization established in 1992 to help maximize the

impact of community-based economic development organizations (CBEDOs). We pursue our mission by helping CBEDOs to increase community control of their assets and means of production. We accomplish this in many ways—by providing technical support to help CBEDOs deal with organizational issues; by networking on a local and national basis for funding and financing for community-based efforts; and, by advocating for communities to play a more active role in the political process in order to effect systemic change. To this end, HACBED has been facilitating statewide conversations to develop a comprehensive asset policy agenda. Core to this agenda is the recognition of the importance of creating policies that assist individuals, families and the broader community to build wealth.

Tax season is an essential time for low-income families to take advantage of their tax related benefits, including the earned income tax credit. Electronic filing of taxes is a quicker, more efficient way to process a tax return. In many cases, working families must pay a professional tax preparer to prepare their return and file electronically. By providing free universal access to electronic filing these low-income working families would be able to keep more of their hard-earned dollars in their pocket.

HACBED fully supports this bill and we look forward to working with you in the future to insure free and low cost tax-related services for low-income families.

Sincerely,

BRENT DILLABAUGH,
Deputy Director.

By Mr. INOUYE (for himself and Mr. STEVENS) (by request):

S1076. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to authorize appropriations for the Federal Aviation Administration for fiscal years 2008 through 2010, to improve aviation safety and capacity, to provide stable, cost-based funding for the national aviation system, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. INOUYE. Mr. President, I rise today to announce the introduction, by request, of the Next Generation Air Transportation System Financing Reform Act of 2007, the Bush administration's proposal for the Federal Aviation Administration, (FAA), reauthorization.

As chairman of the Commerce Committee, I, along with vice chairman STEVENS, introduce this bill out of courtesy to the Bush administration. They have outlined an aggressive proposal for the FAA reauthorization and while I cannot support all portions of this bill, I believe our colleagues should have an opportunity to consider the ideas outlined.

While I commend the Department of Transportation and the FAA for their work on the proposal, I have great concerns with some of the provisions. Specifically, I am troubled by the proposal to dramatically increase the general aviation fuel tax and substantially cut the Airport Improvement Program, AIP, funding level.

The Commerce Committee has jurisdiction over the FAA and I will work with Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER, the chairman of the Aviation Subcommittee, and Senator TRENT LOTT,

the ranking member of the subcommittee, along with other members of the committee, to craft a bipartisan bill that we can bring before the full Senate.

It is important that we act quickly, as the current aviation tax structure expires at the end of the fiscal year. Therefore, we must present our committee and this body with a bill that not only solves funding issues for our Nation's air system, but also puts us on a course to fully modernize our aviation system to safely and efficiently handle the increase in air traffic that is expected.

In the coming weeks, we will be back here with a bill that I believe will gain the support of the majority of the Commerce Committee and the support of the Senate.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, as vice chairman of the Commerce Committee I concur with my good friend and colleague. I applaud the administration for moving the process forward but I echo Senator INOUYE's concerns with the proposal. I look forward to working with him and our colleagues on the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee to craft a Committee proposal in the coming weeks.

By Mr. BYRD (for himself, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. COCHRAN, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. LOTT, and Mr. ISAKSON).

S.J. Res. 11. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to clarify that the Constitution neither prohibits voluntary prayer nor requires prayer in schools; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, West Virginians have always been a deeply spiritual people. Historically, we have stood fast in our devotion to the Creator, even when—or especially when—faced with adversity, deprivation, or misfortune. Just as we recognize that joyful events are best celebrated with prayers of gratitude, we also believe that hardship can be endured and, in fact, diminished through the infinite power of the healing word.

As we leave for Easter recess to celebrate the resurrection, we lift our heads from the darkness to the light. We ask for God's blessings. The Gospel at John 14:13 tells us that God answers prayer, meaning that he hears us whenever we ask for anything according to his will.

The importance of prayer is recognized by people of faith in nearly every denomination. Yet, in America, too many of our citizens belittle, ignore, or denigrate the power of prayer. They believe that the doctrine of separation of powers means that we can pray only within the four walls of a house of worship, and nowhere else. But that viewpoint does not reflect the intent of the Creator.

Prayer, no matter where undertaken, by design, provides both inspiration

and solace. It is comforting, particularly during a time of war. No wonder, then, that prayer has always had a place in the lives of our military. In December 1944, General George S. Patton, Jr., ordered Colonel James H. O'Neill, the chaplain of the Third Army, to produce a prayer to the heavens, which requested clear weather. The prayer, written by Chaplain O'Neill, reads as follows:

Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness . . . Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee, that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory . . . and establish Thy justice among men and nations. Amen.

Chaplain O'Neill's prayer was provided on behalf of all soldiers, regardless of denomination, when or where they prayed, and with whom. It was a prayer in addition to the silent or outspoken, individual and voluntary prayers of each of the enlisted men and women of the Army.

Although I cannot be sure of it, I would imagine that soldiers in the field responded favorably to the prayer of Chaplain O'Neill. They assuredly did not object to his expression of faith—one in which they were free to participate or not. Undoubtedly, the soldiers drew inspiration from the Chaplain's words.

Now, while our children do not normally face the mortal peril that U.S. troops inevitably face in a time of war, all Americans—whether young or old—in school or in battle, surely from time to time need to draw upon the blessings of a higher power to face whatever tests fate may throw their way on any given day.

Yet one wonders what would happen if a student in an American classroom today decided, of his or her own volition, to recite a prayer like the one by Chaplain O'Neill. In some jurisdictions, it is probable that the student would be disciplined and his/her teachers punished for potentially violating the First Amendment.

Is today's state of affairs consistent with the intent of the Framers? No. The Founding Fathers believed in a Supreme Being, and they were proud of their faith. On February 22, 1756, John Adams wrote:

Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! Every member would be obliged in conscience to temperance, frugality, and industry; to justice, kindness, and charity towards his fellow men; and to piety, love, and reverence toward Almighty God . . . what a Utopia, what a paradise would this region be.

As his words reflect, John Adams knew and recognized that we were and are a religious people.

The Religion Clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution state: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; . . ."

In my opinion, too many have not given equal weight to both of these clauses. Instead, they have focused only on the first clause, which prohibits the establishment of religion, at the expense of the second clause, which protects the right of Americans to worship as they please. This country was founded by men and women of strong faith, whose intent was not to suppress religion, but to ensure that the government favored no single religion over another.

In particular, the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment states that Congress cannot make laws that prohibit the free exercise of religion. Consequently, I believe that any prohibition of voluntary prayer in school, either spoken aloud or recounted in silence, violates the right of our schoolchildren to practice freely their religion. And that's not right. Any child should be free to pray to God, of his or her own volition, whether at home, in church, or at school. Period.

I am not a proponent of repeatedly amending the U.S. Constitution. I believe that such amendments should be done only rarely and with great care. However, because I feel as strongly about this today as I have for over four decades, I am going to take this opportunity, once again, as I have at least eight times over the past 45 years, to introduce today a joint resolution to amend the Constitution to clarify the intent of the Framers with respect to voluntary prayer in school.

The language of the resolution that I am introducing today to amend the Constitution simply states: "Nothing in this Constitution, including any amendment to this Constitution, shall be construed to prohibit voluntary prayer or require prayer in a public school, or to prohibit voluntary prayer or require prayer at a public school extracurricular activity."

This resolution is similar to legislation that I introduced or cosponsored starting in 1962, but more recently in 1973, 1979, 1982, 1993, 1995, 1997, and 2006. This resolution is not a radical departure. It simply reiterates what should already be permissible under a correct interpretation of the First Amendment. It does not change the language of the First Amendment, and it would not permit any school to advocate a particular religious message endorsed by the government. The resolution seeks neither to advance nor to inhibit religion. It does not signify government approval of any particular religious sect or creed. It does not compel a "non-believer" to pray. In fact, it does not require an atheist to embrace or adopt any religious action, belief, or expression. It does not coerce or compel anyone to do anything, and it does not foster excessive government entanglement with religion.

This Constitutional Amendment simply allows children to pray, voluntarily, if they wish to do so. The Supreme Court has held that the Establishment Clause is not violated so long

as the government treats religious speech and other speech equally. The resolution has a preeminently secular purpose, which is to ensure that religious and non-religious speech are treated equally.

The First Amendment is to secure religious liberty. Justice Stevens has written that, "nothing in the Constitution as interpreted by this Court prohibits any public school student from voluntarily praying at any time before, during or after the school day."

Similarly, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has written that the Religion Clauses of our Constitution have "kept religion a matter for the individual conscience, not for the prosecutor or bureaucrat."

And we should make certain that religion is a matter for the individual conscience. But keeping religion a matter for the individual conscience should not mean that a schoolchild must stand silent, unable to turn to God for comfort or guidance in times of need. Not every reference to God represents the impermissible establishment of religion. Instead, let us make certain that every individual, including every schoolchild, can be assured of his/her right to pray voluntarily to God, as he/she pleases, consistent with the intent of the Framers, who wrote the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 134—DESIGNATING SEPTEMBER 2007 AS "ADOPT A SCHOOL LIBRARY MONTH"

Mr. DURBIN (for himself and Mr. COLEMAN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 134

Whereas extensive research has demonstrated a link between high-quality school libraries and student achievement in the classroom and on standardized tests, regardless of the level of poverty or family instability experienced by the student;

Whereas 37 percent of all fourth grade children in the United States are reading at below-basic reading levels;

Whereas the school libraries of the United States are valuable tools that could be used to inspire and enhance literacy for all children;

Whereas, to become a lifelong reader, a student must be exposed to adults who read regularly and serve as positive reading role models;

Whereas school librarians are—

(1) instrumental in helping teachers educate the students of the United States; and

(2) through the use of books, computer resources, and other resources, a necessary component for expanding the curriculum of the public schools of the United States;

Whereas the school libraries of the United States are used as media centers to provide students with opportunities to interact with computers and other electronic information resources;

Whereas the use of school library computers helps students develop media and technological skills, including—

(1) critical thinking;
(2) communication competency; and

(3) the ethical and appropriate use of technology information access, retrieval, and production;

Whereas the school libraries of the United States serve as a gathering place for students of all ages, backgrounds, and interests to come together to debate ideas;

Whereas only approximately \$1,000,000,000 is allocated to school libraries each year, which translates to \$0.54 per student; and

Whereas numerous programs, including the READesign program of the Heart of America Foundation, are working to reestablish school libraries as the hearts of the public schools of the United States by—

(1) offering intensive care for school libraries though efforts designed—

(A) to redecorate school libraries;
(B) to revitalize technology available to school libraries; and

(C) to replenish the book shelves of school libraries; and

(2) renewing community support and interest for—

(A) enriching the lives of children; and
(B) helping students regain lost opportunities for learning: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates September 2007 as "Adopt a School Library Month" to raise public awareness about the important role school libraries play in the academic achievement of children; and

(2) calls on the Federal Government, States, local governments, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and the people of the United States to observe the month with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and other activities.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, When I was growing up in East St. Louis, I spent hours reading about faraway places, exciting adventures, and historic figures and events. I spent countless hours in the library discovering wonderful stories and developed a lifelong love of reading.

Now imagine going to school where the library is dark and uninviting, and where there is no librarian in sight. These conditions are real. I have visited schools in my home State of Illinois and seen libraries that show their years of neglect.

The dire circumstances that face some of these school libraries are not due to lack of concern by school officials. School leaders are working with limited budgets and unforgiving performance standards. School libraries were once one of the central features of our school, but are now one of the first programs to be cut.

In Cairo, IL, there is no money available for new books. The superintendent told me that his school libraries would have no books at all if it were not for the donations from the local community. In Collinsville, school libraries had science books so outdated they were published before man landed on the moon. We cannot expect our students to compete in today's global economy unless we provide them with the tools that they need to succeed.

Many studies have demonstrated the strong link between high-quality school libraries and student achievement, both in the classroom and on standardized tests. School libraries benefit all students, regardless of race, class, or family situation. According to a study by the Illinois School Library Media Association, students average 5 percent to 13 percent higher on their

reading and writing test scores when their libraries are well-funded. Students in schools with more current collections in their libraries scored 7 percent to 13 percent higher in reading and writing in lower grades and 3 percent higher on college entrance exams. In Illinois, additional computers in school libraries led to an 8-percent increase in the reading performance of fifth to eighth graders, and to an 11-percent increase in the writing scores for eighth graders. The data is consistent and clear: All of our children are more likely to succeed when their school possesses a high-quality school library.

Many groups recognize the importance of school libraries and are doing something about it. In particular, I commend the Heart of America Foundation, which is focused on improving some of the Nation's most needy school libraries. In impoverished communities where many libraries have one book or less per student, Heart of America tries to bring the collections of these libraries up to at least the national average of 22 books per student. Its READesign program offers intensive care for school libraries through renovation, revitalizing technology, and replenishing book shelves. Heart of America makes READesigns a community effort by bringing together individuals, corporate sponsors, and community groups to provide schools with "library makeovers." The transformation of these school libraries is truly extraordinary. It goes beyond simply painting and restocking the bookshelves. After a READesign, a school library once again becomes a welcoming and vibrant center of learning, books, and technology.

I am confident that others will be as inspired by the READesign program and the potential of our school libraries as I am. In designating September 2007 as "Adopt a School Library Month," it is my hope that individuals will remember the importance of school libraries in facilitating the academic achievement of our children and support needy school libraries in their respective communities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 135—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD SUPPORT INDEPENDENCE FOR KOSOVO

Mr. LIEBERMAN (for himself, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. McCAIN, and Mr. SMITH) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 135

Whereas the United States has enduring national interests in the peace and security of southeastern Europe, and in the greater integration of the region into the Euro-Atlantic community of democratic, well-governed states;

Whereas, in March 1999, the United States, along with other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), commenced military action aimed at ending Slobodan Milosevic's brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing against the people of Kosovo;

Whereas that military action resulted in the defeat of Serb forces and the creation of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, an interim United Nations administration that governs Kosovo, and which ended, de facto, the sovereignty that was previously exercised by the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia over Kosovo;

Whereas the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States have served bravely in Kosovo since 1999, and their presence and participation in the NATO-led Kosovo Force has been indispensable in protecting the people of Kosovo and stabilizing the region;

Whereas United Nations administration was never intended nor understood as a permanent solution to the political status of Kosovo;

Whereas, in light of NATO's military intervention in Kosovo and the United Nations trusteeship established in Kosovo pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), the international community has recognized the political circumstances in Kosovo as unique, and the settlement of Kosovo's status therefore does not establish a precedent for the resolution of other conflicts;

Whereas continuing uncertainty about the status of Kosovo is unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Kosovo, inhibits economic and political development in Kosovo, and contributes to instability and radicalism in both Kosovo and Serbia;

Whereas, in 2005, the United Nations Secretary-General appointed the former President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, as United Nations Special Envoy for Kosovo to develop a comprehensive settlement proposal to resolve the political status of Kosovo;

Whereas, in March 2007, after 14 months of intensive diplomacy, Special Envoy Ahtisaari submitted to the Security Council a comprehensive settlement proposal that would result in supervised independence for Kosovo, with robust protections for the rights of minorities; and

Whereas Special Envoy Ahtisaari has explored every reasonable avenue for compromise in the course of his diplomacy and has stated that further negotiations would be counterproductive: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the United States should support the independence of Kosovo in accordance with its currently constituted borders, a resolution that represents the only just, sustainable solution for an economically viable and politically stable Kosovo;

(2) the United States should, in consultation and cooperation with its allies, vigorously and promptly pursue a United Nations Security Council resolution that endorses the recommendations of United Nations Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari;

(3) in the absence of timely action by the United Nations Security Council, the United States should be prepared to act in conjunction with like-minded democracies to confer diplomatic recognition on, and establish full diplomatic relations with, Kosovo as an independent state, much as the United States worked in cooperation with like-minded democracies to protect the people of Kosovo in 1999;

(4) the United States should oppose any delay in the resolution of the political status of Kosovo as counterproductive, potentially

dangerous, and likely to make the achievement of a lasting settlement more difficult;

(5) the United States should work together with the European Union as a full partner in supporting the political and economic development of an independent Kosovo;

(6) the United States should support the integration of Kosovo into international and Euro-Atlantic institutions, including its timely admission to the Partnership for Peace program of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), with the ultimate goal of full membership in NATO;

(7) the United States should reaffirm its commitment to southeastern Europe, including the continuation of the military mission in Kosovo to deter and disrupt any efforts by any party to destabilize the region through violence;

(8) the Government of Kosovo should exercise responsible leadership under supervised independence and thereby accelerate the transition to full independence, taking particular care to reassure, protect, and ensure the full political and economic rights of Serb and other minority communities in Kosovo;

(9) the Government of Kosovo should make every reasonable effort to develop a cooperative relationship with the Government of Serbia, in recognition of its legitimate interests in the safety of the Serb population in Kosovo and in the protection and preservation of the patrimonial sites of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo; and

(10) the Government of Serbia should exercise responsible leadership and seize the opportunity and the imperative presented by the independence of Kosovo to end the dark chapter of the 1990s and focus its energies toward achieving a prosperous and peaceful future through regional cooperation and integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions, including NATO and the European Union, and toward the establishment of open, constructive relations with the government of Kosovo.

SENATE RESOLUTION 136—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE CONDEMNING THE SEIZURE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN OF 15 BRITISH NAVAL PERSONNEL IN IRAQI TERRITORIAL WATERS, AND CALLING FOR THEIR IMMEDIATE, SAFE, AND UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE

Mr. COLEMAN (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. DEMINT, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. BROWNBACK, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. KERRY, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. ENSIGN, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. CASEY, Mr. DODD, Mrs. CLINTON, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. VITTER, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. MARTINEZ, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. VOINOVICH, and Mr. SMITH) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 136

Whereas, on March 23, 2007, a naval vessel of the United Kingdom, the HMS Cornwall, was conducting routine operations in Iraqi territorial waters pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1723 (2006) and in support of the Government of Iraq;

Whereas, on March 23, 2007, a boarding team consisting of 7 Royal Marines and 8 sailors embarked in 2 of the boats of the HMS Cornwall to conduct a routine boarding of an Indian flagged merchant vessel pursuant to the authorization of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1723 (2006);

Whereas, as Vice Admiral Charles Style, Deputy Chief of the British Defense Staff

(Commitments), demonstrated in a presentation on March 28, 2007, "the merchant vessel was 7.5 nautical miles south east of the Al Faw Peninsula, . . . 29 degrees 50.36 minutes North 048 degrees 43.08 minutes East. This places her 1.7 nautical miles inside Iraqi territorial waters. This fact has been confirmed by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry.";

Whereas at some point shortly after completion of the successful inspection of the merchant ship, the two United Kingdom vessels were surrounded and escorted by Iranian Islamic Republican Guard Navy vessels toward the Shatt 'Al Arab Waterway and into Iranian territorial waters;

Whereas, as Margaret Beckett, the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, stated to the House of Commons on March 28, 2007, even the coordinates of the seizure event that were given by Iran's Ambassador to the United Kingdom at the Ambassador's first meeting with United Kingdom officials were themselves in Iraqi waters;

Whereas Foreign Secretary Beckett noted in that same statement that authorities of the Government of Iran provided "corrected" coordinates of the incident on March 25, 2007, claiming that the event took place in Iranian waters;

Whereas the merchant vessel that was boarded had remained anchored since the time it was boarded, and on March 25, 2007, its location was verified to be in Iraqi waters;

Whereas Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Tony Blair stated on March 25, 2007, that "there is no doubt at all that these people were taken from a boat in Iraqi waters. It is simply not true that they went into Iranian territorial waters.";

Whereas the Government of Iran has yet to release the 15 British sailors it has been holding captive since seizing the sailors from Iraqi waters on March 23, 2007: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns in the strongest possible terms the seizure by the Government of Iran of 15 British naval personnel from Iraqi territorial waters as a provocative and illegal act; and

(2) calls for the immediate, safe, and unconditional release of the personnel from captivity.

SENATE RESOLUTION 137—RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK ON THE 175TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENACTMENT OF THE ACT THAT AUTHORIZED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HOT SPRINGS RESERVATION

Mrs. LINCOLN (for herself and Mr. PRYOR) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:

S. RES. 137

Whereas, with the establishment of the Hot Springs Reservation, the concept in the United States of setting aside a nationally significant place for the future enjoyment of the citizens of the United States was first carried out 175 years ago in Hot Springs, Arkansas;

Whereas the Hot Springs Reservation protected 47 hot springs in the area of Hot Springs, Arkansas;

Whereas, in the first section of the Act of April 20, 1832 (4 Stat. 505, chapter 70), Congress required that "the hot springs in said territory, together with four sections of land, including said springs, as near the centre thereof as may be, shall be reserved for