

he dons his infamous tie emblazoned with the Marvel comic book character, The Incredible Hulk!

With hallmark humor, strength, and aplomb, how could he approach his robust role any differently—a man whose larger-than-life tenure in the public arena reflects the enormity of his stunning and beloved Alaska, a State with a name that means literally “the object towards which the action of the sea is directed.” For more than half century, the action of the sea of public policy has always found its way to this great American and still does because he welcomes it, thrives on it, and seizes upon it in the name of The Last Frontier State and to the benefit of our Nation.

OPEN GOVERNMENT ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am deeply disappointed that the Senate may not consider the Openness Promotes Effectiveness in our National Government Act,” the OPEN Government Act, S. 849, before it adjourns for the Memorial Day recess. The Judiciary Committee favorably reported this bipartisan bill. We have filed a committee report on this important legislation. Regrettably, an anonymous Republican hold is stalling this important Freedom of Information Act, FOIA, legislation, needlessly delaying long-overdue reforms to strengthen FOIA and to protect the public's right to know.

It is both unfortunate and ironic that this bipartisan bill, which promotes sunshine and openness in our government, is being hindered by a secret and anonymous hold. This is a good government bill that Democrats and Republicans alike, can and should work together to enact. I hope that the Senator placing the secret hold on this bill will come forward, so that we can resolve any legitimate concerns, and the full Senate can promptly act on this legislation.

The OPEN Government Act is co-sponsored by 10 Senators from both sides of the aisle. This bill is also endorsed by more than 100 business, public interest, and news organizations from across the political and ideological spectrum, including, the American Library Association, Conservation Congress, the Liberty Coalition, OpenTheGovernment.org, the Sunshine in Government Initiative, the Republican Liberty Caucus and Public Citizen.

I thank all of the cosponsors of this bill and commend Senator CORNYN as our lead Republican sponsor. I also thank the many open government organizations that are working tirelessly to encourage the Congress to enact this bill this year. This measure is cleared for passage on the Democratic side. It should be passed without further delay.

The OPEN Government Act promotes and enhances public disclosure of government information under FOIA, by helping Americans to obtain timely re-

sponses to their FOIA requests and improving transparency in the Federal Government's FOIA process. During the recent hearing that the Judiciary Committee held on this legislation, we learned that, although FOIA remains an indispensable tool in shedding light on bad policies and government abuses, this open government law is being hampered by excessive delays and lax FOIA compliance. Today, Americans who seek information under FOIA remain less likely to obtain it than during any other time in FOIA's 40-year history. This bill would help to reverse this trend and to restore the public's trust in their government.

Senator CORNYN and I both know that open government is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. It is an American issue. It is in this spirit that I urge the removal of the anonymous hold placed on this bill. I also urge all Members of the Senate to join me in supporting this important open government legislation.

We have received numerous letters of support from such organizations as the American Library Association, the National Press Club, Pubic Citizen, Sunshine in Government Initiative and OpenTheGovernment.org. I ask unanimous consent that a letter in support sent to the majority and Republican leaders of the Senate and endorsed by more than 100 organizations from across the political spectrum be printed in the RECORD.

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

MAY 17, 2007.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Hart Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL
Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR REID AND SENATOR MCCONNELL: We write on behalf of the undersigned group of 100 business, public interest, and historical groups and associations to endorse the OPEN Government Act of 2007 (S. 849), as introduced by Senator Patrick Leahy and Senator John Cornyn.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is the public's most significant tool for ensuring integrity and accountability from the federal government. Unfortunately, FOIA's promise of ensuring an open and accountable government has been seriously undermined by the excessive processing delays that FOIA requesters face across the government. The OPEN Government Act would: Close loopholes in FOIA; Help the public get timely responses to FOIA requests; and Improve agency accountability and require better management of FOIA programs.

The public's confidence in the executive branch has reached a dramatic low point. The OPEN Government Act of 2007 would demonstrate bipartisan congressional leadership to restore public faith in government and to advance the ideals of openness that our democracy embodies. The Senate Judiciary Committee has reported favorably upon the bill without any amendments. We urge you to support this legislation and help it move quickly to the Senate floor for a vote.

Sincerely,
Alliance for Justice
America Association of Law Libraries
American Association of Small Property Owners

American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

American Families United

American Library Association

Animal Welfare Institute

ASPCA

Assassination Archives and Research Center

Association of American Publishers

Bill of Rights Defense Committee

Biodiversity Conservation Alliance

Blancett Ranches, Aztec, NM

Californians Aware

Californians for Western Wilderness

Center for Democracy and Technology

Center for Energy Research

Center for National Security Studies

Citizen Action New Mexico

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

Common Cause

Community Recovery Services

Conservation Congress

Doctors for Open Government

DownsizeDC.org, Inc.

The E-Accountability

Foundation/Parentadvocates.org

Electronic Frontier Foundation

Environmental Defense Institute

Environmental Integrity Project

Ethics in Government Group

Fernald Residents for Environmental Safety & Health, Inc.

Florida First Amendment Foundation

Forest Guardians

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Friends of Animals

Friends of the Wild Swan

Georgia ForestWatch

Georgians for Open Government

Government Accountability Project

Great Basin Mine Watch

Gun Owners of America

HALT, Inc

The Health Integrity Project

HEAL Utah

The Humane Society of the United States

Idaho Sporting Congress, Inc.

Indiana Coalition for Open Government

The James Madison Project

Law Librarian Association of Greater New York

Law Librarians Association of Wisconsin

League of Women Voters of the U.S.

Liberty Coalition

Los Alamos Study Group

Maine Association of Broadcasters

Mine Safety and Health News

The Multiracial Activist

National Coalition Against Censorship

National Freedom of Information Coalition

National Security Archive

National Taxpayers Union

National Treasury Employees Union

National Whistleblower Center

Natural Resources Defense Council

The New Grady Coalition

No FEAR Coalition

Northern California Association of Law Libraries

Northwest Environmental Advocates

Nuclear Watch New Mexico

Okanogan Highlands Bottling Company

OMB Watch

Open Society Policy Center

OpenTheGovernment.org

Oregon Natural Desert Association

Oregon Peace Works

Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, Inc.

People For the American Way

Project On Government Oversight

Public Citizen

ReadtheBill.org Education Fund

Republican Liberty Caucus

Reynolds, Motl & Sherwood, PLLP

The Rutherford Institute
 Sagebrush Sea Campaign
 Semmelweis Society International
 Snake River Alliance
 Society of American Archivists
 Society of Professional Journalists
 Southern California Association of Law Libraries
 Southwest Research and Information Center
 The Student Health Integrity Project
 Tax Analysts
 Tri-Valley CAREs (Communities Against a Radioactive Environment)
 Union of Concerned Scientists
 VA Whistleblowers Coalition
 Western Environmental Law Center
 Western Lands Project
 Western Resource Advocates
 The Wilderness Society
 Wild Wilderness
 Wilderness Workshop.

THE BUDGET

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, last week the Senate and House of Representatives voted to adopt a budget resolution for the upcoming fiscal year. I was proud to support this budget, which, in my view, represents an important first step towards returning our nation to a healthy and strong fiscal and economic course. Like the budget of any family or business, the federal budget provides a framework for responsibly meeting our nation's most important priorities while ensuring that we are living within our means. This year's budget restores much-needed fiscal discipline while better targeting our resources towards the investments that will best promote economic growth, national security, and broad-based opportunity.

First, the budget resolution reinstates pay-as-you-go rules, which require that any new spending or tax cuts be paid for with spending cuts or new sources of revenue—rather than simply adding the cost to the national debt for our children and grandchildren to repay with interest. These rules played a major role in helping us to achieve Federal budget surpluses in the late 1990s. The resolution also puts a stop to procedural abuses that had been used by the previous leadership in the Congress, notably the use of budget reconciliation protections—designed for legislation that reduces the deficit—to ram through passage of budget-busting tax bills. These procedural improvements, combined with reasonable and responsible spending limits and revenue targets, provide for much-improved—and much-needed fiscal discipline on both the spending and revenue sides of the ledger.

In the 1990s, we saw how responsible budget policies and economic growth reinforced each other in a cycle that lifted Americans' standard of living across the board. Under the current administration, by contrast, Americans have seen the opposite effect, as irresponsible and poorly targeted fiscal policies have squandered the previous decade's fiscal gains while economic growth has accrued more and more narrowly to a smaller segment of the

population. The Federal budget has declined from a surplus of \$236 billion in 2000 to a deficit of \$248 billion last year, while the national debt has grown from \$5.6 trillion to \$8.8 trillion. Over the same period, real median household income in our country has fallen by nearly \$1,300.

Within the context of fiscal responsibility, the budget adopted last week puts in place a framework for restoring the investments necessary for broad-based economic growth and a return to budget surpluses. Rather than leaving middle-class families behind, it focuses on strengthening the middle class—the backbone of our economy.

This begins with promoting an agenda of innovation and entrepreneurship. The President's budget this year—for the second consecutive year—proposed the largest cut to education in the history of the Department of Education, along with cuts to research and development and technology transfer. It would be hard to find a worse idea than to cut the investments that allow our children to fulfill their maximum potential and drive our nation's economic growth now and in the future. This budget rejects the president's cuts, providing an additional \$6.3 billion for education from preschool to graduate school. As I have said numerous times before, we can be confident that the investment we make here will be returned to us many times over.

This year's budget also directs more resources towards improving health care quality and coverage, and reducing cost—an issue that affects every American family and businesses' bottom line. The resolution includes a deficit-neutral reserve fund to help cover uninsured children and funds for health information technology and comparative effectiveness to help reduce skyrocketing costs.

Just as importantly, with our military being stretched to its limits, the budget includes full funding for restoring force readiness and adequately equipping our military personnel serving in harm's way. It also includes \$3.6 billion above the Bush administration's budget to address the needs of veterans when they return home, because the brave Americans who have served our country deserve much better than the conditions that were revealed in the recent Walter Reed Army Medical Center scandal.

The priorities laid out in the budget adopted last week contrast sharply with the agendas of recent years. Where the Bush administration and previous leadership in the Congress sacrificed all else at the altar of high-income tax cuts, this year's budget will keep taxes low while restoring the importance of education, health care, clean and renewable energy, and the needs of our military. This change is a welcome development that puts our Nation on a better, stronger, more prosperous, and more secure course for the future.

AGING REPORT

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, it is my pleasure to present to the Senate report No. 110-71, titled "Economic Developments in Aging," as compiled by the Senate Special Committee on Aging for the 109th Congress. The Special Committee on Aging is required to report to the Senate at least once a Congress on findings from the work done by the committee. This report contains valuable insight uncovered by the committee over the past 10 years on the subject of the economics of retirement.

The Aging Committee has a long and distinguished history of investigating and debating issues of importance to America's aging population. Along with robust deliberations on retirement security, the committee also has initiated discussions on ways to strengthen Medicare and Medicaid, and to expose companies that prey upon seniors using fraudulent marketing scams. I was proud to serve as chairman of this committee in the 109th Congress, when we began the process of compiling this report, and am pleased to continue my service as ranking member of the committee in the 110th Congress.

The Aging Committee is tasked with a significant challenge to ensure that we, as a nation, are prepared for the significant demographic shift with the aging of our population. In a few short years, a vast wave of Americans will begin to retire. In fact, between 2010 and 2030, the number of people age 65 and older is projected to increase by 76 percent. This change will impact a wide range of social and economic issues, such as labor shortages, loss of experienced workers many of whom have skills that simply are not replaceable—and put a significant strain on the senior entitlement programs of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

To keep pace with the growing aging population, it is critical that Congress address these issues in a thoughtful manner that preserves benefits for those in need. The report compiles relevant high-level summaries of committee hearings related to retirement security that demonstrate the ongoing debate within Congress regarding the best approach to address these important issues.

I look forward to continuing a healthy debate on ways to best prepare for the challenges that await us with our aging nation. I hope this report provides valuable insight as we continue these discussions throughout this Congress.

I thank all the members of the Senate Special Committee on Aging from the past 10 years for their participation in these vital discussions. I especially want to thank the committee's current chairman, Senator HERB KOHL, as well as the committee's past chairmen for their dedication to ensuring a positive future for America's seniors.