

EC-5679. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Visas: Documentation of Immigrants under the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended" (22 CFR Part 42) received on March 10, 2008; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-5680. A communication from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, a draft bill intended to improve veterans' health care benefits; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. INOUE, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 357. A bill to improve passenger automobile fuel economy and safety, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce dependence on foreign oil, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 110-278).

By Mr. LIEBERMAN, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 1667. A bill to establish a pilot program for the expedited disposal of Federal real property (Rept. No. 110-279).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. DEMINT:

S. 2823. A bill to empower States with authority for most taxing and spending for highway programs and mass transit programs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. ROCKEFELLER (for himself, Mr. WEBB, Mr. BROWN, and Ms. MURRAY):

S. 2824. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the collective bargaining rights and procedures for review of adverse actions of certain employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. AKAKA:

S. 2825. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide a minimum disability rating for veterans receiving medical treatment for a service-connected disability; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. LANDRIEU:

S. 2826. A bill to establish the 8/29 Investigation Team to examine the events beginning on August 29, 2005, with respect to the failure of the flood protection system in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. INHOFE:

S. 2827. A bill to repeal a requirement with respect to the procurement and acquisition of alternative fuels; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. SMITH, Mr. BIDEN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. BROWN, Mrs. DOLE, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. OBAMA, Mr. BYRD, Mr. VOINOVICH, Mr. SCHUMER, and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. Res. 504. A resolution condemning the violence in Tibet and calling for restraint by the Government of the People's Republic of China and the people of Tibet; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 22

At the request of Mr. WEBB, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BOND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 22, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a program of educational assistance for members of the Armed Forces who serve in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, and for other purposes.

S. 450

At the request of Mr. ENSIGN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 450, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to repeal the medicare outpatient rehabilitation therapy caps.

S. 582

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 582, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to classify automatic fire sprinkler systems as 5-year property for purposes of depreciation.

S. 616

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. COLEMAN) and the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) were added as cosponsors of S. 616, a bill to promote health care coverage parity for individuals participating in legal recreational activities or legal transportation activities.

S. 789

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 789, a bill to prevent abuse of Government credit cards.

S. 843

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 843, a bill to provide for the establishment of a national mercury monitoring program.

S. 881

At the request of Mrs. LINCOLN, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 881, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend and modify the railroad track maintenance credit.

S. 1130

At the request of Mrs. LINCOLN, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1130, a bill to amend the Internal

Revenue Code of 1986 to restore, increase, and make permanent the exclusion from gross income for amounts received under qualified group legal services plans.

S. 1675

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1675, a bill to implement the recommendations of the Federal Communications Commission report to the Congress regarding low-power FM service.

S. 1738

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1738, a bill to establish a Special Counsel for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction within the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, to improve the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, to increase resources for regional computer forensic labs, and to make other improvements to increase the ability of law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute predators.

S. 1888

At the request of Mrs. CLINTON, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1888, a bill to amend title 4, United States Code, to add National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day to the list of days on which the flag should especially be displayed.

S. 1995

At the request of Mr. SALAZAR, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1995, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reduce the tax on beer to its pre-1991 level.

S. 2002

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2002, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to simplify certain provisions applicable to real estate investment trusts, and for other purposes.

S. 2035

At the request of Mr. SPECTER, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2035, a bill to maintain the free flow of information to the public by providing conditions for the federally compelled disclosure of information by certain persons connected with the news media.

S. 2238

At the request of Mr. AKAKA, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WEBB) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2238, a bill to amend the National Dam Safety Program Act to establish a program to provide grant assistance to States for the rehabilitation and repair of deficient dams.

S. 2510

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the name of the Senator from Michigan

(Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2510, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide revised standards for quality assurance in screening and evaluation of gynecologic cytology preparations, and for other purposes.

S. 2576

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the names of the Senator from Maine (Ms. SNOWE) and the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) were added as cosponsors of S. 2576, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit for qualified expenditures paid or incurred to replace certain wood stoves.

S. 2579

At the request of Mr. INOUE, the names of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. STEVENS) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2579, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in recognition and celebration of the establishment of the United States Army in 1775, to honor the American soldier of both today and yesterday, in wartime and in peace, and to commemorate the traditions, history, and heritage of the United States Army and its role in American society, from the colonial period to today.

S. 2619

At the request of Mr. COBURN, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. ENSIGN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2619, a bill to protect innocent Americans from violent crime in national parks.

S. 2639

At the request of Mr. JOHNSON, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. BAUCUS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2639, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for an assured adequate level of funding for veterans health care.

S. 2690

At the request of Mr. BROWNBACK, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2690, a bill to authorize the placement in Arlington National Cemetery of an American Braille tactile flag in Arlington National Cemetery honoring blind members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and other Americans.

S. 2755

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2755, a bill to provide funding for summer youth jobs.

S. 2766

At the request of Mr. NELSON of Florida, the names of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VOINOVICH) were added as cosponsors of S. 2766, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control

Act to address certain discharges incidental to the normal operation of a recreational vessel.

S. 2771

At the request of Ms. LANDRIEU, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2771, a bill to require the president to call a White House Conference on Children and Youth in 2010.

S. 2799

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2799, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand and improve health care services available to women veterans, especially those serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 2819

At the request of Mr. ROCKEFELLER, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 2819, a bill to preserve access to Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program during an economic downturn, and for other purposes.

S. 2821

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH), the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2821, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the limited continuation of clean energy production incentives and incentives to improve energy efficiency in order to prevent a downturn in these sectors that would result from a lapse in the tax law.

S. RES. 468

At the request of Mrs. CLINTON, the name of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 468, a resolution designating April 2008 as "National 9-1-1 Education Month".

AMENDMENT NO. 4384

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the names of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. SUNUNU) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 4384 proposed to H.R. 3221, moving the United States toward greater energy independence and security, developing innovative new technologies, reducing carbon emissions, creating green jobs, protecting consumers, increasing clean renewable energy production, and modernizing our energy infrastructure, and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax incentives for the production of renewable energy and energy conservation.

AMENDMENT NO. 4419

At the request of Mr. ENSIGN, the names of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. DOMENICI), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. STEVENS), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) and the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. COLEMAN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 4419 proposed to H.R. 3221, moving the United States toward greater energy independence and security, developing innovative new technologies, reducing carbon emissions, creating green jobs, protecting consumers, increasing clean renewable energy production, and modernizing our energy infrastructure, and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax incentives for the production of renewable energy and energy conservation.

AMENDMENT NO. 4421

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 4421 proposed to H.R. 3221, moving the United States toward greater energy independence and security, developing innovative new technologies, reducing carbon emissions, creating green jobs, protecting consumers, increasing clean renewable energy production, and modernizing our energy infrastructure, and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax incentives for the production of renewable energy and energy conservation.

AMENDMENT NO. 4426

At the request of Mr. MARTINEZ, the names of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KYL) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 4426 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3221, moving the United States toward greater energy independence and security, developing innovative new technologies, reducing carbon emissions, creating green jobs, protecting consumers, increasing clean renewable energy production, and modernizing our energy infrastructure, and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax incentives for the production of renewable energy and energy conservation.

AMENDMENT NO. 4427

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 4427 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3221, moving the United States toward greater energy independence and security, developing innovative new technologies, reducing carbon emissions, creating green jobs, protecting consumers, increasing clean renewable energy production, and modernizing our energy infrastructure, and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax incentives for the production of renewable energy and energy conservation.

AMENDMENT NO. 4433

At the request of Ms. SNOWE, the names of the Senator from New Mexico

(Mr. BINGAMAN) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. SUNUNU) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 4433 proposed to H.R. 3221, moving the United States toward greater energy independence and security, developing innovative new technologies, reducing carbon emissions, creating green jobs, protecting consumers, increasing clean renewable energy production, and modernizing our energy infrastructure, and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax incentives for the production of renewable energy and energy conservation.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. ROCKEFELLER (for himself, Mr. WEBB, Mr. BROWN, and Ms. MILKULSKI):

S. 2824. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the collective bargaining rights and procedures for review of adverse actions of certain employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce legislation designed to fix the personnel laws that cover the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, health care professionals, including registered nurses, physicians, physician assistants, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, and dental assistants. I am proud to have the support of my colleagues, Senators WEBB, BROWN and MIKULSKI. This legislation is the companion bill to the pending House bill sponsored by House Veterans' Affairs Chairman, Congressman BOB FILNER.

Our goal is to support the VA health care professionals who work hard to provide quality care to our veterans. The bill seeks to return to the partnership agreement of the 1990s between VA management and workforce. Flexible scheduling and basic fairness from management are key issues to recruit and retain a strong workforce.

Almost 22,000 of the registered nurse caring for our veterans will be eligible to retire by 2010. Even more stunning is that 77 percent of all resignations of nurses occur within the first 5 years. This is a clear signal that more must be done to retain VA nurses and quality health care staff. Anyone involved in health care understands the important role that nurses play in the quality of care and patient satisfaction.

The VA has several options. VA could invest more of its precious, limited funding on contract care—or, as we recommend, support this legislation and restore the partnership that will encourage our nurses and other health care professionals to stay in the VA system to care for our Nation's heroes.

West Virginia has four VA Medical Centers, each with a dedicated team of health care professionals. I have met with the nurses and other professionals to hear their requests for flexible

scheduling. I believe that we should restore the management partnership and work hard to retain our dedicated team of health professionals for our aging veterans, and those newly returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with both physical and mental wounds of war that deserved experienced VA care.

By Mr. AKAKA:

S. 2825. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide a minimum disability rating for veterans receiving medical treatment for a service-connected disability; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, today I introduce the Veterans' Compensation Equity Act of 2008. This legislation would mandate fair and equitable ratings for veterans whose disabilities require continuous medication or the use of adaptive devices, such as hearing aids.

Specifically, the bill would require that all veterans who receive continuous medication or require use of one or more adaptive devices, such as hearing aids, prescribed by the Department of Veterans Affairs or other licensed health care provider for treatment of a service-connected disability, shall be rated at not less than 10 percent.

The amount of compensation veterans with service-connected conditions receive is based on a disability rating, which VA assigns. VA uses its rating schedule to determine which rating to assign to a veteran's particular condition. Currently the rating schedule provides a minimum compensable rating of 10 percent or higher for most but not all disabilities that require continuous medication. I do not see any reason why one veteran who requires continuous medication for treatment of a service-connected disability, such as diabetes or asthma, should receive a compensable rating and another veteran who requires continuous medication for treatment of another disability, such as hypertension or chronic sinusitis, is assigned a zero percent rating and receives no compensation.

This legislation would also provide a minimum compensable rating when a veteran requires the use of a hearing aid or other adaptive device, but is nonetheless assigned a noncompensable rating under the current rating schedule. The use of adaptive devices prescribed by a Department of Veterans Affairs or other licensed health care provider for treatment of a service-connected condition would result in a rating of at least 10 percent.

It is important that veterans who are disabled as a result of military service are compensated in a fair and equitable manner. Providing different compensation for different medical conditions that all require continuous medication or adaptive devices is not just.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this measure, so that veterans seeking compensation will be treated in a fair and equitable manner.

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

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

S. 2825

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 "Veterans' Compensation Equity Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. MINIMUM DISABILITY RATING FOR VETERANS RECEIVING CERTAIN MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR A SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY.

Section 1155 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the third sentence the following new sentence: "For each veteran requiring continuous medication or the use of one or more adaptive devices, such as a hearing aid, prescribed by the Department or other licensed health care provider for treatment of a service-connected disability, the Secretary shall assign a disability rating for such disability of not less than 10 percent."

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 504—CONDEMNING THE VIOLENCE IN TIBET AND CALLING FOR RESTRAINT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND THE PEOPLE OF TIBET

Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mr. SMITH, Mr. BIDEN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. BROWN, Mrs. DOLE, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. OBAMA, Mr. BYRD, Mr. VOINOVICH, Mr. SCHUMER, and Mrs. MURRAY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 504

Whereas, beginning on March 10, 2008, Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhist monks began demonstrations in Lhasa, the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region in the People's Republic of China;

Whereas those protests spread to elsewhere in the Tibet Autonomous Region and to Tibetan autonomous areas in the Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai provinces of China;

Whereas, long-suppressed resentment prompted violent clashes between demonstrators and government forces in the streets of Lhasa, resulting in innocent civilian casualties, the burning of buildings, and extensive property damage;

Whereas Chinese and Tibetan sources report dozens of fatalities, and the arrest of more than 1,000 protesters in the Tibet Autonomous Region and surrounding Tibetan areas of China;

Whereas Tibet is the center of Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama is the most revered figure in Tibetan Buddhism;

Whereas, the Government of China continues to restrict the rights of Tibetan Buddhists to practice their religion freely;

Whereas the Dalai Lama has condemned the violence that began on March 14, 2008, and announced his continuing support for the Olympic Games to be held in Beijing, China;

Whereas the Dalai Lama has specifically stated that he does not seek independence for Tibet from China and has called for negotiations to bring about meaningful autonomy for Tibet that allows Tibetans to maintain their distinctive identity within China;