

that great conflict, to be part of our warrior force that defended and preserved the freedoms of America during that great world war.

So I honor and I appreciate the leadership of Senator AKAKA and Senator INOUE and Senator STEVENS, who have come to the floor and have spoken, from their unique historical perspective, about this being a matter of justice for the Filipino veterans who so helped secure the place of America across the world as a beacon of hope and freedom for generations to come.

I think we, as a Senate body, can do no less than to honor the sacrifice of these great veterans—part of the greatest generation—by making sure we adopt the provisions of this bill as they have been presented by Senator AKAKA in his bill.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I speak today in support of S. 1315, the Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007.

Our service men and women as well as their families make enormous sacrifices for our freedom. In return, Congress has an obligation to spend the money and create the programs necessary to provide quality, comprehensive health care services, mental health counseling, disability compensation, pay increases, better education benefits, and more. That responsibility grows daily with so many of our troops fighting overseas.

I am proud of what this Congress has accomplished to date. We passed a Defense authorization bill that will enhance wounded soldiers' health care and rehabilitation benefits as well as streamline the physical evaluation process. Last year, this Congress provided the largest increase in veterans' spending in this country's history. This February, the Senate passed and President Bush signed the economic stimulus package that would provide stimulus checks to more than 250,000 disabled veterans and to the survivors of disabled veterans. We passed a housing stimulus package on April 10 that had several benefits for veterans including increased limits on the VA Home Loan program and authorization for the VA to provide increased adapted housing grants to disabled veterans.

As a member of the Budget Committee, I am happy to report that this year's budget puts us on track to provide our veterans adequate support in the coming fiscal year. The resolution would provide \$48.2 billion to help ensure that the Veterans Health Administration within the Department of Veterans Affairs can provide the highest quality care for all veterans.

But our work is far from done. S. 1315 contains several critical benefits improvements to ensure that veterans young and old have what they need to provide for their families and lead full, productive lives. Provisions in S. 1315 would improve life insurance programs for disabled veterans, expand the traumatic injury protection program for active duty servicemembers, extend for

2 years the monthly educational assistance allowance for apprenticeship or other on-the-job training, and provide individuals with severe burns specially adapted housing benefits. These are important benefits and services that mean a great deal to the nearly 500,000 veterans living in Maryland and to veterans around this country.

But, for 8 months now, members of the minority party have kept the Senate from even debating S. 1315 because they oppose a provision in the bill that would extend certain VA benefits to elderly Filipino veterans, residing in the Philippines, who fought alongside U.S. troops during World War II. Drafted by our Government, hundreds of thousands of Filipino soldiers served with honor in some of the most dire circumstances of the war. These Filipino veterans were promised veterans' status and were even considered United States veterans until that status was taken from them by Congress in 1946. Restoration of that status rights a wrong committed decades ago. And it is a correction we don't have many more years to make. We should grant these former soldiers full status and the limited pension rights contained in this bill so that they can live out their remaining years in dignity and peace.

I know that some Senators may disagree with me on this issue. That is their right. But I regret that they have made it so hard for us to consider this important bill. I hope the Senate will be able to vote on final passage soon. We owe that much and so much more to this Nation's veterans.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

EQUAL PAY

Mr. ENZI. A few minutes ago, we concluded the vote on H.R. 2831 that came after a very short debate. It was a clever use of the rules by the majority, I have to hand them that. There is a requirement that there can be only 1 hour of debate before the cloture vote. So we didn't have any session today until 5 p.m. The Senate was closed. That is an interesting way to limit debate. As I noted in my earlier remarks, the bill we voted on also didn't come to committee and follow the regular order.

I am very proud of the fact that Senator KENNEDY and I are able to work out a lot of things on a lot of bills. In fact, I think we hold the record for major bill passage. The way we were able to do that is to work in a very bipartisan way. We have worked out difficulties and sometimes we have compromised and sometimes we have left things out so things could get done. On this bill, we never had that opportunity. We never had that courtesy. We never got to debate this for 1 minute in committee mark-up, let alone on the floor.

The debate was kind of fascinating to listen to because there is equal pay,

which all of us are in favor of; and there is the pay gap, which all of us want to close. But the discussion ranged between the two, making them sound like they were the same thing. I want people to be clear that they are not. When we talk about women as a whole in the United States getting 23 cents per hour less than men do, we are not talking about equal pay for equal jobs; we are talking about pay for jobs that are not equal. We have held some hearings in our committee on this, and they have been very enlightening. If a person takes what is considered a traditional job—if a woman takes a traditional job—the jobs don't pay very well. If a woman takes a nontraditional job, they pay very well, just like the men who are doing that job. But they are not traditional jobs for women. Somehow, we have to move women from those traditional jobs, where there is overemployment, to some of the nontraditional jobs where there is underemployment.

One of the fascinating people who spoke at our committee was a young lady who became a mason. She puts rocks on buildings, and she was proud of the work she does, and she should be. She started out paving, then later adding some marble steps, then adding pieces to buildings, and then doing high-altitude work. And I want to tell you, she makes more than I do because she does something different than most people do, and it pays well.

We have this thing in America where we say there is this kind of job, and these are the people who ought to take those; and there are these other jobs, and you are probably not qualified for those. Well, when does that qualification happen? Throughout life. We have to be training people and encouraging people to do better things.

In order to encourage that kind of training we had the America COMPETES Act which we passed last year. It puts an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math so that people can become doctors and engineers, and other high-paying jobs. We ought to get more people into these fields, but what we are getting now is fewer and fewer people into them. We are facing a shortage in those fields, except for the fact that we can bring people in from other countries who can do those because they are turning out a lot of people with the necessary skills.

I have asked the reason for that, and the answer is that they do some things we are never going to do in this country. I went to India recently and learned a lot about their education system. They promise that every kid gets an education through sixth grade, but they do not follow that promise. Only 20 percent of the girls get an education at all. They also have this little review at fourth grade to see if people are interested in education, and if they determine that you aren't they kick you out of school. Now, that is before sixth grade. That is fourth grade. They kick them out of school. Those people will

make \$1 a day for the rest of their lives. At sixth grade, they have another purge and even more people are kicked out of school. We would never stand for that. Those people will make \$2 a day the rest of their lives. Now, in most of the world, poverty is \$1 a day, so they are above the poverty line, although they wouldn't be in the United States. So India only lets 7 percent of the kids go to college—just 7 percent. Again, we would never stand for that. We keep trying to figure out how to get more and more people into post-high school education, and that includes career and vocational education. And we need to do that. But in India, part of people's incentive to get into science, technology, engineering, and math is that those are the jobs that pay well. One person in India told me: We don't have professional sports teams, so there aren't any kids out there who are bouncing a basketball or throwing a pass or doing any of the other things that a lot of American kids are doing and thinking they are going to get to go pro. Some American kids think they are going to go pro and think they will make about \$18 million a year. It is not going to happen for most of them.

I really appreciate the NCAA's ads running now that show a whole bunch of people in different professional sports, and they say there are 380,000 young people who are in college sports, and every one of them will go pro but not in their sport. That is the important line on it: not in their sport.

Somehow, we have to get more people involved in the sciences so they have the basic knowledge in grade school, which will allow them to excel in high school, which will allow them to do well in college and then allow them to get into the higher paying jobs. Men and women have equal talent in all of those areas. What we have to do is encourage that equal talent equally.

I have been trying to get the Workforce Investment Act through here, and I have gotten it through the Senate twice unanimously, but there hasn't been a willingness to go to conference committee with the House. I asked why, and I was told: Well, we are afraid of where the conference committee might go. There is no reason for that fear right now because the same people who were afraid of where it might go would be in charge of the conference committee now. If they are in charge of it, they could make sure it doesn't go anywhere they do not want it to go.

If we can pass that bill, it will provide the flexibility that will allow 900,000 people a year to train for higher skilled jobs. For many women, that will narrow the pay gap. They can go into other kinds of jobs that they may have been precluded by other events in their lives from ever getting into. If we want to narrow the wage gap, there are a number of ways to do that, but it means we have to get women into areas they haven't been traditionally working in before. That is the best solution to the wage gap argument.

Part of the difficulty in passing a bill around here is having a chance to work on the bill. The bill that came before us earlier today passed the House after being allowed only one hour of debate. Using their rules, the majority made sure no one was allowed to amend it. Now, it comes over here and bypasses the committee. The way we usually work a bill is for the chairman of the committee and the ranking member, Senator KENNEDY and myself, to sit down and list out some principles that we have to check with the rest of the committee to see if they match the problem we are trying to solve. After we have those principles, we plug in details and see if we have the details right. Then we call in the stakeholders, which is really anybody interested in that issue, and we see if they agree with it.

We have found that when we can get agreements with the people on the committee and the stakeholders, we have the answer right. And most people in this body agree we have it right because most of the bills that get worked out this way get passed unanimously. A long debate for a bill that comes out of our committee is probably 2 hours.

We are going to have one of those tomorrow. It will be genetic non-discrimination, a very important bill which, first of all, allows people to take advantage of the Genome Project. For example, if you are having your blood checked you can find out your genetic framework, which can tell you things that could happen to you in the future. And if you know they could happen to you in the future, you can take actions to keep them from ever happening.

This bill requires that if you have a genetic marker indicating that something could happen to you, your insurer is not allowed to make it a pre-existing condition and your employer is not allowed to fire you over it. The bill will offer real protection that can ultimately help people live healthier longer.

The Genetic Non-Discrimination bill went through the whole process that I have described. It has even been pre-conferenced with the House side. So we are pretty sure that once it finishes here it will go right over to the House and the House will take care of it too. That doesn't mean we left the House and the House committee out of the process. We let them into the process. We let them into the process early so that everybody would know what was happening. But that hasn't been the case on H.R. 2831.

I am disappointed that there wasn't the need, the courage, the desire to see what the principles are on this issue and see if we could actually solve the problem. We can build a good case for equal employment because we have always voted for equal employment. We will all vote for equal employment. We all want to close the pay gap. That is a bit tougher to do, but we can do it if we work together. If we don't work to-

gether and use issues like this to score political points, it will be like so many bills that come over here and get debated for long periods of time and nothing ever happens to address the issue. The most productive place to address tough issues is the committee. In the committee, you can have a couple of people interested in one part of the issue go off by themselves and come up with a solution. Quite often, it isn't the polarized one the Republicans have or the polarized one the Democrats had. What it becomes is the third way, and that eliminates the clash of the two polarized sides.

There are so many things around here that have been debated so long that if you mention a term from that issue, you get instant rebellion from both sides. I have watched that so many times, people hear a word and jump into the weeds arguing about the broader application of that word and keeping the discussion from actually getting to the principle that is trying to be solved.

So there is a way to get these bills done, but it isn't through "gotcha" politics. It isn't by just bringing things here without consulting the other side to see if there are any small corrections or maybe even big corrections that can be made. And, as I said before, I happen to be disappointed that after all the cooperation we have had in the committee on other difficult issues, that there wasn't even an opportunity for cooperation in the committee on this one.

I believe there are some solutions out there, but they are not going to be arrived at on the floor of the Senate. What happens here on the floor is that both sides bring a series of amendments that we think will put the other side in a bad light if they vote against it. It isn't just one side that will do it, both sides will do it. So we need to have a little more civil way of solving this problem, and I have confidence it can be done.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

COCONUT ROAD INVESTIGATION

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I rise today to comment on the competing Coburn and Boxer amendments that were offered last Thursday to the highway technical corrections bill. I voted in favor of the Coburn amendment. That amendment would establish a bipartisan, bicameral committee of Congress to investigate the circumstances surrounding the changes that were made to the provisions of the 2005 highway bill relating to the Coconut Road project between the time that the bill passed the House and Senate and the time that it was enrolled.

However, I voted against the Boxer amendment, which purports to command the Justice Department to commence a criminal investigation of this same matter. Whether to initiate a criminal investigation is a decision