

the Armed Forces, at the request of the member, pursuant to the Department of Defense policy permitting the early discharge of a member who is the only surviving child in a family in which the father or mother, or one or more siblings, served in the Armed Forces and, because of hazards incident to such service, was killed, died as a result of wounds, accident, or disease, is in a captured or missing in action status, or is permanently disabled, and for other purposes.

S. 2886

At the request of Mr. BAUCUS, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. SUNUNU) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2886, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to amend certain expiring provisions.

S. 2895

At the request of Mr. DODD, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2895, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to maintain eligibility, for Federal PLUS loans, of borrowers who are 90 or more days delinquent on mortgage loan payments, or for whom foreclosure proceedings have been initiated, with respect to their primary residence.

S. 2899

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) and the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) were added as cosponsors of S. 2899, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on suicides among veterans.

S. 2919

At the request of Mr. STEVENS, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mrs. HUTCHISON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2919, a bill to promote the accurate transmission of network traffic identification information.

S. 2920

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2920, a bill to reauthorize and improve the financing and entrepreneurial development programs of the Small Business Administration, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 523

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 523, a resolution expressing the strong support of the Senate for the declaration of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization at the Bucharest Summit that Ukraine and Georgia will become members of the alliance.

S. RES. 533

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the names of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) were added as cosponsors of S.

Res. 533, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the political situation in Zimbabwe.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. BINGAMAN (by request):

S. 2922. A bill to repeal certain oil and gas incentives established in the Energy Policy Act of 2005, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I rise to introduce by request a bill transmitted by the Administration that would eliminate mandatory royalty relief incentives for the oil and gas industry on the Outer Continental Shelf, OCS, in the Gulf of Mexico. I share the administration's position that these royalty incentives should not apply to future OCS oil and gas lease sales on a mandatory basis.

Section 344 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, EPAct, requires the Secretary of the Interior to provide for royalty relief for the production of deep gas from the OCS. Section 345 of EPAct requires the Secretary to extend royalty relief for oil and gas produced from deep water of the OCS. Under these provisions, at certain prices a set quantity of federally-owned oil and gas is allowed to be produced without any royalty payment by industry to the United States. Similar royalty relief language, included in legislation enacted in 1995, has given rise to circumstances that may expose the Treasury to up to an estimated \$60 billion in forgone royalty revenues.

Neither deep gas nor deep water royalty relief is warranted in this price climate. Last year, the administration requested that these incentives be repealed. The President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2009 renews this request. I hope that my colleagues will join me in supporting this legislation.

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

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

S. 2922

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. REPEAL OF CERTAIN OIL AND GAS INCENTIVES.

Sections 344 and 345 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 15904, 15905) are repealed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,

Washington, DC, April 7, 2008.

Hon. JEFF BINGAMAN,

Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Enclosed is a copy of the letter sent to the President of the Senate on August 20, 2007, urging the Senate to consider legislation "to repeal certain oil and gas incentives contained in the Energy Policy Act of 2005." This legislative proposal would end the mandatory royalty relief incentives for future OCS lease sales.

I want to make sure that you are aware of the significance and time sensitivity of this legislative proposal. The next Gulf of Mexico lease sale is scheduled in August of 2008. By law, the Minerals Management Service (MMS) must publish a final notice of sale with final terms and conditions, including royalty relief incentives, at least 30 days prior to the sale. To ensure that any legislative changes are reflected in the final notice of sale for the August sale, this issue must be resolved by July 1.

Please note that an immediate repeal of the mandatory royalty relief is supported by the Administration. Provisions to support the repeal are included in the President's Fiscal Year 2008 budget and cleared by the Office of Management and Budget. Prompt action is now needed by Congress if the repeal of the mandatory royalty relief is to be included in the fast approaching Gulf of Mexico sale.

Your immediate attention would be greatly appreciated. I am personally available to discuss this legislation with you and answer any questions you or your staff may have.

Sincerely,

C. STEPHEN ALLRED,

Assistant Secretary,

Land and Minerals Management.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,

Washington, DC, April 20, 2007.

Hon. RICHARD B. CHENEY,

President of the Senate,

Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: Enclosed is a draft bill, "to repeal certain oil and gas incentives contained in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and for other purposes."

I recommend that the draft bill be introduced, referred to the appropriate committee for consideration, and enacted.

The repeal of sections 344 and 345 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (Energy Policy Act) has been proposed in the President's Fiscal Year 2008 budget. Section 344 of the Energy Policy Act extended existing deep gas incentives by mandating a royalty suspension volume of at least 35 billion cubic feet of natural gas for certain wells completed at depths greater than 20,000 feet sub-sea on leases located in 0-400 meters of water. Section 344 also directed that the same methodology used to calculate suspension volumes in the Minerals Management Service's 2004 rule for wells completed between 15,000 feet and 20,000 feet sub-sea on leases in 0-200 meters of water be applied to leases in 200-400 meters of water. Section 345 of the Energy Policy Act provided mandatory royalty suspension volumes for leases in water depths greater than 400 meters issued in the first five years after the Energy Policy Act's enactment (August 8, 2005–August 8, 2010).

Repeal of Sections 344 and 345 of the Energy Policy Act would eliminate incentives and royalty relief that we believe are unwarranted in today's price environment.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that the enactment of this draft bill would be in accord with the program of the President.

An identical letter is being sent to the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

C. STEPHEN ALLRED,

Assistant Secretary,

Land and Minerals Management.

A BILL

To repeal certain oil and gas incentives contained in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That sections 344 and 345 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 15904 and 15905) are repealed.

SECTION BY SECTION SUMMARY

A bill to repeal certain oil and gas incentives contained in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and for other purposes.

This bill would repeal incentives for natural gas production from deep wells in shallow waters of the Gulf of Mexico and royalty relief for deep water production in the Gulf of Mexico.

By Mr. AKAKA:

S. 2923. A bill to provide for a three-year extension of the Senior oversight Committee on wounded warrior matters, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, today I am introducing the proposed Senior Oversight Committee Extension Act of 2008. The VA and DoD Senior Oversight Committee—the SOC—has been an important component of ongoing efforts to ensure that the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense work together to improve the treatment and care of our Nation's wounded warriors. This bill requires a 3-year extension of the VA and DoD SOC so that it may continue its vitally important oversight function.

As a result of the problems identified at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in May 2007, VA and DoD established the SOC to identify corrective actions. It was tasked with reviewing and overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the various task forces and study groups which were established to study problems related to the transitioning of seriously injured servicemembers. Today, the SOC and its supporting staff continue to work toward implementing policies and procedures to streamline and expedite joint efforts to provide seriously injured servicemembers and veterans with the best care available.

The SOC is currently co-chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs. It brings together the most senior VA and DoD officials on a regular basis to ensure that the decisions designed to improve care, recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration of seriously injured servicemembers are made in a timely and efficient manner. It is supported by a full-time joint VA and DoD staff that is responsible for coordinating, integrating and synchronizing the activities of the Committee.

The Administration's current plan is for the SOC to hand over its responsibilities next January to the existing VA and DoD Joint Executive Council. However, the Joint Executive Council has neither a full time staff nor the equivalent involvement of senior VA and DoD officials. The JEC staff has neither the resources nor the leverage within the individual Departments to carry out the essential work that the SOC has managed. Veterans' organizations who testified at the April 23, 2008,

Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing support the need to extend the SOC rather than transfer responsibilities to the Joint Executive Council.

Although I am pleased with the progress that has been achieved over the past year on improving VA and DoD cooperation and collaboration, much work remains. I am concerned that, in the future, without the full weight of VA and DoD leadership behind these activities, an ongoing commitment to solving the problems related to the goal of seamless transition and a full time staff to track implementation, there is a very real risk of returning to the bureaucratic lethargy which contributed to the Walter Reed scandal. We have come too far to return to those days.

I am a firm believer in the adage that what the boss checks is what gets done. To make sure the boss—in this case, the Secretaries of Veterans Affairs and Defense—keep an eye on coordination and cooperation between the two departments, I am introducing this legislation to provide the two Secretaries with authority to extend the work of the SOC for 3 years, to ensure the continued existence of a joint body that will serve as the single point of contact for the oversight, strategy and integration of policies and procedures pertaining to the seriously injured.

With the upcoming change in Administration, there can be no wavering on the high level of attention that the Departments have brought to issues of coordination and cooperation. I am committed to sustaining this effort for as long as there are servicemembers in combat.

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. 2923

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 "Senior Oversight Committee Extension Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. THREE-YEAR EXTENSION OF SENIOR OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE WITH RESPECT TO WOUNDED WARRIOR MATTERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly take such actions as are appropriate, including the allocation of appropriate personnel, funding, and other resources, to continue the operations of the Senior Oversight Committee until September 30, 2011.

(b) REPORT ON FURTHER EXTENSION OF COMMITTEE.—Not later than December 31, 2010, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly submit to Congress a report setting forth the joint recommendation of the Secretaries as to the advisability of continuing the operations of the Senior Oversight Committee after September 30, 2011. If the Secretaries recommend that continuing the operations of the Senior Oversight Committee after September 30, 2011, is advisable, the report may include such recommendations for the modification of the responsibilities, composition,

or support of the Senior Oversight Committee as the Secretaries jointly consider appropriate.

(c) SENIOR OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE DEFINED.—In this section, the term "Senior Oversight Committee" means the Senior Oversight Committee jointly established by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in May 2007 to address concerns related to the treatment of wounded, ill, and injured members of the Armed Forces and veterans and serve as the single point of contact for oversight, strategy, and integration of proposed strategies for the efforts of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to improve support throughout the recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration of wounded, ill, or injured members of the Armed Forces.

By Mr. AKAKA:

S. 2926. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify and update provisions of law relating to nonprofit research and education corporations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I am introducing legislation concerning the nonprofit research and education corporations—NPCs—that serve the Department of Veterans Affairs. These organizations provide essential support to research and education at VA facilities around the country. My legislation will amend the law which authorizes NPCs so as to better reflect their mission and the needs of VA, as well as strengthen control and oversight of these entities.

The legislation which authorizes NPCs was enacted in 1988 to allow the establishment of these entities as flexible funding mechanisms for the conduct of research and education at VA medical centers. In 2006, 85 NPCs expended \$227 million in support of over 5,000 VA research and education programs. NPCs give VA the opportunity to access and manage research funds from sources outside of VA, while maintaining VA oversight.

Twenty years have passed since the inception of NPCs, and it is time to update the law governing their operation. VA's research needs have shifted and the function of NPCs has evolved. I will highlight a few of the corrections this legislation would make.

NPCs are nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations that are entirely dedicated to serving VA research. They efficiently administer VA research funds, and provide access to some funds that VA would otherwise be unable to access. Unfortunately, given their close affiliation with VA, and due in part to various state laws, NPC nonprofit status is in some situations unclear. My legislation would explicitly identify the nonprofit status of NPCs under IRS code. It would also make clear that NPCs are not owned or controlled by the U.S. Government, and are not agencies or instrumentalities of the U.S.

As the utility and appeal of NPCs have grown, their numbers have expanded. While this growth is positive, it is not always efficient or feasible for a medical center to establish and manage its own NPC. The legislation would

create authority for multi-medical center NPCs to be shared among a number of medical centers. Condensing numerous NPCs into one would retain the local affiliations that make them valuable and effective, but would achieve greater efficiency and economy of scale by combining administrative resources.

The legislation would make additional adjustments in other areas. It would expand VA's oversight capability. It would clarify existing authority for NPCs to transfer funds among medical centers, and it would clarify reimbursement processes. It would also modify the required composition of NPC governance boards, to allow individuals with a wider range of expertise to serve.

I believe these proposed changes would facilitate better working relationships between NPCs and VA, thereby achieving better support of VA research and education. I am confident that these provisions will make an effective source of support for VA even stronger.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 534—DESIGNATING THE MONTH OF MAY 2008 AS "NATIONAL DRUG COURT MONTH"

Mr. BIDEN (for himself, Mr. LEVIN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. KOHL, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. JOHNSON) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 534

Whereas drug courts provide focus and leadership for community-wide partnerships, bringing together public safety and public health professionals in the fight against drug abuse and criminality;

Whereas 60 percent to 80 percent of drug offenders sentenced to prison and over 40 percent sentenced to probation recidivate, and whereas fewer than 17 percent of drug court graduates recidivate;

Whereas the results of more than 100 program evaluations and at least 3 experimental studies have yielded evidence that drug courts greatly improve substance abuse treatment outcomes, substantially reduce crime, and produce significant societal benefits;

Whereas drug courts transform over 120,000 addicts each year in the adult, juvenile, and family court systems into drug-free, productive citizens;

Whereas judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation professionals, law enforcement and community supervision personnel, researchers and educators, national and community leaders, and others dedicated to drug courts and similar types of treatment programs are healing families and communities across the country; and

Whereas the drug court movement has grown from the 12 original drug courts in 1994 to over 2,000 operational drug courts as of December 2007: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the month of May 2008 as "National Drug Court Month";

(2) encourages the people of the United States and interested groups to observe the month with appropriate ceremonies and activities;

(3) encourages leaders across the United States to increase the use of drug courts by instituting sustainable drug courts and other treatment-based alternatives to prison in all 3,143 counties in the United States, which serve the vast majority of the highest-need citizens in the justice system; and

(4) supports the goal of robustly funding the Drug Court Discretionary Grant Program and other treatment-based alternatives to prison in order to expand these critical criminal justice programs.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, today I rise to introduce a resolution marking May 2008 as National Drug Court Month. The more than 2,000 drug courts that currently operate across the country are critical to curbing drug use, reducing recidivism, and turning non-violent prisoners into law abiding and productive members of our society.

Drug courts closely supervise non-violent drug offenders as they address their addiction or substance abuse problem. When they graduate from the program they are clean, sober and better prepared to participate productively in society. In order to graduate from most drug court programs, participants are required to finish high school or obtain a GED, hold down a job, as well as maintain financial obligations including drug court fees and child support payments. A sponsor is also required to help ensure they stay on track.

In 1994, I wrote the law that created the drug courts program because we believed that the programs they oversee were cost-effective, innovative alternatives to prison that would reduce crime and deal with non-violent offenders who are in desperate need of treatment. It turns out we were right. A 2005 report from the Government Accountability Office found that drug court program participants were less likely to be rearrested or reconvicted than those who did not participate in drug court programs. The report also concluded that a conservative estimate of the net benefits to society of sending a non-violent offender through drug court program ranges from about \$1,000 per participant to about \$15,000. There is just no question that these alternative to prison programs not only work, but also make great financial sense.

Treating non-violent offenders through drug court-monitored programs and other alternatives to prison treatment programs provides them with an opportunity to turn away from drugs and to get on the path to be healthy, contributing members of society. It also helps to reduce America's exploding prison population: more than 2.3 million people are in prisons and jails across the U.S.; 1 in 100 adults in the United States are behind bars. It costs an average of nearly \$24,000 to imprison an individual. Drug courts can reduce the financial burden on State and local budgets.

I hope that National Drug Court Month raises awareness about the im-

portance of drug courts and other alternatives to prison treatment-based programs. I ask my colleagues to join me in commending these programs and urging state, local and Federal officials to help expand and robustly fund these treatment programs throughout the country.

SENATE RESOLUTION 535—RECOGNIZING APRIL 28, 2008, AS "NATIONAL HEALTHY SCHOOLS DAY"

Mr. REID (for Mrs. CLINTON (for herself, Mr. KERRY, Mr. BAYH, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SANDERS, and Mr. CASEY)) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 535

Whereas over half of schools in the United States have problems linked to indoor air quality;

Whereas children are more vulnerable to environmental hazards as they breathe in more air per pound of body weight due to their developing systems;

Whereas children spend an average of 30 to 50 hours per week in school;

Whereas poor indoor environmental quality is associated with a wide range of problems that include poor concentration, respiratory illnesses, learning difficulties, and cancer;

Whereas research suggests that children attending schools in poor condition score 11 percent lower on standardized tests than students who attend schools in good condition;

Whereas an average of 1 out of every 13 school-age children has asthma, the leading cause of school absenteeism, accounting for approximately 14,700,000 missed school days each year;

Whereas 17 separate studies all found positive health impacts from improved indoor air-quality, ranging from 13.5 percent up to 87 percent improvement;

Whereas our Nation's schools spent approximately \$8,000,000,000 on energy costs in the last school year, causing officials to make very difficult decisions on cutting back much needed academic programs in efforts to maintain heat and electricity;

Whereas healthy and high performance schools designed to reduce energy and maintenance costs, provide cleaner air, improve lighting, and reduce exposures to toxic substances provide a healthier and safer learning environment for children and improved academic achievement and well-being;

Whereas green and healthy schools save on average \$100,000 per year on energy costs, enough to hire 2 teachers, buy 200 new computers, or purchase 5,000 new textbooks;

Whereas converting all the Nation's schools to green schools would reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 33,200,000 metric tons;

Whereas Congress has demonstrated its interest in this compelling issue by including the Healthy High-Performance Schools Program in the No Child Left Behind Act and the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007; and

Whereas our schools have the great responsibility of guiding the future of our children and our Nation: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate recognizes April 28, 2008, as "National Healthy Schools Day".

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, today is National Healthy Schools Day—established to build awareness and promote healthy school environments for our children and school personnel.