

State and Homeland Security in issuing the 5,000 special visas that Congress authorized in January for those Iraqi citizens.

As part of the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress provided 5,000 special immigrant visas for Iraqis who had aided the United States as interpreters in the country. As chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I have supported these efforts. The Departments of State and Homeland Security seem stymied and unable to implement what Congress has provided. In our efforts to remove any impediment to fast implementation and address any excuse for further delays, we seek passage of this bill as well, to cut through bureaucratic stalling and technical requirements.

This administration has been woefully slow in recognizing its responsibilities not only to those Iraqis who have helped us, but to all Iraqis who have been displaced or have fled the violence still plaguing that country. The relative inaction by the administration with respect to those Iraqis whose lives are in grave danger due to their assistance of the United States is especially troubling. Action is needed now. The Judiciary Committee held its first hearing on this humanitarian problem more than 15 months ago. That hearing on the plight of Iraqi refugees was among our first, in January 2007. In the interim, the administration has continued to make promises it cannot, or will not keep with respect to the resettlement of Iraqi refugees in the United States.

The administration's failure to acknowledge the Iraqi refugee crisis is emblematic of its inability to address other serious human rights issues that are much of its own making. The injustice resulting from the administration's interpretation of the material support and terrorism related bars that were enacted following September 11, 2001, continues to deprive legitimate asylum seekers of our protection. The consequences of these laws continue to go unaddressed, despite the fact that Congress has now twice given the Department of Homeland Security the authority to alleviate the situation. While Secretary Chertoff is unwilling to use this authority to provide asylum to those who need our protection, he has repeatedly used the vast authority ceded to him by proponents of the REAL ID Act to waive landmark environmental laws in the course of constructing a border wall between the United States and Mexico.

This month, during the Judiciary Committee's oversight hearing on the Department of Homeland Security, I followed up by asking Secretary Chertoff about his Department's lack of progress on implementing the authority Congress has given to him to remedy the material support and terrorism bars. At that time, I challenged him to fulfill the goal of legislation I authored and Congress enacted to provide relief to individuals such as

Saman Kareem Ahmad, who received a commendation from General Petraeus for his work on behalf of the United States in Iraq and instructs U.S. military personnel in preparation for service in Iraq. Although Mr. Ahmad was granted asylum, his application for a green card was denied because the organization with which he had once served, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, was deemed a "terrorist organization" by DHS. I urged Secretary Chertoff to use the authority he has been given to ensure that individuals like Mr. Ahmad were not denied a place in the United States because of inflexible and expansive readings of the so-called "material support" bar. I hope the administration takes the opportunity Congress has given it to correct this wrongheaded policy and practice. It is long past the time for this administration to take action and acknowledge the severe humanitarian consequences of its policies, whether in Iraq, or at our shores where the persecuted are seeking refuge.

Providing for the safety of our Iraqi allies is only one aspect of an increasingly severe humanitarian crisis in Iraq. Refugees International recently reported that in the vacuum left by the failure of the Iraqi government to address the plight of millions of its internally displaced citizens, various non-state militias are providing assistance to those who are suffering. By the report's account, these militias are finding fertile ground for recruiting among this population, with the Shiite Sadr movement now being the "main service provider" to displaced Iraqis. We have been pressing the administration for some time to acknowledge this crisis and to make increased efforts to assist those Iraqis who have been internally displaced or who have left the country. Now we learn that the dangers associated with the administration's failure to recognize the magnitude of this crisis go beyond the terrible human cost that has resulted and threaten to undermine any efforts to bring positive change to Iraq.

The bill the Senate approves today will be another effort to encourage this administration to fulfill its obligations to those who have sacrificed significantly to assist the United States. It is my hope that this will end the unacceptable delays and provide long overdue relief.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 2829) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2829

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

SECTION 1. TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS TO PROVISION GRANTING SPECIAL IMMIGRANT STATUS FOR CERTAIN IRAQIS.

Section 1244(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking "each of the five years beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act" and inserting "fiscal years 2008 through 2012"; and

(2) in paragraph (3)—

(A) in subparagraph (A)—

(i) in the subparagraph heading, by striking "ONE THROUGH FOUR" and inserting "2008 THROUGH 2011"; and

(ii) by striking "one through four" and inserting "2008 through 2011"; and

(B) in subparagraph (B)—

(i) in the matter preceding clause (i)—

(I) in the subparagraph heading, by striking "FIVE AND SIX" and inserting "2012 AND 2013";

(II) by striking "the fifth fiscal year beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act" and inserting "fiscal year 2012"; and

(III) by striking "the sixth fiscal year beginning after such date" and inserting "fiscal year 2013"; and

(ii) in each of clauses (i) and (ii), by striking "the fifth fiscal year" and inserting "fiscal year 2012".

SEC. 2. AUTHORITY TO CONVERT PETITIONS DURING TRANSITION PERIOD.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Homeland Security or the Secretary of State may convert an approved petition for special immigrant status under section 1059 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 (8 U.S.C. 1101 note) with respect to which a visa under such section 1059 is not immediately available to an approved petition for special immigrant status under section 1244 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181) notwithstanding any requirement of subsection (a) or (b) of such section 1244 but subject to the numerical limitations applicable under subsection (c) of such section 1244, as amended by this Act.

(b) DURATION.—The authority under subsection (a) shall be available only with respect to petitions filed before October 1, 2008.

HONORING THE PRIME MINISTER OF IRELAND

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 708, S. Con. Res. 74.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 74) honoring the Prime Minister of Ireland, Bertie Ahern, for his service to the people of Ireland and to the world and welcoming the Prime Minister to the United States.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements relating to the concurrent resolution be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 74) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The concurrent resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. CON. RES. 74

Whereas the Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives are saddened that the Prime Minister of Ireland, Bertie Ahern, has announced that he will resign on May 6, 2008;

Whereas Prime Minister Ahern has served the people of Ireland with distinction for many years and has been an extraordinary friend to the United States throughout his years in office;

Whereas, during his extensive period of public service, Prime Minister Ahern has made significant contributions to an unprecedented era of peace, prosperity, and progress in Ireland;

Whereas Prime Minister Ahern entered politics in 1977 and has been elected 10 times in the past 31 years by the people of Dublin Central;

Whereas Prime Minister Ahern was elected leader of Fianna Fáil in 1994 and became Prime Minister in 1997;

Whereas Prime Minister Ahern is the second-longest-serving Taoiseach, or Prime Minister, in the history of Ireland, and the second-longest-serving leader of Fianna Fáil;

Whereas Prime Minister Ahern is the first Taoiseach since 1944 to be elected on 3 successive occasions;

Whereas Prime Minister Ahern has been fully committed to strengthening the economy of Ireland and, under his leadership, Ireland became more prosperous than at any time in the history of the country and became world-renowned as the "Celtic Tiger";

Whereas the people of Ireland have benefitted from a significantly improved quality of life during Prime Minister Ahern's service as Taoiseach;

Whereas Prime Minister Ahern promised years ago that one of his highest priorities was to end the decades-long cycle of hatred and violence in Northern Ireland;

Whereas Prime Minister Ahern kept that promise and worked assiduously to achieve the peace that Northern Ireland enjoys today;

Whereas the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair, described Prime Minister Ahern as a "remarkable leader" and stated that Prime Minister Ahern "will always be remembered for his crucial role in bringing about peace in Northern Ireland, [and] for transforming relations between Britain and the Irish Republic"; and

Whereas Prime Minister Ahern will address a joint session of Congress on April 30, 2008: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That—

(1) it is the sense of Congress that—

(A) the Prime Minister of Ireland, Bertie Ahern, has been a strong and effective leader for the people of Ireland and a good friend to the United States;

(B) the skillful leadership of Prime Minister Ahern was indispensable in finally achieving a successful resolution of the long-standing conflict in Northern Ireland; and

(C) the legacy of Prime Minister Ahern is clear and his contribution to peace is enormous;

(2) Congress thanks Prime Minister Ahern on behalf of the people of the United States, wishes him well, and hopes his unique talents will be of service in resolving conflicts elsewhere in the years ahead in our divided world; and

(3) the Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives look forward to paying fitting and fond tribute to Prime Minister Ahern when he addresses a joint session of Congress on April 30, 2008.

TO COMMEND PUBLIC SERVANTS DURING PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 704, S. Res. 497.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 497) expressing the sense of the Senate that public servants should be commended for their dedication and continued service to the Nation during Public Service Recognition Week, May 5 through 11, 2008.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The resolution (S. Res. 497) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 497

Whereas Public Service Recognition Week provides an opportunity to recognize and promote the important contributions of public servants and honor the diverse men and women who meet the needs of the Nation through work at all levels of government;

Whereas millions of individuals work in government service in every city, county, and State across America and in hundreds of cities abroad;

Whereas public service is a noble calling involving a variety of challenging and rewarding professions;

Whereas Federal, State, and local governments are responsive, innovative, and effective because of the outstanding work of public servants;

Whereas the United States of America is a great and prosperous Nation, and public service employees contribute significantly to that greatness and prosperity;

Whereas the Nation benefits daily from the knowledge and skills of these highly trained individuals;

Whereas public servants—

(1) defend our freedom and advance United States interests around the world;

(2) provide vital strategic support functions to our military and serve in the National Guard and Reserves;

(3) fight crime and fires;

(4) ensure equal access to secure, efficient, and affordable mail service;

(5) deliver Social Security and Medicare benefits;

(6) fight disease and promote better health;

(7) protect the environment and the Nation's parks;

(8) enforce laws guaranteeing equal employment opportunity and healthy working conditions;

(9) defend and secure critical infrastructure;

(10) help the Nation recover from natural disasters and terrorist attacks;

(11) teach and work in our schools and libraries;

(12) develop new technologies and explore the earth, moon, and space to help improve our understanding of how our world changes;

(13) improve and secure our transportation systems;

(14) promote economic growth; and

(15) assist active duty service members and veterans;

Whereas members of the uniformed services and civilian employees at all levels of government make significant contributions to the general welfare of the United States, and are on the front lines in the fight against terrorism and in maintaining homeland security;

Whereas public servants work in a professional manner to build relationships with other countries and cultures in order to better represent America's interests and promote American ideals;

Whereas public servants alert Congress and the public to government waste, fraud, abuse, and dangers to public health;

Whereas the men and women serving in the Armed Forces of the United States, as well as those skilled trade and craft Federal employees who provide support to their efforts, are committed to doing their jobs regardless of the circumstances, and contribute greatly to the security of the Nation and the world;

Whereas public servants have bravely fought in armed conflict in defense of this Nation and its ideals and deserve the care and benefits they have earned through their honorable service;

Whereas government workers have much to offer, as demonstrated by their expertise and innovative ideas, and serve as examples by passing on institutional knowledge to train the next generation of public servants;

Whereas May 5 through 11, 2008, has been designated Public Service Recognition Week to honor America's Federal, State, and local government employees; and

Whereas Public Service Recognition Week is celebrating its 24th anniversary through job fairs, student activities, and agency exhibits: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) commends public servants for their outstanding contributions to this great Nation during Public Service Recognition Week and throughout the year;

(2) salutes government employees for their unyielding dedication and spirit for public service;

(3) honors those government employees who have given their lives in service to their country;

(4) calls upon a new generation to consider a career in public service as an honorable profession; and

(5) encourages efforts to promote public service careers at all levels of government.

SUPPORTING UKRAINE AND GEORGIA BECOMING MEMBERS OF NATO

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 710, S. Res. 523.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 523) expressing the strong support of the Senate for the declaration of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization at the Bucharest Summit that Ukraine