

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

and Georgia will become members of the alliance.

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

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I further ask 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. 523) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 523

Whereas, prior to the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, the Government of Georgia and the Government of Ukraine each expressed the desire to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), have committed their countries to programs of reforms consistent with membership in the Euro-Atlantic community, and have worked consistently for membership in NATO; and

Whereas, in April 2008 at the Bucharest Summit, the assembled leaders of NATO issued the following statement: "NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations. We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in May. MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership. Today we make clear that we support these countries' applications for MAP. Therefore we will now begin a period of intensive engagement with both at a high political level to address the questions still outstanding pertaining to their MAP applications. We have asked Foreign Ministers to make a first assessment of progress at their December 2008 meeting. Foreign Ministers have the authority to decide on the MAP applications of Ukraine and Georgia." Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the declaration of the Bucharest Summit, which stated that Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO;

(2) reiterates its support for the commitment to further enlargement of NATO to include democratic governments that are able and willing to meet the responsibilities of membership; and

(3) urges the foreign ministers of NATO member states at their meeting in December 2008 to consider favorably the applications of the governments of Ukraine and Georgia for Membership Action Plans.

HONORING SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS DURING NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Small Business Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 524, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 524) honoring the entrepreneurial spirit of the owners of small business concerns in the United States during National Small Business Week, beginning April 21, 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, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 524) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 524

Whereas the 26,800,000 small business concerns in the United States are the driving force behind the Nation's economy, creating more than 75 percent of all net new jobs and generating more than 50 percent of the Nation's nonfarm gross domestic product;

Whereas small business concerns represent 99.7 percent of all businesses and employ 50 percent of the Nation's workforce;

Whereas small business concerns represent 97 percent of all exporters and produce 28.6 percent of exported goods;

Whereas small business concerns are the Nation's innovators, advancing technology and productivity;

Whereas the resilience, vitality, and growth of small business concerns are critical to the Nation's competitiveness during a time of economic downturn;

Whereas Congress established the Small Business Administration in 1953, to aid, counsel, assist, and protect the interests of small business concerns in order to preserve free competitive enterprise, to ensure that a fair proportion of the total purchases and contracts or subcontracts for property and services for the Federal Government be placed with small business concerns, to ensure that a fair proportion of the total sales of Government property be made to such small business concerns, and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of the Nation;

Whereas for over 50 years, the Small Business Administration has provided aid and assistance to millions of entrepreneurs who have succeeded in achieving the American dream of owning a small business concern, and thus has played a key role in fostering economic growth; and

Whereas the President has designated the week beginning April 21, 2008, as National Small Business Week; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) honors the entrepreneurial spirit of the owners of small business concerns in the United States during National Small Business Week, beginning April 21, 2008;

(2) honors the efforts and achievements of the owners and employees of small business concerns, whose hard work, commitment to excellence, and willingness to take a risk, have made them a crucial part of the Nation's economy;

(3) recognizes that small business concerns are essential to restoring the Nation's economic health;

(4) recognizes the vital role of the programs of the Small Business Administration and the work of its employees and its resource partners in providing assistance to entrepreneurs and the owners of small business concerns;

(5) strongly urges the President to take steps to ensure that—

(A) reasonable rules relating to the procurement program for women-owned small business concerns under section 8(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)) are expeditiously implemented to give women business owners a fair opportunity to compete for Federal contracts;

(B) small business concerns have access to quality affordable health insurance;

(C) the needs of veterans and reservists who own their own businesses, who work for small business concerns, or want to start their own businesses, are met during deployment and upon their return from duty;

(D) proper measures are enacted to provide a stimulus for business lending during this economic downturn;

(E) the tax burdens of small business concerns are reduced, and that there is a reduction in regulatory and bureaucratic barriers;

(F) small minority owned businesses are supported in their efforts to access the Federal marketplace and gain access to capital;

(G) small business concerns have the tools to become more energy efficient to survive rising costs of energy, increase profits, and reduce the Nation's reliance on foreign oil;

(H) all Federal agencies adhere to the contracting goals for small business concerns, including the goals for small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans, small business concerns owned and controlled by women, small business concerns owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, and HUBZone small business concerns;

(I) venture capital and small business loans, including microloans and guaranteed loans that are delivered through private lenders, for start-up firms and growing small business concerns are available to all qualified small business concerns; and

(J) the management assistance programs delivered by resource partners on behalf of the Small Business Administration, such as small business development centers, women's business centers, and the Service Corps of Retired Executives, are provided with the Federal resources necessary to do their jobs; and

(6) urges that the Administrator of the Small Business Administration have an active role as a member of the President's Cabinet.

RECOGNIZING THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF SEEDS OF PEACE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 536 which was submitted earlier today.

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

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 536) recognizing the 15th anniversary of the founding of Seeds of Peace, an organization promoting understanding, reconciliation, acceptance, coexistence, and peace in the Middle East, South Asia, and other regions of conflict.

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

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table.

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