

S. 2776

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2776, a bill to provide duty-free treatment for certain goods from designated Reconstruction Opportunity Zones in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and for other purposes.

S. 2795

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. KOHL) and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2795, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish a nationwide health insurance purchasing pool for small businesses and the self employed that would offer a choice of private health plans and make health coverage more affordable, predictable, and accessible.

S. 2883

At the request of Mr. ROCKEFELLER, the name of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2883, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the centennial of the establishment of Mother's Day.

S. 2976

At the request of Mr. LAUTENBERG, the names of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) and the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2976, a bill to require the United States Trade Representative to pursue a complaint of anticompetitive practices against certain oil exporting countries.

S. 3093

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3093, a bill to extend and improve the effectiveness of the employment eligibility confirmation program.

S. 3140

At the request of Mr. WEBB, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3140, a bill to provide that 4 of the 12 weeks of parental leave made available to a Federal employee shall be paid leave, and for other purposes.

S. 3141

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3141, a bill to provide for non-discrimination by eligible lenders in the Federal Family Education Loan Program.

S. 3168

At the request of Mr. LUGAR, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3168, a bill to authorize United States participation in the replenishment of resources of the International Development Association, and for other purposes.

S. 3169

At the request of Mr. LUGAR, the name of the Senator from Nebraska

(Mr. HAGEL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3169, a bill to authorize United States participation in, and appropriations for the United States contribution to, the eleventh replenishment of the resources of the African Development Fund.

S.J. RES. 41

At the request of Mr. MCCONNELL, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 41, a joint resolution approving the renewal of import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003.

S. RES. 300

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 300, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) should stop the utilization of materials that violate provisions of the United Nations-brokered Interim Agreement between FYROM and Greece regarding "hostile activities or propaganda" and should work with the United Nations and Greece to achieve longstanding United States and United Nations policy goals of finding a mutually-acceptable official name for FYROM.

S. RES. 594

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 594, a resolution designating September 2008 as "Tay-Sachs Awareness Month".

AMENDMENT NO. 5013

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 5013 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3221, a bill to provide needed housing reform and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 5020

At the request of Mr. ENSIGN, the names of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE), the Senator from Maine (Ms. SNOWE) and the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. COLEMAN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 5020 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3221, a bill to provide needed housing reform and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 5022

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. SUNUNU), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN), the Senator from Maine (Ms. SNOWE) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. SMITH) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 5022 intended to be proposed to H.R. 3221, a bill to provide needed housing reform and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. BURR:

S. 3178. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize dental

insurance for veterans and survivors and dependents of veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce bill that would give our veterans, surviving spouses, and certain dependent children the option to buy dental insurance coverage through the Department of Veterans Affairs. My bill is based on a very successful program that has been in place since 1998 for military retirees and their families.

Under the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program, TRDP, military retirees are given the option to purchase dental coverage under a contract managed by the Department of Defense. Since the program started, over one million eligible participants have chosen to buy dental coverage through this plan, including over 56,000 in my home state of North Carolina. Those individuals have access to a network of about 112,000 dental plan providers across the nation. Premiums range from \$14 to \$48 per month per person, depending on the region and type of dental plan selected. With this kind of success, it seems only fitting that we offer the same kind of benefit to our veterans.

VA runs the largest integrated health care system in the nation. Although VA provides dental benefits to the 7.9 million veterans enrolled in the health care system, these benefits are either limited to a select group of people or can only be provided under very limited circumstances. For example, VA provides comprehensive dental care to veterans for 180 days after they leave service; who have service-related dental conditions; who are in nursing homes and require dental care; or who fall under other very strict guidelines.

My bill would supplement this limited coverage by giving veterans and survivors the option to purchase a more comprehensive dental plan. Of course, many veterans may have dental coverage through their employers or through an individual policy. My bill extends this dental plan option to all enrolled veterans.

As I mentioned, the bill is modeled after the successful program that is now offered to TRICARE retirees. Federal employees also have access to a similar benefit option for dental coverage. Like these other programs, this VA program would be entirely voluntary, be financed through premiums and, most importantly, provide needed coverage from a network of dental professionals in local communities.

This bill would not replace VA's dental services; it is just another option for those who want to have access to group insurance rates that they could not otherwise get on their own. This idea is like the 44 year relationship VA has with Prudential, who provides active duty servicemembers and veterans with group life insurance policies. The most important part of the relationship is that servicemembers and veterans are well-served and get to reap

the benefits of group rates and competition.

This is a good example of how we can build on innovative and successful approaches to improving options for our veterans. I believe my bill is another step in that direction, and I ask my colleagues for their support.

By Mr. REID (for Mr. KENNEDY):

S. 3180. A bill to temporarily extend the programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965; considered and passed.

Mr. REID. 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 placed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 3180

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

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

(a) EXTENSION OF PROGRAMS.—Section 2(a) of the Higher Education Extension Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-81; 20 U.S.C. 1001 note) is amended by striking “June 30, 2008” and inserting “July 31, 2008”.

(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section, or in the Higher Education Extension Act of 2005 as amended by this Act, shall be construed to limit or otherwise alter the authorizations of appropriations for, or the durations of, programs contained in the amendments made by the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-171), by the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (Public Law 110-84), or by the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-227) to the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Taxpayer-Teacher Protection Act of 2004.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 5024. Ms. COLLINS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 4983 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mr. SHELBY)) to the bill 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; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 5025. Mrs. MURRAY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 4983 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mr. SHELBY)) to the bill H.R. 3221, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 5026. Ms. SNOWE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 3221, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 5027. Mr. VITTER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 4983 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mr. SHELBY)) to the bill H.R. 3221, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 5028. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 4983 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD

(for himself and Mr. SHELBY)) to the bill H.R. 3221, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 5029. Mr. NELSON, of Florida (for himself and Mr. COLEMAN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 4983 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mr. SHELBY)) to the bill H.R. 3221, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 5024. Ms. COLLINS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 4983 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mr. SHELBY)) to the bill 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; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of the amendment, add the following:

DIVISION _____COMMERICAL TRUCK FUEL SAVINGS

SEC. ____01. SHORT TITLE.

This division may be cited as the “Commercial Truck Fuel Savings Demonstration Act of 2008”.

SEC. ____02. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) diesel fuel prices have increased more than 50 percent during the 1-year period between May 2007 and May 2008;

(2) laws governing Federal highway funding effectively impose a limit of 80,000 pounds on the weight of vehicles permitted to use highways on the Interstate System;

(3) the administration of that provision in many States has forced heavy tractor-trailer and tractor-semitrailer combination vehicles traveling in those States to divert onto small State and local roads on which higher vehicle weight limits apply under State law;

(4) the diversion of those vehicles onto those roads increases fuel costs because of increased idling time and total travel time along those roads; and

(5) permitting heavy commercial vehicles, including tanker trucks carrying hazardous material and fuel oil, to travel on Interstate System highways when fuel prices are high would provide significant savings in the transportation of goods throughout the United States.

SEC. ____03. DEFINITIONS.

In this division:

(1) COMMISSIONER.—The term “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of Transportation of a State.

(2) COVERED INTERSTATE SYSTEM HIGHWAY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “covered Interstate System highway” means a highway designated as a route on the Interstate System.

(B) EXCLUSION.—The term “covered Interstate System highway” does not include any portion of a highway that, as of the date of the enactment of this Act, is exempt from the requirements of subsection (a) of section 127 of title 23, United States Code, pursuant to a waiver under that subsection.

(3) INTERSTATE SYSTEM.—The term “Interstate System” has the meaning given the

term in section 101(a) of title 23, United States Code.

SEC. ____04. WAIVER OF HIGHWAY FUNDING REDUCTION RELATING TO WEIGHT OF VEHICLES USING INTERSTATE SYSTEM HIGHWAYS.

(a) PROHIBITION RELATING TO CERTAIN VEHICLES.—Notwithstanding section 127(a) of title 23, United States Code, the total amount of funds apportioned to a State under section 104(b)(1) of that title for any period may not be reduced under section 127(a) of that title if a State permits a vehicle described in subsection (b) to use a covered Interstate System highway in the State in accordance with the conditions described in subsection (c).

(b) COMBINATION VEHICLES IN EXCESS OF 80,000 POUNDS.—A vehicle described in this subsection is a vehicle having a weight in excess of 80,000 pounds that—

(1) consists of a 3-axle tractor unit hauling a single trailer or semitrailer; and

(2) does not exceed any vehicle weight limitation that is applicable under the laws of a State to the operation of the vehicle on highways in the State that are not part of the Interstate System, as those laws are in effect on the date of enactment of this Act.

(c) CONDITIONS.—This section shall apply at any time at which the weighted average price of retail number 2 diesel in the United States is \$3.50 or more per gallon.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE AND TERMINATION.—This section shall not remain in effect—

(1) after the date that is 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act; or

(2) before the end of that 2-year period, after any date on which the Secretary of Transportation—

(A) determines that—

(i) operation of vehicles described in subsection (b) on covered Interstate System highways has adversely affected safety on the overall highway network; or

(ii) a Commissioner has failed faithfully to use the highway safety committee as described in section ____06(2)(A) or to collect the data described in section ____06(3); and

(B) publishes the determination, together with the date of termination of this section, in the Federal Register.

(e) CONSULTATION REGARDING TERMINATION FOR SAFETY.—In making a determination under subsection (d)(2)(A)(i), the Secretary of Transportation shall consult with the highway safety committee established by a Commissioner in accordance with section ____06.

SEC. ____05. GAO TRUCK SAFETY DEMONSTRATION REPORT.

The Comptroller General of the United States shall carry out a study of the effects of participation in the program under section ____04 on the safety of the overall highway network in States participating in that program.

SEC. ____06. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STATES.

For the purpose of section ____04, a State shall be considered to meet the conditions under this section if the Commissioner of the State—

(1) submits to the Secretary of Transportation a plan for use in meeting the conditions described in paragraphs (2) and (3);

(2) establishes and chairs a highway safety committee that—

(A) the Commissioner uses to review the data collected pursuant to paragraph (3); and

(B) consists of representatives of—

(i) agencies of the State that have responsibilities relating to highway safety;

(ii) municipalities of the State;

(iii) organizations that have evaluation or promotion of highway safety among the principal purposes of the organizations; and

(iv) the commercial trucking industry; and