10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks committed against the United States on September 11, 2001.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 1355. A bill to regulate political robocalls; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Robocall Privacy Act, a simple, straight-forward bill that would allow continued political outreach through prerecorded phone messages, but protect American families from being inundated by calls throughout the day and night. I am pleased to be joined by Senator DURBIN.

In recent years, we have seen an increase in the development of new technologies that help political candidates reach out to voters. This is a good thing. Political speech is essential and should be protected. The vast majority of these developments strengthen the Democratic process by promoting an interchange of information and ideas.

One of these developments is the robocall—a prerecorded message that can be sent out to tens of thousands of voters at a minor cost through computer automation. With television and radio ads becoming so expensive, these prerecorded calls can play an important role in alerting voters to a candidate's position and urging their support at the polls.

But the process can be abused. Throughout recent elections, we have continued to hear stories about people being inundated with phone calls throughout the day and night. There is simply no good reason why Americans wanting a good night's sleep should be awakened at 4:30 in the morning by a robocall.

Commercial calls are already limited by the Federal Trade Commission's ''Do Not Call'' list, which millions of individuals have registered for. But political calls are specifically exempted from this list.

Let me be clear: I am not seeking to eliminate all robocalls. Instead, this legislation is carefully designed to provide some safeguards. Let me tell you exactly what this bill would do.

It would ban political robocalls between the hours of 9 p.m. and 8 a.m.

It would ban any campaign or group from making more than two robocalls to the same telephone number in a single day.

It would prohibit the organizer of any robocall from blocking the ''caller identification'' number and require an announcement at the beginning of the call indentifying the individual or organization making the call, and the fact that it is a prerecorded message. This is to prevent robocalls from misleading the recipient of the call.

The enforcement provisions of this bill are simple and directed toward stopping the worst of these calls. The bill would create a civil fine for violators of the law, with additional fines for callers who willfully violate the law.

The bill also allows voters to sue to stop those calls immediately, but not receive monetary damages. A judge can order violators of the law to stop these abusive calls.

Let me briefly describe a few incidents that showcase why the provisions in this bill are so important.

On Election Day in 2010, over 110,000 Maryland voters began receiving anonymous robocalls instructing them to ''relax'' and stay home because Governor Martin O'Malley had already won re-election. These calls came a full two hours before the polls would close.

Days before the 2010 Midterm elections, voters in Kansas received anonymous robocalls telling them to bring a voter registration card and proof of home ownership to the polls on Wednesday. Not only are these items not required to vote, but as we know, the election was on a Tuesday.

Similarly, in my home state of California, about two dozen Los Angeles residents complained of receiving Spanish language robocalls from an unidentifiable source instructing them to vote on Wednesday, November 3—the day after Election Day.

Shortly before last year's elections, individuals in St. Louis, Missouri, heard their phones ring and checked the caller ID to find a number belonging to a local hospital. Expecting the worst, they answered the call. The voice on the other end was not a hospital employee, but rather a prerecorded political message from an organization that had been able to manipulate caller ID devices to make it seem as if the calls were coming from emergency officials.

In October 2010, 50,000 Nevadans were awoken at 1 a.m. by a robocall regarding a ballot question in the state that would change the judicial selection process. The calls came in the middle of the night due to a programming error—they were supposed to be made at 1 p.m.

To be clear, incidences like these involving the malicious or untimely use of robocalls are not unique to the recent election.

In a Maryland race in November 2006, in a conservative area residents received a middle-of-the-night robocall from the nonexistent ''Gay and Lesbian Push Organization,'' urging them to support one of the candidates. That candidate lost the election, in part because of the false, late-night call.

In the 2006 Congressional elections, many calls wrongly implied that one candidate was making a robocall. The message began with a recorded voice stating that the call contained information about U.S. Representative Melissa Bean. Some voters called Bean's office to complain without listening to the entire message, which eventually identified an opposing party committee as the sponsor—when most voters had hung up. Representative Bean had to spend campaign funds informing voters she had not made that call.

I am a strong supporter of the First Amendment protection for political speech, but the worst of these calls are disturbing people in their homes and spreading misleading and outright false information. Something must be done to rein in the robocalls which perpetrate these actions.

This bill presents a solution. It does not ban robocalls. It merely provides a reasonable framework of tailored time, place, and manner restrictions.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting the Robocall Privacy Act.

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. 1355

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 ''Robocall Privacy Act of 2011''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Abusive political robocalls harass voters and discourage them from participating in the political process.

(2) Abusive political robocalls infringe on the privacy rights of individuals by disturbing them in their homes.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act—

(1) POLITICAL ROBOCALL.—The term ''political robocall'' means any outbound telephone call—

(A) in which a person is not available to speak with the person answering the call, and the call instead plays a recorded message; and

(B) which promotes, supports, attacks, or opposes a candidate for Federal office.

(2) IDENTITY.—The term ''identity'' means, with respect to any individual making a political robocall or causing a political robocall to be made, the name of the sponsor or originator of the call.

(3) SPECIFIED PERIOD.—The term ''specified period'' means, with respect to any candidate for Federal office who is promoted, supported, attacked, or opposed in a political robocall—

(A) the 60-day period ending on the date of any general, special, or run-off election for the office sought by such candidate; and

(B) the 30-day period ending on the date of any primary or preference election, or any convention or caucus of a political party that has authority to nominate a candidate, for the office sought by such candidate.

(4) OTHER DEFINITIONS.—The terms ''candidate'' and ''Federal office'' have the respective meanings given such terms under section 301 of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (2 U.S.C. 431).

SEC. 4. REGULATION OF POLITICAL ROBOCALLS.

It shall be unlawful for any person during the specified period to make a political robocall or to cause a political robocall to be made—

(1) to any person during the period beginning at 9 p.m. and ending at 8 a.m. in the place which the call is directed;

(2) to the same telephone number more than twice on the same day;

(3) without disclosing, at the beginning of the call—

(A) that the call is a recorded message; and

(B) the identity of the person making the call or causing the call to be made; or

(4) without transmitting the telephone number and the name of the person making the political robocall or causing the political robocall to be made to the caller identification service of the recipient.

SEC. 5. ENFORCEMENT.

(a) ENFORCEMENT BY FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Any person aggrieved by a violation of section 4 may file a complaint with the Federal Election Commission under rules similar to the rules under section 309(a) of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (2 U.S.C. 437g(a)).

(2) CIVIL PENALTY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—If the Federal Election Commission or any court determines that there has been a violation of section 4, there shall be imposed a civil penalty of not more than $1,000 per violation.

(B) WILLFUL VIOLATIONS.—In the case the Federal Election Commission or any court determines that there has been a knowing or willful violation of section 4, the amount of any civil penalty under subparagraph (A) for such violation may be increased to not more than 300 percent of the amount under subparagraph (A).

(b) PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION.—Any person may bring in an appropriate district court of the United States an action based on a violation of section 4 to enjoin such violation without regard to whether such person has filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission.

By Mr. BEGICH (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 1357. A bill to exempt National Forest System land in the State of Alaska from the Roadless Area Conservation Rule; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I wish to speak about legislation I am introducing today that would repeal an ill-fitting and broad-reaching rule that limits not only timber harvest and mining but important renewable energy projects in Southeast Alaska.

In March of this year, a Federal District Court ruling set aside the 2003 Tongass Exemption and reinstated the application of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule in the Tongass National Forest. This decision means that the Tongass National Forest is now managed by a cookie-cutter rule imposed upon all national forests rather than by the 2008 Tongass Land Management Plan developed by Forest Service personnel under a wide reaching multi-year collaboration with Alaskans.

This will have a severe impact and reverse efforts to revitalize local communities and increase economic diversification throughout the region. Over the past few months, I have spoken with Tongass Forest Supervisor Forest Cole and Department of Agriculture staff about what flexibility they have under the rule.

I appreciate that Secretary Vilsack and the plaintiffs in this most recent court case recognize the importance of hydropower development, mining and personal use wood policies to the economy of Southeast Alaska. However, what I have read of their settlement agreement doesn't offer any certainty that there won't be more challenges and delays. Our experience over the past decade suggests there will be.

With lots of demands on the Tongass Forest, the Forest Service needs greater flexibility to address these issues while crafting a reasonably sized timber sale program that keeps the few existing mills alive and allows for modest expansion into second growth markets. Unemployment in the rural portions of Southeast Alaska currently averages more than 15 percent. Energy costs in these non-hydropower communities are too high as well. Instead of adding options, the roadless rule takes them away. It is time once and for all to do away with the rule in Alaska.

I want to thank my colleague, Senator MURKOWSKI, for joining me as a cosponsor.

By Mr. KERRY:

S. 1361. A bill to reduce human exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals Exposure Elimination Act to create a research program through the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to further endocrine related research.

There are approximately 80,000 known chemicals in our environment that are potentially harmful. Many of those chemicals have never been tested to determine if they are damaging to human health. Products that American families use every day such as household cleaners, cosmetics, and personal care products could actually be causing them harm.

This legislation establishes the Endocrine Disruption Expert Panel to study and evaluate up to 10 chemicals per year that are potentially endocrine-disrupting to determine whether they have a high, substantial, minimal, or no level of concern. Any chemical that is deemed a high level of concern could be banned from use within 2 years. This commonsense approach provides vital protections against harmful chemicals while giving industry an opportunity to either find a way to eliminate human exposure to the toxin or eliminate it from use.

The increased rate of disorders affecting the human endocrine system is alarming. Children developing in the womb are particularly vulnerable. Many scientists believe there are connections between effects on the endocrine system and the chemicals around us, and it is time to do more about it.

This bill promotes action based on hard, scientific evidence. I urge all my colleagues to support it.

By Mr. ROCKEFELLER:

S. 1363. A bill to amend titles 10 and 41, United States Code, to allow contracting officers to consider information regarding domestic employment before awarding a Federal contract, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, today I am introducing the American Jobs Matter Act, legislation that will promote domestic job creation in the field of Federal contracting.

We must do all that we can to stop the outward migration of jobs. This bill takes the important step of directing the Federal Government to notify contract applicants that it may consider American job impact when deciding which bids to accept. The government would then be allowed to use that information in making award decisions.

There should be no greater champion of American-made goods than the Federal Government. Members of Congress come from 50 States and 435 districts and we each know of the special skill sets that our constituents possess and how fortunate the Federal Government would be to have these employees working on Federal projects. Yet our flawed procurement policy has no mechanism to assess the impact of government purchasing on American jobs.

This bill seeks to change that. Under the American Jobs Matter Act, contractors will be allowed to submit information related to the net effect of their offer on American employment. This information could include the number of American jobs expected to be created or retained as a result of the work. Bidders would also be allowed to guarantee that the jobs created would not be moved outside the United States after the contract is awarded. The legislation would finally give Federal agencies the ability to assess the impact of procurement decisions on American jobs. It does not dictate that a contract go to the applicant that will create the most jobs. It just elevates job creation to its right place in the hierarchy of criteria that should be studied before making a decision.

The American Jobs Matter Act would be an important step towards promoting a vibrant manufacturing base which is essential to our standard of living, the health of our communities, and ensuring our long-term economic security.

I want to thank my counterpart from the House of Representatives, Representative CHRIS MURPHY, for his leadership in that body on this legislation. I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation and thank the chair for allowing me to speak on this issue.

By Mr. NELSON of Florida:

S. 1364. A bill to ensure the timely payment of Social Security benefits in August 2011; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, the Budget Committee chairman, the Senator from North Dakota, has, in fact, laid out a budget. It puts us on a serious road toward budget balance by utilizing real numbers, not sleight of

hand numbers, not budget fakery numbers, not a budget as a political document but a budget as an economic document. And it nips—indeed, it savages—the annual deficit and the Federal debt of $4 trillion over 10 years.

This is real money, and it is real money that is basically in balance between $2 trillion of spending cuts—which we have had all of those kinds of talks going on down at the White House, and they seem to get to an agreement of $2 trillion of spending cuts. But when it comes to the revenue side, there seems to be an unwillingness to accept revenues.

What I would like to do is elucidate further on the Budget Committee chairman's presentation yesterday or the day before of this budget on how we can produce $2 trillion of new revenue and it not be considered as just straight tax increases but, instead, of going to two other parts of the Tax Code that have been off limits to so much of the tax planning and tax cuts that we have been talking about. Of course, I am talking about the $14 trillion of tax expenditures that the Federal Government expends by not having that tax revenue coming in to the tune of $14 trillion for special tax preferences over the course of the next decade.

Now, if that were not enough in itself, there is also an additional $1 trillion that is money that is kept abroad that is not brought back into this country and, therefore, is not taxed. Just a little portion of that money being kept overseas could be brought in and used in productive activities in the United States. But it would be brought in as income instead of housed in one three-story building in the Cayman Islands for 18,000 corporations, where all it is is a residence for a corporation to use to avoid U.S. taxes.

Now, if we are going to do anything serious about lowering the deficit, we are going to have to try to stop this nonsense that is going on. In the case of tax preferences, the tax expenditures, the $14 trillion, the Senate, in an overwhelming vote a couple of weeks ago, actually attacked one of those tax preferences.

Remember when we voted something like 95 to 5 here to get rid of the subsidy on ethanol made from corn? It was a subsidy put in years ago to encourage ethanol made from corn as a way of blending it with gasoline that would then lessen our reliance on oil, particularly foreign oil. But now we know we can make ethanol from a whole bunch of other things, and it doesn't have to be making ethanol from something that we eat, which all it was doing was driving the price of corn higher and, of course, corn is being used as a feed in the feed lots and, therefore, the meat products that the American consumer was getting at the grocery store went much higher in price.

So we realized here was a tax subsidy, a tax preference, in other words, a tax expenditure, that had outlived its usefulness. There are $14 trillion of these tax preferences that are, in effect, for the next decade, and it would not be an unreasonable question to ask: Could we reduce those tax preferences just a little bit? If you reduced them, just 17 percent of all those tax preferences, you would produce $2 trillion. If that $1 trillion that is kept overseas—if you could stop some of those laws that keep foreign income held by U.S. companies abroad, if you could just tax a little bit of that, then we could even lower the percentage that we needed to get into the tax expenditures.

Now, there are some tax expenditures that are obviously very popular and very necessary. Charitable contributions, which include contributions to churches, they get a charitable deduction that you deduct from your overall income in order to get your adjusted gross income. From that you subtract the various deductions you have to get to your taxable income. Clearly, giving charitable contributions is an activity that we want to encourage, and we encourage that in the Tax Code.

Another example is, you own a home. You go to the bank, you get a mortgage, the mortgage payments that include principal and interest. You are able to deduct the interest that you are paying on that mortgage, and that is a tax preference. It was originally put in to encourage home ownership. Well, should that preference continue for those who don't need the help?

I think these are questions. So if we start just doing little things with this $14 trillion of tax preferences, we can make major reductions in the annual deficit.

Let me give another example: Oil and gas. There are a lot of tax preferences for the oil and gas industry. Normally, when a business goes in and provides capital to get a business up and going, that capital equipment is allowed to be deducted over the life of that piece of equipment.

Well, so much of oil and gas equipment is allowed to be written off in the very first year as an expense of doing business in that first year. That is just one other example. So if we look at it, are we capable of taking $14 trillion of tax preferences—some people call them tax expenditures; some people call them tax giveaways—and, therefore, reduce those, especially the ones that are ineffective and inefficient, even though it is going to step on somebody's toes? Some special interest that has that tax preference, they are not going to like it. They want their goodies. But for the purpose of balancing the budget, for the purpose of bringing this deficit down so we can get on the road to fiscal order instead of the fiscal chaos that we have now, is that not a legitimate question to ask and a legitimate road to go down?

No less than one of the senior economic advisers to President Reagan—his name is Martin Feldstein. He was a Harvard professor and the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers to President Reagan. I want you to see what he says about reducing tax expenditures.

> Cutting tax expenditures is really the best way to reduce government spending. Eliminating tax expenditures does not increase marginal tax rates or reduce the reward for saving, investment or risk-taking. It would also increase overall economic efficiency by removing incentives that distort private spending decisions. And eliminating or consolidating the large number of overlapping tax-based subsidies would also greatly simplify tax filing. In short, cutting tax expenditures is not at all like other ways of raising revenue.

Martin Feldstein, well regarded in conservative circles.

With this crisis looming, why can't we get people to recognize that if we want balance, they have to give, too, and here is a good way. I want to expand on this—another way we could do it.

We could actually, as the Simpson-Bowles commission suggested, lower these tax expenditures Martin Feldstein is talking about. We could even take that additional revenue and pour it into the rest of the Tax Code and lower the tax rates for everybody, including corporate tax rates, and in the process we could also simplify the Tax Code into three tax brackets. All of the tax brackets would be lowered if we got rid of some of those tax expenditures. There are multiple ways we can use this, and in the process, then, we are starting some serious tax reform.

The Senator from North Dakota has laid this out. He has explained this to the Senate. He has the unanimous support of the majority of the Senate Budget Committee. He has the near-unanimous support of the entire majority in the U.S. Senate. He has explained this to the President and to the Vice President.

Of course, one of the easy ways to react to this is, well, there is not enough time. If we want to do major tax reform and tax simplification for the sake of our consumers, there sure is time because we could solve this debt ceiling crisis with a commitment down the line to doing just exactly what I have talked about.

As we are in this maelstrom of all of these different ideas going around about what we are going to do before August 2 so the debt ceiling can be raised and so the country can pay its bills, I have heard about some disturbing things out there on the horizon. One is that Social Security is going to get whacked and that Medicare is going to get whacked.

By the way, what the Budget Committee is proposing does not whack Social Security or Medicare providers. In the first place, Social Security is not in financial trouble in the foreseeable future. It is not until the late 2030s that it starts to get into difficulty. It is around 2035 that it would not, in that year, be able to pay 100 percent of its payments. We can correct that before then.

Our problem is now. Our problem is this next decade of bringing this budget on a path toward balance and bringing the annual deficit down to a much lower percentage of gross domestic product.

The budget I have just outlined, that is the work product of the Senate Budget Committee chairman, brings it down at the end of the decade to 1.8 percent—the deficit—to GDP. Anytime we get below 3 percent of the deficit being a percentage of GDP, we are on the path to fiscal stability, and we would be moving toward that position of balance—a position, by the way, we enjoyed 11 years ago because we were in surplus. Eleven years ago, we had 4 years of surplus in a row, but we started enacting policies—and, I might say, not with the vote of this Senator—that caused the revenues to drop off considerably. Then, of course, when we got in the situation where we started increasing expenditures for one reason or another—increasing expenditures for national defense, for two wars—and those were wars we were not paying for with a revenue source; in fact, we were just going out and borrowing the money.

So this brings me now to Medicare and Social Security. It might make some people in Washington, DC, feel good to whack Medicare. It certainly wouldn't make this Senator feel good. It certainly wouldn't make an awful lot—as a matter of fact, some 45 million senior citizens in this country are on Medicare, some of whom are living from hand to mouth, from Social Security check to Social Security check, and from Medicare reimbursement to Medicare reimbursement for their health care. It certainly wouldn't make them feel good. And it is not going to do anything immediately for the deficit we are having to confront. So why trade off, saying we are going to whack these two programs and not attack things such as tax expenditures that are inefficient and don't produce what they are supposed to do via the incentives in the Tax Code? It simply doesn't make sense.

Oh, by the way, isn't it interesting, isn't it almost ironic that the people who are now attacking Medicare and saying we have to whack it are the very people who were criticizing us 2 years ago in the health care bill when we eliminated $½ trillion of inefficiencies and overpayments out of Medicare to put the program on a more financially solvent path? And they were the very ones who were criticizing us for taking that money out of Medicare. Well, I say to my colleagues, we already took on Medicare, so we ought to get down to the hard choices of budget deficit reduction, which means cutting spending and getting rid of some of these tax expenditures so we can start bringing our budget into balance.

My final subject is Social Security. Now, why in the world would we want to scare the bejabbers out of 45 million senior citizens of this country, some of whom literally are living hand to mouth and from Social Security check to Social Security check and some of whom cannot afford the cost of drugs even partially provided for through Medicare Part D, the prescription drug benefit? I don't think we want to do that.

As we get closer to August 2, I am hearing—and I hope every other Senator is hearing from all of these senior citizens and these disabled workers who are relying on Social Security—that they are concerned about Washington's failure to get its house in order, and if we fail to get our house in order, it is going to threaten the very source of income they count on. So to risk a government default and to say the only way we can do it is by taking it out of Social Security is not going to do anything for us in reducing the deficit over the next decade, which is the problem at hand.

Yesterday, the President was asked if he could tell the folks at home that no matter what happens, Social Security checks are going to go out the day after the government is supposedly going to go into default. Do my colleagues remember what the President said? He said: I cannot guarantee that those checks go out on August 3 if we haven't resolved this issue because there may simply not be the money in the coffers to do it.

So the people who are relying on a fixed income of Social Security to survive—Social Security payments are more than just a government statistic. For them, Social Security is more than just a Federal outlay or an entitlement expenditure. There are almost 4 million Social Security beneficiaries in my State. I can tell my colleagues that their Social Security pays the rent, it pays for the groceries, and it helps pay their medical copays. It helps pay for that over and above what is provided in Medicare.

It is interesting, these speeches I hear. It is all ''it is your fault, and it is your fault, and it is the other guy's fault, and it is so partisan, and it is so ideologically rigid.'' The only way we are going to solve something that is as tangled up as this is for people of good will to be willing to respect the other fellow's point of view and come together and build consensus to find a workable solution.

So as we get closer—and we can almost hear the background music; it is getting more ominous day by day as the clock ticks down to August 2—there is something we can do about it. The threat that Social Security payments could be delayed should not be used as a weapon to force a slash-and-burn cut to these entitlements. I said 45 million earlier; it is actually 56 million retirees who rely on these payments.

A recent report from the Congressional Research Service states:

> Under normal procedures Treasury pays Social Security benefits from the General Fund and offsets this by redeeming an equivalent amount of the Social Security Trust Funds' holdings of government debt. Treasury now may need to issue new public debt to raise the cash needed to pay benefits. Treasury may be unable to issue new public debt, however, because of the debt limit.

In other words, if the debt ceiling is not raised, Social Security benefits could be delayed or jeopardized. So perhaps what we ought to do is enact some legislation that takes Social Security out of the equation in the event we don't reach a deal on the debt ceiling by August 2.

In the past, the President and the Congress have agreed to exempt Social Security from the debt ceiling in order to ensure that the payments go out to Social Security recipients. As a matter of fact, as recently as 1996, Treasury reported it had insufficient cash to pay Social Security benefits in March of that year. In response, Congress then passed—and it was a bipartisan Congress; it was headed by a majority of the Republican Party, and there was a Democratic President, President Clinton. They passed—and it was signed into law—a measure that provided the Treasury with temporary authority to issue securities to the public in the amount equal to the Social Security benefit payments due.

I will conclude by pointing out that after that was done in 1996, Congress later extended the borrowing authority for an additional 2 weeks.

I believe we should use what we know works and not play games with Social Security benefits. So I am introducing some legislation, and I am introducing it today. It is called the Social Security Benefit Protection Act. What it suggests is the way we ought to go. Now, I know we are not going to take up and pass this legislation, but I have a means by which I can get this idea out. What it does is guarantee that the Social Security Administration will be able to continue paying Social Security benefits to retirees, survivors, and disabled workers regardless of what happens to this political gridlock here in Washington.

Similar to the 1996 legislation, this legislation gives the Treasury Department temporary authority to issue new debt to ensure the payments can be made to Social Security beneficiaries, but only to the extent necessary to cover the needs of the Social Security Program.

I urge our colleagues to try to come together and give the assurances to millions of retirees that they are not going to be whacked and, especially so, they are not going to be whacked out of political gridlock by all the rest of us for these excessive reasons. I urge my colleagues to take a look at the ideas in this legislation that I have filed.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 232—RECOGNIZING THE CONTINUED PERSECUTION OF FALUN GONG PRACTITIONERS IN CHINA ON THE 12TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CAMPAIGN BY THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY TO SUPPRESS THE FALUN GONG MOVEMENT, RECOGNIZING THE TUIDANG MOVEMENT WHEREBY CHINESE CITIZENS RENOUNCE THEIR TIES TO THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS AFFILIATES, AND CALLING FOR AN IMMEDIATE END TO THE CAMPAIGN TO PERSECUTE FALUN GONG PRACTITIONERS

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. COBURN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 232

Whereas Falun Gong (also known as Falun Dafa) is a Chinese spiritual discipline founded by Li Hongzhi in 1992 that consists of spiritual and moral teachings, meditation, and exercise based upon the universal principles of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance;

Whereas, during the mid-1990s, Falun Gong acquired a large and diverse following, with as many as 70,000,000 practitioners at its peak;

Whereas, on April 25, 1999, an estimated 10,000 to 30,000 Falun Gong practitioners gathered in Beijing to protest growing restrictions by the Government of the People's Republic of China on the activities of Falun Gong practitioners, and the Government of the People's Republic of China responded with an intensive, comprehensive, and unforgiving campaign against the movement that began on July 20, 1999, with the outlawing of Falun Gong;

Whereas the Government of the People's Republic of China has stated that it fully respects and protects citizen's freedom of religion in accordance with the law, but that ''Falun Gong is neither a religion nor a spiritual movement; rather it is an evil cult against humanity, science and society'';

Whereas, on October 30, 1999, China's National People's Congress promulgated an ''anti-cult'' law (article 300 of the Criminal Law), effective retroactively, to suppress the Falun Gong movement and thousands of religious sects across the country;

Whereas, since 1999, more than 6,000 Falun Gong practitioners have reportedly served time in prison, with estimates of those in reeducation through labor camps reaching as many as 125,000 people, and Falun Gong practitioners are said to constitute approximately two-thirds of all prisoners and detainees of conscience in China (roughly 15,000 people);

Whereas the publication of ''Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party'' in November 2004 by the United States-based newspaper, the Epoch Times, led to the creation of the Tuidang movement;

Whereas the Tuidang movement, which translates literally as ''withdraw from the communist party'', has encouraged as many as 90,000,000 people to publicly renounce their membership in the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliates since 2004;

Whereas, in the lead up to and during the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai, authorities conducted propaganda campaigns portraying ''cults'' like Falun Gong as ''dangers'' to society that ''wreck families'' and ''poison the minds of youth'', carried out strict surveillance of practitioners, and detained and imprisoned large numbers of practitioners;

Whereas, according to estimates by the Department of State and human rights organizations, since 1999, from several hundred to a few thousand Falun Gong adherents have died in custody from torture, abuse, and neglect;

Whereas a review of the Government of the People's Republic of China by the United Nations Human Rights Council's Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review in February 2009 reiterated concerns regarding human rights violations against Falun Gong practitioners, including arrests, detention, torture, and reeducation through labor camps;

Whereas the Department of State's 2010 Human Rights Report on China cited reports of Falun Gong adherents being committed to mental health facilities, medicated against their will, and forcibly subjected to electric shock treatment;

Whereas the Department of State's 2010 Human Rights Report on China stated that the Government of the People's Republic of China automatically censored e-mail and web chats based on an ever-changing list of sensitive key words, such as ''Falun Gong'', and periodically blocked the blogs of a number of prominent activists, artists, scholars, and university professors; and

Whereas the 2010 Annual Report of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China found that lawyers involved in human rights advocacy work—including in legal cases involving Falun Gong practitioners and others deemed by the Government of the People's Republic of China to threaten ''social stability''—have been harassed by the Government of the People's Republic of China based on who their clients are and the causes those clients represent: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses solidarity with Falun Gong practitioners and their families for the lives, freedoms, and rights they lost for adhering to their beliefs and practices;

(2) calls upon the Chinese Communist Party to immediately cease and desist from its campaign to persecute Falun Gong practitioners and promptly release all Falun Gong practitioners who have been confined, detained, or imprisoned in retaliation for pursuing their right to hold and exercise spiritual beliefs;

(3) emphasizes to the Government of the People's Republic of China that freedom of religion includes the right of Falun Gong practitioners to freely practice Falun Gong in China;

(4) calls upon the President, the Secretary of State, and Members of Congress to—

(A) mark the anniversary of the Government of the People's Republic of China's official repression of the Falun Gong spiritual movement;

(B) express solidarity with persecuted Falun Gong practitioners in China; and

(C) meet with Falun Gong practitioners; and

(5) expresses support for volunteers and participants of the Tuidang movement for their peaceful efforts to reclaim Chinese history and culture, and for their pursuit of a fair and open government, a free people, and a society rooted in the practice of virtue.

SENATE RESOLUTION 233—HONORING THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION SPACE SHUTTLE PROGRAM ON REACHING THE HISTORIC MILESTONE OF THE 135TH AND FINAL FLIGHT OF THE SPACE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Mr. NELSON of Florida (for himself, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. WARNER, and Mr. VITTER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 233

Whereas the launch of the space shuttle Atlantis on July 8, 2011, is the 135th and final flight of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Space Transportation System (STS–135) and the 33rd flight of the space shuttle Atlantis;

Whereas the National Aeronautics and Space Administration built 5 space-capable orbiters, the Columbia, the Challenger, the Discovery, the Atlantis, and the Endeavour;

Whereas, with the launch of STS–135, 355 individuals will have flown 852 times during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, beginning with the launch of the first Space Transportation System flight on April 12, 1981;

Whereas a spirit of international partnership has been fostered among the 16 countries represented on the space shuttle missions flown during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, including Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United States;

Whereas the space shuttles together have flown 537,114,016 miles, with STS–135 adding an additional 4,000,000 miles;

Whereas, during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, more than 2,000 on-orbit experiments have been conducted in the fields of Earth science, biology, fluids, materials sciences, and astronomy;

Whereas the Space Shuttle Program has executed the launch and service of the Hubble Space Telescope, enabling groundbreaking and breathtaking views of the universe outside of our solar system;

Whereas the space shuttles have docked to 2 different space stations, with 9 missions to Mir, the space station of the Government of Russia, and 37 missions to the International Space Station;

Whereas the Space Shuttle Program has been essential to the on-orbit assembly of the International Space Station and vital to ensuring the continued viability and support of the International Space Station;

Whereas the space shuttles have landed at the Kennedy Space Center 77 times, at Edwards Air Force Base 54 times, and at the White Sands Test Facility once;

Whereas the launch configuration of the entire Space Transportation System contains approximately 2,500,000 moving parts and, at lift-off, weighs approximately 4,500,000 pounds; and

Whereas the space shuttles can travel around the Earth at a speed of approximately 17,500 miles per hour: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the National Aeronautics and Space Administration on reaching the historic milestone of the 135th and final flight of the Space Transportation System;

(2) honors the men and women of the Space Shuttle Program, who worked tirelessly to