

MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1494, a bill to reauthorize and amend the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Establishment Act.

S. 1575

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1575, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the depreciation recovery period for energy-efficient cool roof systems.

S. 1577

At the request of Mr. BAUCUS, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1577, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase and make permanent the alternative simplified research credit, and for other purposes.

S. 1645

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1645, a bill to establish an Oleoresin Capsicum Spray Pilot Program in the Bureau of Prisons, and for other purposes.

S. 1895

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1895, a bill to require the Secretary of Commerce to establish a program for the award of grants to States to establish revolving loan funds for small and medium-sized manufacturers to improve energy efficiency and produce clean energy technology, to provide a tax credit for farmers' investments in value-added agriculture, and for other purposes.

S. 1903

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the names of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG), the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) and the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. KOHL) were added as cosponsors of S. 1903, a bill to prohibit commodities and securities trading based on nonpublic information relating to Congress, to require additional reporting by Members and employees of Congress of securities transactions, and for other purposes.

S. 1925

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the names of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1925, a bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994.

S. 1935

At the request of Mrs. HAGAN, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1935, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in recognition and celebration of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the March of Dimes Foundation.

S. 1947

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Mary-

land (Ms. MIKULSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1947, a bill to prohibit attendance of an animal fighting venture, and for other purposes.

S. 1956

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1956, a bill to prohibit operators of civil aircraft of the United States from participating in the European Union's emissions trading scheme, and for other purposes.

S. 1990

At the request of Mr. LIEBERMAN, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1990, a bill to require the Transportation Security Administration to comply with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

S. 2003

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2003, a bill to clarify that an authorization to use military force, a declaration of war, or any similar authority shall not authorize the detention without charge or trial of a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States and for other purposes.

S. 2010

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2010, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions.

S.J. RES. 29

At the request of Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. AKAKA) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 29, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to contributions and expenditures intended to affect elections.

S. RES. 176

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 176, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the United States Postal Service should issue a semipostal stamp to support medical research relating to Alzheimer's disease.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. SANDERS:

S. 2037. A bill to reauthorize and improve the Older Americans Act of 1965, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, it is no great secret that our country today faces many enormously difficult problems. We remain in the midst of a very

serious recession. Real unemployment is at about 15 percent. Our middle class continues to decline. The gap between the very rich and everybody else is growing wider. Fifty million Americans have no health insurance. Millions of young people are struggling, trying to figure out how they are going to make it into college and pay for their college education. But in the midst of all of those problems, I hope very much that we do not forget about the problems facing one of the most vulnerable sectors of our society; that is, senior citizens.

We are an aging population. That is no secret. Today, and every day, some 10,000 Americans reach the age of 65. If we as a nation do not begin to address the very serious reality of an aging population, we are going to be in a lot of trouble that we are not anticipating.

One of the issues we have to understand is that not only are we an aging population, but many of those people who are becoming 65 and older are dealing with issues of poverty. Incredibly enough, 20 percent of the seniors in this country are living on average incomes of \$7,500 per year—\$7,500 per year average income for the bottom 20 percent of seniors in this country. Frighteningly, and embarrassingly, more and more seniors in this country are literally going hungry. Today, there are almost 1 million seniors who go hungry and many more who face the threat of hunger. That should not be happening in the United States of America.

What America is supposed to be about is that when we age, we can live out our remaining years with security and dignity, not trying to find food in order to stay alive.

Now, that is the bad news. The good news is that we have Federal legislation called the Older American Act which, to some degree, begins to address these very serious problems.

I am happy to announce, as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging, we are introducing legislation to reauthorize and improve the Older Americans Act.

The legislation we are offering is going to do its very best to say senior citizens in this country will not go hungry. This legislation is going to significantly increase funding for senior centers all over this country, to provide congregate meal programs in senior centers. In my view, these congregate meal programs are enormously important, not only because they provide good nutrition to seniors all over our Nation but also they allow seniors to come together to socialize, to talk to each other, to get some of the professional help they need in their waning years. So we have to strengthen the congregate meal program, and that is what this bill does.

In addition to that, there is another program which is almost life and death to some of the most fragile and vulnerable people in this country; that is, the Meals on Wheels Program. What Meals on Wheels is about—it takes place all

over this country—is, you have people in senior centers and in other institutions who take meals—a good, quality, nutritious hot meal—to seniors, sometimes living at the end of a dirt road in Vermont or in Utah or in New Hampshire. These are people who cannot leave their homes, especially in the wintertime. These are people who, in some cases, would not survive if they did not have that Meals on Wheels Program.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers from senior centers and other institutions who get in their cars and trucks to take these hot meals to seniors all over this country through the Meals on Wheels Program.

What we are finding in my State of Vermont—and what we are finding around the country—is, many senior centers simply do not have the resources now to accommodate the growing number of seniors who need the Meals on Wheels Program.

Let me further say to any of my friends who say: Senator SANDERS, this is a good idea. It is going to cost money. Yes, it will. Increased funding for Meals on Wheels and congregate meals will cost additional revenue. But at the end of the day, the Federal Government will save money. We have had hearings on this issue. We have had physicians come forward, and they say one of the reasons seniors end up in the hospital, seniors end up in the emergency room, is because they are malnourished. Sometimes, literally, because of poor nourishment, they fall, break their hips, at great expense to Medicaid or Medicare. So not only is it the right and moral thing to do to keep seniors in this country from going hungry; in the long run, we save money by keeping them healthy.

Furthermore, in this bill, we are going to do something I think is long overdue. There has been a lot of discussion in the Senate and in the House about Social Security. Some of my friends—often Republicans, sometimes Democrats—think we should cut Social Security, we should try to move toward a balanced budget by cutting funding for some of the most vulnerable people in this country. I strongly oppose that.

One of the arguments brought forth to cut Social Security is: The COLA—the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly; how we determine what the COLA is—it is too generous. It is inadequate. When I tell that to senior citizens in Vermont, do you know what they do? They laugh. They literally laugh when I tell them there are people in Washington, DC, who believe the formulation as to how we determine COLAs is too generous, and they say: Bernie, we have not gotten a COLA for the last 2 years, so how is this too generous? They are, of course, right.

The way we, in my view, formulate the COLA right now is inadequate, not because it is too generous but quite the contrary. The truth is, seniors' pur-

chasing needs are different than the general population. Everybody knows that. Seniors spend a higher percentage of their income on prescription drugs. They spend it on health care. In cold-weather States such as mine and New Hampshire, they spend it on keeping warm. Senior citizens are not out there, by and large, buying flat-screen TVs or laptop computers or iPhones or iPads. Their money is going into health care.

What has been happening in recent years is, while the cost of some products—electronics in general—has been going down, the cost of prescription drugs and health care has been going up. So when you tell seniors their COLA is too generous, they tell you that makes no sense at all because they are spending more and more on health care, prescription drugs, staying warm in the wintertime.

So what we have done in this bill is requested that the Bureau of Labor Statistics improve the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly, or CPI-E, by including more of the items seniors spend money on, such as prescription drugs and other health care costs. We must have a more accurate measure for COLAs for seniors, and I believe this is the path to a fair COLA.

I look forward to working with all the Members of the Senate to make sure we do right by our parents and our grandparents, that we make sure seniors in this country can live out their remaining years in security and dignity by reauthorizing a strong and fair Older Americans Act in the coming months.

I especially want to applaud Senators KOHL, MIKULSKI, CASEY, and FRANKEN for introducing other thoughtful, innovative, and important Older Americans Act amendments.

We are at a critical moment in American history. In the midst of all the other challenges we face, let us not turn our backs on those who sacrificed, who fought the wars, who built the economies that made this country great. Let us support a strengthened and improved Older Americans Act.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 354—HONORING THE LIFE OF DISSIDENT AND DEMOCRACY ACTIVIST WILMAN VILLAR MENDOZA AND CONDEMNING THE CASTRO REGIME FOR THE DEATH OF WILMAN VILLAR MENDOZA

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. RUBIO and Mr. NELSON of Florida) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 354

Whereas, on Thursday, January 19, 2012, 31-year-old Cuban dissident Wilman Villar Mendoza died, following a 56-day hunger strike to highlight his arbitrary arrest and the repression of basic human and civil rights in Cuba by the Castro regime;

Whereas, on November 2, 2011, Wilman Villar Mendoza was detained by security forces of the Government of Cuba for participating in a peaceful demonstration in Cuba calling for greater political freedom and respect for human rights;

Whereas Wilman Villar Mendoza was sentenced to 4 years in prison after a hearing that lasted less than 1 hour and during which Wilman Villar Mendoza was neither represented by counsel nor given the opportunity to speak in his defense;

Whereas, on November 25, 2011, Wilman Villar Mendoza was placed in solitary confinement after initiating a hunger strike to protest his unjust trial and imprisonment;

Whereas Wilman Villar Mendoza was a member of the Unión Patriótica de Cuba, a dissident group the Cuban regime considers illegitimate because members express views critical of the regime;

Whereas security forces of the Government of Cuba have harassed Maritza Pelegrino Cabrales, the wife of Villar Mendoza and a member of the Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco), and have threatened to take away her children if she continues to work with the Ladies in White;

Whereas Human Rights Watch, which documented the case of Wilman Villar Mendoza, stated, "Arbitrary arrests, sham trials, inhumane imprisonment, and harassment of dissidents' families—these are the tactics used to silence critics.";

Whereas Amnesty International stated, "The responsibility for Wilman Villar Mendoza's death in custody lies squarely with the Cuban authorities, who summarily judged and jailed him for exercising his right to freedom of expression.";

Whereas Orlando Zapata Tamayo, another prisoner of conscience jailed after the "Black Spring" crackdown on opposition groups in March 2003, died in prison on February 23, 2010, after a 90-day hunger strike;

Whereas, according to the Cuban Commission on Human Rights, the unrelenting tyranny of the Castro regime has led to more than 4,000 political detentions and arrests in 2011; and

Whereas Cuba is a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council despite numerous documented violations of human rights every year in Cuba: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the Cuban regime for the death of Wilman Villar Mendoza on January 19, 2011, following a hunger strike to protest his incarceration for participating in a peaceful protest and to highlight the plight of the Cuban people;

(2) condemns the repression of basic human and civil rights by the Castro regime in Cuba that resulted in more than 4,000 detentions and arrests of activists in 2011;

(3) honors the life of Wilman Villar Mendoza and his sacrifice on behalf of the cause of freedom in Cuba;

(4) extends condolences to Maritza Pelegrino Cabrales, the wife of Wilman Villar Mendoza, and their children;

(5) urges the United Nations Human Rights Council to suspend Cuba from its position on the Council;

(6) urges the General Assembly of the United Nations to vote to suspend the rights of membership of Cuba to the Human Rights Council;

(7) urges the international community to condemn the harassment and repression of peaceful activists by the Cuban regime; and

(8) calls on the governments of all democratic countries to insist on the release of all political prisoners and the cessation of violence, arbitrary arrests, and threats against peaceful demonstrators in Cuba, including threats against Maritza Pelegrino Cabrales