S. 380

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of S. 380, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize and update the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative for grants to address the problems of individuals who experience trauma and violence related stress.

S. 393

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 393, a bill to designate additional segments and tributaries of White Clay Creek, in the States of Delaware and Pennsylvania, as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

S. 407

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 407, a bill to provide funding for construction and major rehabilitation for projects located on inland and intracoastal waterways of the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 423

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 423, a bill to amend title V of the Social Security Act to extend funding for family-to-family health information centers to help families of children with disabilities or special health care needs make informed choices about health care for their children.

S. 462

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 462, a bill to enhance the strategic partnership between the United States and Israel.

S. 463

At the request of Mr. PRYOR, the names of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 463, a bill to amend the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 to modify the definition of the term ''biobased product''.

S. 502

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 502, a bill to assist States in providing voluntary high-quality universal prekindergarten programs and programs to support infants and toddlers.

S. 526

At the request of Mr. BAUCUS, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 526, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent the special rule for contributions of qualified conservation contributions, and for other purposes.

S. 541

At the request of Ms. LANDRIEU, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) were added as cosponsors of S. 541, a bill to prevent human health threats posed by the consumption of equines raised in the United States.

S. 548

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 548, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve and enhance the capabilities of the Armed Forces to prevent and respond to sexual assault and sexual harassment in the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

S. 554

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 554, a bill to provide for a biennial budget process and a biennial appropriations process and to enhance oversight and the performance of the Federal Government.

S. 557

At the request of Mrs. HAGAN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 557, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve access to medication therapy management under part D of the Medicare program.

S. 562

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 562, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the coverage of marriage and family therapist services and mental health counselor services under part B of the Medicare program, and for other purposes.

S. 572

At the request of Mr. BURR, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 572, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the conditions under which certain persons may be treated as adjudicated mentally incompetent for certain purposes.

S. 579

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the names of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) were added as cosponsors of S. 579, a bill to direct the Secretary of State to develop a strategy to obtain observer status for Taiwan at the triennial International Civil Aviation Organization Assembly, and for other purposes.

S. 603

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 603, a bill to repeal the annual fee on health insurance providers enacted by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

S. 617

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 617, a bill to provide humanitarian assistance and support a democratic transition in Syria, and for other purposes.

S. 641

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 641, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to increase the number of permanent faculty in palliative care at accredited allopathic and osteopathic medical schools, nursing schools, and other programs, to promote education in palliative care and hospice, and to support the development of faculty careers in academic palliative medicine.

S. 642

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 642, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act and title XVIII of the Social Security Act to make the provision of technical services for medical imaging examinations and radiation therapy treatments safer, more accurate, and less costly.

S. RES. 65

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) and the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. COWAN) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 65, a resolution strongly supporting the full implementation of United States and international sanctions on Iran and urging the President to continue to strengthen enforcement of sanctions legislation.

S. RES. 70

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 70, a resolution designating the last full week of July 2013 as ''National Moth Week'', recognizing the importance of moths in the United States, and recognizing the value of National Moth Week for promoting the conservation of moths and increasing the awareness, study, and appreciation of moths, their incredible biodiversity, and their importance to ecosystem health.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. MERKLEY, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 673. A bill to amend the Truth in Lending Act to establish a national usury rate for consumer credit transactions; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, after the financial crisis of 2008 we learned that predatory lending hurts more than just families who lost money. Predatory

lending can affect entire communities and often targets the most vulnerable in our society—low-income families and seniors.

Under Wall Street reform we addressed predatory mortgage practices and granted the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau the authority to supervise nonbank lenders, including payday lenders. We know who these payday folks are. I know them because their businesses are located a few blocks from where I live in Springfield, IL, on Macarthur Boulevard—title loans, payday loans. However, we failed to cap once and for all the annual interest rate that predatory payday lenders can charge for a loan.

In 2012 payday loan volume reached an estimated $45 billion for storefront and online loans. This does not include deposit advance loans that banks make to consumers every day.

If we look a bit deeper, we find that nearly 76 percent of payday loans are made to pay off a previous payday loan. It is a vicious cycle. Someone borrows some money, then they cannot pay it back with high interest rates, and they borrow more—deeper and deeper in debt. Fifty percent of payday borrowers ultimately default on their loans.

With numbers like these, we can only assume payday lenders' profit depends on families rolling their payday loan over eight to nine times—racking up new fees every single time.

Predatory lenders should not be allowed to pad their pockets with the hard-earned money of families that are barely getting by. These are families who are not even able to survive paycheck to paycheck.

That is why I am introducing the Protecting Consumers from Unreasonable Credit Rates Act. I wish to thank my colleagues—Senators BLUMENTHAL, BOXER, MERKLEY, and WHITEHOUSE—for their cosponsorship of this bill and their commitment to protect consumers from predatory lending practices.

This bill would establish a 36-percent annual interest rate cap for all types of consumer credit—a cap that is supported by 100 years of history according to a new report released by the National Consumer Law Center.

That is the same Federal cap that is currently in place for loans marketed to military servicemembers and their families.

Why would we protect military service families from predatory lending and no one else? I will tell you why. We found out that many of them in the military ran into financial difficulties from time to time, and the payday lenders—the title loans and the rest of them—were camping out outside of military facilities anxious to loan members of the military the money they needed to get by until the next payday. Many of our soldiers got so deeply in debt to payday loans they had to leave military service. They just could not keep up with it. So we passed a law that said we are going to protect military families from this exploitation. Our soldiers and sailors, airmen and marines are worth that much more to us that we are going to protect them.

Well, there is an obvious question: Why are we not protecting everybody? If this kind of exploitation is wrong when it comes to military families, why is it not wrong for the rest of America? It surely is. We should expand the law that curbed payday, car title, and tax refund lending around military bases to include all types of credit for all borrowers. If a lender cannot make money on a 36-percent APR, maybe the loan should not have been made in the first place.

Fifteen States and the District of Columbia have already enacted laws that protect homeowners from high-cost loans, and 34 States and the District of Colombia have limited annual interest rates to 36 percent or less for one or more types of consumer credit. But there is a problem with the State-by-State approach: Many of these State laws are riddled with loopholes. Out-of-State lenders evade these State caps. Cash-strapped customers are then subjected to 400 percent annual interest rates for payday loans, on average, and 300 percent for car title loans, on average—400 percent interest? Our bill would require all lending to conform to the 36-percent APR limit, thereby eliminating the loopholes that have allowed predatory practices to flourish in many States around the country.

Let me be clear. I understand that sometimes families fall on hard times. They need a loan to make ends meet. They are desperate. Most of us have been there at one time or another in our lives. That is why I have included in this bill the flexibility for responsible lenders to replace payday loans with reasonably priced, small-dollar loan alternatives. The bill allows lenders to exceed the 36-percent cap for one-time application fees that cover the cost of setting up a new customer account and a processing cost, such as late charges and insufficient funds fees. I urge more institutions to offer small-dollar loans with consumer protections, including rates below 36 percent.

We know it can be done because banks and credit unions—many of them—are offering those loans.

I would also like to talk about a new type of payday lending—the online payday loan. Senator MERKLEY of Oregon and Senator TOM UDALL of New Mexico are leading the effort to crack down on these types of lenders who use the Internet to evade State law. Their bill, called the Safe Lending Act, would address online payday lending, such as hiding behind layers of anonymously registered Web sites and so-called lead generators. The bill would allow consumers to cancel a debit and prohibit payday lenders from circumventing State usury laws. We need more effective enforcement on online payday lenders. The Safe Lending Act would do it.

Another type of payday lending that I am afraid is on the rise is bank payday lending. Several banks offer deposit advance loans, which closely resemble the structure of payday loans, with up to 365 percent interest rates and short-term balloon payments.

Earlier this year, Senators BLUMENTHAL and I wrote a letter to the Federal Reserve, OCC, and the FDIC urging them to prohibit banks from offering predatory payday loans. Today, a petition signed by 157,000 Americans will be delivered to the same regulators calling on then to ban banks from offering payday loan products. I hope they do.

My first mentor in politics was the late Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois. He was a Ph.D. in economics who served here from 1948 to 1966. I met him at the end of his career when I was a college student. He wrote:

> Compound the camouflaging of credit by loading on all sorts of extraneous fees, such as exorbitant fees for credit life insurance, excessive fees for credit investigation, and all sorts of loan processing fees which rightfully should be included in the percentage rate statement so that any percentage rate quoted is meaningless and deceptive.

Senator Douglas said that 50 years ago. The name of the fees may have changed over time, but the goal of nickel-and-diming families out of their hard-earned money, unfortunately, has not changed.

By instituting a 36-percent cap on annual interest rates, the Protecting Consumers from Unreasonable Credit Rates Act would eliminate products that are predatory by their nature. The bill is supported by more than 40 consumer groups. They include Americans for Financial Reform, the Center for Responsible Lending, the Consumer Federation of America, and the National Consumer Law Center.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter from these organizations in support of this legislation.

APRIL 9, 2013.

Re Protecting Consumers from Unreasonable Credit Rates

Hon. RICHARD J. DURBIN,
Hart Senate Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR DURBIN: Thank you for introducing the ''Protecting Consumers from Unreasonable Credit Rates Act of 2013,'' which would extend the 36 percent usury APR cap for military families enacted in the Military Lending Act of 2006 to all consumers. A fair rate cap will protect consumers and curb abuses in the high-cost small dollar loan market. The 36 percent rate cap set by your legislation would permit responsible lending to consumers with less-than-perfect credit while restraining harmful terms.

Currently, consumers pay triple-digit rates for car title and payday loans (including those offered at traditional storefronts, online, and by banks). A large body of research has demonstrated that these products are structured to create a long-term debt trap that drains consumers' bank accounts. Indeed, the lack of underwriting, high fees, short loan terms, single balloon payment, and access to a borrower's checking account

as collateral ensure that most borrowers have no choice but to take out additional loans to pay off the initial payday or car title loan. A properly structured federal usury cap puts all creditors on a level playing field without undermining any additional consumer protections in the states.

Although many states cap rates for some forms of credit, banks can undermine these protections by exporting their weak home-state limits on credit costs to other states across the country. It is vitally important for Congress to set the outside limit on the cost-of-credit to curb abusive lending.

We enthusiastically support the Protecting Consumers from Unreasonable Credit Rates Act of 2013. For more information, please contact Tom Feltner, director of financial services, Consumer Federation of America at (202) 618–0310 or tfeltner@consumerfed.org.

Sincerely,

Alabama Appleseed, Alabama Arise, Americans for Financial Reform, Arkansans Against Abusive Payday Lending, Arkansas Community Organizations, California Reinvestment Coalition, Southwest Center for Economic Integrity (AZ), Center for Responsible Lending, Citizen Action Illinois, Coalition of Religious Communities (Utah), Consumer Action, Consumer Assistance Council, Inc. (MA).

Consumer Federation of America, Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety (CA), Consumers Union, Economic Fairness Oregon, Dēmos, Green America, Florida Consumer Action Network, Jesuit Social Research Institute, Loyola University, New Orleans Kentucky Coalition for Responsible Lending, Mississippi Center for Justice, Monsignor John Egan Campaign for Payday Loan Reform (IL), NAACP.

National Association of Consumer Advocates, National Community Reinvestment Coalition, National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low income clients, National People's Action, Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project (NY), New Jersey Citizen Action, Maryland CASH Campaign, Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition, Project IRENE (IL), RAISE Kentucky, Reinvestment Partners (NC), Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law (IL), South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center, Southern Poverty Law Center, Virginia Citizens Consumer Council, Virginia Poverty Law Center, Woodstock Institute (IL).

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we can allow American consumers today to keep more of their hard-earned money by establishing a reasonable fee and an annual interest rate cap, combating abuses by Internet payday lenders, and eliminating bank payday loans. Families and their communities are sure to benefit by saving more and putting more of their earnings back into the economy.

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. 673

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 ''Protecting Consumers from Unreasonable Credit Rates Act of 2013''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) attempts have been made to prohibit usurious interest rates in America since colonial times;

(2) at the Federal level, in 2006, Congress enacted a Federal 36 percent annualized usury cap for service members and their families for covered credit products, as defined by the Department of Defense, which curbed payday, car title, and tax refund lending around military bases;

(3) notwithstanding such attempts to curb predatory lending, high-cost lending persists in all 50 States due to loopholes in State laws, safe harbor laws for specific forms of credit, and the exportation of unregulated interest rates permitted by preemption;

(4) due to the lack of a comprehensive Federal usury cap, consumers annually pay approximately $23,700,000,000 for high-cost overdraft loans, as much as $8,100,000,000 for storefront and online payday loans, and additional amounts in unreported revenues from bank direct deposit advance loans and high-cost online installment loans;

(5) cash-strapped consumers pay on average 400 percent annual interest for payday loans, 300 percent annual interest for car title loans, up to 3,500 percent for bank overdraft loans, and triple-digit rates for online installment loans;

(6) a national maximum interest rate that includes all forms of fees and closes all loopholes is necessary to eliminate such predatory lending; and

(7) alternatives to predatory lending that encourage small dollar loans with minimal or no fees, installment payment schedules, and affordable repayment periods should be encouraged.

SEC. 3. NATIONAL MAXIMUM INTEREST RATE.

Chapter 2 of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1631 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''SEC. 140B. MAXIMUM RATES OF INTEREST.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no creditor may make an extension of credit to a consumer with respect to which the fee and interest rate, as defined in subsection (b), exceeds 36 percent.

''(b) FEE AND INTEREST RATE DEFINED.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this section, the fee and interest rate includes all charges payable, directly or indirectly, incident to, ancillary to, or as a condition of the extension of credit, including—

''(A) any payment compensating a creditor or prospective creditor for—

''(i) an extension of credit or making available a line of credit, such as fees connected with credit extension or availability such as numerical periodic rates, annual fees, cash advance fees, and membership fees; or

''(ii) any fees for default or breach by a borrower of a condition upon which credit was extended, such as late fees, creditor-imposed not sufficient funds fees charged when a borrower tenders payment on a debt with a check drawn on insufficient funds, overdraft fees, and over limit fees;

''(B) all fees which constitute a finance charge, as defined by rules of the Bureau in accordance with this title;

''(C) credit insurance premiums, whether optional or required; and

''(D) all charges and costs for ancillary products sold in connection with or incidental to the credit transaction.

''(2) TOLERANCES.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—With respect to a credit obligation that is payable in at least 3 fully amortizing installments over at least 90 days, the term 'fee and interest rate' does not include—

''(i) application or participation fees that in total do not exceed the greater of $30 or, if there is a limit to the credit line, 5 percent of the credit limit, up to $120, if—

''(I) such fees are excludable from the finance charge pursuant to section 106 and regulations issued thereunder;

''(II) such fees cover all credit extended or renewed by the creditor for 12 months; and

''(III) the minimum amount of credit extended or available on a credit line is equal to $300 or more;

''(ii) a late fee charged as authorized by State law and by the agreement that does not exceed either $20 per late payment or $20 per month; or

''(iii) a creditor-imposed not sufficient funds fee charged when a borrower tenders payment on a debt with a check drawn on insufficient funds that does not exceed $15.

''(B) ADJUSTMENTS FOR INFLATION.—The Bureau may adjust the amounts of the tolerances established under this paragraph for inflation over time, consistent with the primary goals of protecting consumers and ensuring that the 36 percent fee and interest rate limitation is not circumvented.

''(c) CALCULATIONS.—

''(1) OPEN END CREDIT PLANS.—For an open end credit plan—

''(A) the fee and interest rate shall be calculated each month, based upon the sum of all fees and finance charges described in subsection (b) charged by the creditor during the preceding 1-year period, divided by the average daily balance; and

''(B) if the credit account has been open less than 1 year, the fee and interest rate shall be calculated based upon the total of all fees and finance charges described in subsection (b)(1) charged by the creditor since the plan was opened, divided by the average daily balance, and multiplied by the quotient of 12 divided by the number of full months that the credit plan has been in existence.

''(2) OTHER CREDIT PLANS.—For purposes of this section, in calculating the fee and interest rate, the Bureau shall require the method of calculation of annual percentage rate specified in section 107(a)(1), except that the amount referred to in that section 107(a)(1) as the 'finance charge' shall include all fees, charges, and payments described in subsection (b)(1) of this section.

''(3) ADJUSTMENTS AUTHORIZED.—The Bureau may make adjustments to the calculations in paragraphs (1) and (2), but the primary goals of such adjustment shall be to protect consumers and to ensure that the 36 percent fee and interest rate limitation is not circumvented.

''(d) DEFINITION OF CREDITOR.—As used in this section, the term 'creditor' has the same meaning as in section 702(e) of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (15 U.S.C. 1691a(e)).

''(e) NO EXEMPTIONS PERMITTED.—The exemption authority of the Bureau under section 105 shall not apply to the rates established under this section or the disclosure requirements under section 127(b)(6).

''(f) DISCLOSURE OF FEE AND INTEREST RATE FOR CREDIT OTHER THAN OPEN END CREDIT PLANS.—In addition to the disclosure requirements under section 127(b)(6), the Bureau may prescribe regulations requiring disclosure of the fee and interest rate established under this section.

''(g) RELATION TO STATE LAW.—Nothing in this section may be construed to preempt any provision of State law that provides greater protection to consumers than is provided in this section.

''(h) CIVIL LIABILITY AND ENFORCEMENT.—In addition to remedies available to the consumer under section 130(a), any payment compensating a creditor or prospective creditor, to the extent that such payment is a transaction made in violation of this section, shall be null and void, and not enforceable by any party in any court or alternative dispute resolution forum, and the creditor or any subsequent holder of the obligation shall

promptly return to the consumer any principal, interest, charges, and fees, and any security interest associated with such transaction. Notwithstanding any statute of limitations or repose, a violation of this section may be raised as a matter of defense by recoupment or setoff to an action to collect such debt or repossess related security at any time.

''(i) VIOLATIONS.—Any person that violates this section, or seeks to enforce an agreement made in violation of this section, shall be subject to, for each such violation, 1 year in prison and a fine in an amount equal to the greater of—

''(1) 3 times the amount of the total accrued debt associated with the subject transaction; or

''(2) $50,000.

''(j) STATE ATTORNEYS GENERAL.—An action to enforce this section may be brought by the appropriate State attorney general in any United States district court or any other court of competent jurisdiction within 3 years from the date of the violation, and such attorney general may obtain injunctive relief.''.

SEC. 4. DISCLOSURE OF FEE AND INTEREST RATE FOR OPEN END CREDIT PLANS.

Section 127(b)(6) of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1637(b)(6)) is amended by striking ''the total finance charge expressed'' and all that follows through the end of the paragraph and inserting ''the fee and interest rate, displayed as 'FAIR', established under section 141.''.

By Mr. ROBERTS:

S. 677. A bill to amend the Federal Crop Insurance Act to extend and improve the crop insurance program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, today I have just introduced legislation in regards to our efforts to, once again, try to address a farm bill on behalf of our Nation's farmers, ranchers, and dairy producers. We passed a farm bill in the last session. It was one of the first bills where we achieved regular order, i.e., where every Senator had an opportunity to have an amendment. Many did. We had over 300, as I recall—''we'' meaning the distinguished chairperson of the committee, Senator STABENOW, and myself as the ranking member at that particular time. Thank goodness not all 300 demanded a vote, but I think we voted 73 times, and we passed the bill by a good bipartisan margin. I hope we can get back to that. The chairperson, Senator STABENOW, is working very diligently to produce another farm bill.

I see the distinguished majority leader coming to the floor. He was very helpful in our pleas to bring a farm bill to the floor. Senator REID actually asked me whether we could do it in 3 days as I promised, and we did it in 2½, so with cooperation we got that done. It was, as I say, the first bill we took up in the last session where we did have regular order. I hope we can keep that record. I thank the majority leader for his efforts in that regard.

Why am I bringing this up now, even before we mark up in regards to the bill I have introduced? Basically because farmers are now planting their crops despite 3 years of drought and all sorts of hardship and all sorts of uncertainty about a farm bill. We have extended the 2008 act. It is not what we wanted to do in the Senate, but that is what happened. So we hope that does not happen again.

We hope we can work again in a bipartisan way to produce a product that not only helps the farmer and rancher—we have, what, 6 billion people in the world today? We are going to go to 9 billion people in the next several decades. Everybody in the Senate should be aware of that. It is an overriding issue. We are going to have to double our agricultural production if we are going to continue our efforts to feed this country in a troubled and hungry world.

That even has national security implications. Show me a country that does not have a stable food supply, and I will show you a country that is in a lot of trouble. Just read about the Mideast and what is happening there.

What do farmers want? I mean what was the No. 1 issue we heard—''we'' meaning, again, Senator STABENOW and I—when we held farm hearings both in Michigan, specialty crops, and Kansas, program crops: wheat, corn, beans et cetera? Over and over the No. 1 issue was crop insurance.

We were trying to get out of the business or stay out of the business of farmers planting for the government. And ''farm subsidies,'' that always makes the headlines in the Washington Post for people who for the most part have never been west of the Missouri River.

Despite all the criticisms of the farm program, I think we consolidated and reformed 100 different programs. We saved roughly $23 or $24 billion—the first authorizing committee to do so. We also strengthened and improved crop insurance. That was the No. 1 issue for farm lenders, the No. 1 issue for farmers and ranchers, and the No. 1 issue for everybody involved in the miracle of agriculture that allows us to do this so Americans have the safest, most abundant, and cheapest food in the history of the world.

I hear time and time again from our producers and their lenders that crop insurance is the cornerstone of the farm safety net. I hear it at home in Kansas. We hear it in the Agriculture Committee. I hear it every time I speak to producers in Washington. I know the chairperson of the committee, Senator STABENOW, has heard the same. All members of the committee know the value of crop insurance. I mean all members of the distinguished Committee on Agriculture.

As we head into another round of farm bill debates, and I know the chairperson would like to get it done, would like to mark up a bill in the next 3 weeks—I don't know if that is possible; we will see. We did that in 2½ days in the last session of Congress. Whether we can do that again I am not sure—I am constantly asked for my priorities, and my priorities reflect what I have heard from farmers and ranchers at home and their bankers and their lenders and everybody who wants consistency. The No. 1 priority for the farm bill is crop insurance. If you doubt the importance of crop insurance, just look what it has provided the past 2 years. It is rather unbelievable.

Since 2011 we have faced the worst drought since the Dust Bowl in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas—and in Nebraska now. In so many cases Nebraska is worse than any other place.

Then we had the massive flooding along the Mississippi and the Missouri Rivers, and hurricanes that simply devastated the Northeast as well. I don't know what we have done to Mother Nature, but she sure has not been very kind to us. In 2012 the drought worsened and spread across the Midwest to States such as Missouri, Iowa, and Illinois. Now that we are into the Midwest, now we have headlines about the drought. When we burn up almost every year out in our country, on the high plains, nobody gets any attention. But they get it in the Midwest, they get a lot of attention.

Just months after all of this, why are producers still now tuning up their equipment and preparing their fields to put seed in the ground once again? A farmer never puts any seed in the ground without hope for a crop. Hope springs eternal with regard to agriculture, and here we are, once again, having that capability. It is not because of some agriculture ad hoc disaster program that seems to appear every even-numbered year in this body or any package for farmers, through a disaster program, that would represent some kind of help. Farmers are back on their feet and producing the food that feeds a troubled and hungry world because of crop insurance. They are able to put the seed in the ground again because they managed their risk and protected their operations from Mother Nature's destruction through the purchase of crop insurance.

This is the one component of the farm safety net that requires a producer to have skin in the game. We could apply that to a lot of other things that we debate on the floor of the Senate. Don't forget, crop insurance only provides coverage if a producer actually has a loss. So a Kansas farmer might pay into the crop insurance system for years or a farmer or a producer from Wisconsin or, for that matter, anyplace that values agriculture. But if they never experience a severe loss or a natural disaster, they will never receive a penny. Simply, crop insurance allows producers a way to manage risk so they can continue to provide a stable and secure food supply and pass their operations on to their children.

If that is not a success story in the partnership between government and private industry and America's farmers, I don't know what is. But just because a program is successful doesn't

mean there is not room for improvement. That is what the bill is that I just laid at the desk.

Crop insurance is a big tent with plenty of room under it. The program already protects more than 250 million acres of cropland in the United States, more than two-thirds of the eligible acres that we farm. But there are still acres that are not protected and producers who cannot afford to purchase this kind of protection they need. The more producers under that crop insurance tent, and the more that are protected from disaster, the more stable our food supply and our rural economies will be.

We made great progress, as I said, last year in the Agriculture Committee and on the Senate floor improving crop insurance to bring even more people under the tent. Today, I am here again to continue our work to preserve and protect and strengthen our crop insurance. My legislation enhances the Crop Insurance Program by including something called a Supplemental Coverage Option. The acronym for that is SCO. It allows producers to purchase additional crop insurance coverage on an area yield and loss basis. It also amends the Federal Crop Insurance Act to make available separate enterprise units for irrigated and nonirrigated acreages of crops in counties. That is especially helpful in regard to what we are going through with another year of drought.

The bill also addresses the declining Actual Production History, that is a yield problem, by increasing the county transitional yield. So if someone did not have a yield in their farm, but they could then go to the county yield average, they would be in a lot better shape. They would be helped out in one area and not another area. This would help in that respect.

The legislation also sets budget limitations. Yes, we set budget limitations on future renegotiation of what is called the Standard Reinsurance Agreement by requiring any savings realized in the SRA renegotiations to return to the Crop Insurance Program, to return to the RMA programs. Let's not use the Crop Insurance Program where we have savings and then use it as a bank for other programs. That has happened far too often—in the Senate and in the House.

The legislation also continues the Stacked Income Protection Plan—that is known as STAX—for the producers who plant upland cotton. That means all or most all of the products that we produce in the organizations that represent those commodities and represent those farmers who grow the commodities are in agreement—and cotton was very helpful in the last farm bill.

Meanwhile, in order to help pay down the debt and reduce the deficit, the legislation is fully paid for by the elimination of direct payments which saves taxpayers $5 billion over 10 years. Overall, the legislation will strengthen the farm safety net while at the same time saving taxpayers billions of dollars and preventing costly ad hoc agriculture disaster programs.

There are those who don't believe in a good Crop Insurance Program. When Mother Nature doesn't behave and they get into these terribly destructive forces of nature—and it always happens. As I have said, it usually happens on an even-numbered year. If they are going to get into a disaster program and take part in it, they better darn well make sure to say: OK. I am going to help you out, but don't put your name on it. Because when it comes out to the Farm Service Agency and all the people who are supposed to implement it at the Department of Agriculture and in almost every county in the United States, it is a disaster to implement and the farmer doesn't get the kind of help he or she needs. That is not the way to do business. The cost annually is far greater than the Crop Insurance Program.

Overall, the legislation will strengthen the farm safety net while at the same time saving the taxpayers billions of dollars. It prevents ad hoc agriculture disaster programs. That is what the farmer wants. The farmer wants certainty. If he takes part in a Crop Insurance Program, he has certainty and he has protection.

There was a time in the not-so-distant past when the farm programs greatly distorted planning decisions. As chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, back in the day, along with others in the Senate, we did everything we could to eliminate those distortions. Why? Because with the World Trade Organization, we could get in a lot of trouble.

I am confident this proposal is the responsible path forward for agriculture, and it will not drive planting decisions or leave farmers to plant for the government program rather than the marketplace. With this crop insurance legislation, we have the opportunity to improve on an enormously successful program and continue good farm program policies.

We have a lot of work ahead of us to pass and sign a farm bill into law. A lot of farmers and a lot of ranchers are depending on it, and there are a lot of people who benefit from it. As I said, we have the lowest cost and safest food in the history of the world, and it allows us to use our wherewithal in a humanitarian way to be of help to those in need who undergo some very difficult circumstances. As I have indicated, agriculture involves our national security.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Agriculture Committee, farmers across the country, and industry partners to enact this legislation as part of the farm bill.

By Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota:

S. 684. A bill to amend the Mni Wiconi Project Act of 1988 to facilitate completion of the Mni Wiconi Rural Water Supply System, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Mni Wiconi Project Act Amendments of 2013 to facilitate completion of a rural water supply system that was first authorized in the 100th Congress. As a freshman Member of the House of Representatives, I introduced legislation authorizing construction of the Mni Wiconi Project to bring quality, treated Missouri River water to several Indian reservations and a large, rural area of my State. Prior to Mni Wiconi, these areas faced insufficient and, too often, unsafe drinking water.

In the authorizing statute, Congress found that the United States has a trust responsibility to ensure that adequate and safe water supplies are available to meet the economic, environmental, water supply, and public health needs of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Rosebud Indian Reservation, and Lower Brule Indian Reservation. Treated drinking water from the Missouri River now reaches most areas on these three reservations, as well as the 7 county area of the West River/Lyman-Jones Rural Water System.

Nearly 25 years after it was first authorized, this critically important project is very close to completion. Because appropriations failed to keep pace with projected timelines, however, additional administrative costs have cut into construction funding. As a result, the project needs an increase in the cost ceiling and extension of its authorization in order to be completed. Without these adjustments, some portions of the Oglala Sioux Rural Water Supply System and Rosebud Sioux Rural Water System will remain incomplete. The legislation I have introduced today addresses this shortfall and also directs other Federal agencies that support rural water development to assist the Bureau of Reclamation in improving and repairing existing community water systems that are important components of the project.

Our Federal responsibility to address the need for adequate and safe drinking water supplies on the Pine Ridge, Rosebud and Lower Brule Indian Reservations remains as important as ever. I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this legislation.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself and Ms. HIRONO):

S. 690. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. SCHATZ. 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. 690

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 ''Filipino Veterans Fairness Act of 2013''.

SEC. 2. CERTAIN SERVICE IN THE ORGANIZED MILITARY FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES AND THE PHILIPPINE SCOUTS DEEMED TO BE ACTIVE SERVICE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 107 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by striking ''not'' after ''Army of the United States, shall''; and

(B) by striking '', except benefits under—'' and all that follows in that subsection and inserting a period;

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) by striking ''not'' after ''Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945 shall''; and

(B) by striking ''except—'' and all that follows in that subsection and inserting a period;

(3) by amending subsection (c) to read as follows:

''(c) DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—In determining the eligibility of the service of an individual under this section, the Secretary shall take into account any alternative documentation regarding such service, including documentation other than the Missouri List, that the Secretary determines relevant.

''(2) REPORT.—Not later than March 1 of each year, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that includes—

''(A) the number of individuals applying for benefits pursuant to this section during the previous year; and

''(B) the number of such individuals that the Secretary approved for benefits.''; and

(4) by amending subsection (d) to read as follows:

''(d) RELATION TO FILIPINO VETERANS EQUITY COMPENSATION FUND.—Section 1002(h) of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (title X of division A of Public Law 111–5; 123 Stat. 200; 38 U.S.C. 107 note) shall not apply to an individual described in subsection (a) or (b) of this section.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) The heading of such section is amended to read as follows:

''§ 107. Certain service deemed to be active service: service in organized military forces of the Philippines and in the Philippine Scouts''.

(2) The item relating to such section in the table of sections at the beginning of chapter 1 of such title is amended to read as follows:

''107. Certain service deemed to be active service: service in organized military forces of the Philippines and in the Philippine Scouts.''.

SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The amendments made by this Act shall take effect on the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) APPLICABILITY.—No benefits shall accrue to any person for any period before the effective date of this Act by reason of the amendments made by this Act.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 94—RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SINKING OF THE U.S.S. ''THRESHER'' (SSN 593)

Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself, Ms. AYOTTE, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. KING) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 94

Whereas U.S.S. *Thresher* was first launched at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard on July 9, 1960;

Whereas U.S.S. *Thresher* departed Portsmouth Naval Shipyard for her final voyage on April 9, 1963, with a crew of 16 officers, 96 sailors, and 17 civilians;

Whereas the mix of that crew reflects the unity of the naval submarine service, military and civilian, in the protection of the United States;

Whereas at approximately 7:47 a.m. on April 10, 1963, while in communication with the surface ship U.S.S. *Skylark*, and approximately 220 miles off the coast of New England, U.S.S. *Thresher* began her final descent;

Whereas U.S.S. *Thresher* was declared lost with all hands on April 10, 1963;

Whereas in response to the loss of U.S.S. *Thresher*, the United States Navy instituted new regulations to ensure the health of the submariners and the safety of the submarines of the United States;

Whereas those regulations led to the establishment of the Submarine Safety and Quality Assurance program (SUBSAFE), now 1 of the most comprehensive military safety programs in the world;

Whereas SUBSAFE has kept the submariners of the United States safe at sea ever since as the strongest, safest submarine force in history;

Whereas, since the establishment of SUBSAFE, no SUBSAFE-certified submarine has been lost at sea, which is a legacy owed to the brave individuals who perished aboard U.S.S. *Thresher*;

Whereas from the loss of U.S.S. *Thresher*, there arose in the institutions of higher education in the United States the ocean engineering curricula that enables the preeminence of the United States in submarine warfare; and

Whereas the crew of U.S.S. *Thresher* demonstrated the ''last full measure of devotion'' in service to the United States, and this devotion characterizes the sacrifices of all submariners, past and present: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the 50th anniversary of the sinking of U.S.S. *Thresher*;

(2) remembers with profound sorrow the loss of U.S.S. *Thresher* and her gallant crew of sailors and civilians on April 10, 1963; and

(3) expresses its deepest gratitude to all submariners on ''eternal patrol'', who are forever bound together by dedicated and honorable service to the United States of America.

NOTICES OF HEARINGS

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a hearing has been scheduled before Subcommittee on National Parks. The hearing will be held on Tuesday, April 23, 2013, at 2:30 p.m. in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The purpose of the hearing is to receive testimony on the following bills:

S. 59, to designate a Distinguished Flying Cross National Memorial at the March Field Air Museum in Riverside, California;

S. 155, to designate a mountain in the State of Alaska as Denali;

S. 156, to allow for the harvest of gull eggs by the Huna Tlingit people within Glacier Bay National Park in the State of Alaska;

S. 219, to establish the Susquehanna Gateway National Heritage Area in the State of Pennsylvania, and for other purposes;

S. 225, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of alternatives for commemorating and interpreting the role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early years of the National Parks, and for other purposes;

S. 228, to establish the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area, California;

S. 285, to designate the Valles Caldera National Preserve as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes;

S. 305, to authorize the acquisition of core battlefield land at Champion Hill, Port Gibson, and Raymond for addition to Vicksburg National Military Park;

S. 349, to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate a segment of the Beaver, Chipuxet, Queen, Wood, and Pawcatuck Rivers in the States of Connecticut and Rhode Island for study for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes;

S. 371, to establish the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park, to dedicate the Park to John H. Chafee, and for other purposes;

S. 476, to amend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Development Act to extend to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Commission;

S. 486, to authorize pedestrian and motorized vehicular access in Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area, and for other purposes;

S. 507, to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Los Alamos, New Mexico, and Hanford, Washington, and for other purposes, and;

S. 615, to establish Coltsville National Historical Park in the State of Connecticut, and for other purposes.

Because of the limited time available for the hearing, witnesses may testify by invitation only. However, those wishing to submit written testimony for the hearing record should send it to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, 304 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510–6150, or by email to John_Assini@energy.senate.gov.

For further information, please contact please contact David Brooks (202) 224–9863 or John Assini (202) 224–9313.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a hearing has been scheduled before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. The hearing will be held on Tuesday, April 23, 2013, at 10 a.m., in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The purpose of this hearing is to receive testimony on the following legislation:

S. 306, the Bureau of Reclamation Small Conduit Hydropower Development and Rural Jobs Act;