

fund science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and training that will help drive American competitiveness. Senator SCHUMER offered a second degree amendment to ensure that a percentage of the funding is used to promote STEM education in groups that are underrepresented in the sciences, such as women and racial minorities. Both amendments were accepted by the committee by unanimous consent.

The committee considered 35 amendments to strengthen the bill's border security provisions offered by both Republicans and Democrats. Of the 26 amendments accepted to this section, 10 were offered by Republicans. Senator GRASSLEY offered an amendment to expand the Comprehensive Southern Border Strategy to include all border sectors, not just high-risk sectors. The committee accepted amendments by Senators FLAKE and GRASSLEY to increase oversight of DHS enforcement strategies, and amendments by Senators SESSIONS and CORNYN to protect border communities. These amendments add to, and strengthen, the strong enforcement provisions already included in the bill.

These amendments are just a few of the amendments offered to strengthen provisions in the pre-Title and Title I border security provisions and promote jobs and innovation in the non-immigration visa provisions in Title IV of the bill. Other bipartisan proposals to provide assistance for American workers to apply for jobs in the technology sector and establish employee reporting requirements to address potential abuse of the visa system have also been adopted.

The Judiciary Committee debated and accepted 48 amendments offered by Republican members. I was encouraged by the committee's open and respectful debate. In a time where partisan brinksmanship has become the norm, the Judiciary Committee was able to demonstrate the need for compromise and find common ground to stand on in pursuit of comprehensive immigration reform. The result of our committee's consideration is a stronger, more bipartisan bill, and I look forward to working with the rest of the Senate to ensure its passage.

The bill is not the one that I would have drafted. I voted for amendments that were rejected and against amendments that were accepted. The bill mandates more than \$1.5 billion of more southern border fencing, which I believe a mistake. My greatest disappointment is that the legislation that comes from the Senate Judiciary Committee does not recognize the rights of all Americans, including gay and lesbian Americans who have just as much right to spousal immigration benefits as anyone else. I will continue my efforts to end the needless discrimination so many Americans face in our immigration system. This discrimination serves no legitimate purpose and it is wrong.

Since the beginning of this Congress, I have tried to make comprehensive immigration reform our top legislative priority in the Senate Judiciary Committee. In January at Georgetown University Law Center, I outlined my expectation that comprehensive immigration reform would be the matter to which the Judiciary Committee would devote itself this spring and announced an early hearing to highlight the national discussion. I followed through. The committee held three hearings on comprehensive immigration reform in February and March.

I have said since the beginning of the year that I was looking forward to seeing principles turned into legislation. The Judiciary Committee has now advanced such a bill. We completed our work a month later than I had hoped, but we had to begin much later than I had hoped. We were able to make up ground by concentrating our efforts during the 5 weeks since the bill was introduced in which we held three more hearings and five extended markup sessions.

I have favored an open and transparent process during which all 18 Senators serving on the Senate Judiciary Committee had the opportunity to participate and to propose or oppose ideas for reform. The Majority Leader agreed that we needed regular order in the consideration of comprehensive immigration reform. The process took time and was not easy. There were strongly-held, differing points of view.

I am encouraged that after two resounding presidential defeats, some Republican politicians are concerned enough about the growing Hispanic voting population that they are abandoning their former demagoguery and coming to the table. In what is being called its "autopsy" of the last election, the Republican National Committee wrote: "Hispanic voters tell us our Party's position on immigration has become a litmus test, measuring whether we are meeting them with a welcome mat or a closed door." After slamming the door on our efforts for comprehensive immigration reform during the Bush administration, I welcome Republicans to this effort. I continue to fear that some merely want to talk the talk while looking for excuses to abandon what needs to be a bipartisan effort.

Few topics are more fundamental to who and what we are as a Nation than immigration. The Statue of Liberty has long proclaimed America's welcome: "Give us your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. . . . Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" That is what America has stood for and what we should continue to represent. Immigration throughout our history has been an ongoing source of renewal of our spirit, our creativity and our economic strength.

In the course of our deliberations I have quoted my friend of many years,

Ted Kennedy. In the summer of 2007, as our effort at comprehensive immigration reform was being blocked in the Senate, he spoke about his disappointment and our resolve. He said: "A minority in the Senate rejected a stronger economy that is fairer to our taxpayers and our workers. A minority of the Senate rejected America's own extraordinary immigrant history and ignored our Nation's most urgent needs. But we are in this struggle for the long haul. . . . As we continue the battle, we will have ample inspiration in the lives of the immigrants all around us." I have taken inspiration from many sources, from our shared history as immigrants and as Americans, from the experiences of my own grandparents, and from our courageous witnesses Jose Antonio Vargas and Gaby Pacheco and from the families that can be more secure when we enact comprehensive immigration reform.

The dysfunction in our current immigration system affects all of us and it is long past time for reform. I hope that our history, our values, and our decency can inspire us finally to take action. We need an immigration system that lives up to American values and helps write the next great chapter in American history by reinvigorating our economy and enriching our communities. Together we can work to pass a bill that repairs our broken immigration system.

POSTAL REFORM

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this year, as I do every year, I have met with many Vermonters who have come up to me to express their views about the future of the U.S. Postal Service. But this year, these meetings have taken a different tone. Today, rather than asking me how the Senate can make a durable and effective institution even stronger, Vermonters ask me how the Senate can stave off the impending default of the Postal Service. I hear these questions from businesses, from private citizens, and from postal employees. I am stopped by Vermonters in the grocery store or at the gas pump, wanting to know what we in the Senate will do. Vermont, because of our mostly rural population, is more dependent on the Postal Service than are urban and densely populated States. Vermonters, almost to a person, subscribe to Ben Franklin's vision of a public Postal Service that guarantees the delivery of mail to everyone.

These questions about the coming collapse of the Postal Service are strange to say the least. The USPS posted a \$100 million profit from its business operations during the first quarter of fiscal year 2013. So how is it that a company that made \$100 million in the first quarter of this fiscal year is in financial trouble? As in far too many other instances, the problem is not with the Postal Service, the problem is with the United States House of Representatives.

In 2006, by unanimous consent, the Senate took up and passed the House's Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act. One of the provisions of this bill, meant to shore up the long-term security of postal retiree health benefits, required that the Postal Service begin the prepayment of health benefits 75 years in advance. While no other public agency or private business stipulates this degree of prepayment, I consented in 2006 because the economy was strong, the Postal Service could manage these prepayments, and I believed that any needed changes to the proposal could be made with the same level of bipartisan comity as in 2006. How wrong I was.

Of course, since 2006, the economy has collapsed, first-class mail volume has fallen precipitously, and bipartisanship in the Congress has taken a nose dive. These factors together explain how the U.S. House of Representatives has converted a \$100 million profit in the first quarter of fiscal 2013 into a \$1.3 billion loss. While many American businesses have gone under during the Great Recession and others have struggled just to stay afloat, House Republicans have refused to budge on the health benefits prepayment.

You may ask why the onus resides at the feet of House Republicans. After all, the Senate consented to the 2006 House Republican-sponsored bill. But since that time, only the U.S. Senate has taken measures to solve the problem. Last year we took up and passed the 21st Century Postal Service Act of 2012, which would have lightened the fiscal burden on the Postal Service until its lost revenues from the economic slump and reductions in first-class mail could be offset by growth into the package delivery market. This bill was passed on a bipartisan basis here in the Senate despite record-breaking partisanship by the Senate minority. I should note, as with any bipartisan measure, there were provisions in this bill with which I disagreed. Yet it turned out to make little difference, since the Senate bill languished in the House. In fact, the House even failed to take up its own bill and pass it as an alternative to the Senate proposal.

Meanwhile, the Postal Service continues to stagger under the crushing burden of 75 years of prepayments for retiree health benefits. This effort, which originally looked like a reasonable effort to shore up retiree benefits, has become the proverbial albatross.

Rather than addressing this problem, the strategy of the House of Representatives appears to be to force the Postal Service into default, at which point their draconian demands for slashing cuts will look reasonable by comparison to their manufactured crisis. If this strategy sounds familiar, it should—it is the same strategy Republicans used to negotiate the Budget Control Act of 2011, using U.S. credit worthiness as a hostage they seemed more than willing

to kill. This strategy ultimately cost the United States its triple-A rating with Standard and Poor's and an estimated \$1.3 billion in additional interest payments in 2011 alone, according to the Government Accountability Office. And that figure will escalate with time. That's \$1.3 billion more that taxpayers will pay to Chinese lenders and Wall Street banks in order for Republicans to secure sequestration cuts to Medicare cancer treatments, cut National Guard technicians' salaries through furlough, and reduce Head Start programs for needy children.

The strategy worked so well in the summer of 2011 that it has overtaken everything else in the Republican playbook. Unable to sell a shrinking vision of America to voters in 2012, Republicans are left with procedural mechanisms to obtain their desired outcome. Ironically, if they are successful, they are likely to simultaneously celebrate victory and blame President Obama and Senate Democrats for letting them get their way. If that seems like an absurdity, compare the conflicting statements of the Speaker of the House JOHN BOEHNER and Chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee GREG WALDEN on proposed cuts to Social Security in the President's 2014 budget proposal. The President finally proposed reductions to entitlement programs after Republicans had long demanded such cuts, eliciting muted praise from Speaker BOEHNER while Chairman WALDEN accused the President of "going after seniors." I should note that as part of House leadership, Chairman WALDEN works for Speaker BOEHNER.

So do not be surprised when a new rendition of this plan causes a default by the Postal Service, after which Republicans demand reductions in the Postal Service's competitive product line and massive layoffs of postal employees. I supported last year's Senate postal reform bill in the hope of striking a compromise. But there are better ways to balance the Postal Service's books, and recognizing that the House has refused compromise, I am glad to join Senator SANDERS and other Democratic Senators in a full-throated articulation of a better vision for the USPS.

This vision is articulated by our bill, the Postal Service Protection Act of 2013. This bill would allow the Postal Service to recover huge retirement pension overpayments estimated by the Inspector General of USPS to be \$75 billion. It would alleviate the remaining health benefits prefunding requirement. It would protect postal customers from having their local postal facilities closed without the Postal Service following proper criteria. The bill would permit the Postal Service to sell non-postal products and services. It would allow the mailing of beer or wine by a licensed manufacturer in accordance with the laws of the States. It would permanently protect one of the Postal Service's greatest commercial

advantages over its competitors, Saturday delivery. And it would set the table for long-term growth into the package delivery market by establishing a Chief Innovation Officer and a Postal Innovation Advisory Commission.

Like any business enterprise, the Postal Service cannot cut its way to greatness. It must find areas where it can grow. The Postal Service Protection Act of 2013 would give the Postal Service the financial breathing room and innovation mechanisms it needs to chart a new and sustainable course in the next century, when email and package delivery will supplant first class mail. These changes do not diminish our commitment to Ben Franklin's vision; they facilitate its renewal, recognizing that while change is not easy, it is also unavoidable. In that spirit, I call on all Senators to join me in cosponsoring Senator SANDERS' Postal Service Protection Act and in keeping faith with Americans by protecting an indispensable American institution.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN VARRICCHIONE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I wish to recognize a man who is a leading contributor to the preservation of the Italian community in Burlington, VT.

John Varricchio grew up in a former Italian neighborhood adjacent to downtown Burlington. I have my own fond memories of that neighborhood, travelling with my mother—a first generation Italian-American—from Montpelier to Burlington to shop in the small, family-owned, Italian markets there. Only remnants of the neighborhood remain, as most of it was lost to urban renewal in the 1960s.

I had the pleasure of joining John and other members of the Vermont Italian Club for the dedication of a historic marker, which serves as a reminder of the wonderful neighborhood in which he grew up, and of the people who lived there. John was instrumental in making the marker possible. We all shared wonderful Italian food after the dedication ceremony. I was honored to be part of such a special event.

John never moved far from the old neighborhood. He stayed in Vermont and became an outstanding teacher and coach at Rice Memorial High School—a Catholic school in South Burlington—where he became affectionately known among students as "Mister V." Many Rice graduates consider him a favorite teacher.

John's contributions to the Vermont Italian Club, and his efforts to preserve our State's Italian heritage, are many. In honor of his work, I ask unanimous consent that an article published in The Burlington Free Press on May 10, 2013, "Fragrant memories of Burlington's deep Italian roots," be printed into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows: