

week, and then final passage. It is a historic and important measure. We have interrupted it briefly to consider a nomination that is important as well. It is the nomination by President Obama of Penny Pritzker of Chicago to be the next Secretary of Commerce in the President's Cabinet.

I know Penny and I know her family and I know the reputation they enjoy in Chicago, in Illinois, and around the world. She is an extraordinary person. The Pritzker family has been successful in business for many decades and many generations. She stepped up years ago and told her father she wanted to play a role in business leadership. There weren't that many women involved in business leadership at that time, but her father said he would give her an opportunity, and he did. She became very successful with the corporation, with the family businesses, and has made a name for herself over the years.

Penny has decades of business, entrepreneurial, and, equally important for this job, civic experience. Despite her success in the private sector, Penny Pritzker and her family have given unsparingly of their own time to help many important causes. She understands business and economic development, but she also understands the reality of the challenges many families face across our country.

We know the jobs report from earlier this month showed we had 6.9 million jobs created over 39 consecutive months of private sector job growth. That is progress. We have come a long way. But let's make no mistake, families are still struggling to find work and many who are working are struggling paycheck to paycheck to survive. Penny Pritzker will bring considerable experience to the Department of Commerce to help us create new businesses and job opportunities in America.

Penny understands what it takes to build a business from scratch. She has done it five different times with start-up businesses. She has created jobs that support families and communities across America.

More than creating jobs, she has helped countless people get the education they need to connect them with job opportunities.

She leads Skills for America's Future, a national program bringing together businesses, community colleges, and others, preparing workers for good-paying 21st century jobs.

In addition to education, Penny Pritzker is an ardent supporter of the arts, which supports economic development and tourism across the Nation. She is a member of the American Academy of the Arts and Sciences and a trustee of the Kennedy Center.

There is no question that our economy is headed in the right direction. The question is: Who will pursue today's efforts to continue that growth and lead us to future success? Who will continue efforts to help American businesses in the global marketplace?

Although we are on the right track, too many businesses in America are still struggling to survive. Expanding the new markets is one way to help American business and our economy. We need a Secretary of Commerce who will not only help small businesses grow and create jobs but also open opportunities for businesses to expand their products and services across the States, the country, and the globe.

Penny Pritzker called me a couple of weeks ago and urged me, if possible, to do everything I could to try to get her nomination moving before July. I talked to Senator REID, who was fully supportive of the President's nominee. The reason she is anxious to do that is because important trade discussions are going to begin after the 1st of July with some of the leading economic powers around the world. She wanted to be at that table. It is important for America that she is.

Penny knows what it takes to make business work. She knows the tools businesses need. What is more, she knows economic development at all levels.

Colleagues from both sides of the aisle agree we need job creation. Penny Pritzker has a proven track record in promoting jobs and growth, and her leadership will help our country. Her decades of experience will serve her well. Ms. Pritzker's wide-ranging perspective will prove worthwhile to the future of our Nation as we compete in the global marketplace.

I urge my colleagues to support Ms. Penny Pritzker's nomination, and I look forward to working with her as she is hopefully going to be the next Secretary of Commerce under the Obama administration.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I also rise in support of Penny Pritzker for Secretary of Commerce. I think she will do an excellent job.

I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 3 or 4 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING KEN DUKE

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I rise today to honor Ken Duke of Hope, AR. Ken is an incredible athlete who has a great story and is actually here with us today.

Years ago, as a teenager, Ken was diagnosed with scoliosis and he was forced for years to wear a back brace. There were times when he had to wear that back brace for 23 hours a day. He underwent surgery and numerous treatments. Eventually they put a metal rod in his spine and the rod is still there today.

Despite all of those tough circumstances, he persevered. He went on to win his high school district golf tournament. He was wearing the back brace, no less.

In recent years, Ken became a strong advocate for those suffering from spi-

nal problems. He now hosts an annual charity golf tournament called "A Day with Duke."

Anyway, after playing golf for Henderson State University—and might I say, Go Reddies—he turned professional. As do many professional golfers, he had his good days and bad days, his ups and downs. It is a tough life. He has been out there plugging away week in and week out. But this past Sunday Ken had one of his best days of golf he has ever had in his career. At the Travelers Championship in Cromwell, CT, Duke faced a tense playoff with Chris Stroud. After Stroud had chipped in on the 18th hole, the men were neck and neck, both at 12 under par. But Ken pushed ahead, making a 2½ foot birdie putt on the second playoff hole to clinch his first PGA tour victory. This was not only a great shot and a great round of golf, but it is also a great American story.

Arkansas is very proud of Ken, and we hope there are many wins in his future. I wanted to say "congratulations."

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, I have the honor to chair the Commerce Committee and thus have enormous interest in who our next Commerce Secretary is going to be. I don't think the President could have picked anybody better.

I have known Penny Pritzker for 30 years. I have Chicago relations in my family too. She is a force of nature. That is the thing I want people to understand: She is a force of nature. Yes, she is wealthy. Yes, she is experienced in business. Yes, she is experienced in public service. She is a tiger of energy and purpose.

The Department of Commerce is probably the most complicated—I don't know compared to DOD, but I think it is the most complicated non-DOD agency. We have oceans, spectrum, aviation, trains. There are a thousand different areas, including all the oceans. It takes a real leader and it takes a tough person. We haven't had a tough enough person for a while. We had one, but then because of health reasons that person had to resign.

I cannot imagine a better—and I don't say these things often about nominees—I cannot imagine a more perfect person to run the Department of Commerce than Penny Pritzker. I hope my colleagues will vote for her overwhelmingly.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor, and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I rise today to speak once again on the immigration bill before us.

Before there was a Judiciary Committee markup, before there was an immigration bill, and before there was even a Gang of 8, most Senators had three basic beliefs: The immigration system is broken, fixing it will be neither simple nor easy, and it absolutely needs to be done.

I share those beliefs. I also rely on two sets of experience.

I served in this body and on the Judiciary Committee during the 99th Congress when we considered the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, commonly called the Simpson-Mazzoli bill, and during the 110th Congress when we considered the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007.

I voted against both of them. I opposed the 1986 legislation because it was self-proclaimed amnesty. I opposed the 2007 legislation because it had been developed outside of the Judiciary Committee.

My participation in the current immigration reform effort has been informed by those beliefs and those experiences. We simply must fix our broken immigration system, but in doing so we must not repeat either the substantive errors from 1986 or the procedural errors from 2007.

As we all know, most of the media and political attention has focused on the border security and legalization parts of this bill. But there is much more to it than that.

I initially focused on two areas. First, working with Senators RUBIO, COONS, and KLOBUCHAR, I focused on increasing opportunities for high-skilled immigrants. The bill we introduced, the I-Squared bill, now has 28 bipartisan cosponsors.

Second, working with Senators RUBIO, FEINSTEIN, and BENNET, I focused on developing the guest worker program that will be so important for the agricultural sector of our economy. Those discussions were led by Senator FEINSTEIN, and there is no question I played a significant role in those. This program is the product of true compromise between farm workers and growers. I had real questions whether that could be done, but it was. I was glad to see it included as part of the Gang of 8 original bill.

Another important provision that was made part of the original bill was my proposal for permanently extending a visa program for religious workers. This provision will provide up to 5,000 visas for foreign nationals to work with religious organizations that help

America's neediest people and underserved communities. I have supported this program for many years and am very grateful that the Gang of 8 offered to include it in the bill at my request.

In addition, I commend the Judiciary Committee chairman, Senator LEAHY, for conducting an open, fair, and thorough markup of S. 744. Thankfully, this bill—unlike the bill in 2007—is being handled through regular order.

During the committee's consideration of S. 744, I filed 24 amendments, 20 of them within Judiciary Committee jurisdiction. I am proud of the fact that 15 of those 20 amendments were made part of the legislation that is before us now. I do not think "proud" is the word; I am pleased rather than proud.

For example, the committee adopted by voice vote my amendment establishing strong penalties for cultivating marijuana on Federal lands. Mexican drug cartels are driving the expansion of this plague, using chemicals and diverting water sources that also harm the environment. My amendment will reduce the illegal drugs that enter the market and protect America's natural resources at the same time.

The committee also adopted my amendment to establish a mandatory biometric exit system at the 10 busiest international airports. Preventing individuals from entering the country illegally is only one side of the coin; the other side, of course, is preventing individuals from overstaying their visas. We know if that works in those airports, we then will be encouraged to expand that in many other ways.

Nearly half of those who are currently here illegally came into the country legally but did not leave when they were supposed to. My amendment tackles part of that equation.

I do want to respond to what some of my colleagues have said about this new biometric system. Some have claimed that my amendment dials back current law.

Let me be clear: I fully support the biometric exit system provided for under current law. Sadly, it has not been properly implemented.

What good is it if legislation simply remains on paper? Do the critics of my amendment prefer the status quo, which has accomplished absolutely nothing?

My amendment will actually deploy a real biometric exit system—something that current law has failed to do. And, by the way, it is fully paid for.

Trust me. This is more than just a figleaf. The Judiciary Committee also adopted—once again by voice vote—my amendment to improve education and training in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math, or the STEM fields.

While foreign high-skilled workers play an important part in our economy, we need to invest more in developing the American workforce, especially the next generation. I look forward to seeing the STEM account grow

and provide hundreds of millions of dollars directly to the States for this critical education and training. That is in the bill now.

I am particularly pleased that the Judiciary Committee adopted a package of my amendments establishing a coherent and constructive approach to high-skilled immigration. These provisions will ensure that the H-1B and L-1 visa categories actually work for a change. I especially want to thank Senators SCHUMER and DURBIN for their genuine willingness to compromise because these complex issues require a delicate balance of interests.

This is the path I have pursued so far. From the outset of this process, I have made it clear that there are issues with this bill under the jurisdiction of the Finance Committee. As the ranking member of the Finance Committee, I have been working in good faith to ensure that those matters are addressed in a responsible and productive way.

Toward that end, I filed amendments both in committee and on the Senate floor and have been working with my colleagues to get them included.

These are important issues that simply cannot be overlooked. For example, there was the issue of whether immigrants receiving a change in status would be allowed to receive welfare benefits. Under a longstanding provision of Federal law, noncitizens, including legal immigrants, are not eligible for Federal cash welfare benefits for their first 5 years in the country.

While S. 744 preserved that 5-year ban for RPIs, I know the Obama administration believes it has the authority to permit States to spend Federal welfare dollars on cash benefits to previously prohibited individuals. In order to prevent this or future administrations from contravening Federal welfare law, we needed to clarify that the Secretary of Health and Human Services cannot permit Federal welfare dollars from being spent on noncitizens. That is a system I am not willing to support, and I am pleased they accepted my amendment in solving that problem.

Today I am pleased to report that we have successfully negotiated provisions that will prevent the administration from waiving the 5-year ban on welfare benefits as well as prohibiting the Secretary from permitting this type of spending. They have been included as part of the compromise package we will be voting on later this week.

Another problem with the original bill was that it did not adequately address Social Security. Specifically, the bill did not state how periods of unauthorized employment would be treated in the calculation of Social Security benefits.

Once again, I have worked with my colleagues to reach an agreement on a provision that says that periods of unauthorized earnings do not count toward determining Social Security benefits. The provision will, among other things, prevent people who did not