

During the debate on S. 744, two of my colleagues, Chairman LEAHY and Senator ROCKEFELLER, came to the floor to discuss this issue. I join them in support of preserving States' rights to extend Medicaid and CHIP benefits to lawfully residing noncitizen children and pregnant women. I thank my colleagues for addressing an issue that is critical to my home State and I echo their comments on the intention of the Senate with regard to this issue.

Madam President, I would also like to speak today about the need for comprehensive immigration reform by highlighting the work of one of my constituents.

I was touched when I read a poem written by 10-year-old Erin Stark of Bellevue, WA. I met Erin last month at a welcoming ceremony for new immigrants in my home State of Washington. She told me about her passion for writing and explained that she won a national writing contest with the submission of her poem on immigration. I think her words exemplify the diversity and extraordinary contributions made by immigrants to this country.

“WHAT WOULD YOU MISS ABOUT IMMIGRANTS,
IF THEY DIDN'T COME TO AMERICA?”

Would you miss the food?
The pot stickers, sushi, and dumplings,
Pizza, spaghetti, curry, or crepes?
Just think about it for a minute or two,
Could you survive eating fish at every meal?
Could you?

Immigrants are coming every day,
Variety is what they bring with them in every way.

Would you miss the holidays?
Day of the Dead, and Chinese New Year,
Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Ramadan too?
Why did the Christians travel the distance,
Was it to share their beliefs and Christmas?
Immigrants are coming every day,
Variety is what they bring with them in every way.

Would you miss their art,
Painting, literature, and music,
Plays, sculpture, and design?
Life would be dull without art,
People might become sad and would get broken hearts.

Immigrants are coming every day,
Variety is what they bring with them in every way.

Would you miss the things they made?
Railroads, canals, communities, and skyscrapers,
Schoolhouses, highways, churches, and businesses?

What would kids do without schools?
We might turn into fools!
Immigrants are coming every day,
Variety is what they bring with them in every way.

Immigrants are coming every day,
They bring recipes, celebrations, talents, and skills.

Variety is what they bring with them in every way.

USA would be bland without immigrants,
Now our nation is colorful and the joy is infinite.

—Erin Stark

Mr. President, I would like to extend a special welcome to Erin Stark. I look forward to seeing all that she will accomplish in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO ROHIT KUMAR

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I wish to pay tribute to my colleague Rohit Kumar, who will soon, unfortunately, be leaving Senate service for other pursuits.

Rohit stood by me and others here in the Senate as we navigated through deep challenges faced by our Nation, and he has consistently and vigilantly worked for the American people to promote a lot of good, and to prevent a lot of bad from happening.

Rohit is a consummate Senate professional whose skills and accomplishments have provided a long strand of service to this body and to the country. He is a rarity, combining a razor-sharp intellect, logical patterns of thought, and an ability to obtain fair and balanced assessments of challenges that typically involve tradeoffs across a host of competing interests. He adds to that an uplifting disposition and a keen wit.

Rohit possesses mastery of policy, politics, rules of the Congress, and more. While most of us would be content having mastery of any one of those realms, Rohit has managed to master them all. He is a complete package.

Rohit has been an asset to me, to my caucus, to Senate Leadership, and to the country, and his presence will be missed by all of us.

All of us here in the Senate are also indebted to Rohit's beautiful family, which has endured the often-rigorous demands that his Senate service has placed on them. I can think of more than a few occasions where Rohit was negotiating issues that are deeply important for the future of our Nation in stressful, around-the-clock marathon sessions.

If you were to ask me to construct a template for an ideal person to have by your side to navigate through the tough decisions, tradeoffs, and negotiations we face in Congress, I would simply point to Rohit Kumar.

We are all very sad to see Rohit leave. We trust that he will be able to take a bit more time with his family, and will pursue future endeavors with more of the same rigor and industriousness he has consistently shown in his service to the country while working in the Senate. Wherever he goes, without doubt, those around him will benefit tremendously.

I wish to thank Rohit for the many years of outstanding assistance he has provided to me, to my colleagues in the Senate, and to the country. I also thank his family for sharing Rohit with us, and for persevering as we often tapped his talents around the clock. I am proud to have worked with Rohit.

REMEMBERING HARRY BYRD JR.

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I rise today to pay special tribute to a man I admired for many years, former U.S. Senator Harry Byrd Jr. Sadly, Harry

passed away July 30, 2013, leaving behind a lasting legacy that garnered the respect of many throughout our State and Nation.

Senator Byrd made history in 1970 when he became the first person to win election to the U.S. Senate as an independent candidate. He used that independence to be a voice for good and was someone people respected for his deliberative manner.

Senator Byrd was not one to introduce unnecessary legislation and in fact believed legislation was not always the answer. However one of his proudest moments as a legislator was his work on a bill that mandated a balanced Federal budget in 1978. He set the tone for my own commitment to this principle that I have continued to fight for throughout my service in the Senate.

I had the pleasure of getting to know Harry during my early years as a Senator. In fact, after the important and difficult Labor Law Reform battle I waged 2-years into office, I received a note from Harry that I treasure to this day. This Independent Senator praised my work and declared that “. . . the American people are indebted to you.” Strong words from a strong man that I looked up to and admired as a very junior Senator just learning the ropes.

Senator Byrd not only conquered the political world—he was a highly respected voice in the newspaper business—two entities not always known for cohesive relationships. He spent many decades in publishing and served as editor and publisher for two newspapers; as well as the vice president of the Associated Press.

His service in the Senate was matched by his service to his country in the U.S. Navy as a Lieutenant Commander during World War II. His love for America and the ideals it represents could be found throughout the good works he performed throughout his life.

Our nation lost a truly wonderful man. I know that many people will truly miss his strength, leadership, and wisdom.

Elaine and I convey our deepest sympathies to his three children and their families. May our Heavenly Father bless them with peace and comfort at this time. The contributions and impact Senator Byrd made on his family, his community, and our Nation will be felt and appreciated for generations to come.

UNITED STATES-ISRAEL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2013 reaffirms the strong relationship the United States has with Israel. As the legislation states, our countries share a deep and unbreakable bond, forged by over 60 years of shared interests and shared values.

S. 462 includes provisions that will enhance cooperation between our countries in the areas of energy, defense, homeland security, and agriculture.

While I support the end goal of the bill, I do have reservations about a section dealing with the visa waiver program. The visa waiver program was created by Congress but is largely overseen and maintained by the executive branch. The Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State, may designate any country as a participant if certain qualifications are met. Congress laid out the criteria, which include low nonimmigrant visa refusal rate; machine readable passport program; law enforcement and security interests; reporting lost and stolen passports; repatriation of aliens; and passenger information exchange.

Once a country meets these requirements, the Secretary of Homeland Security allows the country to participate in the visa waiver program. Yet, S. 462 would amend the statute and allow Israel in the program even if all the criteria are not met. Specifically, under the legislation, Israel would not have to abide by the low nonimmigrant visa refusal rate. Currently, 37 countries participate in the visa waiver program without needing a special exception.

I am concerned about section 9 of the bill because it sets a precedent for other countries not to have to abide by all the terms of the program. Participating in the visa waiver program is a great benefit. Congress should not be making exceptions.

So, while I support the bill and am cosponsoring it today, I will advocate that section 9 be amended before it is passed by this body. The Senate should accept the House language, which simply includes a statement of policy and requires the Secretary of State to report on the extent to which Israel satisfies the requirements specified in law.

I hope my colleagues will work with me on this section, and I look forward to helping pass this bill in the Senate to reaffirm the partnership of United States with Israel.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT KIRK A. OWEN

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I pay tribute today to a true American hero, Army SSG Kirk A. Owen of Sapulpa, OK who died on August 2nd, 2011, serving our Nation in Paktya Province, Afghanistan. Staff Sergeant Owen was assigned as a scout to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Oklahoma Army National Guard.

Staff Sergeant Owen died of injuries sustained when the vehicle in which he was riding was attacked with an improvised explosive device in the Lajah District, Paktya Province while conducting combat operations. He was 37 years old.

Kirk enlisted in the Oklahoma National Guard at the age of 31 as a Chaplain's Assistant after seeing a recruiting commercial on television and deployed in support of disaster relief operations following Hurricane Katrina. Kirk then deployed again to Iraq in 2007 as an infantryman and rose through the ranks to Staff Sergeant. He served as a full time Army National Guard Soldier. He strived to be the best in everything he did and was repeatedly recognized for his excellence as the Hero of the Battlefield and the outstanding soldier in the 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team for his performance at the Joint Readiness Training Center, and presented the Unsung Hero Award when he attended the Ranger Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader Course for his scout training. He also was Soldier of the Cycle for basic training and given Distinguished Honors at Advanced Individual Training.

A true warrior and leader, Kirk died while escorting an Explosive Ordnance Disposal team to disarm dangerous explosive devices in Paktya Province. Kirk was a loving husband, endearing father, and faithful friend. His loving presence, strong faith, incredible sense of duty and honor, and his wonderful sense of humor left a lasting impression on every heart he touched.

First Baptist Church Pastor Doyle Pryor said, "Kirk is one of those guys who had a natural sense of duty and honor. He really believed his military service was a calling from God."

Major General Myles Deering, the Oklahoma National Guard Adjutant General, said, "He was an outstanding non-commissioned officer, dedicated to loyally serving his country and fellow Soldiers. His loss is being felt across the state and he will be greatly missed."

His daughter Kylie wrote:

My dad was a fantastic leader. All of his guys looked up to him. My nickname for him was Ironman. There was nothing to me that he couldn't do. He loved Jesus with all his heart and that's where my peace is coming from. I can just see him up in heaven following Jesus around wanting to know everything. A few weeks before he left we were at the grocery store and my dad and little sister were walking down the marshmallow aisle and he turned to her and said 'Kayci, I think heaven will smell like marshmallows.' I hope it does. The memory of my dad will live on forever and his good looks will too.

In July 2012, the town of Sapulpa dedicated a neighborhood park where the Owen family still lives as a tribute to Kirk and his service to our Nation. There is a lasting monument in his honor.

Kirk lived a life of love for God, his wife and daughters, family, friends, and country. He leaves behind a wonderful and loving family: his wife, Tiffany and daughters, Kylie and Kayci. He will be remembered for his commitment to and belief in the greatness of our nation. I am honored to pay tribute to this true American hero who volunteered to go into the fight and made the ultimate sacrifice for our protec-

tion and freedom. We will keep them in our thoughts and prayers, always.

HYDROPOWER REGULATORY EFFICIENCY ACT

Mr. SESSIONS. I rise today to express my support for the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act of 2013, H.R. 267. This important legislation will encourage and facilitate the development of clean and renewable hydropower capacity in the United States.

Hydropower has played a key role in the economic and industrial development of the State of Alabama over the last 100 years. In fact, according to the National Hydropower Association, Alabama ranks among the top ten States in hydropower generation, with over 8,700,000 megawatt-hours of conventional hydrogeneration. I believe hydropower will continue to make important contributions to meet Alabama's energy needs well into the future. For that reason, I believe the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act of 2013 is an important piece of legislation that merits this body's full support. I would like to recognize the excellent work of the Senate Energy Committee, including the chairman and ranking member, on this legislation. At this time, I wish to ask the ranking member for permission to engage her in a brief colloquy concerning her understanding of Section 6 of this legislation.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. I welcome an exchange for the record.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank my colleague for her willingness to discuss this legislation. Section 6 of the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act of 2013 promotes hydropower development by directing the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, FERC, to investigate the feasibility of a more streamlined licensing process for certain hydro projects that should not be subjected to the lengthy and expensive licensing process that was designed for projects with many more complicated issues and stakeholder interests.

Under H.R. 267, two types of projects would be eligible for the 2-year licensing process: new hydro developments at existing nonpowered dams and closed-loop pumped storage hydro. It is my understanding that adding generation capacity at existing nonpowered dams would tap into an important and substantial renewable energy resource at projects where the impacts of dam construction have already been realized.

For hydropower developers to take full advantage of any streamlined licensing process that FERC may develop as contemplated in Section 6 of the act, I believe there needs to be a good understanding of what types of pumped storage projects would be considered "closed-loop pumped storage projects." This term is not defined in the act, and I am not aware of any generally accepted engineering or industry definition for that term.

In order that I might have a better understanding of the types of hydropower projects that would be eligible