

EC-5942. A communication from the Acting Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Department of Defense assigning women to previously closed positions in the Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-5943. A communication from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs), Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to Reserve Component Equipment Procurement and Military Construction for fiscal year 2015; to the Committee on Armed Services.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. BEGICH (for himself and Mr. PRYOR):

S. 2425. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to reduce the shortage of psychiatrists in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs by repaying loans for certain psychiatrists, to carry out a pilot program to provide housing allowances to health care providers of the Veterans Health Administration who accept assignment at rural and highly rural clinics, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. TOOMEY (for himself and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. 2426. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to require that the Director of the Bureau of Prisons ensure that each chief executive officer of a Federal penal or correctional institution provides a secure storage area located outside of the secure perimeter of the Federal penal or correctional institution for firearms carried by certain employees of the Bureau of Prisons, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BARRASSO (for himself and Mr. ENZI):

S. 2427. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to coordinate Federal and State permitting processes related to the construction of new surface water storage projects on lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture and to designate the Bureau of Reclamation as the lead agency for permit processing, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. LEAHY:

S. 2428. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs provides temporary care in the most cost effective manner when patients are relocated during medical facility construction and renovation projects, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. THUNE):

S. 2429. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the exclusion for employer-provided educational assistance to employer payment of interest on certain refinanced student loans; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. ROBERTS:

S. 2430. A bill to establish the Office of the Special Inspector General for Monitoring the Affordable Care Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. ISAKSON (for himself and Mr. CHAMBLISS):

S. 2431. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. REED, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. REID, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. BOXER, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. LANDRIEU, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. BROWN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mrs. HAGAN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BEGICH, Mr. BENNET, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. MURPHY, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. MENENDEZ, and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 2432. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for the refinancing of certain Federal student loans, and for other purposes; read the first time.

By Mr. GRAHAM:

S.J. Res. 37. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to parental rights; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mr. NELSON):

S.J. Res. 38. A joint resolution conferring honorary citizenship of the United States on Bernardo de Galvez y Madrid, Viscount of Galveston and Count of Galvez; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. Res. 467. A resolution recognizing the 100th Anniversary of Fishermen's Terminal in the Port of Seattle and celebrating Seattle's rich maritime heritage and its importance to the United States; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 506

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 506, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide recruitment and retention incentives for volunteer emergency service workers.

S. 539

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 539, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to foster more effective implementation and coordination of clinical care for people with pre-diabetes and diabetes.

S. 632

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 632, a bill to amend the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008

to repeal a duplicative program relating to inspection and grading of catfish.

S. 958

At the request of Mr. UDALL of Colorado, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. WALSH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 958, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reduce the tax on beer to its pre-1991 level, and for other purposes.

S. 1188

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1188, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the definition of full-time employee for purposes of the individual mandate in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

S. 1214

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1214, a bill to require the purchase of domestically made flags of the United States of America for use by the Federal Government.

S. 1249

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1249, a bill to rename the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking of the Department of State the Bureau to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and to provide for an Assistant Secretary to head such Bureau, and for other purposes.

S. 1256

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1256, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to preserve the effectiveness of medically important antimicrobials used in the treatment of human and animal diseases.

S. 1324

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1324, a bill to prohibit any regulations promulgated pursuant to a presidential memorandum relating to power sector carbon pollution standards from taking effect.

S. 1406

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1406, a bill to amend the Horse Protection Act to designate additional unlawful acts under the Act, strengthen penalties for violations of the Act, improve Department of Agriculture enforcement of the Act, and for other purposes.

S. 1410

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1410, a bill to focus limited Federal resources on the most serious offenders.

S. 1445

At the request of Mr. PRYOR, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1445, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the participation of optometrists in the National Health Service Corps scholarship and loan repayment programs, and for other purposes.

S. 1495

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1495, a bill to direct the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration to issue an order with respect to secondary cockpit barriers, and for other purposes.

S. 1647

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1647, a bill to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to repeal distributions for medicine qualified only if for prescribed drug or insulin.

S. 1708

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the names of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. UDALL) were added as cosponsors of S. 1708, a bill to amend title 23, United States Code, with respect to the establishment of performance measures for the highway safety improvement program, and for other purposes.

S. 1761

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1761, a bill to permanently extend the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act of 2009 and establish a private right of action to enforce compliance with such Act.

S. 1875

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. WALSH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1875, a bill to provide for wildfire suppression operations, and for other purposes.

S. 1883

At the request of Mrs. HAGAN, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1883, a bill to extend duty-free treatment for certain trousers, breeches, or shorts imported from Nicaragua, and for other purposes.

S. 2004

At the request of Mr. BEGICH, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2004, a bill to ensure the safety of all users of the transportation system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, children, older individuals, and individuals with disabilities, as they travel on and across federally funded streets and highways.

S. 2013

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from West Vir-

ginia (Mr. MANCHIN), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS), the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER), the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2013, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal of Senior Executive Service employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs for performance, and for other purposes.

S. 2091

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) were added as cosponsors of S. 2091, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the processing by the Department of Veterans Affairs of claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 2125

At the request of Mr. WALSH, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2125, a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to ensure the integrity of voice communications and to prevent unjust or unreasonable discrimination among areas of the United States in the delivery of such communications.

S. 2162

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2162, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to establish a deduction for married couples who are both employed and have young children and to increase the earned income tax credit for childless workers, and to provide for budget offsets.

S. 2208

At the request of Mr. KIRK, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2208, a bill to allow the Secretary of the Treasury to rely on State examinations for certain financial institutions, and for other purposes.

S. 2329

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) and the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2329, a bill to prevent Hezbollah from gaining access to international financial and other institutions, and for other purposes.

S. 2358

At the request of Mr. UDALL of Colorado, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2358, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to authorize additional leave for members of the Armed Forces in connection with the birth of a child.

S. 2363

At the request of Mrs. HAGAN, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2363, a bill to protect and enhance opportunities for recreational hunting, fishing, and shooting, and for other purposes.

S. 2370

At the request of Mr. COBURN, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. UDALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2370, a bill to rescind unused earmarks provided for the Department of Transportation, and for other purposes.

S. 2405

At the request of Mr. REED, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2405, a bill to amend title XII of the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize certain trauma care programs, and for other purposes.

S. 2408

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2408, a bill to authorize the exploration, leasing, development, and production of oil and gas in and from the western portion of the Coastal Plain of the State of Alaska without surface occupancy, and for other purposes.

S. 2409

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2409, a bill to authorize the exploration, leasing, development, production, and economically feasible and prudent transportation of oil and gas in and from the Coastal Plain in Alaska.

S. 2413

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2413, a bill to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 2414

At the request of Mr. MCCONNELL, the names of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2414, a bill to amend the Clean Air Act to prohibit the regulation of emissions of carbon dioxide from new or existing power plants under certain circumstances.

At the request of Mr. JOHANNIS, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2414, *supra*.

S. 2422

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the names of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Montana (Mr. WALSH), the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 2422, a bill to improve the access of veterans to medical services from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 36

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 36, a joint resolution relating to the approval and implementation of the proposed agreement for nuclear co-operation between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. LEAHY:

S. 2428. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs provides temporary care in the most cost effective manner when patients are relocated during medical facility construction and renovation projects, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, following the resignation of Secretary Shinseki last week, it is time for some deep soul-searching about the future of the Department of Veterans Affairs. As details slowly emerge from the inspector general's investigation, I am struck by a disturbing aspect of organizational culture within the VA that prioritizes meeting goals and checking boxes instead of providing true quality care for veterans. Secretary Shinseki himself was a decorated veteran, and I am sure he must have been as frustrated as all of us to find some of the things that were happening.

There is an overwhelming current rushing toward the path of least resistance for "reporting" care for the men and women who served this Nation admirably and with dedication. But we should not lose sight of the hard work and commitment of the many men and women working in the VA system every day striving to provide effective and timely care to veterans. We have to tell ourselves that there is really no shortcut to quality care for veterans. The VA has rightly been under intense pressure and scrutiny to live up to the promise we made to veterans when they agreed to serve.

We have many people in this body and the other body who voted for a war that I think historians will call a disaster—the war in Iraq. For the first time in America's history, they voted for a war and did not do anything to pay for it—no tax to pay for it or anything else. Ten years later, though, they say: We have to watch the cost of VA health care and all that; we have to find the money. Well, that did not bother them when they sent these men and women to war. Let's take care of them now.

It has become apparent that at facilities across the United States some VA employees have decided to choose to simply tell those above them and those of us with oversight responsibility what they want to hear, over providing quality care in a timely fashion. And that is appalling and unacceptable.

But most VA employees are tireless servants. Many are veterans them-

selves. For those men and women who give their all for our veterans, it is becoming evident that the system of incentives and disincentives may have worked against them. For example, it appears that the criteria for bonuses are too weighted towards reported metrics, rather than toward taking the time to understand the outcomes behind the statistics. What sort of message is sent to good employees when their "success" depends only on a small part of the picture of veterans' care?

There should be no shortcut to quality care for veterans in Washington policymaking circles either. The mere replacement of a cabinet secretary results in neither accountability nor reform. Even widespread firing of SES-level government employees will not automatically result in providing quality care for veterans. Other meaningful and more comprehensive reforms are needed, and without delay. Earlier this year my distinguished colleague from Vermont Senator SANDERS introduced an expansive collection of many needed reforms. Unfortunately, like so many bills we have tried to consider this year, partisan objections stalled progress based on procedural rather than substantive matters. Some of the same people who have been so critical of this administration and the VA were the same ones who voted to block going forward with needed reforms.

Well, the Senate is going to get another opportunity to consider a comprehensive collection of reforms. It must prompt some meaningful bipartisan action here in the Senate. Let's not play "gotcha." Let's play "help you" to the veterans. That is what we need to do. Congress has an obligation to consider, debate, and vote on the reforms needed to make our system of care for veterans both efficient and effective.

My wife began her nursing career as a brand new registered nurse in a VA hospital. I know how hard she and those around her worked. They were veterans of a different generation, but they needed help and care just as much as everybody else.

So I look forward to the Senate's consideration of the legislation introduced yesterday by Senator SANDERS. I am proud to cosponsor it. Many reforms are needed within the VA, and the Ensuring Veterans Access to Care Act takes important steps toward achieving these changes.

Of course, additional reforms are needed. So today I am introducing legislation to address one shortfall at the VA that has existed far too long. Current law provides a disincentive to cost-effective, onsite medical care solutions when operating rooms are refurbished or rebuilt within a VA hospital or care facility. Because the VA must report any major medical facility costs exceeding \$10 million to Congress, the VA is encouraged to pay for veterans care at outside facilities, including travel to and from those facilities, out

of the medical services account. It is robbing Peter to pay Paul. It is a different pot of money. So that way they do not have to have an extensive report. But the best solution for veterans and the bottom line may very well be a temporary onsite facility.

The bill is simple but attempts to take the allure of a shortcut away by ensuring that the expenses of temporary offsite care are also calculated and reported.

Senator SANDERS, the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, has said: "If you think it's too expensive to take care of our veterans, then don't send them to war." He is right. We paid for two unfunded wars on a credit card. Now it is time we invest in those who put themselves in harm's way to protect our security. It is time for us to worry about some of the things we need to do here at home. It is time.

By Mr. ROBERTS:

S. 2430. A bill to establish the Office of the Special Inspector General for Monitoring the Affordable Care Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I first congratulate my colleague Senator ISAKSON for doing a good job of summarizing exactly where we are and the problems we are experiencing with the complexity of the Affordable Care Act and the hope that the new Secretary will be responsive, as the Senator so eloquently pointed out when he questioned her when she came before the committee. I thank the Senator for making an excellent speech and making excellent points, and I will endeavor to do the same, as we are talking about the same subject.

My remarks are once again on the Affordable Care Act. I know we have other issues, many important issues—the Veterans' Administration, the release of terrorists in an exchange—but it is equally important we continue to shed light on the many failings of this law.

During the very first debate on the Affordable Care Act, I distinctly remember comparing this rush to government health care as akin to riding hell-for-leather into a box canyon to find the only alternative would be to turn around, ride back out, and get on a more realistic, market-oriented health reform trail.

Then I put it another way. I said: There are a lot of cactuses out there. We didn't have to sit on every one of them.

We never even saw the bill before we voted on it. I think everybody understands that. I voted no and so did every Republican Senator and Member of Congress. This was not a bipartisan effort.

I regret to say to my colleagues that I told you so, and here we are in a box canyon. Until the administration provides us more details to the contrary, we have to assume that more Americans are losing the care they liked,