

Whereas a Veterans Health Administration official cited the policy of the Veterans Health Administration for the nondistribution of the holiday cards; and

Whereas the Veterans Health Administration official stated that, in order to respect veterans' religious beliefs, all donated holiday cards are reviewed by a multidisciplinary team of staff led by the chaplaincy services to determine whether the cards are appropriate and can be freely distributed to patients; and

Whereas the Veterans Health Administration official stated that the process for reviewing holiday cards was not fully explained to the particular group involved and apologized for any misunderstanding; and

Whereas the officials at the Veterans Health Administration facilities described in this resolution ignored the policies established by the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs regarding holiday practices at the facilities; and

Whereas those holiday cards, gifts, and presentations came from caring citizens, including young children, who took the time to recognize the heroic actions of men and women who have sacrificed so much in the service of their country in times of both peace and war; and

Whereas, although Christmas Day has origins in religious beliefs, it is recognized as a civic holiday for federal employees; and

Whereas the Veterans Health Administration violates the right to religious freedom of the veterans in its care by not allowing them to receive certain holiday cards and gifts and to attend certain presentations: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Alaska State Legislature condemns the actions of the Veterans Health Administration officials that prohibited religious holiday messages, music, and gifts from being conveyed to veterans at Veterans Health Administration facilities and respectfully requests that the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs ensure that the violations of veterans' rights described in this resolution do not occur again; and be it further

Resolved, That the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs reconsider the policies on holiday practices at Veterans Health Administration facilities and rewrite those policies so that the violations of veterans' rights described in this resolution do not occur again; and be it further

Resolved, That the Alaska State Legislature finds it very troubling that the established policies and procedures of the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs on holiday practices at the Veterans Health Administration facilities are apparently being ignored and respectfully requests that the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs review the present established policies on holiday practices at Veterans Health Administration facilities and train personnel on those policies so that the apparent violations of veterans' rights described in this resolution do not occur again; and be it further

Resolved, That the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs provide each member of the Alaska State Legislature with a written assurance that the actions of the Veterans Health Administration officials described in this resolution do not reflect the policies on holiday practices at Veterans Health Administration facilities.

Copies of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United States; the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Vice-President of the United States and President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable John Boehner, Speaker of the U.S.

House of Representatives; the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs; the Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs; the Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs; Verdine Bowen, Director, Office of Veterans Affairs, Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs; Susan Yeager, Director, Alaska VA Healthcare System; the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress; and all other members of the 113th United States Congress.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. LEAHY, from the Committee on the Judiciary, without amendment:

H.R. 1447. A bill to encourage States to report to the Attorney General certain information regarding the deaths of individuals in the custody of law enforcement agencies, and for other purposes.

By Mr. CARPER, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute and an amendment to the title:

S. 1744. A bill to strengthen the accountability of individuals involved in misconduct affecting the integrity of background investigations, to update guidelines for security clearances, and for other purposes.

By Mr. LEAHY, from the Committee on the Judiciary, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 2520. A bill to improve the Freedom of Information Act.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. LEAHY for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Jorge Luis Alonso, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

Haywood Stirling Gilliam, Jr., of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California.

Amit Priyavadan Mehta, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia.

Allison Dale Burroughs, of Massachusetts, to be United States District Judge for the District of Massachusetts.

Jeanne E. Davidson, of Maryland, to be a Judge of the United States Court of International Trade.

John Robert Blakey, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

Amos L. Mazzant, III, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Texas.

Robert Lee Pitman, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas.

Robert William Schroeder III, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Texas.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

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. HEINRICH:

S. 2947. A bill to amend the Federal Power Act to clarify the authority of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to prescribe just, reasonable, and not unduly discriminatory or preferential terms, conditions, and compensation applicable to wholesale demand response resource participation in organized wholesale energy, capacity, and ancillary service markets; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. SANDERS:

S. 2948. A bill to extend the requirement that drug manufacturers that increase prices faster than inflation pay an additional rebate to State Medicaid programs to include manufacturers of generic drugs; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. NELSON, Mr. HELLER, Mrs. MCCASKILL, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 2949. A bill to improve motor vehicle safety by encouraging the sharing of certain information; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. MORAN:

S. 2950. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish the Physician Ambassadors Helping Veterans program to seek to employ physicians at the Department of Veterans Affairs on a without compensation basis in practice areas and specialties with staffing shortages and long appointment waiting times; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. HELLER:

S. 2951. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is informed of the interment of deceased veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mrs. MURRAY:

S. 2952. A bill to establish the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. THUNE, and Mr. KIRK):

S. 2953. A bill to prohibit an alien who is a national of a country with a widespread Ebola virus outbreak from obtaining a visa and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. HARKIN:

S. 2954. A bill to improve the Higher Education Act of 1965, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. CASEY (for himself, Mr. ALEXANDER, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. HARKIN, and Mr. FRANKEN):

S. 2955. A bill to revise the Inland Waterways Trust Fund financing rate; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. NELSON (for himself, Mr. DONNELLY, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. BOOKER):

S. 2956. A bill to prevent caller ID spoofing, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. BEGICH:

S. 2957. A bill to limit the disturbance to American families caused by electioneering phone calls by expanding the National Do Not Call Registry to include Super PACs and other third-party political groups, to prohibit robo-calls to Americans who have listed their telephone numbers on the Registry,

and to prohibit push-polling; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. TOOMEY:

S. 2958. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the employer wage credit for employees who are active duty members of the Uniformed Services; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CASEY (for himself, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. KAINE, and Mr. WARNER):

S. 2959. A bill to ensure that claims for benefits under the Black Lung Benefits Act are processed in a fair and timely manner, to protect miners from pneumoconiosis (commonly known as "black lung disease"), and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. FRANKEN, and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 2960. A bill to provide for rental assistance for homeless or at-risk Indian veterans; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. BEGICH:

S. 2961. A bill to establish the Office of Planning for Future Intercity Transportation within the Office of the Secretary of Transportation; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. TOOMEY:

S. 2962. A bill to repeal the tax increase imposed by Obamacare on taxpayers who incur catastrophic medical expenses; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. BOXER (for herself, Mr. BEGICH, Mr. NELSON, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. CANTWELL, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. REED, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. WARREN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. BOOKER, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 2963. A bill to remove a limitation on a prohibition relating to permits for discharges incidental to normal operation of vessels; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. BROWN (for himself, Mr. BENNET, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. CASEY, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. SCHUMER, and Ms. STABENOW):

S. 2964. A bill to extend the trade adjustment assistance program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CRUZ:

S. 2965. A bill to provide that members of the Armed Forces performing hazardous humanitarian services in West Africa to combat the spread of the 2014 Ebola virus outbreak shall be entitled to tax benefits in the same manner as if such services were performed in a combat zone; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself and Mr. PORTMAN):

S. 2966. A bill to improve the understanding and coordination of critical care health services; to the Committee on Finance.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. ISAKSON (for himself and Ms. BALDWIN):

S. Res. 585. A resolution designating December 3, 2014, as "National Phenylketonuria Awareness Day"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr.

RUBIO, Mr. MARKEY, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. COONS, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. Res. 586. A resolution calling on the Government of Burma to develop a non-discriminatory and comprehensive solution that addresses Rakhine State's needs for peace, security, harmony, and development under equitable and just application of the rule of law, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

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

S. Res. 587. A resolution encouraging reunions of Korean-Americans who were divided by the Korean War from their relatives in North Korea; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. ENZI, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. THUNE, Mr. WICKER, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. HELLER, Mr. COCHRAN, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. TESTER, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. FRANKEN, and Ms. HIRONO):

S. Res. 588. A resolution recognizing that access to hospitals and other health care providers for patients in rural areas of the United States is essential to the survival and success of communities in the United States; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. MARKEY):

S. Res. 589. A resolution honoring the life of Thomas M. Menino, Mayor of Boston, Massachusetts, from 1993 to 2014; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. WALSH, Mr. BEGICH, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. THUNE, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. INHOFE, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MORAN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. KAINE, Mr. CRAPO, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. HEINRICH, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. HELLER, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. COCHRAN, and Mr. REID):

S. Res. 590. A resolution recognizing National Native American Heritage Month and celebrating the heritages and cultures of Native Americans and the contributions of Native Americans to the United States; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. REID (for Mrs. HAGAN (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BROWN, Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota, Ms. MIKULSKI, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. CARDIN, and Mr. LEVIN)):

S. Res. 591. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of American Education Week; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 526

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, his name 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. 666

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 666, a bill to prohibit attendance of an animal fighting venture, and for other purposes.

S. 838

At the request of Mrs. MCCASKILL, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 838, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to protect employees in the building and construction industry who are participants in multiemployer plans, and for other purposes.

S. 1011

At the request of Mr. JOHANNES, the names of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) and the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) were added as cosponsors of S. 1011, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the centennial of Boys Town, and for other purposes.

S. 1040

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the names of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) were added as cosponsors of S. 1040, a bill to provide for the award of a gold medal on behalf of Congress to Jack Nicklaus, in recognition of his service to the Nation in promoting excellence, good sportsmanship, and philanthropy.

S. 1249

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) 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. 1361

At the request of Mr. MURPHY, the names of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE) were added as cosponsors of S. 1361, a bill to direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to accept additional documentation when considering the application for veterans status of an individual who performed service as a coastwise merchant seaman during World War II, and for other purposes.

S. 1674

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1674, a bill to help establish, enhance, and increase access to early childhood parent education and family engagement programs, and for other purposes.

S. 1815

At the request of Mr. BEGICH, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1815, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to include occupational therapists as behavioral and mental health professionals for purposes of the National Health Service Corps.