

of the Social Security Act to specify coverage of continuous glucose monitoring devices, and for other purposes.

S. 838

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 838, a bill to amend the Truth in Lending Act to establish a national usury rate for consumer credit transactions.

S. 1110

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1110, a bill to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to publish in the Federal Register a strategy to significantly increase the role of volunteers and partners in National Forest System trail maintenance, and for other purposes.

S. 1378

At the request of Mr. PAUL, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1378, a bill to strengthen employee cost savings suggestions programs within the Federal Government.

S. 1392

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1392, a bill to require certain practitioners authorized to prescribe controlled substances to complete continuing education.

S. 1890

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) were added as cosponsors of S. 1890, a bill to amend chapter 90 of title 18, United States Code, to provide Federal jurisdiction for the theft of trade secrets, and for other purposes.

S. 1975

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1975, a bill to establish the Sewall-Belmont House National Historic Site as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

S. 2042

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the names of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2042, a bill to amend the National Labor Relations Act to strengthen protections for employees wishing to advocate for improved wages, hours, or other terms or conditions of employment and to provide for stronger remedies for interference with these rights, and for other purposes.

S. 2185

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 2185, a bill to require the Secretary of the

Treasury to mint coins in recognition of the fight against breast cancer.

S. 2289

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) were added as cosponsors of S. 2289, a bill to modernize and improve the Family Unification Program, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 349

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 349, a resolution congratulating the Farm Credit System on the celebration of its 100th anniversary.

S. RES. 378

At the request of Mr. JOHNSON, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 378, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the courageous work and life of Russian opposition leader Boris Yefimovich Nemtsov and renewing the call for a full and transparent investigation into the tragic murder of Boris Yefimovich Nemtsov in Moscow on February 27, 2015.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mrs. BOXER:

S. 2674. A bill to authorize the President to provide major disaster assistance for lead contamination of drinking water from public water systems; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today I rise to address the crisis of lead contamination in drinking water that we are seeing all across this Nation. It is time for us to come together and solve these problems. We have all been outraged by the crisis in Flint, where we know children and families are being poisoned by lead in their drinking water.

My colleagues from Michigan, Senators STABENOW and PETERS, have an excellent bipartisan bill—which Senator INHOFE and I helped to negotiate—that would provide emergency relief to address this crisis. The people of Flint need this relief now. So I call on any of those holding up this bill to get out of the way and let this legislation pass immediately. The crisis in Flint has also brought attention to the broader issue of lead in drinking water in communities throughout our Nation.

I want to read to you some headlines from just the last few weeks. Here is one from the Clarion-Ledger in Jackson, MS: “Pregnant women, kids cautioned over Jackson water, lead.” That is February 25, 2016.

From Newsweek: “With lead in the water, could Sebring, Ohio, become the next Flint?” That is January, 27, 2016.

From the Associated Press: “Elevated Lead Levels Found in Newark Schools’ Drinking Water.”

In Charlotte, the Charlotte Observer: “Lead in water not confined to Flint.” That is January 30, 2016.

Whether it is Flint, MI; Newark, NJ; Jackson, MS; or Durham, NC—or shall I name some places that are going to hit us—the American people have a right to expect clean, safe drinking water when they turn on their faucets.

It is clear that this is a national crisis that demands a national solution going forward. So that is why today I have introduced new legislation, the Lead in Drinking Water Disaster Act. We are doing this because, should there be more Flints, we want to have a better way to move forward.

Currently, the President can declare a major disaster for catastrophes such as hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, storms, droughts, fires, floods, and explosions. Now, sometimes those fires, floods, and explosions are manmade and, yet, we are able to act through FEMA, or the Federal Emergency Management Agency. But lead in drinking water is not on the list of major disasters covered under FEMA’s rules.

It is critical that future Presidents do not have their hands tied because the definition of a major disaster does not include lead in drinking water. My bill ensures that a lead-contamination crisis would be considered a disaster, which it clearly is.

Take a look at the color of the water coming out of the fountains here—the faucets. Nobody could face this in their homes. You would get your kids out of there so fast. Current law doesn’t think this is a disaster. So I think this simple way I have of moving forward should be attractive to colleagues. I hope they will sign on to this very simple bill.

The way it would work is that the Governor in any State that is hit by this would ask the President for a major disaster declaration. So for all of my colleagues who feel we should process these things through the State, that is exactly what happens in my bill. If the President agrees, FEMA would provide immediate assistance to protect families from lead in the water.

What we do in this legislation is we name several agencies who would help create the plan to address the emergency. It would be, in addition to FEMA, Health and Human Services, the EPA, and the Army Corps of Engineers. They would work together to create a plan to resolve the crisis.

We can see what is happening to the kids in Flint. Instead of doing their afterschool activities—look how sweet they are—they are carrying bottles of water throughout their community.

Look, there is no safe level of lead for children. The effects of exposure are generally irreversible. Lead harms the developing brains and nervous systems of children and babies. It can cause miscarriage, stillbirths, and infertility in both men and women. People with prolonged exposure to lead may be at risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, and kidney disease.

What is the extent of this problem? Millions of homes across America receive water from pipes that date back to an era before scientists knew of the harm caused by lead exposure. While we take steps toward investing in modernizing our water infrastructure, which I hope we will do as we write a new Water Resources Development Act—Senator INHOFE and I are very hard at work in doing just that—we also have to step in and help communities that are in crisis right now.

I want to conclude with this. Again, take a look at the drinking water coming out of the tap. Would anyone in the Senate stand still for a minute if their children or grandchildren were in a situation where this was the drinking water, this was the bathing water? We know there is no way we would ever allow that to happen.

No American should ever have to drink water that puts their health and the health of their children at risk. I hope we take action by passing the emergency legislation by the Michigan Senators this week. The children and families of Flint should not have to wait one more day.

After we pass that measure, which addresses itself just to Flint, MI, I hope we will take up my legislation to help future Presidents address this public health threat, which is going to pop up all over this great Nation of ours. We must be prepared. We cannot tie the hands of this President or any future President.

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. WARREN, and Mr. BOOKER):

S. 2675. A bill to provide for the adjustment of the debts of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to be a voice for the 3.5 million American citizens living in Puerto Rico, the 200,000 Puerto Ricans who have served in our Armed Forces in every conflict since World War I, and the 20,000 who currently wear the uniform and put their lives on the line for our country.

I rise to introduce a comprehensive stability and recovery package that restores fairness, ensures accountability, and gives Puerto Rico the tools it needs to dig itself out of this hole. And I rise to implore this Congress to act before it is too late.

Let me thank Senators SCHUMER, BROWN, WARREN, CANTWELL, BLUMENTHAL, and BOOKER for supporting these efforts and working so hard on behalf of the people of Puerto Rico. I also want to thank Congressman PIERLUISI, who coauthored the tax sections of this bill along with parts of the healthcare titles.

Finally, I want to thank Governor Padilla for his incredible leadership on the island and for strongly endorsing our legislation. The people of Puerto

Rico are fortunate to have a Governor who cares deeply about their lives and is so dedicated to putting them first and above politics.

Let me put it this bluntly: Puerto Rico is on the brink of default and staring into the abyss. For the better part of the past year, the government has been compelled to take drastic and unprecedented actions just to avoid a total default of the central government. They have closed schools and hospitals, they have laid off police officers and firefighters, and they have raised taxes on businesses and individuals. But all the spending cuts and tax hikes in the world will not make a dent in this crisis unless Puerto Rico has the ability to restructure its debts. That is because servicing the government's \$72 billion debt is swallowing a massive 36 percent of the island's revenue. That is 36 cents of every dollar the government takes in going not to roads or bridges and schools but to bondholders instead. This percentage is six times the U.S. State average and simply unsustainable by any measure.

In fact, despite all we hear about Puerto Rico's significant annual budget deficits, the island would actually be running a surplus—a surplus—if it didn't have to make debt payments. Let me repeat that: It would have a surplus.

These debt service payments act like an albatross and handcuff the people of Puerto Rico, preventing them from investing in their economy. Fewer resources for education, infrastructure, and essential services cause a death spiral as talented workers opt to leave the island, businesses are shuttered, and revenue drops even further. That is why the first and most important step we must take is to give Puerto Rico the ability to restructure its debt in an orderly fashion—a right that they had at one time and that was surreptitiously stripped out. There is no legislative history as to why it was stripped out, but they had this right. This is not novel. Our legislation would in essence do just that, providing a fair and reasonable way for Puerto Rico to restructure all of its debts while avoiding a costly race to the courthouse that would result in years—years—of costly litigation. But before Puerto Rico can even access this authority, it needs to affirmatively opt in and accept the establishment of an independent fiscal stability and reform board and create a chief financial officer.

This both ensures that any restructuring plan is based on objective and independent analysis of the island's situation and provides assurances to creditors that future governments will adhere to a prudent long-term fiscal plan, while affirming and respecting Puerto Rico's sovereignty.

Once Puerto Rico opts in, it receives an automatic 12-month stay to give government officials the necessary breathing room to organize their finances and develop a sustainable 5-year

fiscal plan upon which annual budgets and their restructuring proposal will be based.

Once the Governor submits a restructuring proposal, a judge selected by the First Circuit Court of Appeals would have to confirm that it complies with the fiscal plan, protects the rights of pensioners, and, if feasible, does not unduly impair general obligation bonds.

Our process follows precedent by giving creditors a voice and the ability to object in court, and it ultimately gives an independent judge the authority to ensure that any plan is fair and reasonable. In order to ensure the long-term fiscal plan is followed—not just now, but in the future—our legislation gives the independent board the power to review annual budgets and future debt issuances and to exercise strong oversight and transparency powers.

If future budgets do not comply with the fiscal plan, the board has the authority to issue a vote of no confidence, which will send a strong and unequivocal message to the legislature, to capital markets, and to the Puerto Rican people that the proposed path is unsustainable, which, in turn, will provide much needed transparency and accountability to the budgeting process.

At the same time, we are careful to affirm the fundamental pillars of democracy by making the board of, by, and for the people of Puerto Rico. The board will consist of nine members chosen by the Governor of Puerto Rico, its legislature, both parties, the Supreme Court, and the President of the United States. At least six of the board members must be full-time residents of Puerto Rico, at least six must have knowledge of its history, culture, and socioeconomics, and all members—all members—must have financial and management expertise.

This structure strikes the proper balance by providing strong and independent oversight and accountability while still respecting the sovereignty and democratic rights of the people of Puerto Rico.

It is not a bailout—far from it, in fact. This proposal wouldn't cost the U.S. Treasury a penny—not a dime—and, because it is limited to the territories, wouldn't have a contagion effect on the broader municipal market.

As I have said before, giving Puerto Rico the flexibility to restructure its debt is the top priority and a prerequisite for any legitimate recovery plan. But it is also clear that the lack of health care funding parity is adding pressure to the overall financial situation as the island's health care system accounts for 20 percent of the island's economy, and it is responsible for a third of its overall debt burden.

Currently, Puerto Rico's Medicaid Program, rather than being reimbursed for necessary costs, is capped. Not only is it capped, it is set to hit a funding cliff as soon as mid-2017. When this happens, the island will instead receive

funding to cover only a very small portion of its Medicaid costs, a burden no State could handle.

The second piece of our legislation fixes this by moving Puerto Rico toward a Medicaid system that provides stable funding for the long term. Additionally, there are several policies in Medicare that treat the island differently from the rest of the Nation, leaving providers and seniors to face unfair penalties and low reimbursements.

This bill eliminates many of these discrepancies to more accurately align Medicare policies in Puerto Rico with the rest of the country. As citizens of the United States—and I emphasize that because sometimes Members of Congress have asked me whether they need an American passport to go to Puerto Rico. I thought they were joking, but they were serious. As citizens of the United States, it is only fair that Puerto Ricans be afforded the same access to care, coverage, and health benefits as everyone else.

Finally, our legislation would incentivize Puerto Rican workers to enter the formal economy and give families the help they need to raise their children by providing parity to the island for the earned-income tax credit and child tax credit. Praised by both Republicans and Democrats as one of the most effective tools to combat poverty and encourage workers to enter the labor market, the earned-income tax credit is currently unavailable to the people of Puerto Rico. However, as American citizens, all it takes for a resident of Puerto Rico to become eligible for a credit is a short plane ride to Miami.

This is just another reason why so many Puerto Ricans have fled the island and taken up residence on the mainland. It makes no sense to prohibit American citizens living in Puerto Rico from taking advantage of this important credit, especially with such a stubbornly lower labor participation rate.

Our legislation corrects this inequity, providing equal treatment for all American citizens, regardless of whether they reside in Puerto Rico or in the States.

I shouldn't need to remind this body that from the infancy of our Nation, the people of Puerto Rico have been there for us and with us, and now we need to be there for them. Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States in 1898 after the Spanish-American War. Less than two decades later, in 1917, Congress passed the Jones-Shafroth Act, granting American citizenship to the residents of the island. But even long before they were granted U.S. citizenship, Puerto Ricans have had a long and profound history of fighting on the side of America.

As far back as 1777, Puerto Rican ports were used by U.S. ships, enabling them to run British blockades and keep commerce flowing, which was so crucial to the war effort. It was Puerto

Rican soldiers who took up arms in the U.S. Civil War, defending this Nation's Capital, Washington, DC, from attack, and they fought in the Battle of Fredericksburg.

In World War I, almost 20,000 Puerto Ricans were drafted into the U.S. Armed Forces. Let's not forget about the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers, the segregated military unit composed almost entirely of soldiers from Puerto Rico, who played a crucial and prominent role in World War I, World War II, and the Korean war.

I am proud to say that I worked with Senator BLUMENTHAL and others to make sure that the heroic Borinqueneers—the only Active-Duty segregated Latino military unit in the history of the United States and the last segregated unit to be deactivated—received well deserved and long overdue national recognition when we passed a bill awarding these courageous patriots with the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions to the United States.

While some might be tempted to point their finger at our brothers and sisters on the island and fault Puerto Rico for carrying more than \$70 billion in debt, I challenge my Senate colleagues to work with us on finding solutions because this problem isn't going away.

Mark my words. If we don't act now, this crisis will explode into a full-blown humanitarian catastrophe, not in a matter of decades or even years but in months. In just a couple of months, they have a major payment they do not have the wherewithal to make.

We may think we will kick the ball down the road. But, no, that human catastrophe is going take place in months, and we will be right back here next year with the same set of problems, only far, far worse.

Delaying action is akin to letting an infection reach the bloodstream before seeking treatment. The longer you wait, the more painful and challenging the treatment is. Puerto Rico isn't asking us to pull them out of this, just to give them the wherewithal to help them help themselves be able to achieve the goal.

Let's not stand aside and do nothing while the island burns. Let's not turn our backs on our friends and fellow citizens when they need us the most. Let's instead come together as a nation and support our fellow citizens like we always do when things get tough. The people of Puerto Rico have always been there for us and with us. Let's make sure that we are there for them.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 398—DESIGNATING MARCH 15, 2016, AS “NATIONAL SPEECH AND DEBATE EDUCATION DAY”

Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. COONS, and Mr. KING) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 398

Whereas it is essential for youth to learn and practice the art of communicating with and without technology;

Whereas speech and debate education offers students myriad forms of public speaking through which students may develop talent and exercise unique voice and character;

Whereas speech and debate education gives students the 21st-century skills of communication, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration;

Whereas critical analysis and effective communication allow important ideas, texts, and philosophies the opportunity to flourish;

Whereas personal, professional, and civic interactions are enhanced by the ability of the participants in those interactions to listen, concur, question, and dissent with reason and compassion;

Whereas students who participate in speech and debate have chosen a challenging activity that requires regular practice, dedication, and hard work;

Whereas teachers and coaches of speech and debate devote in-school, afterschool, and weekend hours to equip students with life-changing skills and opportunities;

Whereas National Speech and Debate Education Day emphasizes the lifelong impact of providing people of the United States with the confidence and preparation to both discern and share views;

Whereas National Speech and Debate Education Day acknowledges that most achievements, celebrations, commemorations, and pivotal moments in modern history begin, end, or are crystallized with public address;

Whereas National Speech and Debate Education Day recognizes that learning to research, construct, and present an argument is integral to personal advocacy, social movements, and the making of public policy;

Whereas the National Speech & Debate Association, in conjunction with national and local partners, honors and celebrates the importance of speech and debate through National Speech and Debate Education Day; and

Whereas National Speech and Debate Education Day emphasizes the importance of speech and debate education and the integration of speech and debate education across grade levels and disciplines: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates March 15, 2016, as “National Speech and Debate Education Day”;

(2) strongly affirms the purposes of National Speech and Debate Education Day; and

(3) encourages educational institutions, businesses, community and civic associations, and all people of the United States to celebrate and promote National Speech and Debate Education Day.