

BLUNT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2646, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish the Veterans Choice Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs to improve health care provided to veterans by the Department, and for other purposes.

S. 2693

At the request of Mr. ALEXANDER, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2693, a bill to ensure the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission allocates its resources appropriately by prioritizing complaints of discrimination before implementing the proposed revision of the employer information report EEO-1, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 383

At the request of Mr. PERDUE, the names of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) and the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 383, a resolution recognizing the importance of the United States-Israel economic relationship and encouraging new areas of cooperation.

S. RES. 391

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 391, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate to oppose the transfer of foreign enemy combatants from the detention facilities at United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to the United States homeland.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. WYDEN:

S. 2706. A bill to promote innovative approaches to outdoor recreation on Federal land and to open up opportunities for collaboration with non-Federal partners, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, last summer, I set out on a tour of Oregon's Seven Wonders to hear from Oregonians in every corner of the State about how to improve access to outdoor recreation. Recreation is a big economic multiplier for my State, and Oregonians are the true experts on outdoor recreation—it is in our DNA.

Oregon's recreation and tourism economy generates an estimated \$10 billion a year in direct economic impact for the state and supports more than 101,000 jobs—enough people essentially to fill every seat in Autzen and Reser stadiums, home to the University of Oregon Ducks and Oregon State Beavers. Recreation supports communities and businesses large and small throughout urban and rural Oregon and can have astounding benefits on veterans, youth, and seniors.

Not only do you have outfitters and the crafts people who produce recre-

ation products, like canoes, kayaks, bikes, and fishing poles, recreation supports the broader travel and tourism industry including equipment retailers and gear shops. But the benefit doesn't stop when the sun goes down. Then visitors go to the brewpubs and restaurants, and they stay overnight at the hotels and the motels. So what we need to do is ensure that recreation is a higher priority for the future so it can continue to boost economies large and small.

Yet on my tour of Oregon's Seven Wonders, I consistently heard one troubling theme that's yanking our recreation economy's potential back down to earth. Simply put, red tape is tying down the opportunities for Oregon recreation and tourism to lift off to even greater heights. Outfitters and guides must navigate confusing permit processes only to wait months or years for their permits to get approved, and outdoor enthusiasts searching for outdoor recreation opportunities often get lost in the paperwork before they ever hit the trails.

That is why today I am introducing the Recreation Not Red-Tape, RNR, Act to ensure that recreation is a priority for Federal agencies and to cut the bureaucratic red tape in the recreation permitting process to make accessing outdoor recreation opportunities easier and much more fun. I gathered input from Oregonians who enjoy public lands, entrepreneurs in the outdoor travel and tourism industry, and community leaders from Oregon and across the Nation. The bill focuses on making sure everyone has easier access to the outdoors, recognizing and building on recreation as an economic driver, and making the repair and management of our recreational public lands easier. Additionally, the bill supports improving access to outdoor recreation for veterans, seniors, and youth.

My friend and colleague, Representative EARL BLUMENAUER, is today introducing the House companion of the Recreation Not Red-Tape Act. The bill is supported by over 50 Oregon and national organizations, from American Alpine Club to Vet Voice.

By Mr. COTTON:

S. 2708. A bill to provide for the admission to the United States of up to 10,000 Syrian religious minorities as refugees of special humanitarian concern in each of the fiscal years 2016 through 2020; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, 6 months ago, a 12-year-old boy stood before a crowd in a Syrian village not far from Aleppo. This boy was Christian and standing above him were Islamic State terrorists holding knives. In the crowd was the boy's father, a Christian minister. Methodically, the terrorists began cutting off the young boy's fingers. Amidst his screams, they turned to the minister, his father. If he renounced his faith and in their terms returned to Islam, his son's suffering

would stop. In the end, however, these ISIS terrorists killed the boy, killed his father, and killed two other Christians solely over the faith they professed. They did so by crucifixion.

In the time of Christ, the cross was not just a means of execution but a brutal and public warning to all. Because of Christ's suffering, the cross was transformed into a revered symbol of His sacrifice and promise of salvation, but today it is clear ISIS seeks to turn the cross once again into a message of dread.

Eight other Christians in the village that day were also killed. They were executed by public beheading, but not before ISIS barbarians raped the two women among the victims and forced the crowd to witness the atrocity.

Today was the deadline set by law for Secretary of State Kerry to present Congress with an evaluation of the persecution of Christians, Yazidis, and other religious minorities in Syria and Iraq. I am heartened Secretary Kerry this morning took the needed step of declaring the systemic murder of religious minorities by ISIS what it plainly is: genocide.

The nature of these horrific crimes of ISIS has not been a secret. It is no secret that the story of the torture and death of that 12-year-old Syrian boy, his minister father, and 10 other Christians is repeated many times over in different villages, with different victims of different religions throughout the region. It is no secret that hundreds of thousands of religious minorities in Syria and Iraq have been driven by war and violence from homes and lands they have held for generations. It is no secret ISIS terrorists have destroyed Christian churches, desecrated holy ancient shrines, and dug up Christian graves and smashed their tombstones. It is no secret bishops, priests, and other clerical leaders are being abducted and murdered. It is no secret ISIS terrorists capture Yazidi women and girls and lock them into a life of sexual slavery and repeated rape. Many of these victims choose to take their own lives, seeing suicide as their only escape amidst hopelessness and unimaginable suffering. It is no secret that thousands of Christians and other religious minorities have been systematically raped and tortured, beheaded, crucified, burned alive, and buried in mass graves, if buried at all. It is no secret the word we should use to describe the whole of these atrocities—the word we must use—is “genocide.”

The plain reality is that the Islamic State is seeking to eradicate Christians, Yazidis, Sabeen-Mandean, Jews, and other religious groups it sees as apostates and infidels. This is part of its fanatical focus on establishing a caliphate first in the Middle East and eventually across the rest of the world.

Christians, Yazidis, and others who have managed to find refuge have seen ISIS's genocidal campaign firsthand. They can list name after name of missing family members—wives and daughters kidnapped into sexual slavery,

sons and brothers killed, and others spirited away to unknown fates. These victims know the truth of the genocide occurring in Syria and Iraq, and now that truth is recognized officially by the United States of America.

There are those who wavered on whether this was genocide. They feared that uttering this truth would compel U.S. action to stop the genocide. My answer is—and? A mortal enemy who wishes to commit mass terrorist atrocities against the United States is also systematically persecuting and exterminating Christians and other religious minorities. When will our national security interests ever overlap more perfectly with our moral sentiment than now? We can and we ought to stop ISIS dead, stop them before they kill more Americans, stop them before they eliminate Christian communities that have existed since the days of Christ himself.

Still others argue that while a genocide may be occurring, recognizing it may somehow play into ISIS's propaganda that it is fighting a righteous jihad against a supposed new Crusade. I never understood this argument. To stay silent in the face of ISIS's propaganda is to accommodate that propaganda. To cede any power to ISIS's narrative is to bend the light of truth to the hard darkness of a lie. Standing up for the practitioners of religions born in the Middle East and calling the region home since the beginning of recorded history is not a new Crusade. It is a defense of world order demonstrated through the periods of peaceful coexistence of the many religions in those ancient lands—an existence that today is threatened with extinction by ISIS's barbarism.

Today the United States rightly recognizes this genocide, but we must also take action to relieve it. ISIS is a threat to the United States, our allies, and to the stability of the whole Middle East. Destroying ISIS and stopping its malignant expansion is a core national security interest of the United States, but stopping ISIS and the depraved ideology that enables it is also a pursuit that aligns with our highest ideals and humanitarian principles.

I and many of my colleagues in the Senate have deep disagreements with the President's policy to defeat ISIS. For 2 years his policy of confusion, delay, and paralysis has failed to stop these terrorists. An entirely new approach that has the United States in the lead of a determined coalition is badly needed, but it is not only President Obama's strategic approach that is ill-considered. His policy on Syrian refugee resettlement is as well. Because the United States unwisely relies on the United Nations for all referrals of refugees seeking resettlement in the United States, Christians and other religious minorities fleeing persecution are the victims of unintentional discrimination when seeking asylum and protection in the United States.

Last year, of the 1,790 Syrian refugees resettled in the United States,

only 41 were religious minorities. Of that 41, 29 were Christian. That means that while 13 percent of Syria's prewar population consisted of religious minorities, only 2.3 percent of the refugees who make it to the United States are religious minorities. Without doubt, Syrians of all confessions are being victimized by this savage war and are facing unimaginable suffering, but only Christians and other religious minorities are the deliberate targets of systemic persecution and genocide. Their ancient communities are at risk of extermination. Their ancestral homes and religious sites are being erased from the Middle Eastern map. Christians and other minorities should not be shut out from the small number of refugees who find shelter in the United States. We ought to help ensure that these faith communities survive, but why are Christians underrepresented among the refugees? There are a number of factors. Perhaps chief among them is that the United States, for all intents and purposes, relies exclusively on the U.N. refugee agency to identify candidates for resettlement. According to the State Department, less than 1 percent of the thousands of Syrian refugees referred by the U.N. to the United States are religious minorities.

Let me stress that this underrepresentation is not the result of intentional discrimination. The U.N. does praiseworthy and hard work in relieving the suffering of refugees around the world and, as a result, improving the security and stability of nations in and near conflict and disaster zones, but it is well established that many religious minorities in Syria are very reluctant to register as refugees with the United Nations because they fear facing even more persecution. The U.N. itself has reported that minority communities "fear that registration might bring retribution from other refugees" in camps or other areas in which they sought safe haven. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has reported that Christians refrain from registering with the U.N. because they fear being marked for revenge by forces loyal to Bashar al-Assad should he remain in power in Syria.

Whether these fears are well-founded or not, the reality is, they exist and they deter Christians from seeking U.N. protection. While the U.N. has sought to educate minority populations on the safety of the registration system, the fact remains that only 1 percent of the millions of Syrian refugees who registered with the U.N. are non-Muslim.

The United States ought not to depend solely on the U.N. for refugee resettlement referrals. If we are to do our part in saving ancient faith communities from genocide, we must find alternate ways to identify persecuted people to whom we can grant safe haven.

Today I am introducing legislation to create that alternate way. The Reli-

gious Persecution Relief Act would grant religious minorities fleeing persecution from groups like ISIS and other groups in Syria priority status so they can apply directly to the U.S. resettlement program, without going through the U.N. first. It will set aside 10,000 resettlement slots annually that must be devoted to religious minorities.

The priority status, known as P-2 status, will allow religious minorities to skip the U.N. referral process, and it will fast track the process by which we confirm that they are in fact targets of persecution and genocide. To answer in advance a most urgent and understandable question, those who apply for P-2 status will be subject to the exact same security vetting process as all other refugee applicants. It is my strong position that the United States must work with known religious leaders in the region and pursue other proven vetting methods to ensure that those who enter this country are not threats to the security of the American people.

Extending a hand to help persecuted people in this manner is not a new idea. In 1989, the late Senator from New Jersey, Frank Lautenberg, crafted what has been called the Lautenberg amendment, which granted P-2 priority status to Soviet Jewry, Vietnamese nationals, and other religious minorities seeking refuge. In 2004, the late Senator from Pennsylvania, Arlen Specter, expanded the Lautenberg amendment to cover religious minorities fleeing oppression from the Ayatollahs in Iran. In 2007 the late Senator from Massachusetts, Ted Kennedy, passed a bill that granted priority status to certain Iraqi religious minority members.

The bill I am introducing today follows this bipartisan tradition of the Senate and our country. Among the first Americans were Pilgrims from religious persecution in the Old World. That is one reason we have a long tradition of defending religious minorities here and around the world.

In the coming weeks, I will discuss this bill with my fellow Senators. My hope is, it will pass and pass soon because each day will bring another Christian child who is tortured, another minister crucified, and another girl raped. Faith communities in the Middle East are slowly being strangled out of existence.

We are coming upon Easter, the day of Christ's resurrection. The message of Easter is one for all of humanity; that in times of pain and suffering, trial and tribulation, there can ultimately be salvation, there can ultimately be triumph over death.

I try to keep this message in mind, particularly amidst these times when religious conflict and oppression do not seem to be waning but waxing. Today Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world. Other religions are not far behind in the scope and depth of the oppression they face. While the United States cannot save all those

who are suffering from religious persecution, when the persecutors are rabid terrorists who want to kill Americans and we have the means not only to defeat those terrorists but to also protect the innocent, we ought to act. Certainly we have an obligation to stop the unintentional discrimination in our own refugee process that unfairly blocks Christians and other religious minorities from seeking safety in the United States.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. HEINRICH, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. BROWN):

S. 2710. A bill to increase the participation of historically underrepresented demographic groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and industry; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, March is Women's History Month. So this morning I would like to highlight the progress women have made in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math—or the STEM fields—challenges that persist, and legislation that I will be introducing to help overcome these challenges.

Today we rely on computers for much of our modern life. For that, we thank pioneer RDML Grace Hopper, who was one of the first computer programmers. Space travel is one of the most technologically challenging endeavors that humankind has undertaken. The road to becoming an astronaut requires intelligence and toughness, not to mention fortitude. Astronauts like Sally Ride, the first American woman in space, have shown that women belong in every endeavor.

Hawaii is home to women leaders in STEM fields. Dr. Isabella Aiona Abbott was raised in rural Hana on the island of Maui. She became the first Native Hawaiian woman to receive a Ph.D. in science and went on to discover over 200 species of algae. She remains a leading expert on Pacific algae. These women persevered and rose to great heights of success in the STEM fields. However, we must do better to make sure that many more women have the opportunity to pursue STEM careers. While girls and boys express a similar level of interest in STEM at an early age, studies have found that women start to lose interest in STEM as early as in middle school. This loss of women and minorities continues at nearly every stage of the STEM career trajectory. For example, women are more likely to switch from a STEM to non-STEM major in their first year of college than their male counterparts.

Girls and women report many reasons for losing interest in STEM. These include negative stereotypes about women in STEM, perceived gender barriers, feelings of isolation, and a lack of female role models and mentors. Gender bias and institutional barriers

still slow the advancement of girls and women. Research shows that issues of bias can hinder interest in STEM, influence academic performance, and influence whether faculty encourages female students to pursue STEM careers. Furthermore, bias—whether conscious or unconscious—can harm the hiring, promotion, and career advancement of women in STEM. Bias can even hurt female researchers' chances of winning competitive science grants. Approximately half of the U.S. population and workforce is made up of women. But women make up just over a quarter of the STEM workforce.

As our economy becomes more global, our entire population—men and women—must be engaged in fields that will keep America competitive on the world stage. Expanding the number of women and minorities in STEM fields is essential to meeting that challenge. The importance of growing the U.S. STEM workforce is acknowledged by leaders and businesses in all fields at all levels. For example, this recognition was very evident in the Senate's immigration reform debate. When I served on the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2013, increasing our STEM workforce through immigration policy drove major sections of the bipartisan immigration reform bill passed by the Senate.

In Hawaii and elsewhere, there are programs that expose students to STEM careers through mentoring and interactive activities such as robotics. I want to focus on one school in Hawaii that created these opportunities for their students—Molokai Middle School. This is a school that struggled with science and math scores, but when their teachers established a robotics programs, students from all backgrounds got interested in science. The year the program started, the Molokai Middle School robotics team overcame all odds to represent Hawaii in a national robotics tournament. This year, they will compete in an international robotics competition in Kentucky. Molokai is an island of only about 7,000 people. Their students have thrived and succeeded through their STEM experience. While programs like these have a positive impact on encouraging students to stay excited about STEM fields, there are not enough of such programs.

That is why today I am proud to be joined by Senators GILLIBRAND, MURRAY, FEINSTEIN, HEINRICH, BALDWIN, STABENOW, and BROWN to introduce the Women and Minorities in STEM Booster ACT to improve the recruitment, retention, and success of women and minorities at all stages of the STEM pipeline. This bill authorizes the National Science Foundation to award competitive grants for outreach, mentoring, and professional development programs.

The STEM booster act also authorizes funding for STEM education outreach programs at the elementary and secondary school levels, funding for

mentoring programs, and programs to increase the recruitment and retention of women and minority faculty.

I am also working on another bill to address some of the cultural and institutional barriers that I mentioned today, which impede women's and minorities' advancement in STEM fields. In addition to increasing mentoring and outreach programs, the second bill will improve guidance, training, and coordination among Federal STEM agencies and universities to proactively combat bias and discrimination.

We are on the right track to grow our STEM workforce in the United States, but we still need to move forward faster. We must act now to speed this process. My bill will help expose more girls, women, and minorities to opportunities in STEM fields and accelerate their participation.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting women and minorities in STEM now.

By Mr. MCCAIN:

S. 2711. A bill to expand opportunity for Native American children through additional options in education, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today I am introducing legislation to help tackle the challenging problem of fixing our broken education system on Indian reservations. The bill, known as the Native American Education Opportunity Act, would expand the education opportunities of Native American student living on reservations by allowing their parents to take full advantage of Education Savings Account which would be funded by the Bureau of Indian Education, BIE.

Under this bill, eligible students could apply for up to 90 percent of the per pupil expenditure that BIE would spend on them at a BIE school and use those funds to pay for private school tuition, tutors, online curriculum courses, special needs services, and other K-12 education needs. This funding would be provided through the use of Education Savings Accounts, or ESA's, which are established State-administered programs in the States of Arizona, Mississippi, Florida, Tennessee, and Nevada.

Across the Nation, there is a growing interest in State legislatures in enacting ESA's because of the freedom and opportunity they give to families, but in particular low-income students. My home State of Arizona is at the forefront of this revolutionary approach of empowering parents-To customize their child's education. I believe that families living on Indian reservations in my state and elsewhere should reap the benefits of ESA's too.

As my colleagues know, the need to improve Indian County is a crisis issue. I'm of course referring to the broken Bureau of Indian Education system which consists of 185 schools and 41,000 students. By some estimates, the BIE's

average per pupil spending is \$15,000—higher than the national average. Less than 7 percent of all Native American students attend a BIE school, but the performance disparity between BIE students and Native American students attending non-BIB schools is staggering. Almost half of BIE students do not graduate from high school. Their test scores trail by double digits compared to their peers. Some BIB schools have facilities that are unsuitable as a learning environment. A series of recent reports by the Government Accountability Office, GAO, have focused on the disrepair of schools and bureaucratic mismanagement. Some schools desks, school supplies, and even heat.

I wholeheartedly agree that Congress must intervene and implement administrative reforms and maintenance improvements. But, let us consider that market competition could be a powerful tool for improving teacher retention, diversifying education options, and improving test scores and graduation rates in Indian Country more so than any 5-year BIB plan developed in Washington.

This bill is particularly useful for rural Indian reservations with large land bases where children living on the reservation have little choice but to attend a BIB school. Take for example the Navajo Nation where non-BIB public schools can be over 50 miles away, and private school options are few and far between. It is unconscionable to leave students stranded in failing schools when we can create the option of expanding their educational opportunities in even the most remote parts of Indian Country. We can and should do more to create a market that attracts private schools and other education services willing to open shop on remote Indian reservations.

School choice initiatives, while still relatively new, are building a track record of success. One example is a Federal program set up 12 years ago to address the beleaguered public school system in our Nation's capital, Washington, D.C. Congress established the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program which at one time provided up to \$20 million in scholarships to low income families to pull their children out of a failing DC public schools and place them in a private school. The DC program transformed the future of thousands of children in the District. In 2011, a U.S. Department of Education study found that graduation rates, particularly among minority students jumped by as much as 20 percent for the kids who participated in the program.

The situation in the BIE school system is failing, and it is a reflection of our failure in our solemn obligation to meet certain needs of Native Americans living on Indian reservations. I believe that opening up education opportunity beyond BIE schools for Native American families can prove to be one of the most effective agents for change for education in Indian Country. I en-

courage my colleagues to support this legislation.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 2716. A bill to update the oil and gas and mining industry guides of the Securities and Exchange Commission; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I am introducing legislation to require the Securities and Exchange Commission, SEC, to update its industry guides for oil, gas, and mining companies.

In November 2015, Peabody Energy agreed to provide comprehensive SEC disclosures about climate change risks facing the company when it settled charges of misleading investors. The company executed this settlement with the New York Attorney General after an investigation discovered that Peabody Energy “repeatedly denied in public financial filings to the SEC that it had the ability to predict the impact that potential regulation of climate change pollution would have on its business, even though Peabody and its consultants actually made projections that such regulation would have severe impacts on the company.”

Unfortunately, it appears that the SEC had no role in this settlement, in which Peabody Energy agreed to amend its SEC disclosures, admitting that “concerns about the environmental impacts of coal combustion . . . could significantly affect demand for our products or our securities.”

It is clear that the SEC needs to do more when it comes to critically reviewing the disclosures being filed by publicly traded companies, but it is also clear that the SEC's industry guides for oil, gas, and mining companies should be updated to reflect the growing risk of climate change to these companies. By so doing, the investing public can access the material information necessary to make informed decisions when investing in these types of companies. Indeed, it is for this reason that the SEC has established industry guides for certain industries with complex financial and non-financial data.

These disclosures are important to investors, such as Allianz Global Investors, which is a global diversified active investment manager with nearly \$500 billion in assets under management. Allianz has specifically called for “achieving better disclosure of the effects of carbon costs on the Oil & Gas companies.”

In updating the industry guides for oil, gas, and mining companies, my legislation would direct the SEC to work with the SEC's Investor Advisory Committee. This Committee was established by the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act to advise and consult with the SEC on regulatory priorities, the regulation of securities products, trading strategies, fee structures, disclosure effectiveness, and on initiatives to promote investor con-

fidence and the integrity of the securities marketplace.

I thank Ceres for their support, and I also thank Representative CARTWRIGHT for introducing companion legislation in the House of Representatives today. I urge our colleagues to join us in supporting this legislation.

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

S. 2717. A bill to improve the safety and address the deferred maintenance needs of Indian dams to prevent flooding on Indian reservations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Dam Repairs and Improvements for Tribes Act of 2016 or DRIFT Act. This important legislation is intended to address the flood prevention and dam safety needs in Indian Country. It would address the deferred maintenance needs of Bureau of Indian Affairs, BIA, dams, as well as reform tribal programs within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The BIA has 137 high-hazard dams and over 700 low-hazard dams across the United States. Nearly all of the high-hazard dams are in Western United States, including two high-hazard dams on the Wind River Reservation in my home State of Wyoming—Washakie Dam and Ray Lake Dam. According to the BIA staff, on average these dams are 70 to 80 years old and have over \$500 million in deferred maintenance needs. Funding is simply not keeping up with the maintenance needs of these dams and the threat to public safety in and around Indian Country is very real. The United States has a trust obligation to maintain and operate these dams and prevent what could be a future dam failure.

The legislation I am introducing today would require the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of the Army, to address the maintenance backlog of BIA dams by establishing a High-Hazard Indian Dam Safety Deferred Maintenance Fund and a Low-Hazard Indian Dam Safety Deferred Maintenance Fund. The high-hazard fund would receive \$22,750,000 each year from fiscal years 2017 through 2037. The low-hazard fund would receive \$10,000,000 for the same time period. The bill funds low-hazard dams if their needs are critical as well and are not being addressed by available scarce resources. Neglecting the deferred maintenance needs of these dams may result in them becoming high hazard dams in the near future.

The DRIFT Act establishes criteria for how the money would be prioritized, looking at criteria such as threats to public safety, natural or cultural resources, and economic concerns. The criteria also looks at the ability of increasing water storage capacity of BIA dams to prevent flooding to downstream communities.

The legislation also seeks to make other important flood prevention and

dam safety policy reforms for both the BIA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Specifically, the DRIFT Act establishes a 4-year pilot program for a BIA flood mitigation program for tribes; establishes a Tribal Safety of Dams Committee within the Department of the Interior to make recommendations to Congress for modernizing the Indian Dam Safety Act; and mandates that tribes regularly report their dam inventory to BIA.

The bill requires the BIA to report annually on the safety status of their dams to Congress; makes reforms to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Tribal Partnership Program to allow the Corps to pay for any feasibility study of a project costing not more than \$10,000,000; allows in-kind contributions by tribes to count towards a cost-share of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' feasibility study; and allows tribes to not have a cost share for studies and projects that cost up to \$200,000. This is the same cost-sharing requirements the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers allows for U.S. territories.

It is time to make sure that we make the necessary changes to ensure that tribes and surrounding communities are protected, and that the Federal Government collaborates with and empowers Indian tribes to secure their communities."

By Mr. Kaine (for himself, Ms. Baldwin, Mr. Portman, Mrs. Capito, and Ms. Ayotte):

S. 2718. A bill to amend the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 to support innovative approaches to career and technical education and redesign the high school experience for students by providing students with equitable access to rigorous, engaging, and relevant real world education through partnerships with business and industry and higher education that prepare students to graduate from high school and enroll into postsecondary education without the need for remediation and with the ability to use knowledge to solve complex problems, think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and develop academic mindsets; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, the demands of today's competitive global market require that students have the right skills and knowledge to succeed in postsecondary education and enter the workforce. Providing students with an engaging experience that is relevant to the workforce and integrates partnerships with industry and higher education is critical to our Nation's future. Unfortunately, these opportunities are lacking in many of today's high schools, leaving students unprepared for 21st century careers.

Career and technical education, CTE, is often overlooked in discussions on increasing relevancy and rigor in our Nation's schools—despite the fact that a strong focus on academics is the cor-

nerstone of high-quality CTE. When the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education conducted a 4-year longitudinal study in three states, they found that students participating in CTE programs or career pathways outperformed their peers on the number of credits they earned in science, technology, engineering and math, STEM, and AP classes, while also earning higher grade point averages in their CTE classes.

That is why I am introducing with my colleagues, Senators Portman, Baldwin, and Capito, the CTE Excellence and Equity Act. This bipartisan legislation supports funding for innovation in career and technical education to help redesign the high school experience for historically underserved students. It would authorize grants to partnerships among school districts, employers, and institutions of higher education in Virginia and other states that help students earn industry recognized credentials or credit toward a postsecondary degree or certificate. The bill also places an emphasis on understanding the relevance of coursework in the context of a future career by placing an emphasis on teaching workplace skills through job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships.

CTE programs are critical components to every student's education. I am pleased to be introducing this bipartisan legislation to strengthen CTE programs in high school so that students are better prepared for postsecondary studies and the workforce. I hope that my colleagues consider this legislation as we move to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins CTE Act.

By Mrs. Murray (for herself, Mr. Sanders, Mr. Blumenthal, Mr. Durbin, and Ms. Warren):

S. 2719. A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to improve the protections provided to members of the uniformed services and their families, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mrs. Murray. Mr. President, I have often said when our nation sends men and women to war we commit to taking care of them when they return home. We also promise them important legal protections to allow them to focus on their mission and in recognition that while they are deployed or away from home servicemembers often do not have the resources to respond to a range of financial and legal issues. Despite these protections, too many servicemembers have been cheated on their student loans, on their mortgages, and on their credit cards.

When our men and women in uniform are serving our country, they should not have to worry about whether our government is going to hold up its end of the bargain and fulfill its responsibilities to them.

So today I introduce the SCRA Enhancement and Improvement Act of 2016, which will put an end to many of

these predatory practices and give servicemembers and the government the tools they need to fight back when banks and student loan servicers deny servicemembers their rights.

In 2014, I learned of allegations that at least one major student loan servicer had been overcharging men and women in uniform on their student loans while they were on active duty. That's unacceptable. One servicemember overcharged on their student loans is one too many.

That is why this bill will end the unfair and improper practices of student loan servicers by requiring them to automatically apply the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, SCRA, interest rate cap, respond within 14 days to any request for SCRA protections, and provide a full explanation any time they deny an SCRA protection, along with clear instructions on how to remedy the situation so the servicemember can receive that protection. It will also require student loan servicers to have a designated service representative or point of contact for servicemembers and ensure these individuals are properly trained on the needs of servicemembers, how the military operates, and the protections required by SCRA, the Higher Education Act, and other laws.

The bill will hold servicers accountable for their conduct and treatment of servicemembers by requiring them to retain all communications with servicemembers so we can conduct thorough oversight.

The SCRA Enhancement and Improvement Act will also hold the Department of Education accountable for enforcing standards and the law with its student loan servicers. Following numerous allegations of servicemembers being mistreated by student loan servicers who were not complying with the SCRA interest rate caps, and at least 69,000 servicemembers who were overcharged by one Federal contractor, I asked the Department to review how many servicemembers had been improperly denied their benefits under SCRA. Shockingly, the Department told us that the servicers were complying in the "vast majority of cases." This was inconsistent with what the Department of Justice and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau had found.

I wrote to the Department of Education's Inspector General and asked her to review the Department's findings. Two weeks ago the IG released their report, and it showed that instead of doing a thorough investigation to find out exactly how many servicemembers may have been overcharged on their student loans, the Department's review was riddled with errors and papered over mishandling of military borrowers' loans.

The bill I am introducing today will require sufficient notice to be given when a loan is transferred or sold, and that all benefits or protections for the servicemember are seamlessly transferred to the new loan servicer. It will

also forgive all Federal and private student loan debt in the event the servicemember dies in the line of duty.

The SCRA Enhancement and Improvement Act also expands protections beyond student loans. I was concerned when several years ago some of the nation's largest mortgage servicers improperly overcharged and foreclosed upon deployed servicemembers in violation of the SCRA. Thousands of servicemembers and veterans were wronged over several years. After those allegations came to light, and after the Department of Justice reached a settlement with those mortgage servicers, GAO released a report in 2014 looking at the importance of mortgage and foreclosure protections in the SCRA. The results were concerning, especially when they found at one mortgage servicer that 82 percent of loans that would have benefitted from the SCRA's interest rate cap still had rates in excess of 6 percent.

This bill would reduce the interest rate cap to three percent to provide meaningful protection to servicemembers, including a zero percent cap for servicemembers eligible for hostile fire or imminent danger pay. It would expand the SCRA interest rate protection to all of a servicemember's debt regardless of when it was incurred, in order to cover consolidation loans and in recognition that the same challenges exist for military borrowers regardless of when a debt was first incurred. It would also strengthen the protections that prevent judgements against a servicemember who cannot appear in court because of military service.

As the daughter of a World War II veteran, I know how much our military families sacrifice on behalf of their country. So I believe protecting our military men and women from predatory practices is an absolutely essential commitment we make to them. We will not allow our servicemembers to be taken advantage of.

Finally, as we have seen too often, these protections are only as good as our ability to enforce the law and hold people accountable. The SCRA Enhancement and Improvement Act will give servicemembers, the Department of Justice, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau the legal and oversight tools they need to hold entities accountable. It would clarify that servicemembers may bring a private right of action to enforce their rights and make arbitration clauses unenforceable unless all parties agree after a dispute arises. The bill will give the Attorney General the authority to issue civil investigative demands in SCRA investigations. It would double the fines against parties found to be violating the protections afforded by the SCRA.

With the number of Federal entities involved, it is essential the departments and agencies work collaboratively to protect servicemembers. The Defense Department must ensure

it is providing clear, useful information to servicemembers on their rights and how to invoke them, and that the training stays current. I especially commend the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau for its dedicated work on behalf of our men and women in uniform.

Our servicemembers deserve better than what they have gotten over the last several years. The SCRA Enhancement and Improvement Act will go a long way to ensuring our servicemembers are protected, putting a stop to the predatory practices of banks and student loan servicers, and change the apathy that has characterized the Department of Education's oversight. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

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

S. 2730. A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, known as the "Ghost Army", collectively, in recognition of its unique and incredible service during World War II; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act to honor the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, called the "Ghost Army," which was a top-secret unit of the United States Army that served in the European Theater of Operations during World War II. The unit was actively engaged in battlefield operations from June of 1944 through March of 1945. The deceptive activities of the Ghost Army were essential to several Allied victories across Europe and are estimated to have saved thousands of lives.

I was inspired to introduce this bill after hearing the story of Jack McGlynn of Medford, MA. I have known Jack for decades going back to my time in the Massachusetts State Legislature, but I never knew that he was a member of the Ghost Army. Like many World War II Veterans, Jack returned home to Massachusetts after the War, started a family, and got involved in local politics. Jack was a city councilor, Mayor, and State Representative. He kept his service in the Ghost Army a secret from everyone, even his wife and 6 children. Finally in 2008, Jack read that it was declassified and he finally shared the story with his family and friends.

In evaluating the performance of the Ghost Army after the War, a U.S. Army analysis found that "Rarely, if ever, has there been a group of such a few men which had so great an influence on the outcome of a major military campaign." Many Ghost Army soldiers were specially selected for their mission, and were recruited from art schools, advertising agencies, communications companies, and other creative and technical professions.

The first four members of the Ghost Army landed on D-day and two became

casualties while camouflaging early beach installations. The Ghost Army's secret deception operations commenced in France on June 14, 1944, when Task Force Mason landed at Omaha Beach to draw enemy fire and protect the 980th Artillery.

Task Force Mason was a prelude to full scale tactical deceptions completed by the Ghost Army. Often operating on or near the front lines, the Ghost Army used inflatable tanks, artillery, air planes and other vehicles, advanced engineered soundtracks, and skillfully crafted radio trickery to create the illusion of sizable American forces where there were none and to draw the enemy away from Allied troops.

Ghost Army soldiers impersonated other, larger Army units by sewing counterfeit patches onto their uniforms, painting false markings on their vehicles, and creating phony headquarters staffed by fake generals, all in an effort to feed false information to Axis spies. During the Battle of the Bulge, the Ghost Army created counterfeit radio traffic to mask the efforts of General George Patton's Third Army as it mobilized to break through to the 101st Airborne. It also provided assistance to elements of 10th Armored Division in the besieged Belgian town of Bastogne.

In its final mission, Operation Viersen, the Ghost Army deployed a tactical deception that drew German units down the Rhine River and away from the 9th Army, allowing the 9th Army to cross the Rhine into Germany. On this mission, the 1,100 men of the Ghost Army, with the assistance of other units, impersonated forty thousand men, or two complete divisions of American forces, by using fabricated radio networks, soundtracks of construction work and artillery fire, and more than 600 inflatable vehicles.

Three Ghost Army soldiers gave their lives and dozens were injured in carrying out their mission. Their activities remained classified for more than forty years after the war and I believe the extraordinary accomplishments of this unit are deserving of belated recognition. The United States will be eternally grateful to the Ghost Army for their proficient use of innovative tactics throughout World War II, which saved thousands of lives and were instrumental in the defeat of Nazi Germany.

I ask all my colleagues to cosponsor this legislation to give a Congressional Gold Medal to the members of the Ghost Army.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 403—DESIGNATING THE WEEK BEGINNING APRIL 24, 2016 AS “NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL ASSESSMENT CENTER WEEK” IN CELEBRATION OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDUSTRIAL ASSESSMENT CENTERS

Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. COONS, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BENNET, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. DONNELLY, Ms. WARREN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. PORTMAN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. PETERS, Mr. CARPER, Mr. GARDNER, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. TOOMEY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 403

Whereas Industrial Assessment Centers (IACs) are university-led programs funded by the Department of Energy that provide energy efficiency assessments to small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises in the United States for improving energy efficiency and reducing water usage and waste;

Whereas IACs increase the energy efficiency, productivity, sustainability, and competitiveness of manufacturers in the United States;

Whereas, since the inception of the IAC program in 1976, IACs have conducted more than 16,000 assessments at manufacturing plants across the United States;

Whereas the assessments conducted by IACs have saved an estimated 76,000,000,000 British thermal units, a quantity equivalent to meeting the energy needs of almost 1,400,000 homes in the United States;

Whereas IACs have saved participating manufacturers more than \$1,000,000,000 in energy costs;

Whereas an estimated 6,000,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions have been avoided due to IAC assessments, a quantity equivalent to the emissions from more than 1,200,000 cars;

Whereas the IAC program equips undergraduate and graduate university students with the skills to conduct energy audits, improving workforce training and cultivating the next generation of energy engineers;

Whereas more than 3,000 students have graduated from the IAC program, with more than 60 percent continuing on to pursue careers in energy-related fields; and

Whereas 2016 marks the 40th anniversary of the IAC program: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week beginning April 24, 2016 as “National Industrial Assessment Center Week”; and

(2) calls on the people of the United States to observe National Industrial Assessment Center Week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 404—DESIGNATING MARCH 2016 AS “NATIONAL MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION MONTH”

Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself and Mr. ISAKSON) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 404

Whereas the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Association

for Middle Level Education, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals have declared March 2016 as “National Middle Level Education Month”;

Whereas schools that educate middle level students are responsible for educating nearly 24,000,000 young adolescents between the ages of 10 and 15, in grades 5 through 9, who are undergoing rapid and dramatic changes in their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development;

Whereas young adolescents deserve challenging and engaging instruction and knowledgeable teachers and administrators who are prepared to provide young adolescents with a safe, challenging, and supportive learning environment;

Whereas young adolescents deserve organizational structures that banish anonymity and promote personalization, collaboration, and social equity;

Whereas the habits and values established during early adolescence have a lifelong influence that directly affects the future health and welfare of the United States;

Whereas research indicates that the academic achievement of a student in grade 8 has a larger impact on the readiness of that student for an institution of higher education at the end of high school than any academic achievement of that student in high school; and

Whereas in order to improve graduation rates and prepare students to be lifelong learners who are ready for an institution of higher education or a career and civic participation, the people of the United States must have a deeper understanding of the distinctive mission of middle level education: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates March 2016 as “National Middle Level Education Month”;

(2) honors and recognizes the importance of middle level education and the contributions of the individuals who educate middle level students; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States to observe National Middle Level Education Month by visiting and celebrating schools that are responsible for educating young adolescents in the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 405—DESIGNATING PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, AS THE SITE OF THE CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, IN COORDINATION WITH VISION 2020

Mr. CASEY submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 405

Whereas the 19th Amendment to Constitution of the United States was ratified on August 18, 1920, guaranteeing women in the United States the right to vote;

Whereas the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment will occur in 2020;

Whereas Vision 2020, developed by the Institute for Women's Health and Leadership at Drexel University, has launched the Vision 2020 Campaign for Equality—

(1) to commemorate the centennial of women's suffrage; and

(2) to advance and achieve economic, social, and political equality for women in the United States by 2020;

Whereas Vision 2020 is partnering with national associations and professional organi-

zations that represent more than 20,000,000 women and girls in the United States;

Whereas in 2020, celebratory events will take place in cities all across the United States, particularly in cities in which monumental historic events and people shaped the women's suffrage movement;

Whereas Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which was home to historic women who played significant roles in the women's rights movement, including Lucretia Mott, Alice Paul, Fanny Jackson Coppin, and Eliza Sproat Turner, should be designated as the headquarters and coordinating site to celebrate the centennial of women's suffrage;

Whereas the women's suffrage movement was closely tied to abolitionism and many suffragists gained previous experience in advocacy as antislavery activists;

Whereas the first major event in the women's suffrage movement occurred on July 19, 1848, the date on which Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the first convention on women's rights, the Seneca Falls Convention;

Whereas in 1850, Lucy Stone organized the National Women's Rights Convention and gave a speech that inspired Susan B. Anthony and others to join the cause for women's rights;

Whereas in 1851, Sojourner Truth gave her famous speech entitled “Ain't I a Woman?” at a convention in Akron, Ohio;

Whereas in 1869, women suffragists formed the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association, which were national organizations established to work for the right of women to vote that united in 1890 to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association;

Whereas in 1872, Susan B. Anthony and a group of women voted in the Presidential election and were arrested and fined for voting illegally;

Whereas in the late 19th century, the Senate voted on women's suffrage for the first time;

Whereas during the early 20th century, a new generation of women joined the women's suffrage movement and devoted time to marches and other active forms of protest, including the first picket lines in front of the White House;

Whereas women suffragists were often detained and sent to jail and some of those women who went on hunger strikes were aggressively force fed;

Whereas since the ratification of the 19th Amendment, the work begun by the suffragists continues to advance the equality of women in all political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of life in the United States, including shared leadership; and

Whereas the contributions of women suffragists who fought for and won, for women of the United States, the right to vote should be celebrated on the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the crucial role that the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution played in advancing the rights of women and promoting the democratic values at the core of the United States;

(2) designates Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as the site of the national centennial commemoration of the ratification of the 19th Amendment; and

(3) commends the efforts of Vision 2020—

(A) to orchestrate, lead, and coordinate that momentous occasion in Philadelphia; and

(B) to continue the fight for equality for women.