

EC-6178. A communication from the Deputy Secretary of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Exemption from Derivatives Clearing Organization Registration” (RIN3038-AE65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 16, 2020; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-6179. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Broflanilide; Pesticide Tolerances” (FRL No. 10016-42-OCSP) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2020; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-6180. A communication from the Senior Counsel, Legal Division, Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Qualified Mortgage Definition under the Truth in Lending Act (Regulation Z): General QM Loan Definition” (RIN3170-AA98) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 17, 2020; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-6181. A communication from the Senior Counsel, Legal Division, Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Qualified Mortgage Definition under the Truth in Lending Act (Regulation Z): Seasoned QM Loan Definition” (RIN3170-AA98) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 17, 2020; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-6182. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to the Western Balkans that was declared in Executive Order 13219 of June 26, 2001; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-6183. A communication from the Secretary of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the export to the People’s Republic of China of items not detrimental to the U.S. space launch industry; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-6184. A communication from the Director, Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Amendments Relating to Disclosure of Records and Information” (RIN3170-AA63) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 18, 2020; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-6185. A communication from the Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Endowment’s Agency Financial Report for fiscal year 2020; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-6186. A communication from the Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Statistical Programs of the United States Government: Fiscal Years 2019/2020”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-6187. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; California; Placer County Air Pollution Control District, Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District, Mariposa County Air Pollution Control District, and Eastern Kern Air Pollution Control District” (FRL No. 10017-70-Region

9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2020; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-6188. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; California; South Coast Air Quality Management” (FRL No. 10017-96-Region 9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2020; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-6189. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Partial Approval, Partial Disapproval, and Conditional Approval; Arizona; Maricopa County Air Quality Management Department; Reasonably Available Control Technology State Implementation Plan and Surface Coating Rule” (FRL No. 10017-89-Region 9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2020; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-6190. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Employee Benefits Security Administration, Department of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Grandfathered Group Health Plans and Grandfathered Group Health Insurance Coverage” (RIN1210-AB89) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 17, 2020; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-6191. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “National Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease: 2020 Update”; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-6192. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Parts A and B Supplemental Awards for Fiscal Year 2020 Report to Congress”; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-6193. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Employee Benefits Security Administration, Department of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Fiduciary Duties Regarding Proxy Voting and Shareholder Rights” (RIN1210-AB91) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 17, 2020; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-6194. A communication from the Assistant Chief Counsel for Regulatory Affairs, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Hazardous Materials: Miscellaneous Amendments Pertaining to DOT-Specification Cylinders” (RIN2137-AE80) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2020; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-6195. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Legislative Affairs, Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, Department of Commerce transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “FY2019 Annual Report on Small Entity Compliance Guides”; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

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 Ms. WARREN:

S. 5070. A bill to improve the anti-corruption and public integrity laws, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. REED:

S. 5071. A bill to support library infrastructure; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. REED (for himself and Mr. TESTER):

S. 5072. A bill to improve Vet Centers for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

By Mr. SCOTT of Florida:

S. 5073. A bill to establish a program to support county and municipal government entities in reducing the spread of COVID-19 through standardized testing and evaluation measures, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MENENDEZ:

S. 5074. A bill to provide assistance for United States citizens and nationals taken hostage or unlawfully or wrongfully detained abroad, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 802

At the request of Mr. DAINES, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 802, a bill to amend part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, and for other purposes.

S. 206

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2006, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit certain conduct relating to the use of horses for human consumption.

S. 2668

At the request of Ms. SINEMA, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2668, a bill to establish a program for research, development, and demonstration of solar energy technologies, and for other purposes.

S. 2862

At the request of Ms. SINEMA, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2862, a bill to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a grant program to remove nonnative plant species that contribute to drought conditions, and for other purposes.

S. 3127

At the request of Ms. SINEMA, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3127, a bill to protect, for current and future generations, the watershed, ecosystem, and cultural heritage of the Grand Canyon region in the State of Arizona, to provide for a study relating to the uranium stockpile in the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 4121

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, her name was added as a cosponsor of S.

4121, a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Transportation to establish a motor vehicle recall assistance program, and for other purposes.

S. 4475

At the request of Ms. SINEMA, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4475, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain land to La Paz County, Arizona, and for other purposes.

S. 4659

At the request of Mr. REED, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 4659, a bill to require a determination as to whether crimes committed against the Rohingya in Burma amount to genocide.

S. 5019

At the request of Mr. DAINES, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 5019, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to limit the charitable deduction for certain qualified conservation contributions.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. REED (for himself and Mr. TESTER):

S. 5072. A bill to improve Vet Centers for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, as many of my colleagues know, the transition from deployment to civilian life is frequently difficult. Vet Centers, created in the wake of the Vietnam War, are community-based centers that were designed to provide critical services for veterans, service members, and their families. Today, there is a need to enhance these Centers to realize that original vision—which is why I am introducing the Vet Center Improvement Act.

This legislation is an outgrowth of a Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigation that Senator TESTER and I requested into allegations that changes to performance metrics at Vet Centers may have negatively impacted care and additional concerns that he and I had about their staffing practices. The subsequent GAO report concluded that recent changes “have the potential to negatively affect care and create undue burden and stress on counselors providing that care at some Vet Centers.” This report included recommendations to improve care, transparency, and hiring and staffing methods that form the foundation for our legislation.

Specifically, the Vet Center Improvement Act requires periodic review and reform of performance standards at Vet Centers; the creation and periodic re-evaluation of a staffing model, along with standardization of position descriptions and responsibilities across Vet Centers; the creation of a working

group to implement changes to improve quality of care for veterans and recruitment and retention of staff; and the GAO to review Vet Center infrastructure and examine what future investments are needed.

Additionally, our legislation creates a pilot program to provide grants to combat food insecurity and provide necessary heating and cooling assistance to veterans and their families. Food insecurity and the need for heating assistance are growing issues for veterans and others as a result of the pandemic.

I would like to thank Senator TESTER for not only the attention he has paid to this issue as Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, but also for joining with me on this important legislation. Our legislation has received support from such organizations as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Veterans (AMVETS), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), National Community Action Foundation (NCAF), National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSP), the National Energy & Utility Affordability Coalition (NEUAC), and the URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America. I look forward to continuing our partnership on this and other measures to improve care for our veterans, and I hope our colleagues will join us in this endeavor.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 2719. Mr. GARDNER (for Mr. LANKFORD) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 458, calling for the global repeal of blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws.

SA 2720. Mr. GARDNER (for Mr. LANKFORD) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 458, supra.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 2719. Mr. GARDNER (for Mr. LANKFORD) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 458, calling for the global repeal of blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws; as follows:

Strike all after the resolving clause and insert the following: “That the Senate—

(1) recognizes that blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws inappropriately position governments as arbiters of religious truth and empower officials to impose religious dogma on individuals or minorities through the power of the government or through violence sanctioned by the government;

(2) calls on the President and the Secretary of State to encourage the repeal of blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy in bilateral discussions between the United States and all countries that have such laws, through direct interventions in bilateral and multilateral fora;

(3) encourages the President and the Secretary of State to oppose—

(A) any efforts, by the United Nations or by other international or multilateral fora, to create an international anti-blasphemy norm, such as the “defamation of religions” resolutions introduced in the United Nations between 1999 and 2010; and

(B) any attempts to expand the international norm on incitement to include blasphemy or defamation of religions;

(4) supports efforts by the United Nations to combat intolerance, discrimination, or violence against persons based on religion or belief without restricting expression, including United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 (2011) and the Istanbul Process meetings pursuant to such resolution, that are consistent with the First Amendment to the Constitution;

(5) calls on the President and the Secretary of State to designate countries that enforce blasphemy, heresy, or apostasy laws as “countries of particular concern for religious freedom” under section 402(b)(1)(A)(ii) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6442(b)(1)(A)(ii)) for engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom, as a result of the abuses flowing from the enforcement of such laws and from unpunished vigilante violence often generated by blasphemy allegations;

(6) urges the governments of countries that enforce blasphemy, heresy, or apostasy laws to allow for freedom of religion and expression and amend or repeal such laws, as they provide pretext and impunity for vigilante violence against religious minorities; and

(7) urges the governments of countries that have prosecuted, imprisoned, and persecuted people on charges of blasphemy, heresy, or apostasy to release such people unconditionally and, once released, to ensure their safety and that of their families.

SA 2720. Mr. GARDNER (for Mr. LANKFORD) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 458, calling for the global repeal of blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws; as follows:

Strike the preamble and insert the following:

Whereas Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “[e]veryone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance”;

Whereas many countries continue to have criminal blasphemy laws, and many punish people who engage in expression deemed by the government to be blasphemous, heretical, apostate, defamatory of religion, or insulting to religion or to religious symbols, figures, or feelings, and such punishment can include fines, imprisonment, and capital punishment including by beheading;

Whereas blasphemy laws have affected Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Baha'i, secularists, and many other groups, are inconsistent with international human rights standards because they establish and promote official religious orthodoxy and dogma over individual liberty, and often result in violations of the freedoms of religion, thought, and expression that are protected under international instruments, including Articles 18 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);

Whereas the United Nations Human Rights Committee stated in General Comment 34 that “[p]rohibitions of displays of lack of respect for a religion or other belief system, including blasphemy laws, are incompatible with the [ICCPR].”;

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has found that blasphemy charges are often based on false accusations, are used for sectarian or political purposes, and foster religious intolerance, discrimination, and violence;

Whereas USCIRF has found that at least 84 countries had blasphemy laws as of 2020;