

qualified to become the Nation's foremost spokesman on health issues.

In 1992, under Dr. Satcher's leadership, the CDC launched and implemented a successful childhood immunization initiative. Before the initiative, only a little more than half of the Nation's children—55 percent—were immunized. Now, 78 percent are immunized. As a result, vaccine-preventable childhood diseases are at record lows.

Dr. Satcher has also led CDC efforts to strengthen the Nation's defenses against infectious diseases and food-borne illnesses. We rely on the CDC to provide a rapid response to outbreaks of disease and protect public safety. Under Dr. Satcher, CDC has begun to implement a comprehensive strategy on infectious diseases and plays a key role in a new early warning system on food-borne illnesses.

Dr. Satcher was previously a member of the faculty of the UCLA School of Medicine and the King/Drew Medical Center in Los Angeles. For 2 years, he served as interim dean of the Drew Postgraduate Medical School. He also served as professor and chairman of the department of community medicine and family practice at the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta.

For over a decade, from 1982 to 1993, Dr. Satcher served as president of Meharry Medical College in Nashville, the Nation's largest private historically black institution for educating health care professionals and biomedical researchers.

At the CDC, he has combined a proven track record of leadership and effectiveness that make him an excellent choice to be Surgeon General and Assistant Secretary for Health, and I urge the Senate to move expeditiously to confirm him.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. DURBIN:

S. 1172. A bill for the relief of Sylvester Flis; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. WARNER (for himself, Mr. CHAFEE, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. BOND, Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. REID, Mr. KEMPTHORNE, Mr. THOMAS, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. INHOFE,

Mr. DORGAN, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. JOHNSON):

S. 1173. A bill to authorize funds for construction of highway safety programs, and for mass transit programs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. MOYNIHAN (by request):

S. 1174. A bill to improve the operations and governance of the Internal Revenue Service, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DURBIN:

S. 1172. A bill for the relief of Sylvester Flis; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

PRIVATE RELIEF LEGISLATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to offer legislation on behalf of Mr. Sylvester Flis, a permanent resident alien from Poland, now living in Chicago. This bill would grant immediate citizenship to Sylvester by waiving the mandatory 5-year waiting period required of all permanent residents wishing to become U.S. citizens. Out of great respect for what U.S. citizenship stands for and the privileges it bestows, the Senate has rarely granted this kind of request, and only in cases that it deems to be uniquely compelling. After hearing Sylvester's story, I am confident my colleagues will agree with me that this request fulfills this high standard and is therefore deserving of their support.

Sylvester entered this country as a permanent resident in July 1994 after learning that his grandmother, by virtue of having been born in New Haven, CT and being a U.S. citizen, could sponsor her family to be in the United States. He now lives in Chicago with his parents, Czeslaw and Lucja, his sister, Anna, and brother, Ireneusz.

Like many young Eastern Europeans who grew up during the final years of Soviet domination, Sylvester, now 23 years of age, is eager to take advantage of the opportunities offered by his new found freedom. He currently takes English classes and is working toward his GED, general equivalency diploma. Sylvester works for his uncle's carpentry business and hopes to eventually find a job in electronics, which is what he studied as a student in Poland. Like the millions of immigrants who have preceded him, Sylvester has left behind the security of friends and familiar surroundings to come to the United States to share his talents and make our Nation a stronger one.

Two things, however, make Sylvester very different from most immigrants. First, he suffers from a disease known as spina bifida. Spina bifida is the failure of the spine to close during the first month of pregnancy. This results in varying degrees of paralysis, loss of sensation in the lower limbs, difficulty with bowel and bladder management, and learning disabilities. As a result of his condition, Sylvester is confined to a wheelchair.

The second thing that distinguishes Sylvester from most immigrants is that he is a world class athlete. Despite his condition, Sylvester has developed into one of the top sled hockey players in the country. I imagine most of you are unfamiliar with sled hockey, as was I until I became familiar with Sylvester's story. Sled hockey is a variation of regular hockey that is played by disabled individuals on a regulation rink. Sled hockey has all the same rules as regular hockey except that players use sleds, rather than ice skates, to maneuver around the ice.

Last Spring, Sylvester competed with the United States National Team in international sled hockey competitions in Sweden and the United Kingdom. He hopes to compete with the United States in the 1998 Paralympics in Nagano, Japan next March. The Paralympics are an international athletic competition for individuals with mobility disabilities held every 4 years. They begin soon after the completion of the regular Olympic Games and are held in the same city and country as the Olympics. Sylvester is considered a lock to make next year's team.

To make that dream a reality, however, Sylvester needs to be a U.S. citizen by the end of this coming January, which is when the final team will be selected. While the International Olympic Committee allows Paralympians to represent countries with which they have permanent residency, the U.S. Olympic Committee [USOC] has very strict rules which require citizenship for all U.S. competitors. Sylvester was eligible to participate with the United States team in Europe last Spring because those competitions were not sponsored by the USOC. By granting Sylvester citizenship and waiving the mandatory 5-year-waiting period, he will be eligible to compete for the United States in Japan. Without a waiver, Sylvester would become a citizen in July 1999, which would be too late for the 1998 games. Poland will not be competing in sled hockey at these games, making the United States team Sylvester's only chance to participate in this once-in-a-lifetime event.

As I mentioned at the outset, Sylvester is more than just a good athlete who wants to compete for the United States. He is a young man of tremendous character who has worked hard to become part of our community. I've spoken to several people who have worked with Sylvester and they all attest to his work ethic, his character, and his enthusiasm for helping others. This spirit is best demonstrated by the active role he has played in the Chicago community to help other disabled individuals overcome the obstacles they face in their daily lives. His volunteer activities include teaching sled hockey at the Chicago Park District to disabled and nondisabled individuals. He also volunteers with Wheelchair Dance Chicago, an organization that, as the name suggests, helps disabled individuals learn to dance. Through his