

purposes of carrying out any administrative or programmatic project or activity under this Act or under the National Oceanographic Partnership Program, including support for the interagency program office, a common infrastructure, and system integration for a ocean and coastal observing system. Funds may be transferred among such departments and agencies through an appropriate instrument that specifies the goods, services, or space being acquired from another Council member and the costs of the same.

SEC. 7. APPLICATION WITH OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF LANDS ACT.

Nothing in this Act supersedes, or limits the authority of the Secretary of the Interior under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1331 et seq.).

SEC. 8. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for the implementation of an integrated ocean and coastal observing system under section 4, and the research and development program under section 5, including financial assistance to the interagency program office, the regional associations for the implementation of regional ocean and coastal observing systems, and the departments and agencies represented on the Council, \$150,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2006 through 2010. At least 50 percent of the sums appropriated for the implementation of the integrated ocean and coastal observing system under section 4 shall be allocated to the regional associations certified under section 4(f) for implementation of regional ocean and coastal observing systems. Sums appropriated pursuant to this section shall remain available until expended.

SEC. 9. REPORTING REQUIREMENT.

Not later than March 31, 2010, the President, acting through the Council, shall transmit to Congress a report on the programs established under sections 4 and 5. The report shall include a description of activities carried out under the programs, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs, and recommendations concerning reauthorization of the programs and funding levels for the programs in succeeding fiscal years.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, the Committee on Commerce, Science, and transportation, which I co-chair with my good-friend Senator DANIEL INOUE, has unanimously passed out of committee, four bills to protect our oceans and enhance the collective knowledge of the marine environment. The Senate just passed these four bills by unanimous consent, and I look forward to working with the House to get this important legislation enacted into law.

Water covers over 70 percent of the Earth's surface. It is estimated that 80 percent of life on Earth is in the oceans. The Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Oceans, and the Gulf of Mexico, make up the waters of the United States Exclusive Economic Zone. In fact, the Pacific Ocean alone covers nearly an entire hemisphere of the globe. But little is known about these waters.

The four bills the Senate passed today will provide greater understanding of the complex ocean environment. Together, they will increase the coordination and effectiveness of the Federal agencies that contribute to the research and management of these critical marine ecosystems.

The four bills are: S. 50, the Tsunami Preparedness Act; S. 39, the National Ocean Exploration Program Act; S. 361, the Ocean and Coastal Observation System Act of 2005; and S. 362, the Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act of 2005.

The Tsunami Preparedness Act is the first bill that Senator Inouye and I drafted as the new Co-chairmen of the Commerce Committee. It was developed in the wake of the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami that took lives in 11 countries and provides an expanded tsunami detection and warning system for the United States. The bill authorizes the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA, to establish, operate, and maintain a dependable national tsunami warning system that would provide maximum tsunami detection capability for the Nation. The system would build on the model established in the Pacific, and provide for its repair, expansion and modernization by the close of calendar year 2007. In addition, the bill directs NOAA to provide any necessary technical support or other assistance to international efforts to establish regional tsunami detection and warning systems in other parts of the world, including the Indian Ocean.

I wrote the next bill, National Ocean Exploration Program Act, for the simple fact that very little is known about our oceans and more research and exploration is desperately needed. Approximately 95 percent of the ocean floor remains unexplored, much of it located in the polar-regions and southern ocean. We know more about the surface of the moon than the ocean floor; this bill is intended to change that. The National Ocean Exploration Program Act establishes a national program within NOAA to conduct inter-disciplinary ocean exploration voyages in partnership with other Federal agencies or academic institutions. The Act will strengthen interagency coordination on ocean exploration for the purposes of developing and facilitating the transfer of new exploration technologies, communication infrastructure, and data management systems to the Program. The bill gives priority attention to the exploration of deep ocean regions to make exciting new discoveries. In addition, it will promote the development of improved oceanographic research, communication, navigation, and data collection systems, in an effort to increase understanding of the ocean environment.

The Ocean and Coastal Observation System Act of 2005, developed by Senator SNOWE, will also contribute to our knowledge of the oceans with greater monitoring and observation of this dynamic environment. The bill will establish a national, integrated ocean and coastal observing system that will collect, compile, and make available data on ocean conditions in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, including the Great Lakes. The ocean and coastal observation system will help improve

weather and flood forecasting, promote understanding of climatic variability processes, enhance safety and efficiency of marine operations, facilitate research, improve management of marine and coastal ecosystems, and provide information to raise public awareness of oceans.

And finally there is the Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act of 2005. Authored by Senator INOUE, this bill responds to the immediate need to prevent and reduce significantly the amount of trash that is collecting in our oceans. The bill establishes separate programs within NOAA and the Coast Guard to identify, assess, reduce and prevent marine debris and its adverse impacts on the marine environment and navigation safety. In addition the bill creates an Interagency Committee on Marine Debris to coordinate federal efforts to prevent and reduce marine debris.

I look forward to the new information and management capabilities these bills will provide. Alaska has more coastline than the rest of the country combined. The oceans are a vital part of our way of life, and we depend on sound scientific research to maintain them. These bills are important to increase our efforts to be good stewards of our oceans.

I thank my colleagues on the Commerce Committee and those in the Senate for their overwhelming support of these bills.

DISCHARGE AND REFERRAL—S. 759

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 759, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make higher education more affordable and for other purposes, and that the bill be referred to the Committee on Finance.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRAINING FOR REALTIME WRITERS ACT OF 2005

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 142, S. 268.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 268) to provide competitive grants for training court reporters and closed captioners to meet requirements for realtime writers under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with amendments, as follows:

[Strike the parts shown in black brackets and insert the parts shown in italic.]

S. 268

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,