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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

STEVENS-INOUYE INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE LEGACY ACT OF 2006

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 5946 which was received from the House.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5946) to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to authorize activities to promote improved monitoring and compliance for high seas fisheries, or fisheries governed by international fishery management agreements, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consideration of the measure.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Stevens amendment be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read for the third time and passed; and a motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

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

The amendment (No. 5224) was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Text of Amendments.'')

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill (H.R. 5946), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

AMENDING THE INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1986

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6111, which was received from the House.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6111) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide that the Tax Court may review claims for equitable spouse relief and to suspend the running on the period of limitations while such claims are pending.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the amendment at the desk be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The amendment (No. 5225) was agreed to, as follows:

In line 17, page 3, strike ''on or''.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill (H.R. 6111), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

PIPELINE SAFETY IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2006

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 5782 which was received from the House.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5782) to amend title 49, United States Code, to provide for enhanced safety and environmental protection in pipeline transportation, to provide for enhanced reliability in the transportation of the Nation's energy products by pipeline, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I would like to thank Commerce Committee co-chairmen Stevens and Inouye for their hard work in achieving this bill's passage. H.R. 5782 the Pipeline Inspection, Protection, Enforcement, and Safety Act of 2006 is a timely piece of legislation, and I hope that it will soon become law. I am proud to be one of the original cosponsors of the Senate version of this bill, S.3961.

Our 2.3 million miles of natural gas and hazardous liquid pipelines are more than simply a series of tubes. This system is the transportation mode for nearly two-thirds of the energy consumed by our Nation. From large transmission pipelines to distribution pipelines to service lines which run into our homes, every part of this system must be safe.

I am pleased that Congress is acting to reauthorize the Office of Pipeline Safety, OPS, and bringing its resources more in line with what is needed to adequately regulate this industry. This bill would authorize 50 percent more Federal pipeline safety inspectors than the Federal Government currently has.

The bill will change Federal policy to help prevent construction-related damage to pipelines by giving additional enforcement authority to OPS and authorizing grants to states to improve one-call notification programs. At the same time, it will also make OPS enforcement actions more transparent to those interested in what the Federal Government is doing to make their lives safer. Furthermore, this bill will also regulate for the first time low-stress oil pipelines, such as the ones in Prudhoe Bay, AK, and gas distribution pipelines all over the country.

One subject in the bill I was proud to author deals with the mandatory use of excess flow valves. These important safety devices can shut off gas flow when a service line is ruptured, preventing a potential explosion. One lesson we learned after the 1994 gas explosion in Edison, NJ, is that technology must be used to shut off gas flow in the case of a rupture. Shortly after that damaging explosion, I introduced legislation to require a greater use of automatic or remotely controlled shutoff valves. I am pleased that this bill will require excess flow valves to be installed in every new single family residence or replacement service lines in a single family residence.

While the bill would give some discretion to the administration as to who may be exempted from this EFV requirement, I have met with Admiral Barrett, Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration, and he assures me that only operators of master meter and liquefied petroleum gas, LPG, systems are intended to be excluded. On these systems, he believes EFVs have not been shown to be effective.

By letter to me dated December 4, 2006, Admiral Barrett of the Federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration wrote to me:

REQUIRING INSTALLATION OF EXCESS FLOW VALVES

The American Gas Association has provided data that leads PHMSA to believe that 1.2 million new and renewed gas services will be installed each year. PHMSA had been planning to propose to require each operator to include in its risk analysis consideration of whether to install EFV's to protect single-family residences served by new and replaced gas service lines from release of gas due to major damage to the line. Modifications to the reauthorization provisions will change PHMSA planned approach, but would allow PHMSA to determine applicability of the future standard to distribution operators. The circumstances where PHMSA believes conditions for installation of EFV's are not suitable are when gas supply pressure is not continuously higher than 10 psig, when liquids/contaminants that could interfere with valve operation are present in the gas stream, and where load data may be unstable.

Based on current data, we would expect to apply the requirements for EFV's to more than 99 percent of new and replaces residential service lines. PHMSA plans to exclude from the requirement only operators of master meter and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) systems. These are very small distribution systems, whose operation of gas is incidental to another business, such as a mobile home park or small apartment complex, in the case of the master meter operator; or a ski lodge, in the case of the LPG operator. The variability in gas use is too large to pick one size EFV and most incidents would not trigger an EFV. We estimate that approximately 8,000 of these systems would be excluded from the EFV requirement. The estimate is based on reports in 2004 from (1) 45 state pipeline safety agencies that collectively 6,972 master meter systems were operating in their states and (2) 5 state pipeline safety agencies indicating that 926 LPG systems were operating in their states. Because some states do not have jurisdiction over all master meter systems