

and second time by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. AKAKA (for himself, Mr. BURNS, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. GRAHAM, and Mr. INOUE):

S. 1242. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to make permanent the visa waiver program for certain visitors to the United States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. FRIST:

S. 1243. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to revise and extend the prostate cancer preventive health program; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. THOMPSON (for himself, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. VOINOVICH, Mr. KERREY, and Mr. BREAU):

S. 1244. A bill to establish a 3-year pilot project for the General Accounting Office to report to Congress on economically significant rules of Federal agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

#### SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. LIEBERMAN (for himself, Mr. GREGG, Mr. BAYH, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. MACK, Mr. DODD, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. COCHRAN, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. BUNNING, Mr. ROBB, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. DASCHLE, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. GORTON, Mr. SMITH of Oregon, Mr. ENZI, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. HUTCHINSON, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. CAMPBELL, and Mr. THURMOND:

S. Res. 125. A resolution encouraging and promoting greater involvement of fathers in their children's lives and designating June 20, 1999, as "National Father's Return Day"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. SCHUMER:

S. Con. Res. 41. A concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress regarding the treatment of religious minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and particularly the recent arrests of members of that country's Jewish community; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

#### STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. AKAKA (for himself, Mr. BURNS, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. GRAHAM, and Mr. INOUE):

S. 1242. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to make permanent the visa waiver program for certain visitors to the United States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

##### THE VISA WAIVER PROGRAM

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, today I am introducing a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to make permanent the visa waiver program for certain visitors to the United States.

The visa waiver program has been an unprecedented success in reducing barriers to travel and tourism to and from the United States. The program allows a citizen of a participating country to

forego visa application at a U.S. consulate abroad, and allows them to travel to the U.S. for business or pleasure and make application for entry directly to the INS at a port of entry. To use this privilege, an applicant agrees to waive rights to challenge the decision of the INS inspector, and agrees to depart the U.S. within 90 days. More than 10 million visitors used the visa waiver program in fiscal year 1995. This represents 76 percent of the total number of non-immigrant entries by citizens of visa waiver countries. Visitors entering under the visa waiver program accounted for just under 50 percent of all temporary business and tourist entries.

In the ten years since the implementation of the visa waiver program, international visitors have become accustomed to the program's requirements, and use it routinely. The program has effectively served the purpose for which it was designed, to facilitate the efficient flow of low-risk foreign tourists and business travelers. Simultaneously, the program has afforded Department of State consular officers more time to focus efforts on individuals who visit the U.S. for other purposes, such as employment or study, or those who intend to remain in the U.S. for extended periods. Further, it has allowed the Department of State to drastically reduce its consular staff at low-risk locations, and strengthen efforts in high risk locations. Yet, all this pales in comparison to the real benefit of the visa waiver program, that of expanded foreign travel and tourism to the U.S. Put simply, the U.S. needs this program to remain competitive with the many other nations around the globe who are competing for the finite pool of business travelers and tourists.

In 1996, the World Tourism Organization reported that the United States was the second most popular international tourist destination and the number one location for tourism expenditures. Of the 44.8 million arrivals that year, 12.4 million entered under the visa waiver program. International tourism in the U.S. is a \$65 billion enterprise which boosts the economies of many local communities.

In my home state of Hawaii, tourism is an \$11 billion industry which generates about one-quarter of the state's tax revenue and one-third of its jobs. It is estimated that 80 percent of all international visitors arriving at Honolulu International Airport arrive under the visa waiver program. We know that the visa waiver program has been very successful because it provides a big boost for Japanese visitors to travel to Hawaii. Our long-term goal for a permanent visa waiver program would be to expand participation of the program in the Asia-Pacific region. Currently, most of the 26 eligible countries are in Europe. Only four of these countries

are in the Asia-Pacific region—Australia, Japan, Brunei, and New Zealand. We hope that South Korea and China will be future participants in an expanded program.

While the pilot program has been extended periodically since its inception, its unqualified success justifies a permanent program. Further, because the program's life has at times been uncertain and somewhat unpredictable, particularly at times when an authorization is about to expire, any real or perceived lapse in the program causes needless turmoil and uncertainty among the industry and government both here and abroad and, most important, the traveling public. In the ten years since it commenced, the benefit of the program has been clearly proven, and the need for it to remain a pilot program has ceased. To sunset the program in April 2000 or in the future would require a reinvestment of significant capital, both human and otherwise. In addition, because the visa waiver program is based on reciprocity, any termination or restriction of the program would likely result in a substantial backlash by other participating nations against U.S. citizens traveling abroad, resulting in more entry burdens for U.S. citizens when they attempt to enter other visa waiver countries.

Visa waiver participants, by their very definition, are low-risk travelers. There is no data which indicates that visa waiver travelers stay longer than permitted otherwise violate the terms of their admission in any greater numbers than any other population of the traveling public. Another important benefit of the visa waiver program is the standardization of passports and machine readable documentation, which is used as an inducement for acceptance of a country into the program. The ability to read a document by machine has greatly increased the efficiency of the Federal inspection service process.

I can say without reservation that this program is a resounding success. It has bolstered the U.S. economy through the expedited admission of millions of legitimate short-term visitors for business, allowing for the negotiation of contracts for the provision of American goods and services to the world. It has provided a welcome boost to the U.S. tourism industry, which employs thousands of American citizens, through the visa-free admission of millions of foreign tourists. We must support permanent reauthorization of this highly effective program. The visa waiver program is not just a win-win situation, it is a win for business, a win for tourism, and a win for effective management of the Department of State.

Thank you, Mr. President. I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the bill be printed in the RECORD.