

retirement security account. Based on our experience with the Thrift Savings Plan, I think it would be a significant step towards stronger financial security for all Americans.

The TSP has been a great success for Federal workers. Over the past 10 years, the three investment choices available to workers in the TSP have average annual rates of return of 17.5 percent, 8.5 percent, and 7.6 percent.

That means the worst performing of these three funds, the G fund, which invests strictly in Government securities, has returned over 7 percent annually to investors. That compares very, very well to the 2 to 3 percent annual return that most Americans get for their money that they pay into Social Security. Compounded over decades, the differences in the rates of return are staggering.

Under my bill, taxpayers will own their own retirement secured accounts, and they, not the Federal Government, can control how their money is invested. My legislation follows the scrupulous conflict of interest rules that have worked well for the TSP to make sure that Government cannot vote shares of stock or manipulate markets. Best of all, withdrawals from this retirement secured account will be tax free, because we should not need to penalize Americans who successfully plan for their retirement.

Congress has wisely moved in recent years to help retirees keep more of their own money. Social Security reform must continue that trend. I believe Social Security reform must be voluntary. It should give taxpayers more, not fewer, investment choices, and it must protect the most vulnerable Americans who are counting on these benefits. It is important to bring as many ideas to the table as possible as part of a national dialogue about Social Security reform. These are the principles I have tried to follow in writing this bill, and I will work with anyone on my legislation and on any other proposals to improve the Social Security system.

Mr. President, we have a golden window of opportunity now to reform Social Security. Our economy is the strongest it has been in decades. We have a budget surplus to give us some flexibility in making difficult decisions. Now we have to find the political will. It is a challenge we must meet.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator DURBIN, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

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

DELAY IN CAPITOL VISITORS CENTER

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I didn't know Jacob Chestnut, but I did know

Detective John Gibson, as a result of an unfortunate incident with a member of my family. Officer Gibson reacted in a very valiant way on something a couple months before he was murdered last July in this Capitol complex.

Jacob Chestnut and John Gibson, about 9 months ago, were murdered. They were murdered when an assailant went through a door, shot both of them, killed both of them, and was after other people as well. The Presiding Officer, being a physician/surgeon, was on the floor and rendered great aid and assistance to others who were injured, for which we are all grateful. After that tragedy, many of us stood on this floor and talked about the need to do something to stop these incidents in the future.

Mr. President, I look at this in a number of different ways. I look at it as someone who knows what a valiant man John Gibson was and, of course, I am sure Officer Chestnut also; I just did not know him on a personal basis. I approach this on the basis that I am a Senator and have some responsibility for this Capitol complex. I approach it as a person who is concerned about my staff and the visitors who come to this complex being safe and secure.

I approach it also as a former Capitol police officer. I have great empathy and great understanding, I believe, for what police officers go through in this facility. What we talked about last year, after this incident, is that finally, after more than a decade, we were going to do something to create a visitors center in the east plaza. In this beautiful Capitol complex, we have a big parking lot; we have asphalt. We have talked about having a nice grassy area, as well as an underground area where people can come and enter the Capitol.

Now, if people want to come and take a tour through the Capitol, they stand out on the east plaza, on that asphalt. No matter the temperature, it can be 5 degrees below zero, they still stand out there. There is no place else for them to go. If it is 100 degrees, like it gets here in August, they still stand out there. There is no place else for them to go. There is no place for them to get a drink of water. There is no place for them to go to the bathroom. They stand out on the asphalt waiting to come through the Capitol.

After the unfortunate murders of these two police officers, we talked about how we were going to do something. We immediately authorized a bill to allow construction of this facility. After that was done, we appropriated money to initiate the planning of this visitors center. In fact, we are no closer to completion of this facility today than when these two officers were gunned down by this man, this terrorist.

We need to move forward with this effort. However, we have created a bu-

reaucratic nightmare. We have four or five committees and subcommittees which have jurisdiction over how it is going to be constructed, when it is going to be constructed, and who is going to be constructing it, in what manner it is going to be constructed. We have heard lately that other committees want to get involved. We do not have enough now. We want to add some more.

I say, as a member of two committees that are talking about this, out of the three or four that are involved, I think we should get on with the business at hand. I understand the need for oversight, I understand very much, but there comes a time when we have said enough and we must move forward to do what we have to do.

This is not a waste of taxpayers' money. If we have this beautiful facility, not only will it be a convenience for the public but it will be a safety factor, because it will give a way to funnel people in this Capitol so that proper measures can be taken to find out if they are carrying weapons or bombs or anything else that could be of danger to the people inside this facility. In addition to that, it will be a place where people can go to the bathroom and escape from the elements. It will probably be set up so that there will be places for them to eat. In effect, it will be a place where there will be revenues gained from this facility. We owe this facility to the two officers who were gunned down 9 months ago, we owe it to our staffs, for we, as Members, are responsible for their safety and security. We owe it to the millions of people who come to this facility on a yearly basis. We are very proud of this U.S. Capitol; all Americans are. We should be able to come to this Capitol without fearing for our safety.

For more than 10 years, well before last year's tragedy, there had been a lot of talk about building a Capitol complex visitors center, but it has only been talk. It is about time we turn this talk into action, for the good of the country.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to speak for 10 minutes.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Thank you.

NEED FOR A VISITORS CENTER

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I came to the floor to speak for a moment of personal privilege, but I heard

my colleague from Nevada speaking about the need for a visitors center. I would like to add my support for his calling for us to resolve whatever difficulties there may be and try to get this visitors center constructed for all the good reasons he outlined.

There are millions and millions of young people and adults who come to this beautiful building. This really is the people's house. There really is no place for them to rest and to have a refreshment and to get someplace away from the hot Sun. The lines are quite long.

For all the reasons he laid out in his few minutes, I add my voice to how important I think it is for us to get on with the business of a visitors center for this Capitol.

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND AVERY C. ALEXANDER, STATE HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE FROM LOUISIANA

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to rise for a moment of personal privilege on behalf of myself and Senator JOHN BREAUX to note with great sadness the passing of a leading citizen of my hometown, New Orleans, LA, our State representative, Rev. Avery C. Alexander, a community and civil rights leader for many decades who passed away in New Orleans last Friday at the age of 88.

Reverend Alexander, or "the Rev.," as he was referred to by all of his many, many, many friends, was the son of a sharecropper from Houma, LA, and rose to prominence in the 1960s civil rights struggle. From the streets of New Orleans where he "shouted out" for the voiceless, to the halls of Baton Rouge where he fought for better schools, civil rights, and a more inclusive economy, "the Rev." stood tall.

When I was considering running for the legislature many, many years ago at the ripe old age of 23, my father rightfully advised me to meet with a small group of leaders to ask for their input and their ideas and their counsel.

The first person to show up at our home on that day was "the Rev." Once I was elected to the legislature, he helped me understand the political process from the inside as well as the outside. I will always be grateful for his early advice and counsel, and so will the thousands of others who have benefited from his encouraging words, his fighting spirit and determination to make this world a better place for all.

Reverend Alexander was a person who always managed somehow to rise above the man-made limitations placed on him, and he succeeded triumphantly.

It was Margaret Mead who said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world." In fact, she said, it has never been done any other way. "The Rev." knew that and lived that

until the day he passed. Many times, he alone was that small group, and he did, in fact, change our world for the better.

He worked as a laborer and a longshoreman—before he was a member of the legislature—while continuing his education at night. When he witnessed the unfair treatment of dock workers, he became active in the labor movement on the waterfront in New Orleans.

As a lifelong member of the NAACP, he championed the cause of anti-discrimination, voter registration, and citizen review of police brutality and misconduct.

He participated in the now famous march from Selma to Montgomery alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1956, Reverend Alexander was arrested and dragged up the steps from the basement of city hall while attempting to integrate the public cafeteria in that building.

In 1992, he established a non-denominational ministry founded on the principle of "helping all people." Reverend Alexander was elected to the House of Representatives in 1975 and remained an active and effective member until his recent death.

As dedicated as he was to advocating civil rights for African Americans, he was equally dedicated to standing up for the rights of women. His words of encouragement throughout the years were in no small part responsible for helping me become the first elected woman Senator from Louisiana.

As a strong believer in higher education, he continued his own personal education at Xavier University, Southern University, Tulane University and the Union Theological Seminary and the University of New Orleans. Reverend Alexander also served as chaplain for many, many years of the Louisiana legislative black caucus, on the National Board of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and was a delegate on three separate occasions to the National Democratic Convention.

Mr. President, the citizens of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana have lost a dear friend. Many young leaders in our State and throughout the country have lost a great mentor, and the American people have lost a great civil rights leader. He will be missed. God bless his family, especially his daughter Cheryl, his brother Lymon and all the grandchildren and great grandchildren. We today commend him to you, dear Lord, in your eternal care.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield back the remainder of my time and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 617 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, as the Chairman of the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, I come to the floor today because I believe that the time has come for a thoughtful and critical re-examination of United States policy towards the People's Republic of China.

There had been encouraging developments in China in the past two years. China has begun tackling the staggering job of reforming an antiquated command economy and opening it to private enterprise; and have begun to move the military out of the private sector. They've taken this difficult step even though they know it will result in the displacement and unemployment of literally millions of people. In addition, the government has greatly increased the number of democratic elections taking place at the village level throughout China. And Beijing has, for the most part, avoided interfering in Hong Kong affairs now that it is again a part of the PRC.

But Mr. President, despite these improvements, I cannot ignore the fact that for every step China has taken forward, it appears to have also taken one or two back. And a bilateral relationship that 10 months ago looked as though it were showing improvement is instead, I believe, headed down a rocky road.

FOR EXAMPLE: NUCLEAR AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

Recent press reports have indicated that over the span of the last several years there have been damaging leaks to the Chinese of sensitive United States nuclear technology which has enabled them to advance their own nuclear program. The exact facts of the case are still unclear, and I am sure will be the subject of intense Congressional scrutiny in the months ahead, but what is clear to me is that there is a credible foundation for the accusations and that they are not, as the Chinese would have us believe, the figment of some supposed "anti-China" media bias. My examination of the Cox report leads me to the identical conclusion with regards to the transfer and acquisition of satellite technology.

Now it would be naive to deny that espionage is a fact of geopolitical life, or that countries act in their own best interests; we should neither be shocked nor appalled that it goes on. But still, China's willingness to systematically circumvent our laws and acquire over