

S. RES. 482

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CONRAD) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 482, a resolution designating July 26, 2008, as “National Day of the American Cowboy”.

S. RES. 541

At the request of Mr. FEINGOLD, the names of the Senator from Maine (Ms. SNOWE) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 541, a resolution supporting humanitarian assistance, protection of civilians, accountability for abuses in Somalia, and urging concrete progress in line with the Transitional Federal Charter of Somalia toward the establishment of a viable government of national unity.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. AKAKA:

S. 3023. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to prescribe regulations relating to the notice to be provided claimants with the Department of Veteran’s Affairs regarding the substantiation of claims; to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, today I introduce the proposed Veterans’ Notice Clarification Act of 2008. This bill would require VA to issue regulations specifying the content of notices provided to claimants who seek VA benefits and services. Following a number of court decisions, VA’s notification letters to veterans have become increasingly long, complex, and difficult to understand.

These notification letters must be simplified, as veterans, VA, veterans’ advocates and outside review bodies have all recommended. The letters should use simple ordinary language rather than bureaucratic legalese and they should be focused on the specific type of claim that the veteran is bringing.

My bill would require different notice contents depending upon whether the claim is an original claim, a claim to reopen, or a claim for an increase in benefits. VA would also have the discretion to provide additional or alternative contents for notice if appropriate to the benefits sought. For example, an original claim for service-connected compensation may require different content than a claim for a specially adapted housing grant.

The notice required for original claims by the Veterans Claims Assistance Act, Public Law 106-475, should provide useful information based on the documents submitted to VA and the benefit sought. The information and evidence requested by VA should be relevant to the claim filed. For example, the information and evidence requested by VA for a claim for dis-

ability compensation and financial information concerning claims for pension benefits are wholly different. A veteran should not be made to submit information that is unrelated to his or her claim.

I believe that this bill, if enacted, will assist VA in developing appropriate criteria to implement the requirements of the current law. In addition, courts which review appeals from VA decisions should find it easier to identify errors in notification by measuring the notice against clear regulatory criteria.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this measure, so that veterans, survivors and dependents seeking VA benefits may be provided with clearer and more understandable notices.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 3023

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Veterans’ Notice Clarification Act of 2008”.

SEC. 2. REGULATIONS ON CONTENTS OF NOTICE TO BE PROVIDED CLAIMANTS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS REGARDING THE SUBSTANTIATION OF CLAIMS.

Section 5103(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting “(1)” before “Upon receipt”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(2)(A) The Secretary shall prescribe in regulations requirements relating to the contents of notice to be provided under this subsection.

“(B) The regulations required by this paragraph—

“(i) shall specify different contents for notice depending on whether the claim concerned is an original claim, a claim for reopening a prior decision on a claim, or a claim for increase in benefits;

“(ii) may provide additional or alternative contents for notice if appropriate to the benefit or services sought under the claim;

“(iii) shall specify for each type of claim for benefits the general information and evidence required to substantiate the basic elements of such type of claim; and

“(iv) shall specify the timing of the issuance of notice.”

By Mr. REID (for Mrs. CLINTON):

S. 3027. A bill to amend the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to establish a program to provide college coaches to low- and middle-income high-achieving high school students; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, in honor of AmeriCorps Week, I am pleased to introduce legislation that will place more of our Nation’s low- and middle-income high school students on the road to higher education.

My legislation will address the disparity that exists in college persistence between lower-income, high-achieving students and their more affluent peers.

According to the National Educational Longitudinal Survey, NELS, more than 1.5 million high school students with annual household incomes of less than \$85,000 do not earn college degrees despite having ranked in the top half of their high school classes. Further, a recent report from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation found that 59 percent of lower-income high-achieving students graduated from college compared to 77 percent of their higher income peers. America cannot remain competitive in the global economy if we continue to squander our college talent every year. That is why I am sponsoring the Coaching Our Adolescents for College Heights Act, or the COACH Act.

The COACH Act creates a pilot AmeriCorps program to recruit, train, and place recent college graduates, or coaches, in high schools to help prepare low- and middle-income, high-performing high school students for success in college. Under this program, coaches will be responsible for working with school staff to build a strong college-going culture within their high schools. Coaches will be paired with a cohort of low- and middle-income, high-achieving students to ensure student enrollment and success in college-prep coursework and to connect participating students with summer internships, community service activities, and other opportunities that will enrich each student’s academic experience. Coaches will also help students and their parents in understanding the college application, admissions, and financial aid processes as well as work with students to select and enroll in the institutions of higher education that best meet each student’s educational and social needs.

The role of coaches will not end once students are enrolled in college, as coaches will be required to monitor their students’ academic performance and social adjustment through the end of each student’s first year of college. In this way, coaches will ensure that students are connected to the support services they need to persist in and ultimately graduate from college.

A recent study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research found that only 41 percent of students who aspired to go to college took the steps necessary in their senior year to apply to and enroll in a four-year college, despite being well-qualified for even the most selective colleges and universities. It is among these students that the Nation suffers the greatest loss in proven talent. Unfortunately, our high schools are struggling to provide these students with necessary guidance. In 2002, the National Center of Education Statistics found that the average ratio

of high school students to full-time guidance counselors was 315 to 1. Furthermore, only 10 percent of public schools have advisors whose sole responsibility is college counseling. The COACH Act not only addresses the need to prepare our high-achieving, low- and middle-income students for college, but it also engages eager AmeriCorps members as a necessary resource for completing this task.

I hope my colleagues will join me in this effort to help these students succeed in higher education and compete in the global economy.

By Mr. REID (for Mrs. CLINTON): S. 3028. A bill to amend the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to promote community service among United States youth by connecting secondary school seniors to community service opportunities; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, in honor of AmeriCorps Week, I am pleased to introduce a bill that will help keep our Nation's high school seniors engaged in learning and community service. My legislation will connect high school seniors to service opportunities within their schools or communities while earning money for college.

The senior year of high school is a crucial transition time for youth. Despite this fact, many twelfth grade students opt to take less challenging courses, or no classes at all, during their final year of high school, a phenomenon commonly termed "senioritis." I strongly believe we should use this opportunity to provide a service-oriented education for young people across the country. That is why I am sponsoring the Senior Year Community Service Act.

This legislation will create a pilot program to enable six local educational agencies to connect high school seniors with service opportunities within their communities or schools. The bill calls on the Corporation of National and Community Service to assist local educational agencies with the implementation of this pilot program. Using grant funds, the local educational agency will establish a partnership with a community based organization to implement this pilot program, provide a service coordinator to assist participating high schools, and provide information to students about this program as early as their junior year.

The Senior Year Community Service Act also requires the Department of Education to study the effects of this program on participating seniors. The evaluation will measure student academic achievement on State academic assessments, graduation rates and student rates of college enrollment, persistence and graduation. If the evaluation proves that this program is suc-

cessful in increasing student achievement, the legislation calls upon the Department of Education to make this program a universal experience for high school seniors.

Research has shown that participation in community service activities can lead to increased student achievement. In one study, students involved in community service and service-learning reported higher grades and better school attendance. In another study, civically-engaged high school students tended to make greater academic progress and were more likely to graduate from college.

The benefits of community service participation can reach beyond the school walls. The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse notes that in addition to increased academic achievement, service learning contributes to students' increased self-efficacy, enhanced problem-solving skills, and enhanced civic engagement.

We have seen colleges and universities take their own approaches to solving the problem of "senioritis." Earlier this year, the New York Times reported that a handful of universities are taking action against slacking high school seniors—ranging from requiring students to meet monthly with the dean of admissions once enrolled, to rescinding admission status completely. Programs that keep seniors engaged in school can prevent college-bound students from squandering their precious opportunities.

The Senior Year Community Service Act will prevent many high school students from wasting their senior year and makes community service a common expectation for high school seniors. I hope that my Senate colleagues will join me in supporting this bill that will help our youth stay on track for a bright and successful future.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 567—A BILL DESIGNATING JUNE 2008 AS "NATIONAL INTERNET SAFETY MONTH"

Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. BAYH, Mr. BROWN, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. CONRAD, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. CRapo, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HATCH, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. KERRY, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. LEAHY, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. VITTER, Mr. VOINOVICH, and Mr. WICKER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 567

Whereas there are more than 1,000,000,000 Internet users worldwide;

Whereas, in the United States, 35,000,000 children in kindergarten through grade 12 have Internet access;

Whereas approximately 86 percent of the children of the United States in grades 5 through 12 are online for at least 1 hour per week;

Whereas approximately 67 percent of students in grades 5 through 12 do not share with their parents what they do on the Internet;

Whereas approximately 30 percent of students in grades 5 through 12 have hidden their online activities from their parents;

Whereas approximately 31 percent of the students in grades 5 through 12 have the skill to circumvent Internet filter software;

Whereas 61 percent of the students admit to using the Internet unsafely or inappropriately;

Whereas 12 percent of middle school and high school students have met face-to-face with someone they first met online;

Whereas 42 percent of students know someone who has been bullied online;

Whereas 56 percent of parents feel that online bullying of children is an issue that needs to be addressed;

Whereas 47 percent of parents feel that their ability to monitor and shelter their children from inappropriate material on the Internet is limited; and

Whereas 61 percent of parents want to be more personally involved with Internet safety; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates June 2008 as "National Internet Safety Month";

(2) recognizes that National Internet Safety Month provides the citizens of the United States with an opportunity to learn more about—

(A) the dangers of the Internet; and

(B) the importance of being safe and responsible online;

(3) commends and recognizes national and community organizations for—

(A) promoting awareness of the dangers of the Internet; and

(B) providing information and training that develops critical thinking and decision-making skills that are needed to use the Internet safely; and

(4) calls on Internet safety organizations, law enforcement, educators, community leaders, parents, and volunteers to increase their efforts to raise the level of awareness for the need for online safety in the United States.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, today I introduced a resolution designating June 2008 as National Internet Safety Month.

The Internet has become one of the most significant advances in the 20th century and, as a result, it affects people's lives in a positive manner each day. However, this technology presents dangers that need to be brought to the attention of all Americans. Consider the pervasiveness of Internet access by children and the rapid increase in Internet crime and predatory behavior. Never before have powerful educational solutions—such as Internet safety curricula for grades kindergarten through 12—been more critical and readily at hand.

I-SAFE is one nonprofit organization that has worked tirelessly to educate our youth and our community on these important issues. Formed in 1998, I-SAFE educates youth in all 50 States, Washington, DC, and Department of