

# AUTHORITIES FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

## COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 4, 2006, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on "A Current Assessment of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Threats and Countermeasures."

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

## COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 4, 2006, at 3 p.m., to conduct a hearing on "Reform of FHA's Title I Manufactured Housing Loan Programs."

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

## COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet on Tuesday, April 4, 2006, at 10 a.m. on TSA.

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

## COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session on Tuesday, April 4, 2006, at 10 a.m., in 215 Dirksen Senate Office Building, to hear testimony on "Preparing Your Taxes: How Costly Is It?"

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

## SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 4, 2006, at 2:30 p.m. to hold a closed hearing.

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

## SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND TERRORISM

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on International Operations and Terrorism be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 4, 2006, at 10 a.m., hold a closed briefing on Counterterrorism Priorities.

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

## SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Personnel be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 4, 2006, at 2:30 p.m., in open

session to continue to received testimony on health benefits and programs in review of the Defense authorized request for fiscal year 2007.

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

## SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWERS

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Seapower be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 4, 2006, at 3:30 p.m., in open session to receive testimony on the posture of the U.S. transportation command in review of the Defense authorization request for fiscal year 2007 and future years defense program.

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

## SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 4, 2006, at 10 a.m., in open session to receive testimony on missile defense programs in review of the Defense authorization request for fiscal year 2007.

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

## PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator BAUCUS, I ask unanimous consent that the following list of fellows and interns with the Finance Committee staff be allowed on the Senate floor for the duration of debate on the immigration reform bill: Lesley Meeker, Britt Sandler, Lauren Shields, Laura Kellams, and Deidra Henry-Spires.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VOINOVICH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

## MEASURE PLACED ON CALENDAR—S. 598

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that calendar No. 374, S. 598, now be referred to the Banking Committee and then immediately discharged and placed on the calendar.

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

## PROMOTING FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. BENNETT. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 421, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 421) calling on the government of Afghanistan to uphold freedom of religion and urging the Government of the United States to promote religious freedom in Afghanistan.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in the past week, the world has witnessed the

arrest, the imprisonment, the threatened execution, and eventually the release of a man in Afghanistan named Abdul Rahman. His so-called crime? Apostasy. He was threatened with capital punishment because 16 years ago, while working on a humanitarian mission in Pakistan, he converted to Christianity.

Abdul Rahman has thankfully been released, and charges against him have been dropped. However, religious freedom remains in jeopardy in Afghanistan as do those who might choose to practice it.

I have great respect for President Karzai and the state he is trying to build. I respect the right of Afghanistan to its own laws and legal system.

But it will be a great tragedy if the overthrow of the Taliban government results in its replacement by a state that professes democracy but falls so far short of such an essential democratic standard: the freedom of belief.

We have over 22,000 troops in Afghanistan. Two hundred and eighty-two Americans have given their lives in that country since Operation Enduring Freedom began.

Freedom must, by definition, include freedom of religion.

It is our responsibility to make that utterly clear. As President Bush has stated, "We expect [the government of Afghanistan] to honor the universal principle of freedom. It is deeply troubling that a country we helped liberate would hold a person to account because they chose a particular religion over another."

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom raised concerns during the drafting of Afghanistan's constitution that it opened the door for cases such as this. Those concerns extend to both members of religious minorities and to members of the country's majority Muslim community who might dare to express an interpretation of Islam that differs from the prevailing orthodoxy. Sadly, these apprehensions have been borne out.

The State Department's International Religious Freedom Report for 2005 noted that conversion from Islam is "in theory" punishable by death in Afghanistan. Although charges against Mr. Rahman were fortunately dropped, clearly such a punishment is more than simply theoretical.

Afghanistan is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which reads in part, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."

Today, I am introducing a resolution calling on the Government of Afghanistan to live up to the principles it has endorsed in that covenant. This resolution also urges the Government of Afghanistan to consider the importance