

system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, relies heavily on the use of domestic steel in new construction.

The industry continues to incorporate improvements in the technology used to build steel projects. These improvements are also bringing down construction costs and increasing safety at construction sites. In light of these economic, environmental, and safety factors, it is no surprise that there is a three-to-one preference for using structural steel in the construction of multistory residential and non-residential buildings.

Mr. President, I congratulate the structural steel industry on its second annual SteelDay. Steel manufacturing and construction is driving our Nation's progress into the future.

GREATER OWENSBORO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the remarkable accomplishments of the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce. They were selected as the winner, out of eight National finalists, in the 2010 Chamber of the Year competition sponsored by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives, ACCE. This is quite a feat, as the ACCE's Chamber of the Year is the Nation's only award that recognizes local chambers for their dual role in creating and leading businesses and communities.

Chambers wanting to apply for this award could do so if they had an exceptional year or if they had a program or initiative that went above and beyond expectations. With this in mind, the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce highlighted their success in developing the Chamber Leadership Initiatives for Northwestern Kentucky, C-LINK, alliance and the Owensboro Buys It! program in the application process.

C-LINK includes 12 chambers in the region and has been a leading proponent of Interstate 69 in western Kentucky, one of the largest transportation projects in the region, which has seen significant progress in the past two years. Owensboro Buys It! was started in 2009 to create local commerce and to teach small business leaders how to initiate an "elevator pitch" and sharpen their ability to gain and retain customers. When the chamber board of directors mapped out a strategic plan in 2008, they made it their goal to earn this award by 2012. Because of their hard work, they managed to beat even that audacious goal.

Under the leadership of chamber president Jody Wassmer, the board of directors, staff, and members of the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce made their hometown, their Commonwealth, and this Senator very proud. I ask my colleagues to rise and join me in congratulating them on this honor.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT AMENDMENTS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I commend the House of Representatives for promptly enacting the Freedom of Information Act amendments to the Securities and Exchange Act, Investment Company Act, and Investment Advisers Act of 2010, S. 3717. This bipartisan bill will ensure that the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA, remains an effective tool to provide public access to information about the stability of our financial markets.

This bill will also ensure that the important goals of the historic Wall Street reform law—enhancing transparency, accountability, and confidence in our financial system—will become a reality for all Americans. The bill eliminates several broad FOIA exemptions for Security and Exchange Commission, SEC, records that were recently enacted as part of Public Law 111-203. The bill also helps to ensure that the SEC has access to the information that the Commission needs to carry out its new enforcement activities under the new reforms.

I thank Representative EDOLPHUS TOWNS, the distinguished chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Representative BARNEY FRANK, the distinguished chairman of the House Committee on Financial Services, for their support of this bill and for working with me to quickly enact this legislation. I also thank Senators GRASSLEY, CORNYN, and KAUFMAN for cosponsoring this important open government bill. In addition, I commend the many open government organizations, including OpenTheGovernment.org, the Project on Government Oversight, the American Library Association, and the Sunlight Foundation for their support of this bill.

The Freedom of Information Act has long recognized the need to balance the government's legitimate interest in protecting confidential business records, trade secrets, and other sensitive information from public disclosure, and preserving the public's right to know. To accomplish this, care must always be taken to ensure that exemptions to FOIA's disclosure requirements are narrowly and properly applied. The bill accomplishes this important goal.

I commend the Congress for working in a bipartisan and expeditious manner to eliminate these overly broad FOIA exemptions. I urge the President to promptly sign this good government bill into law.

FEDERAL HIRING FREEZE

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, as chairman of the Senate subcommittee that oversees the Federal workforce, I strongly oppose the proposal by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to impose a hiring freeze for all non-security positions in the Federal Gov-

ernment. If adopted, this proposal would sacrifice our Nation's long-term investments in the employees needed to efficiently and effectively run government programs for a short-sighted approach that does nothing to address our current fiscal challenges.

Far from being fiscally responsible, these policies would end up costing the government more over the long run, by increasing our reliance on contractors whose work would not be capped. Arbitrary restrictions on hiring Federal employees open up opportunities for waste, fraud, and abuse as contracting expands without investment in oversight. Over the past decade, Federal contracts have nearly doubled in size, to over \$500 billion, but the size of the workforce overseeing contractors has stayed constant. We must reverse, not reinforce, that trend.

Over the past two years, we have made efforts to rebalance the work performed by Federal employees and contractors. Many times, replacing contractors with Federal employees allows agencies to more efficiently meet their missions and provide vital services. The American people expect strong leadership from the Federal Government and we must make sure the Federal Government has the people it needs to perform critical functions and to properly oversee the important work done by contractors. Freezing the Federal workforce could once again lead to dramatic overreliance on contractors, putting agency missions and taxpayer dollars at risk.

The American people deserve a government that hires the right people with the right skills to run their government in an effective and efficient manner. An arbitrary cap on Federal employees is a poor substitute for the careful, thoughtful approach to Federal workforce planning we need.

Our Federal civil service is comprised of hard working, talented people who have dedicated their lives to the service of this country—and our way of life would not exist without them. These are honorable men and women who provide critical services to the American people, including protecting our Nation, ensuring that our food and drugs are safe, caring for our wounded warriors, and responding to natural disasters. America's public servants deserve our gratitude and respect. I thank them for their dedication.

AQUACULTURE DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak on an issue that is of great importance to my home State of Louisiana: Federal disaster assistance. As you know, along the gulf coast, we keep an eye trained on the Gulf of Mexico during hurricane season. This is following the devastating one-two punch of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita of 2005 as well as Hurricanes Gustav and Ike last year. Our communities and businesses are still