

Whereas automatic fire alarm systems provide the early warning of a fire that is necessary for occupants and the fire department to take appropriate action;

Whereas automatic fire sprinkler systems are a highly effective method of controlling or extinguishing a fire in its early stages, protecting the lives of the building's occupants;

Whereas many college students live in off-campus residences, fraternity and sorority housing, and residence halls that are not adequately protected with automatic fire sprinkler systems and automatic fire alarm systems;

Whereas fire safety education is an effective method of reducing the occurrence of fires and reducing the resulting loss of life and property damage;

Whereas college students do not routinely receive effective fire safety education during their time in college;

Whereas it is vital to educate young people in the United States about the importance of fire safety to help ensure fire-safe behavior by young people during their college years and beyond; and

Whereas, by developing a generation of fire-safe adults, future loss of life from fires may be significantly reduced: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates September 2011 as "Campus Fire Safety Month"; and

(2) encourages administrators of institutions of higher education and municipalities across the country—

(A) to provide educational programs to all students during September and throughout the school year;

(B) to evaluate the level of fire safety being provided in both on- and off-campus student housing; and

(C) to ensure fire-safe living environments through fire safety education, installation of fire suppression and detection systems, and the development and enforcement of applicable codes relating to fire safety.

NATIONAL AIRBORNE DAY

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 254.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 254) designating August 16, 2011, as "National Airborne Day."

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

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements relating to this matter be printed in the RECORD.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 254) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 254

Whereas the airborne forces of the Armed Forces have a long and honorable history as bold and fierce warriors who, for the national security of the United States and the defense of freedom and peace, project the

ground combat power of the United States by air transport to the far reaches of the battle area and to the far corners of the world;

Whereas the United States' experiment with airborne operations began on June 25, 1940, when the Army Parachute Test Platoon was first authorized by the Department of War, and 48 volunteers began training in July 1940;

Whereas August 16 marks the anniversary of the first official Army parachute jump on August 16, 1940, to test the innovative concept of inserting United States ground combat forces behind a battle line by means of a parachute;

Whereas the success of the Army Parachute Test Platoon in the days immediately before the entry of the United States into World War II validated the airborne operational concept and led to the creation of a formidable force of airborne formations, such as the 11th, 13th, 17th, 82nd, and 101st Airborne Divisions;

Whereas included in these divisions, and among other separate formations, were many airborne combat, combat support, and combat service support units that served with distinction and achieved repeated success in armed hostilities that provide the lineage and legacy of many airborne units throughout our Armed Forces;

Whereas the achievements of the airborne forces during World War II prompted the evolution of those forces into a diversified force of parachute and air-assault units that, over the years, have fought in Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf region, and Somalia, and have engaged in peacekeeping operations in Lebanon, the Sinai Peninsula, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo;

Whereas since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, United States airborne forces, which include members of the XVIII Airborne Corps, the 82nd Airborne Division, the 101st Airborne Division, the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne) of the 25th Infantry Division, the 75th Ranger Regiment, and special operations forces of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force, together with other units of the Armed Forces, have demonstrated bravery and honor in combat, stability, and training operations in Afghanistan and Iraq;

Whereas the modern-day airborne force also includes other elite forces composed of airborne trained and qualified special operations warriors, including Army Special Forces, Marine Corps Reconnaissance units, Navy SEALs, and Air Force combat control and para-rescue teams;

Whereas of the members and former members of the United States airborne forces, thousands have achieved the distinction of making combat jumps, dozens have earned the Medal of Honor, and hundreds have earned the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, or other decorations and awards for displays of heroism, gallantry, intrepidity, and valor;

Whereas the members and former members of the United States airborne forces are all members of a proud and honorable tradition that, together with their special skills and achievements, distinguishes such members as intrepid combat parachutists, air assault forces, special operation forces, and, in former days, glider troops;

Whereas the history and achievements of the members and former members of the United States airborne forces warrant special expressions of the gratitude of the people of the United States; and

Whereas since the airborne forces, past and present, celebrate August 16 as the anniversary of the first official jump by the Army Parachute Test Platoon, August 16 is an ap-

propriate day to recognize as National Airborne Day: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates August 16, 2011, as "National Airborne Day"; and

(2) calls on the people of the United States to observe National Airborne Day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

NATIONAL CHESS DAY

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent to proceed to S. Res. 255.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 255) designating October 8, 2011, as "National Chess Day" to enhance awareness and encourage students and adults to engage in a game known to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

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

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I rise today in support of this resolution to designate National Chess Day as October 8, 2011. I greatly appreciate the support of my colleague, Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER of Tennessee.

National Chess Day is designed to enhance awareness and encourage students and adults to engage in a game known to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

There are 76,000 members of the Chess Federation and half of them are students. Studies indicate that chess programs can help with students improving in math and reading. Engaging students in such activities can make learning fun and help them develop a lifelong pastime to engage their skills.

Engaging students in chess is a wonderful opportunity to promote education, and I hope as school begins in a few weeks, more students will join the Chess Federation and learn this historical game.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements relating to this matter be printed in the RECORD.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 255) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 255

Whereas there are more than 76,000 members of the United States Chess Federation (referred to in this preamble as the "Federation"), and unknown numbers of additional people in the United States who play the game without joining an official organization;

Whereas approximately 1/2 of the members of the Federation are scholastic members, and many of the scholastic members join by the age of 10;

Whereas the Federation is very supportive of the scholastic programs and sponsors a

Certified Chess Coach program that provides the coaches involved in the scholastic programs training and ensures schools and students can have confidence in the programs;

Whereas many studies have linked chess programs to the improvement of student scores in reading and math, as well as improved self-esteem;

Whereas the Federation offers a school curriculum to educators to help incorporate chess into the school curriculum;

Whereas chess is a powerful cognitive learning tool that can be used to successfully enhance reading and math concepts; and

Whereas chess engages students of all learning styles and strengths and promotes problem-solving and higher-level thinking skills: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates October 8, 2011, as “National Chess Day”; and

(2) encourages the people of the United States to observe “National Chess Day” with appropriate programs and activities.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 95, 230, 232, 254, 255, 256, 257, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 275, 277, 278, 279, 280, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 288, and Calendar Nos. 291 through 323, and nominations placed on the Secretary's Desk in the Air Force, Army, Foreign Service, Marine Corps, and Navy; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; and that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for the second year in a row, the Senate has failed to take significant steps before the August recess to address the serious crisis of judicial vacancies on courts around the country. Last August, Senate Republicans left 17 judicial nominations pending and consented to confirm only four Federal circuit and district court nominations before the recess. I noted at that time what a serious blow that was to our ability to make progress addressing the judicial vacancies crisis that had already persisted for well over a year. Today, as the Senate recesses with judicial vacancies still near 90 as they were a year ago, the Senate is doing even worse, confirming only 4 judicial nominations of the 24 nominees already considered by the Judiciary Committee and awaiting a Senate vote.

Last week, I urged the Senate to confirm the two dozen judicial nominations already fully considered by the Judiciary Committee and ready for final action by the Senate. Of them, 20 were unanimously reported, without a single negative vote. Many have been

pending without final action for months. I am, again, disappointed as Senate Republicans continue to delay these much needed and long awaited confirmations.

Even though Federal judicial vacancies have remained near or above 90 for more than 2 years, the Senate's Republican leadership has refused to consent to vote on these qualified, consensus nominations, leaving 16 of the 20 unanimously reported nominees in limbo. This is not the way to make real progress. The American people should not have to wait more weeks and months for the Senate to do its constitutional duty and ensure the ability of our Federal courts to provide justice to Americans around the country.

In the past, we were able to confirm consensus nominees more promptly. They were not forced to languish for months. In the second year of the Bush administration, in 2002, before the August recess the Senate moved ahead to confirm a dozen judicial nominees. The next year, with a Republican Senate majority, Senate Democrats consented to seven confirmations before the August recess. With the delays that have been backlogging confirmations for years now, we have 20 unanimously reported judicial nominees who could all have been confirmed before this recess. Regrettably, 16 will not go forward today because Republicans refuse to consent.

At a time when judicial vacancies remain near 90, these needless delays perpetuate the judicial vacancies crisis that Chief Justice Roberts wrote of last December and that the President, the Attorney General, bar associations, and chief judges around the country have urged us to join together to end. The Senate can and should be doing a better job working to ensure the ability of our Federal courts to provide justice to Americans around the country.

Just last week, the Congressional Research Service released a report that confirms what many of us have been saying for some time: This is the longest sustained period of historically high vacancy rates on the Federal judiciary in the last 35 years.

This is hardly surprising. Republican obstruction kept the total confirmations in the first year of the President's term to the lowest total for a first year in more than 50 years, when only 12 judicial nominees were allowed to be considered. Republican obstruction kept the 2-year total of confirmations to the lowest total in 35 years, for the first 2 years of a President's term, with only a total of 60 Federal circuit and district court nominations confirmed during the course of those entire first 2 years of the Obama administration. Accordingly, judicial vacancies have perpetuated needlessly and caused needless delay on consensus nominees.

We are seeing it, again, this week as we approach the August recess in the third year of the Obama administra-

tion. In the 17 months I chaired the Judiciary Committee during President Bush's first term, the Senate confirmed 100 of his Federal circuit and district court nominees. It looks like it will take twice as long to reach 100 confirmations of President Obama's Federal circuit and district court nominees. President Obama has been in office for 31 months and only 95 of his Federal circuit and district court nominees have been confirmed. There are two dozen more that are stalled, awaiting final Senate action. By the August recess in the third year of the Bush administration, the Senate had confirmed 143 Federal circuit and district court judges. This year, the comparable number is only 95.

It is not accurate to pretend that real progress is being made in these circumstances. Vacancies are being kept high, consensus nominees are being delayed and it is the American people and the Federal courts that are being made to suffer. This is another area in which we must come together for the American people. There is no reason Senators cannot join together to finally bring down the excessive number of vacancies that have persisted on Federal courts throughout the Nation for far too long.

I have always taken seriously the responsibility of the Senate to make sure that the Federal judiciary has the resources it needs. Senate Republicans had pocket-filibustered more than 60 of President Clinton's judicial nominations and refused to proceed on them while judicial vacancies skyrocketed to more than 110. Despite that, in the 17 months I chaired the Judiciary Committee during President Bush's first 2 years in office, the Senate proceeded to confirm 100 of his judicial nominees; during the next 24 months, with a Republican majority in the Senate, confirmed 105 more, for a total of 205 confirmed judges during President Bush's first term. We have a long way to go for the Senate to be as productive as we were during President Bush's first term.

We were able to lower vacancies dramatically during President Bush's years in office, cutting them in half during his first term. The Senate has reversed course during the Obama administration, and with Republican objections slowing the pace of confirmations, judicial vacancies have been at crisis levels for over 2 years. Over the 8 years of the Bush administration, from 2001 to 2009, we reduced judicial vacancies from 110 to a low of 34. They now stand at 88 vacancies. The vacancy rate—which we reduced from 10 percent to 6 percent by this date in President Bush's third year, and ultimately to less than 4 percent in 2008—is back above 10 percent.

Time and time again over the last 2½ years, I have urged the Senate to come together and work to address this crisis. At the beginning of this year, I called for a return to regular order in the consideration of nominations. We