

On page 394, between lines 16 and 17, insert the following:

“(C) MICROLOANS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the Secretary may establish a program to make or guarantee microloans.

“(2) LIMITATION.—The Secretary shall not make or guarantee a microloan under this chapter that would cause the total principal indebtedness outstanding at any 1 time for microloans made under this chapter to any 1 borrower to exceed \$35,000.

“(3) APPLICATIONS.—To the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary shall limit the administrative burdens and streamline the application and approval process for microloans under this subsection.

“(4) COOPERATIVE LENDING PROJECTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subparagraph (B), the Secretary may contract with community-based and nongovernmental organizations, State entities, or other intermediaries, as the Secretary determines appropriate—

“(i) to make or guarantee a microloan under this subsection; and

“(ii) to provide business, financial, marketing, and credit management services to borrowers.

“(B) REQUIREMENTS.—Before contracting with an entity described in subparagraph (A), the Secretary—

“(i) shall review and approve—

“(I) the loan loss reserve fund for microloans established by the entity; and

“(II) the underwriting standards for microloans of the entity; and

“(ii) establish such other requirements for contracting with the entity as the Secretary determines necessary.

On page 395, line 22, insert “a microloan to a beginning farmer or rancher or military veteran farmer or” before “a direct loan”.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on June 7, 2012, in room SD-628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, at 2:15 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled “Universal Service Fund Reform: Ensuring a Sustainable and Connected Future for Native Communities.”

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on June 7, 2012, at 10 a.m., in SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct an executive business meeting.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on June 7, 2012, at 11:30 a.m.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to

meet during the session of the Senate on June 7, 2012, at 2:30 p.m.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CLEAN AIR AND NUCLEAR SAFETY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety of the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on June 7, 2012, at 10 a.m. in Dirksen 406 to conduct a hearing entitled, “Recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future for a Consent-Based Approach to Siting Nuclear Waste Storage and Management Facilities.”

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE, PEACE CORPS, AND GLOBAL NARCOTICS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on June 7, 2012, at 10:45 a.m., to hold a Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, and Global Narcotics Affairs subcommittee hearing entitled, “The Path to Freedom: Countering Repression and Strengthening Civil Society in Cuba.”

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Nathan Engle, a legislative fellow in my office, be granted floor privileges for the consideration of S. 3240.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following detailees: Maureen James, Marcus Graham, and Kevin Norton, be granted floor privileges for the duration of the consideration of S. 3240, the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TO ALLOW THE CHIEF OF THE FOREST SERVICE TO AWARD CERTAIN CONTRACTS FOR LARGE AIR TANKERS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Agriculture Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 3261.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3261) to allow the Chief of the Forest Service to award certain contracts for large air tankers.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the importance of updating our aging and diminishing fleet of air

tankers for emergency wildfire suppression operations.

Congress, the Forest Service, and communities sensitive to fire have known for a decade that we need to retire old air tankers. The tragic deaths this past weekend of two Forest Service contractors in an air tanker crash, and a crash landing at the Minden-Tahoe Airport near Carson City, remind us that further delay is unacceptable.

First, I would like to express my deep sorrow over the deaths of the two Forest Service contractors. Todd Tompkins and Ronnie Edwin Chambless were killed on Sunday as they dropped flame retardant from their P-2V7 heavy air tanker on the White Rock fire. At its highest point, the fire was ravaging nearly 5,000 acres in western Utah and southeastern Nevada, including sagebrush and other grasses in Lincoln County, NV.

Between the two of them, Captain Tompkins and First Officer Chambless had been flying for nearly three decades, including over a decade fighting fires. Captain Tompkins said he liked his work because it helped save communities and lives. Sadly, when he went into that mission on Sunday, he could not save his own.

My State has incurred much devastation from wildfires in recent years. These blazes have destroyed homes, displaced families and businesses, and wiped out both critical wildlife habitat and productive grazing lands.

Of course, without the brave work of the air tanker pilots dispatched to battle these fires, the damage could have been much worse. It is therefore critical that we help ensure these courageous men and women have the tools they need to conduct their important public safety work and preserve their own lives.

Today, we are asking for unanimous consent for Senate passage of legislation introduced by Senators WYDEN and BINGAMAN, S. 3261, which would allow the Forest Service to quickly complete the contracting process for acquiring at least seven new large air tankers to fight wildfires during the 2012 and 2013 fire seasons.

The Forest Service is contending with an aging fleet of aircraft. The agency is working with planes that were designed for combat in the Korean War. Finding parts for tankers a half-century old is difficult, leading them to be grounded for long periods of times when repairs are needed.

The Forest Service has said it needs between 18 and 28 new air tankers for optimal response to emergency response to wildfires. Today, however, there are only nine Forest Service tankers deemed airworthy to fight fires during what is expected to be a terrible fire season. If we act promptly, Congress has the opportunity to help the Forest Service put more tankers into service this year.

To partially satisfy the need for new air tankers, the Forest Service has requested that Congress waive a 30-day