

REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT OF
1999

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the importance of the Refugee Protection Act of 1999 and to honor those most affected by this legislation.

The Refugee Protection Act of 1999 will continue a tradition that is as old as the United States itself. Our great country was founded by men and women who left their homeland for a better life in the new world. Many of these individuals escaped persecution in their home countries, made the difficult decision to leave what they knew behind and to take their chances in a new country where many did not know the language and customs or have friends or family. The Refugee Protection Act helps to continue this tradition by ensuring that those who seek entrance to the United States as refugees are given fair consideration and due process.

The Refugee Protection Act of 1999 would reinstate important protections against the deportation and refusal of refugees and asylum seekers who enter the United States from countries in which they face danger and persecution, whether it is due to ethnic, religious or political beliefs. Over the past few years Vermont has seen an increase in the number of refugees who have come to live in our great state. These refugees are well served by a number of agencies in Vermont which provide them help and promote their interests, including the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, the Tibetan Resettlement Project, the Tibetan Association of Vermont and Vermont Refugee Assistance. The Refugee Protection Act of 1999 will continue the example set in the state of Vermont, by welcoming refugees to our country and ensuring that all are given the full extent of protection they deserve.

MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY
IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss S. 1501, the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999. During the Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Surface Transportation hearing on this bill, I brought the attention of the entire room to a deadly tractor trailer accident that occurred in Atlanta in the early morning hours of August 31, 1999. Two lives were lost as a result of that accident, but if the incident would have occurred at a busier time of day, I shudder to think of the fatalities that could have resulted.

In 1998, 221 people were killed in Georgia as a result of truck related crashes, and thousands more were injured. Recently, I met with two people who lost their families in truck related accidents. These stories are ones which I hope will become less frequent as a result of the action we are taking in S.

1501. This bill has the opportunity to improve safety for drivers and truckers.

S. 1501 would make the Office of Motor Carrier a separate office within the Department of Transportation (DOT), as opposed to being within the Federal Highway Administration as it is now. This action will allow Congress to statutorily mandate safety as the main focus of the office. Additionally, it promotes enforcement as a main goal and provides some teeth to this new agency's punitive actions.

However, there are some areas within the legislation that I believe need attention as we work to form a final bill. For example, I believe that a conflict of interest provision should be included. Without such a provision, the new agency could continue to award contracts to the very industry that operates under the federal motor carrier safety regulations the new agency will administer. An unbiased, multifaceted panel would be a better option to conduct sensitive research with federal money.

In fact, the DOT's Inspector General (IG) released a report to Congress that cites the too close relationship between the industry and the regulators who oversee it:

[A collaborative, educational, partnership-with industry] is a good approach for motor carriers that have safety as a top priority, but it has gone too far. It does not work effectively with firms that persist in violating safety rules and do not promptly take sustained corrective action.

I believe this finding supports the inclusion of conflict of interest standards in the final bill.

S. 1501 does a great deal to improve motor carrier safety in this country, but we can do more. I hope that the conferees on this bill will give strong consideration to including a conflict of interest provision in the final bill.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Monday, November 15, 1999, the federal debt stood at \$5,686,436,332,009.22 (Five trillion, six hundred eighty-six billion, four hundred thirty-six million, three hundred thirty-two thousand, nine dollars and twenty-two cents).

Five years ago, November 15, 1994, the federal debt stood at \$4,747,133,000,000 (Four trillion, seven hundred forty-seven billion, one hundred thirty-three million).

Ten years ago, November 15, 1989, the federal debt stood at \$2,916,316,000,000 (Two trillion, nine hundred sixteen billion, three hundred sixteen million).

Fifteen years ago, November 15, 1984, the federal debt stood at \$1,626,849,000,000 (One trillion, six hundred twenty-six billion, eight hundred forty-nine million).

Twenty-five years ago, November 15, 1974, the federal debt stood at \$481,430,000,000 (Four hundred eighty-one billion, four hundred thirty mil-

lion) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,205,006,332,009.22 (Five trillion, two hundred five billion, six million, three hundred thirty-two thousand, nine dollars and twenty-two cents) during the past 25 years.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

PERIODIC REPORT ON THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO IRAN AND IRANIAN ASSETS BLOCKING—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 74

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Iran that was declared in Executive Order 12170 of November 14, 1979.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.
THE WHITE HOUSE, November 16, 1999.

20TH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FEDERAL LABOR RELATIONS AUTHORITY—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 75

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with section 701 of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-454; 5 U.S.C. 7104(e)), I have the pleasure of transmitting to you the twentieth Annual Report of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for Fiscal Year 1998.

The report includes information on the cases heard and decisions rendered by the Federal Labor Relations Authority, the General Counsel of the Authority, and the Federal Service Impasses Panel.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.
THE WHITE HOUSE, November 16, 1999.