

submit their books to outside auditors. The Accountability of Tax Dollars Act of 2002 would require all executive agencies to prepare audited financial statements and subject those statements to an independent audit.

I was especially surprised to learn that current Federal law does not require the Securities and Exchange Commission—the entity with which publicly held companies are required to file their audited financial statements—to subject its own books to the scrutiny of outside auditors. Other Government agencies, including the Federal Trade Commission, the Consumer Product Safety Administration, the Federal Election Commission, the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, the National Labor Relations Board, and the Federal Communications Commission—agencies that spend billions of taxpayer dollars every year—have also been exempt from this legal requirement.

I, along with many of my colleagues, have been very critical of the alleged accounting abuses by some of this Nation's largest corporations that have recently been brought to light. Particularly in light of these recent revelations, it is incumbent on Congress to ensure that the Federal Government, at the very least, meets the same standards that we set for the private sector.

It is my hope that subjecting Federal agencies to congressional and executive oversight will provide an incentive for agencies to improve their financial performance or risk possible elimination. Independent audit opinions should contribute to increased Government efficiency by providing information that can be used to strengthen integral accountability, better monitor assets and liabilities, enhance cost controls, identify inefficiencies and weaknesses, and curb Government waste.

S. 2644, the Accountability of Tax Dollars Act of 2002, would extend the Chief Financial Officers' Act requirements currently imposed on the major agencies to all executive branch agencies.

The act gives the Office of Management and Budget the authority to waive the audit requirement for smaller agencies that have annual budgets of less than \$25 million. In order to allow agencies some additional time to meet this new standard of accountability, the bill allows the OMB Director discretion during the first 2 years of the act's implementation to waive the application of the new requirements to any agency.

This bill has bipartisan support as well as the support of the Government Accounting Office and the administration.

Again, I urge my colleagues to support this important good Government legislation.

NOMINATION OF MAURA HARTY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to place a hold on the nomina-

tion of Ms. Maura Harty to be Director of the Office of Consular Affairs within the Department of State. Ms. Harty was voted out of the Committee on Foreign Relations today by voice vote. My reason for placing a hold on this nomination is to hear from Ms. Harty regarding a number of controversial cases that were under her jurisdiction as an employee of the Office of Consular Affairs.

First, I am seeking to know more about cases of international child abductions, which have left many parents frustrated with our Government. Many parents do not believe that Ms. Harty, in her capacity as the Managing Director of the Office of Overseas Citizens Services, vigorously pursued the interest of American abducted children.

Second, I wish to convey my concerns about personal appearance waiver programs, such as Visa Express. I am seeking assurance from the nominee that visa issuing procedures will be improved, and future recommendations from the inspector general will be seriously considered by the Office of Consular Affairs.

Finally, I intend to question the nominee on allegations that she fired an employee for blowing the whistle on a Foreign Service national who committed visa fraud. I have been a long-time champion for protecting the rights of those who shed light on the problems in our Government, so I take these allegations very seriously and look forward to hearing from Ms. Harty regarding this matter.

DECOMMISSIONING OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD CUTTER "SEDFE"

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate the distinguished history of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Sedge* which will be decommissioned November 15, 2002, after serving 50 years in Alaskan waters, and to honor the many men and women who have served aboard her.

The *Sedge*, a 180-foot seagoing buoy tender with a complement of 7 officers and 54 enlisted personnel, was the 35th of the original 39 buoy tenders built for the U.S. Coast Guard. Commissioned on July 5, 1944, the *Sedge* began her long service with an assignment in Hawaii. Shortly after arriving in her new home port of Honolulu, she was called into service to support wartime operations. She served in the Pacific theater from 1944 to 1945, tending navigation aids in Guam, Okinawa, Anguar, Midway, Pearl Harbor, and Shanghai.

On February 26, 1947, the *Sedge* was decommissioned and mothballed. But the old girl's life was not over. She was recommissioned in Seattle, Washington on April 14, 1950, with orders making Boston, MA, her new homeport. However, on May 1, new orders sent the *Sedge* to Kodiak, AK, instead.

After 7 years of service in Kodiak, the *Sedge* was transferred to Cordova, AK on July 15, 1957, serving there for almost 16 years. In the Spring of 1973,

the *Sedge* shaped a course for the Coast Guard Yard in Curtis Bay, MD, for major renovation. She came out of the yard with a new lease on life—updated propulsion machinery, a new hydraulic buoy handling system, a bow thruster and improved quarters.

After about a year of work, the *Sedge* was recommissioned and departed for yet another new homeport: Homer, AK. She arrived in Homer on November 8, 1974.

The *Sedge's* primary duty is to maintain aids to navigation that make maritime travel possible and safe. For the last 28 years, she has maintained 73 shore aids and 19 buoys in and around Alaska's Cook Inlet, and she has done it well. But throughout her history she has also done her duty on other matters: national defense, search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, and environmental protection.

In the early 1950s, radar stations in the Arctic—the DEW Line—needed regular servicing and supplies. Convoys would meet in Nome, AK, for the voyage, and the *Sedge* was there. This included the year she was locked in the ice pack for 3 days, and the year she was called on to rescue an LST that was in severe danger in an Arctic storm.

In 1962, she rescued six people who had been adrift in a life raft for 5 days.

After the gigantic Alaska earthquake of 1964, the *Sedge* helped evacuate people from stricken towns and villages in Prince William Sound. She braved many difficulties including the unpredictable seas and tides after the earthquake, including one unheard of minus 30-foot tide that put her hard aground in Prince William Sound.

In 1989, she was back in the Prince William Sound for another disaster. She was the first Coast Guard cutter to respond to the *Exxon Valdez* oilspill. The *Sedge* helped skim 4,000 barrels of oil off the water soon after the incident. Afterwards, the crew of the *Sedge* constructed a lighted tower on Bligh Reef, the shoal on which the *Exxon Valdez* ran aground.

The history of the *Sedge* contains too many such stories of lives saved and lives touched to relate them all. Suffice it to say that the men and women who have served on board the *Sedge* have earned the many accolades and honors they have received, including the Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation, the World War II Victory Medal, the Navy Occupation Service Medal, the Coast Guard Special Operations Service Ribbon, the Department of Transportation Outstanding Unit Award, the Coast Guard Unit Commendation, the Coast Guard "E" Ribbon, the Coast Guard Bicentennial Unit Commendation, the National Defense Service Medal, the Coast Guard Arctic Service Medal, and the Humanitarian Service Medal.

The *Sedge* will work her last aid to navigation on November 5, 2002, before her scheduled decommissioning on November 15, 2002. She will be replaced