

with respect to the availability of contact lenses.

S. 2510

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2510, a bill to establish a national health program administered by the Office of Personnel Management to offer health benefits plans to individuals who are not Federal employees, and for other purposes.

S. 2554

At the request of Mr. ENSIGN, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. ALLARD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2554, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the permissible use of health savings accounts to include premiums for non-group high deductible health plan coverage.

S. 2653

At the request of Mr. STEVENS, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2653, a bill to direct the Federal Communications Commission to make efforts to reduce telephone rates for Armed Forces personnel deployed overseas.

S. 2658

At the request of Mr. BOND, the names of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. STEVENS) and the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2658, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to enhance the national defense through empowerment of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau and the enhancement of the functions of the National Guard Bureau, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE), the Senator from Montana (Mr. BAUCUS), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN), and the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. AKAKA) were added as cosponsors of S. 2658, *supra*.

S. CON. RES. 91

At the request of Mr. REID, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. Con. Res. 91, a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the President should posthumously award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Leroy Robert "Satchel" Paige.

S. RES. 458

At the request of Mr. ALEXANDER, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 458, a resolution affirming that statements of national unity, including the National Anthem, should be recited or sung in English.

AMENDMENT NO. 3592

At the request of Mr. REED, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. CHAFEE) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3592 intended to be proposed to H.R. 4939, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3597

At the request of Mr. LUGAR, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. MARTINEZ) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3597 proposed to H.R. 4939, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3688

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3688 proposed to H.R. 4939, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mr. DODD, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3688 proposed to H.R. 4939, *supra*.

AMENDMENT NO. 3717

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the names of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 3717 proposed to H.R. 4939, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3719

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the names of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. BROWNBACK), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 3719 proposed to H.R. 4939, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3777

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the names of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. BROWNBACK), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 3777 proposed to H.R. 4939, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3805

At the request of Mr. BENNETT, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. LANDRIEU) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3805 intended to be proposed to H.R. 4939, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. SANTORUM (for himself, Mrs. DOLE, and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 2701. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a refundable credit for high deductible health plans for uninsured individuals; to the Committee on Finance.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, this week, the first week of May, is National Cover the Uninsured Week. Now in its fourth year, it is the largest non-partisan effort in our Nation's history to raise awareness on the staggering numbers of Americans who do not have health insurance.

Forty-six million Americans have no health insurance—including more than 8 million children. In Alaska, 110,000 people do not have health insurance—that is nearly 17 percent of our population. One-half of Alaska's uninsured live in a household with a least one child.

Being uninsured too often means going without needed care—and minor illnesses can become major ones simply because health care is delayed. Over a third of Alaska's uninsured reported that they didn't seek medical care for themselves or their family when it was needed. Why? Because they couldn't afford it. An estimated 18,000 uninsured Americans die each year because they received too little care, too late.

Most of these individuals and families are hard-working Americans—just making it from paycheck to paycheck. In fact, 8 out of 10 of uninsured Americans either work or are in working families.

To help those working families, I join Senator SANTORUM and Senator DOLE in introducing the Helping Working Americans Afford Health Coverage Act of 2006. The goal of this bill is to make health coverage more affordable and accessible to the working populations with the greatest needs.

This bill creates a progressive, refundable health care tax credit targeted toward low- and moderate-income individuals and families which can be used for health savings account-eligible health insurance. Recent studies show that low- and moderate-income Americans and those previously uninsured are enrolling in health savings accounts or HSAs. More than one-third of HSA purchasers last year had incomes under \$50,000 per year, and one-third of individual HSA purchasers last year were previously uninsured.

Specifically, the refundable tax credit would provide a subsidy of up to 90 percent of the cost of health care coverage, up to a maximum credit of \$1,000 per adult and up to \$3,000 for a family. Additionally, the credit will be advanceable so that an individual or family would not have to wait to be reimbursed to purchase coverage.

This bill also contains an important provision to address the higher health care costs and higher poverty levels in the noncontiguous States of Alaska and Hawaii. In Alaska, the qualifying income thresholds for both individual Alaskans and Alaskan families are increased by 25 percent.

Though the Helping Working Americans Afford Health Coverage Act is not as comprehensive as S. 160, the SAVE Act, Securing Access, Value and Equality Act—legislation that I introduced

earlier in the Congress—it is still an important first step in addressing the needs of the uninsured.

The National Association of Health Underwriters states that this bill “will provide much needed relief by providing a refundable tax credit that can be used for both their health insurance policy premiums and as a deposit into their HSA account. This (bill) will provide individuals with ready access to health care while encouraging them to become more engaged in the process of obtaining health care.”

Mr. President, helping Americans afford insurance saves money in the long run. Between \$65 billion and \$130 billion of public health dollars are spent on treating acute patients. Much of this could be saved if only those individuals received preventative care.

Making health insurance more affordable will make a real difference to the Nation’s physical and economic health. I am proud of Alaskans and all Americans who have united during National Cover the Uninsured Week and are bringing attention to this national health care crisis. I ask my colleagues to take an important step in helping the uninsured by supporting the Helping Working Americans Afford Health Insurance Act of 2006.

By Mr. SPECTER (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. FRIST, Mr. REID, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. DEWINE, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. WARNER, Mr. INOUE, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. KERRY, Mr. CHAFEE, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. ALLEN, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. OBAMA, Mr. SALAZAR, and Mr. MENENDEZ):

S. 2703. A bill to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased to join the chairmen of both the Senate and House Judiciary Committees, the ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee, the Democratic and Republican leaders of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, and members of Congress from both parties to introduce a bill to reauthorize and reinvigorate the temporary provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The bicameral, bipartisan introduction of this bill reflects not only its historic importance as a guarantor of the right to vote for all Americans, but also the broad consensus that the expiring provisions must be extended this year without delay.

There are few things as critical to our Nation, and to American citizenship, as voting. Like the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, the right to vote is foundational because it secures the effective exercise of all other rights. As people are able to register, vote, and elect candidates of their choice, their interests and rights get attention. The very legitimacy of our government is dependent on the access all Americans have to the political process.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was the result of an historic struggle for civil rights led by such American heroes as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King and Rosa Parks, who refused to be treated as second-class citizens. That struggle reached a crucial turning point on March 7, 1965, on the Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma, AL, when State troopers brutally attacked JOHN LEWIS and his fellow civil rights marchers who were fighting for their right to vote.

The events of that day, now known as “Bloody Sunday,” were captured in newspapers and on televisions across the country, and those powerful images marked a crucial turning point in securing the right to vote for all Americans. A few days after the violence of Bloody Sunday, President Lyndon Johnson outlined the proposed Voting Rights Act of 1965, before a joint session of Congress. Within months, Congress passed it so that the Constitution’s guarantees of equal access to the electoral process, regardless of race, would not be undermined by discriminatory practices.

The enactment of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 transformed the landscape of political inclusion. Prior to the Act, minorities of all races faced major barriers to participation in the political process, through the use of such devices as poll taxes, exclusionary primaries, intimidation by voting officials, language barriers, and systematic vote dilution. We have made great gains since that time, but our work is not finished. The record established in 10 hearings in the House of Representatives indicates that the tools provided by the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act remain necessary for protecting the voting rights of minority Americans in this country.

Among the Act’s most critical protections are the pre-clearance provisions of Section 5, which prevent discriminatory laws from going into practice. The Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 would extend these protections for 25 years, retaining the most effective measures to fight certain kinds of pervasive and recurring discrimination.

The insidious discriminatory tactics that led to the original Voting Rights Act were deeply rooted. In the annals of our Nation, this fight dates back almost 100 years, to the ratification of the 15th Amendment in 1870, the last of the post-Civil War Reconstruction amendments. It took implementation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 for people of all races in many parts of our country to gain the effective exercise of rights guaranteed 95 years earlier by the 15th Amendment. The pre-clearance provisions were one of the primary reasons this Act succeeded where earlier attempts had failed. Section 5 requires certain covered jurisdictions with a history of discrimination to pre-clear all voting changes with either the Department of Justice or the U.S. District Court for the District of Colum-

bia. In doing so, Section 5 combats the practices in these jurisdictions of shifting from one invalidated discriminatory tactic to another, which had undermined earlier efforts to enforce 15th Amendment guarantees.

We have made significant progress toward a more inclusive democracy over the past four decades since the enactment of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. However, I fear that if we fail to reauthorize the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act, our country is likely to backslide. We must make sure those gains do not suffer the same fate as the gains in voting rights made during Reconstruction.

After the Civil War, the Reconstruction Act promised that the guarantees of the 15th Amendment would be realized. Between 1870 and 1900, 22 African Americans served in the United States Congress. In 1868, Louisiana elected an African-American Lieutenant Governor, Oscar Dunn, and 87 African Americans held seats in the South Carolina legislature. However, these Reconstruction-era gains in African-American voting and representation proved to be short-lived. Following the end of Reconstruction, the rights of African Americans to vote and to hold office were virtually eliminated in many areas through discriminatory legal barriers, intimidation, and violence. The changes were swift, systematic and severe. By 1896, Representative George White of North Carolina was the only African American remaining in the U.S. Congress, and it would take 72 years after Representative White left Congress for African-American voters in the South to elect another candidate of their choice to Congress.

In Mississippi, the percentage of African-American voting-age men registered to vote fell from more than 90 percent during Reconstruction to less than 6 percent in 1892. Between 1896 and 1900, the number of African-American voters in Louisiana was reduced from 130,000 to a mere 5,000. Unlike their short-lived gains made during Reconstruction, African-American voters’ exclusion from the ballot box was persistent. Only 3 percent of voting-age African-American men and women in the South were registered to vote in 1940, only 1 percent in Mississippi—just 1 percent. These numbers are staggering, and they provide a history lesson we should not ignore.

As part of the Voting Rights Act reauthorization in 1975, Congress added Section 203, which requires bilingual voting assistance for certain language minority groups. This provision was enacted pursuant to congressional power to enforce the 14th and 15th Amendments. Section 203 has been a key factor to expanding the inclusiveness of democracy to all citizens and has led to extraordinary gains in representation and participation made by Asian-American and Hispanic-American citizens. Like Section 5, Section 203 is expiring in 2007. The Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and

Amendments Act of 2006 would extend these critical protections for 25 years.

Hispanic-American populations have been one of the primary minority language groups to benefit from the protections of the bilingual provisions of the Voting Rights Act. For example effective implementation of the bilingual provisions in San Diego County, CA, helped increase voter registration by more than 20 percent. And voter turnout among Hispanic Americans in New Mexico rose 26 percent between 2000 and 2004 after television and radio spots in Spanish educated listeners about voter registration and absentee ballots.

Voting rights belong to people who are American citizens. They are trying to vote but many of them are struggling with the English language due to disparities in education and the incremental process of learning. It is imperative that all citizens be able to fully exercise their rights as citizens, particularly a right as fundamental as the right to vote. Renewing the expiring language provisions of the Voting Rights Act will continue to help make that a reality.

Rather than merely extending the Voting Rights Act, Congress now has an opportunity to reinvigorate the Act, strengthening and improving its remedies. The Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 does so by clarifying certain parts of Section 5 to give clear guidance to the Courts and to restore the original understanding of the Act. Two recent Supreme Court decisions have significantly narrowed Section 5's effectiveness and undermined the purposes of the Act.

The Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 remedies the Supreme Court's holding in *Reno v. Bossier Parish*, by making clear that a voting rule change motivated by any discriminatory purpose violates Section 5. Under the holding in *Reno v. Bossier Parish*, certain voting rule changes passed with the intent to discriminate against minorities could pass Section 5 muster. Because such an interpretation is inconsistent with purposes of the Voting Rights Act to eliminate discriminatory tactics that undermine the guarantees of the 15th Amendment, the Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act fixes this inconsistency by clarifying that a voting rule change motivated by any discriminatory purpose also cannot be pre-cleared.

The Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 also remedies the Supreme Court's holding in *Georgia v. Ashcroft*. Under the test established in *Georgia* for assessing a jurisdiction's challenge to denial of Section 5 pre-clearance, the court can give greater weight to numerous undefined considerations than to the ability of a minority community to elect a candidate of its choice. This test is as difficult to administer as it is contrary to the purposes of the Act. This act

fixes both of these problems by restoring the original understanding that the purpose of the Voting Rights Act is to protect the minority community's ability to elect their preferred candidates of choice and by setting forth defined factors.

In addition to restoring the Act's original meaning, this Act makes changes to the expiring Federal examiners and observers provisions to better allocate resources for combating discrimination in voting. The Voting Rights Act provides for Federal examiners to ensure that legally qualified persons are free to register for Federal, State, and local elections and that observers to observe whether citizens who are eligible to vote are able to exercise the right to vote. Federal observers are the most frequently used federal oversight tool in voting and the only Federal officials authorized to enter polls and places where votes are tabulated. This Act eliminates Federal examiners because they have not been appointed to jurisdictions certified for coverage in more than 20 years, and other laws such as the Help America Vote Act now address the concern of voting rolls. At the same time, the bill strengthens the observers provisions to allow the assignment of federal observers upon finding that there is a reasonable belief that a violation of the 14th or 15th Amendments will occur, without having to first certify federal examiners.

The Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendment Act also removes an impediment to effective protection of voting rights by authorizing the prevailing party in a lawsuit brought under Section 2 to recover expert costs as part of the attorney fees already authorized. This will have a significant impact on the ability of litigants to successfully combat discrimination in court.

The process of reauthorization began in the House of Representatives, where Representatives NADLER, CHABOT and WATT presided over 10 hearings on the effectiveness and continuing need for the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act. Last week, the distinguished House Judiciary chairman and ranking member appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee and introduced the extensive record from those hearings. I am grateful for the hard work that has been done in the House, and I want to thank Chairman SPECTER for agreeing to move forward promptly with Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on the expiring provisions.

Congress has reauthorized and revitalized the Act four times, each time with overwhelmingly bipartisan support. As I noted last week in welcoming the House Judiciary chairman and ranking member, we are repeating the bicameral and bipartisan process of the 1982 reauthorization. In 1982, Chairman SPECTER and I were both Members of the Judiciary Committee, along with Senators KENNEDY, BIDEN, HATCH and GRASSLEY. Under the chairmanship of Senator Strom Thurmond, reauthoriza-

tion was reported by the Judiciary Committee and passed both houses of Congress. I am hopeful that our Committee can accomplish the work that needs to be done and report this bill to the full Senate before the Memorial Day recess.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is one of the most important laws Congress has ever passed, helping to usher the country out of a history of discrimination and into the greater inclusion of all Americans in the decisions about our Nation's future. Our democracy and our Nation have been better and richer for it. While I hope some day these extraordinary remedies are not needed, I urge the Senate to build on the work done in the House of Representatives to extend the expiring provisions so that we can eliminate recurring discrimination and make sure that the gains we have made are not lost. I am heartened that this is not a partisan issue benefiting one party or another. Rather, as demonstrated by the bicameral and bipartisan process we continue for reauthorizing and revitalizing the Act's expiring provisions, this is about making our democracy reflect the will of all of the American people.

By Mr. DEWINE (for himself, Mr. SPECTER, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. KERRY, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. DODD, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. LIEBERMAN):

S. 2704. A bill to revise and extend the National Police Athletic League Youth Enrichment Act of 2000; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, today I join Senators SPECTER, FEINSTEIN, BIDEN, KERRY, BOXER, SCHUMER, NELSON of Florida, MENENDEZ, DODD, KENNEDY, LAUTENBERG, DURBIN, and LIEBERMAN to introduce a bill to reauthorize the Police Athletic/Activities League, better known as PAL. These local youth crime prevention programs, run by police officers nationwide, provide after-school educational, athletic, and recreational opportunities for the communities they serve.

The first PAL chapter was founded in the 1910s in New York. The growth since then has been tremendous, and there are now over 330 PAL chapters in 38 States, DC, the Virgin Islands, Canada, and Nigeria, serving approximately 2 million children between the ages of 5 and 18. In my own home State of Ohio, we are fortunate enough to have 28 of these outstanding organizations.

Studies conducted in Eastlake, OH, and Portland, OR, have shown a substantial drop in the juvenile crime rate in those two cities upon the creation of a PAL chapter. These chapters make a point to serve those most in need. For example, 50 percent of the kids involved in the 28 Ohio chapters come from families with a median income of less than \$20,000.

PAL chapters provide kids with a wide range of activities. One chapter in Ohio, for instance—the Chillicothe-Ross County Police Athletic League—has offered dances, films, rap contests, and programs in archery, art, basketball, bowling, boxing, computers, cooking, CPR, fishing, fitness, lacrosse, nutrition, paint ball, running, tumbling, volleyball, and weightlifting. Other chapters around the country have offered programs like chess, flag football, junior golf, homework clubs and hydroponic gardening. In addition—through their Youth Leadership Council—PALs provide a setting for kids to learn important skills to assist them in becoming the leaders of tomorrow.

But, the Police Athletic/Activities League does more than merely provide after-school activities to kids who may not otherwise have access to tutoring or athletic facilities. PAL provides them with mentors and positive role models. In addition, PAL programs help teach kids that their relationship with law enforcement need not be one that is “us vs. them;” instead, to quote National PAL, itself, the relationship can be one of “cops and kids together—providing solutions through sports and education.”

The money provided by this reauthorization bill would enable PAL programs to continue their current programs and also expand—at a rate of 50 chapters per year—into areas where kids can truly benefit from the good work of the PAL.

The PAL has been a success for over 90 years, and the Senate consistently has supported this outstanding organization. We passed the National Police Athletic League Youth Enrichment Act of 2000 by unanimous consent, and I urge my colleagues to continue to support the PAL with this reauthorization.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 2704

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “National Police Athletic League Youth Enrichment Reauthorization Act of 2006”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Section 2 of the National Police Athletic League Youth Enrichment Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 13751 note) is amended—

- (1) in paragraph (1)—
 - (A) by redesignating subparagraphs (C) through (G) as subparagraphs (D) through (H), respectively; and
 - (B) by inserting after subparagraph (B) the following:

“(C) develop life enhancing character and leadership skills in young people;”;
 - (2) in paragraph (2) by striking “55-year” and inserting “90-year”;;
 - (3) in paragraph (3)—
 - (A) by striking “320 PAL chapters” and inserting “350 PAL chapters”; and
 - (B) by striking “1,500,000 youth” and inserting “2,000,000 youth”;

(4) in paragraph (4), by striking “82 percent” and inserting “85 percent”;

(5) in paragraph (5), in the second sentence, by striking “receive no” and inserting “rarely receive”;

(6) in paragraph (6), by striking “17 are at risk” and inserting “18 are at risk”; and

(7) in paragraph (7), by striking “1999” and inserting “2005”.

SEC. 3. PURPOSE.

Section 3 of the National Police Athletic League Youth Enrichment Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 13751 note) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

- (A) by striking “320 established PAL chapters” and inserting “342 established PAL chapters”; and

(B) by striking “and” at the end;

- (2) in paragraph (2), by striking “2006.” and inserting “2010; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(3) support of an annual gathering of PAL chapters and designated youth leaders from such chapters to participate in a 3-day conference that addresses national and local issues impacting the youth of America and includes educational sessions to advance character and leadership skills.”.

SEC. 4. GRANTS AUTHORIZED.

Section 5 of the National Police Athletic League Youth Enrichment Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 13751 note) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking “2001 through 2005” and inserting “2006 through 2010”; and

(2) in subsection (b)(1)(B), by striking “not less than 570 PAL chapters in operation before January 1, 2004” and inserting “not fewer than 500 PAL chapters in operation before January 1, 2010”.

SEC. 5. USE OF FUNDS.

Section 6(a)(2) of the National Police Athletic League Youth Enrichment Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 13751 note) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking “four” and inserting “two”; and

(2) in subparagraph (A)—

- (A) in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking “two programs” and inserting “one program”;
- (B) in clause (iii), by striking “or”;
- (C) in clause (iv), by striking “and” and inserting “or”;

(D) by inserting after clause (iv) the following:

“(v) character development and leadership training; and”.

SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

Section 8(a) of the National Police Athletic League Youth Enrichment Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 13751 note) is amended by striking “2001 through 2005” and inserting “2006 through 2010”.

SEC. 7. NAME OF LEAGUE.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—Section 4(4) of the National Police Athletic League Youth Enrichment Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 13751 note) is amended in the paragraph heading, by striking “ATHLETIC” and inserting “ATHLETIC/ACTIVITIES”.

(b) TEXT.—The National Police Athletic League Youth Enrichment Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 13751 note) is amended by striking “Police Athletic League” each place such term appears and inserting “Police Athletic/Activities League”.

By Mr. AKAKA:

S. 2708. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide an enrollment priority for veterans, who are recipients of certain medals of valor, in health care services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise today on behalf of our Nation's veterans and military heroes to introduce the “Heroes Healthcare Eligibility Act of 2006.” This legislation would recognize the sacrifices and contributions of our Nation's military heroes by ensuring that our military heroes have full access to VA health care.

Since January 2003, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has used his authority under current law to prohibit Priority 8 veterans from enrolling in the VA health care system. Priority 8 veterans are those with no service-connected disability and have an income of over \$26,902. To date, more than 260,000 of these supposed “middle-income” veterans have been turned away from the VA health care system.

I was dismayed to learn that the group of Priority 8 veterans may include thousands of war heroes, who were awarded medals for valor in combat but are ineligible for health care because of income limitations. Lou Green, a Korean war veteran and veterans advocate, brought a case to my attention where a multiple Silver Star award winner was denied access to care. This particular veteran had income just slightly above the means test limit but was told that his award “meant nothing” for getting VA health care.

This bill would recognize those veterans who have been awarded the Silver Star Medal or higher for valor and give them access to VA health care on par with former POWs; service connected veterans rated 10 percent or 20 percent disabled and all those who have received a Purple Heart. From World War II to present, more than 134,000 servicemembers have been awarded either the Silver Star, Air Force Cross, Navy Cross, Distinguished Service Cross or the Medal of Honor.

I would tell my colleagues that there is precedent for establishing priority eligibility for a veteran's benefit as a result of being awarded a military decoration. As I mentioned before, today combat veterans in receipt of a Purple Heart are eligible for VA health care, as they fall into the third priority group. Also, current policy at Arlington National Cemetery gives eligibility for full-body burial to those who have been awarded the Silver Star or higher for valor or are in receipt of the Purple Heart.

As much as I would like to reopen the doors to VA health care for all Priority 8 veterans, this legislation to recognize our Nation's military heroes is a step in the right direction. It is time our decorated military heroes receive the recognition they so richly deserve. I urge my colleagues to join me in making this needed change to VA's health eligibility for our military heroes a reality.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 462—DESIGNATING JUNE 8, 2006, AS THE DAY OF A NATIONAL VIGIL FOR LOST PROMISE

Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. BIDEN, and Mr. TALENT) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 462

Whereas over 26,000 citizens die from the effects of drug abuse each year;

Whereas the damage from drugs is not limited to drug abusers, the collateral damage from drugs is enormous, and drug abuse costs society over \$60,000,000,000 in social costs and lost productivity;

Whereas drugs rob users, their families, and all the people of the United States of dreams, promises, ambitions, talents, and lives;

Whereas drug abuse affects millions of families in the United States;

Whereas the stigma of drug abuse and the cloak of denial keep many individuals and families from dealing with the impact of drugs;

Whereas many friends and families are ashamed to acknowledge the death of their loved ones caused by drug abuse;

Whereas all the people of the United States can benefit from illuminating the problem of drug abuse and its impact on families, communities, and society;

Whereas the futures of thousands of youth of the United States have been cut short because of drug abuse, including the life of—

(1) Irma Perez, who suffered and died of an Ecstasy overdose at age 14;

(2) David Manlove, who wanted to be a doctor, but died from inhalant abuse at age 16;

(3) David Pease, an articulate debater, who died of a heroin overdose at age 23;

(4) Ian Eaccarino, a college student who died of a heroin overdose at age 20;

(5) Jason Surks, who was studying to be a pharmacist, but died of prescription drug abuse at age 19;

(6) Kelley McEnery Baker, who died of an overdose of Ecstasy at age 23;

(7) Ryan Haight, who died of an overdose of prescription drugs he had purchased over the Internet at age 18; and

(8) Taylor Hooton, a high school baseball star whose life was cut short by steroids at age 16;

Whereas these deaths represent only a small sample of the lost promise that drug abuse has cost the future of the United States;

Whereas law enforcement, public health and research organizations, community coalitions, drug prevention outreach organizations, individual parents, siblings, friends, and concerned citizens are joining together on June 8, 2006, in a Vigil for Lost Promise, to call public attention to the tremendous promise which has been lost with the deaths of those affected by drugs: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goals of the Vigil for Lost Promise;

(2) encourages any families who have been affected by a death due to drugs to visit www.nationalparentvigil.com;

(3) encourages all young people to choose to live a drug-free life;

(4) encourages all people of the United States to work to stop drug abuse before it starts and remain vigilant against the far reaching loss of promise caused by deaths from drug abuse;

(5) designates June 8, 2006, as the day of a National Vigil for Lost Promise; and

(6) encourages all citizens of the United States to remember the lost promise of youth caused by drug abuse on this day.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, sadly, every year over 26,000 people die in this country from the effects of drug abuse. This is a staggering and sobering statistic. Still, millions more have been devastated by this tragic loss of life and promise. Ordinary people like you and I, are left to cope with the loss of a loved one senselessly taken at the hands of drugs.

Over the years, families and friends have individually found ways to remember and honor their memory. But to date, there has been no national event to bring people together to call attention to the nature and extent of the drug problem in this country.

Now, eight families who have personally suffered the loss of a loved one because of drugs have joined together to plan a remembrance. On June 8, 2006, the first annual Vigil for Lost Promise: Remembering Those Who Have Died From Drugs will be held in Washington, DC.

This national event finally gives these and other families the opportunity to remember and honor the memory of those who have died from drugs. This event will illuminate for everyone just how pervasive and dangerous this problem is in our society.

Others sharing similar stories of loss will be joined by leaders in the drug prevention, treatment and education fields, community leaders, clergy from all faith, educators, legislators and concerned citizens as well as the Drug Enforcement Administration, the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the Partnership for a Drug Free America to raise public awareness about the terrible toll that drugs take on families, friends and society.

Today, I am pleased to submit along with my colleagues, Senator BIDEN and Senator TALENT, a resolution to support the goals of the Vigil for Lost Promise and to designate June 8, 2006, as the day of a National Vigil for Lost Promise. It is important that these and other families who have lost of a loved one to drugs know that they are not alone. Many wonderful people have had to endure the same nightmare and this event lets everyone know that there is hope and there is help.

I encourage all my colleagues to visit www.nationalparentvigil.com to learn more about this very important event. I also want to urge my colleagues to join us in passing this resolution to demonstrate our commitment to raising awareness about drugs and to lend our support to those who have lost a loved one to drugs.

SENATE RESOLUTION 463—RECOGNIZING THE 58TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Mr. FRIST (for himself, Mr. REID, Mr. VOINOVICH, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. VIT-

TER, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. SANTORUM, Mr. KYL, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. NELSON of Florida, and Mr. BIDEN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 463

Whereas, on May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was established as a sovereign and independent country;

Whereas the United States was 1 of the first countries to recognize Israel, only 11 minutes after its creation;

Whereas Israel has provided Jews from all over the world with an opportunity to reestablish their ancient homeland;

Whereas Israel is home to many religious sites that are sacred to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam;

Whereas Israel provided a refuge to Jews who survived the horrors of the Holocaust, which were unprecedented in human history;

Whereas the people of Israel have established a unique, pluralistic democracy that incorporates the freedoms cherished by the people of the United States, including—

(1) the freedom of speech;

(2) the freedom of religion;

(3) the freedom of association;

(4) the freedom of the press; and

(5) government by the consent of the governed;

Whereas Israel continues to serve as a shining model of democratic values by—

(1) regularly holding free and fair elections;

(2) promoting the free exchange of ideas; and

(3) vigorously exercising in its Parliament, the Knesset, a democratic government that is fully representative of its citizens;

Whereas Israel has bravely defended itself from terrorist and military attacks repeatedly since it declared its independence;

Whereas the Government of Israel has successfully worked with the neighboring Governments of Egypt and Jordan to establish peaceful and bilateral relations;

Whereas, despite the deaths of over 1,000 innocent Israelis at the hands of murderous suicide bombers and other terrorists during the last 5 years, the people of Israel continue to seek peace with their Palestinian neighbors;

Whereas visionary Israeli leaders like Yitzhak Rabin and Ariel Sharon were at the forefront of creating conditions for peace in the Middle East;

Whereas the United States and Israel enjoy a strategic partnership based on shared democratic values, friendship, and respect;

Whereas the people of the United States share an affinity with the people of Israel and view Israel as a strong and trusted ally;

Whereas Israel has made significant global contributions in the fields of science, medicine, and technology; and

Whereas the Independence Day of Israel on the Jewish calendar coincides this year with May 3, 2006: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the independence of the State of Israel as a significant event for providing refuge and a national homeland for the Jewish people;

(2) commends the bipartisan commitment of all administrations and Congresses of the United States since 1948 that stood by Israel and worked for its security and well-being;

(3) congratulates the United States and Israel for strengthening their bilateral relations during the last year in the fields of defense, diplomacy, and homeland security, and encourages both countries to continue their cooperation in resolving future mutual challenges; and