

Mr. President, hardworking American families are facing many difficult challenges due to the current economic realities facing our country. Now, more than ever, they find themselves having to choose between basic needs to provide for their families, and this is being greatly exacerbated by rising gasoline prices, which have risen by more than 58 percent in the last 14 months. That is why I am pleased to be joined by so many of my colleagues in offering a proposal to provide some needed relief for every person who will be filling their gas or diesel tanks this summer.

In the past year, the price of unleaded regular gas has increased 53 cents per gallon. Diesel fuel prices nationwide are now over \$1.30 more per gallon more than this time last year. With the growing financial strains placed on so many Americans—rising food prices and falling home prices—the additional hit of rising fuel prices is becoming the breaking point.

In an effort to ease some of the hardship caused by the higher fuel prices, our bill would suspend the Federal tax on gas and the tax on diesel fuel from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Last Memorial Day, alone, approximately 32 million Americans traveled by car 50 miles or more from home. Suspending the federal excise tax during the summer, when fuel prices have historically been at the highest annually, would allow Americans to keep a few more of their hard-earned dollars.

Now, let me be clear: this bill would not harm the Highway Trust Fund. This bill would ensure that the Highway Trust Fund remains whole during this “gas tax holiday” by transferring monies from the General Treasury. We all agree that our roads and highways must be maintained and improved to ensure the safety of the road-traveling public, and this amendment would do nothing to impact highway construction.

So, my colleagues have an opportunity to take meaningful action to ease some of the financial burdens that are impacting all hardworking Americans every time they fill up their gas or diesel tanks. Let's put some action behind the usual rhetoric around here and vote to ease their tax burden this summer.

By Mr. KENNEDY (for himself, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. OBAMA, Mr. BROWN, Mr. FEINGOLD, and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 2891. A bill to amend the National Labor Relations Act to apply the protections of the Act to teaching and research assistants; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it is important for Congress to do more to guarantee graduate students the right to organize and to bargain over their wages and working conditions as teaching and research assistants, so I am introducing legislation today to do so.

More than ever in modern education, teaching and research assistants are in

classrooms every day, educating students in colleges and universities across the country. Their numbers are increasing as the number of full time faculty dwindles. Often, teaching and research assistants are now doing the same job as junior faculty members.

In fact, the classroom is a workplace for these scholars. It's where they earn the money they need to pay to put food on their tables and a roof over their heads. They deserve the right to stand together and make their voice heard in their workplace. Like other employees, they should have the right to join a union and improve their working conditions. Obviously, better wages and working conditions for them also means better education for their students.

In 2004, however, a decision by the National Labor Relations Board changed the law and denied fundamental workplace rights and protections for teaching and research assistants. This ruling stopped an active organizing movement in its tracks and deprived thousands of teaching and research assistants of their right to organize and bargain over their wages and working conditions.

It is hardly the only bad decision by the National Labor Relations Board under the Bush administration, which has been the most anti-worker, anti-labor, anti-union NLRB in history. The Board has let workers down at every turn. It has blocked efforts to gain union representation, undermined workers' attempts to improve their pay and benefits, and exposed them to penalties for seeking to improve their working conditions.

The National Labor Relations Board is supposed to protect the rights of American workers, but it is failing teaching and research assistants, just as it has failed so many others. By passing the Teaching and Research Assistants Collective Bargaining Rights Act, Congress will give these workers back the rights that the National Labor Relations Board has taken away. This legislation amends the definition of employee under the National Labor Relations Act to explicitly include teaching and research assistants at private universities and colleges and restores the law to where it was before the Bush board's anti-worker decision.

This bill is a significant step forward in restoring workers' rights, and I urge my colleagues to join in supporting this important legislation.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 519—WELCOMING POPE BENEDICT XVI TO THE UNITED STATES AND RECOGNIZING THE UNIQUE INSIGHTS HIS MORAL AND SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS BRING TO THE WORLD STAGE

Mr. BROWNBACK (for himself, Mr. CASEY, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr.

BURR, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. DOMENICI, Mrs. DOLE, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. CRAIG, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. THUNE, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. ENZI, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. HATCH, Mr. ROBERTS, and Mr. ALLARD) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 519

Whereas Pope Benedict XVI will travel to the United States for his first pastoral visit as Pope and will visit Washington, DC, and New York;

Whereas Pope Benedict XVI was elected as the 265th Bishop of Rome on April 19, 2005, succeeding the much beloved Pope John Paul II;

Whereas the visit of Pope Benedict XVI will mark the 9th visit of a pope to the United States, recognizing the historical importance of the Catholic Church in American life, the deep faith and charity of its members, and the responsibilities of the United States in world affairs;

Whereas Pope Benedict XVI has spoken approvingly of the vibrance of religious faith in the United States, a faith nourished by a constitutional commitment to religious liberty;

Whereas Pope Benedict XVI remains committed to ecumenical dialogue and, during his trip to the United States, will meet with leaders of world religions and representatives of other Christian denominations and will visit a synagogue in New York City, all demonstrating his commitment to sincere dialogue and unity among all members of the human family;

Whereas Pope Benedict XVI has authored 2 encyclical letters inviting the world to meditate on the virtues of love and hope, “Deus caritas est” and “Spe salvi”;

Whereas millions of Americans have discovered in Pope Benedict's words a renewed faith in the power of hope over despair and love over hate;

Whereas Pope Benedict XVI has been a clear and courageous voice for the voiceless, working tirelessly for the recognition of human dignity and religious freedom across the globe;

Whereas Pope Benedict XVI has spoken out for the weak and vulnerable;

Whereas Pope Benedict XVI seeks to advance a “civilization of love” across our world; and

Whereas Catholics in parishes and schools across the Nation, and countless other Americans as well, eagerly await the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate welcomes Pope Benedict XVI on the occasion of his first pastoral visit to the United States and recognizes the unique insights his moral and spiritual reflections bring to the world stage.

SENATE RESOLUTION 520—DESIGNATING MAY 16, 2008, AS “ENDANGERED SPECIES DAY”

Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Ms. COLLINS, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. KERRY, Mr. BROWN, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. LEVIN, Mrs. BOXER, and Mr. FEINGOLD) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 520

Whereas, in the United States and around the world, more than 1,000 species are officially designated as at risk of extinction and thousands more also face a heightened risk of extinction;