

memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia to honor free persons and slaves who fought for independence, liberty, and justice for all during the American Revolution;

S. 888, A bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate a segment of Illabot Creek in Skagit County, Washington, as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System;

S. 925, A bill to designate Mt. Andrea Lawrence;

S. 970, A bill to designate additional segments and tributaries of White Clay Creek, in the States of Delaware and Pennsylvania, as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System;

S. 1063, A bill to allow for the harvest of gull eggs by the Huna Tlingit people within Glacier Bay National Park in the State of Alaska;

S. 1134, A bill to authorize the St. Croix River Crossing Project with appropriate mitigation measures to promote river values; and

S. 1235, A bill to recognize the memorial at the Navy UDT-SEAL Museum in Fort Pierce, Florida, as the official national memorial of Navy SEALs and their predecessors.

Because of the limited time available for the hearing, witnesses may testify by invitation only. However, those wishing to submit written testimony for the hearing record should send it to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510-6150, or by email to jake_mccook@energy.senate.gov.

For further information, please contact David Brooks or Jake McCook.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on July 13, 2011, at 10 a.m. in room 253 of the Russell Senate Office Building. The Committee will hold a hearing entitled, "Unauthorized Charges on Telephone Bills: Why Crammers Win and Consumers Lose."

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

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on July 13, 2011, at 10 a.m. in room SD-406 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to

meet during the session of the Senate on July 13, 2011, at 9 a.m., in HVC-210 of the Capitol Visitor Center, to conduct a hearing entitled "Tax Reform and the Tax Treatment of Debt and Equity."

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on July 13, 2011, at 3 p.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on July 13, 2011, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled "Ten Years After 9/11: Preventing Terrorist Travel."

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on July 13, 2011, at 10 a.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "The Violence Against Women Act: Building on Seventeen Years of Accomplishments."

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on July 13, 2011, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "Nominations."

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Seapower of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on, July 13, 2011, at 2:30 p.m.

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Carlos Algara, an intern in the office of Senator MERKLEY, be granted privilege of the floor for the duration of the remainder of today's session.

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

HONORING THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION SPACE SHUTTLE PROGRAM

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 233, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 233) honoring the men and women of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Space Shuttle Program on reaching the historic milestone of the 135th and final flight of the Space Transportation System.

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

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, because I was on the floor, the remarkable Senate staff, who do this so much in a routine fashion, asked me to do this. Of course, it was with enormous emotion that I watched *Atlantis* soar into the heavens last Friday. This is a fitting tribute to the people who have made this program possible for 30 years, with 135 flights, not without tragedy for we lost two space shuttles and 14 souls. Now we are going to a vigorous new program with new, more efficient, and safer rockets that will take us into the heavens.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements relating to the resolution be printed in the RECORD.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 233) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 233

Whereas the launch of the space shuttle Atlantis on July 8, 2011, is the 135th and final flight of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Space Transportation System (STS-135) and the 33rd flight of the space shuttle Atlantis;

Whereas the National Aeronautics and Space Administration built 5 space-capable orbiters, the Columbia, the Challenger, the Discovery, the Atlantis, and the Endeavour;

Whereas, with the launch of STS-135, 355 individuals will have flown 852 times during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, beginning with the launch of the first Space Transportation System flight on April 12, 1981;

Whereas a spirit of international partnership has been fostered among the 16 countries represented on the space shuttle missions flown during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, including Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United States;

Whereas the space shuttles together have flown 537,114,016 miles, with STS-135 adding an additional 4,000,000 miles;

Whereas, during the history of the Space Shuttle Program, more than 2,000 on-orbit

experiments have been conducted in the fields of Earth science, biology, fluids, materials sciences, and astronomy;

Whereas the Space Shuttle Program has executed the launch and service of the Hubble Space Telescope, enabling groundbreaking and breathtaking views of the universe outside of our solar system;

Whereas the space shuttles have docked to 2 different space stations, with 9 missions to Mir, the space station of the Government of Russia, and 37 missions to the International Space Station;

Whereas the Space Shuttle Program has been essential to the on-orbit assembly of the International Space Station and vital to ensuring the continued viability and support of the International Space Station;

Whereas the space shuttles have landed at the Kennedy Space Center 77 times, at Edwards Air Force Base 54 times, and at the White Sands Test Facility once;

Whereas the launch configuration of the entire Space Transportation System contains approximately 2,500,000 moving parts and, at lift-off, weighs approximately 4,500,000 pounds; and

Whereas the space shuttles can travel around the Earth at a speed of approximately 17,500 miles per hour: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the National Aeronautics and Space Administration on reaching the historic milestone of the 135th and final flight of the Space Transportation System;

(2) honors the men and women of the Space Shuttle Program, who worked tirelessly to design, build, and operate the Space Transportation System, in order to promote science, exploration, and international cooperation;

(3) remembers the 14 crewmembers lost during the space shuttle Challenger accident, which occurred on January 28, 1986, and the space shuttle Columbia accident, which occurred on February 1, 2003;

(4) notes the diligence in applying the lessons learned through the Challenger and Columbia tragedies to honor the 14 crewmembers we lost and enhance the safety of the crewmembers that followed;

(5) recognizes that the Space Shuttle Program has inspired generations of children to become engineers, scientists, and explorers, which has led to maintaining the precedent of leadership in human space exploration set by the United States during the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions; and

(6) acknowledges that the Space Shuttle Program has, through its technological advancements and scientific research, driven innovation in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to benefit the people of the United States and all of humankind.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

CONGRESSIONAL RETIREMENT AGE ACT

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of the senior Senator from Florida about Social Security. In my State—and it is not much different in Rhode Island, the State of the Presiding Officer—the average Social Security benefit is \$14,000 a year. A huge percent—I think about half—of Social Security beneficiaries in Ohio rely on Social Security for more than half of their income.

When I hear proposals here, which Senator NELSON also was speaking against, to make significant cuts to seniors who are getting \$1,000 a month from Social Security and letting off hedge fund managers who are paying significantly lower tax rates than most people in the middle class—that the sacrifice is aimed toward the middle class and aimed toward seniors and not spread more evenly among people who are the most privileged of society—it bothers me, as it does, I know, the Presiding Officer.

I rise today about a similar issue, about a Social Security issue also, calling on my colleagues in the Senate and in the House of Representatives to practice what we preach.

Presently, the Congress and the White House are working to find agreement on ways to balance the budget, as we should. I was part of the effort in the 1990s. During the Clinton years we balanced the Federal budget. In fact, during those 8 years, we took a terrible deficit and high unemployment, and even though taxes for upper income people were raised to 39 percent, we saw 21 million private sector jobs created, we saw incomes going up, and we saw that President Clinton left office with the highest budget surplus in American history.

We saw the policies of the next 8 years and what they did to our country: tax cuts for the wealthy, deregulation of Wall Street, bad trade agreements, a giveaway to the drug and insurance companies, and two unpaid-for wars and where that got us to this budget situation—exacerbated by this recession in the last 3 years. So we clearly need to move forward in balancing the budget.

Some Washington politicians want to balance the budget by cutting the Social safety net upon which millions of hard-working Americans rely. I oppose those efforts.

In a time of fiscal belt-tightening, Members of Congress should also share the burden of reducing that deficit. That is why I have introduced the Congressional Retirement Age Act of 2011.

The bill is simple. As Congress and the White House seek an agreement on a deficit reduction package, Members of Congress cannot permit themselves to receive benefits denied to ordinary working Americans.

While the wealth of Members of Congress varies, there is no doubt we receive a healthy salary and benefits compared to millions of American families who do not.

Members of Congress also have an added benefit. We can access our Federal retirement benefits early, whether we serve as few as 5 or as many as 25 years. Millions of seniors—who have worked their lives in factories or have worked their lives in construction or have worked their lives walking the floor of retail outlets, department stores or diners—millions of seniors cannot do the same. For too many Americans, Social Security has become

their retirement plan, as pensions disappear and 401(k)s plummet.

All Members of Congress are able to collect their pensions at any time—starting at age 50—if they have served 25 years. Most have not by the age of 50, obviously, but once they have served 25 years, they can receive full pensions. If they have served as few as 5 years, they can collect their pensions beginning at age 62.

So with 25 years of congressional service, Members of Congress can receive pensions immediately upon retirement. If they have served 5 years, they can receive a pension—not a large one at that point but a pretty decent pension—at age 62.

But what about a Youngstown steelworker, what about a Columbus store clerk, what about a Cincinnati nurse, what about a Toledo sheet metal worker, what about an Akron worker in a rubber plant? Do they get that option? Of course not. They have to wait until age 65, or age 62 at a discounted amount, to receive retirement benefits.

No longer should any Congressman, no longer should any Congresswoman, no longer should any Senator be treated differently from other Americans. That is what the Congressional Retirement Age Act of 2011 would ensure.

This bill would amend the Federal Employees Retirement System and the Civil Service Retirement System to directly tie current and future Members of Congress' access to their Federal retirement benefits to the Social Security retirement age.

It is that simple and it is bipartisan. Senator MCCASKILL of Missouri, a Democrat, Senator JOHNSON of South Dakota, a Democrat, are cosponsors. The House companion, introduced by Representative BOBBY SCHILLING of Illinois, a Republican, has seven Republican cosponsors.

This idea is endorsed by the conservative National Taxpayers Union, that calls it “one of the few serious attempts to reform Congressional pensions in recent memory.” I do not agree with the National Taxpayers Union on that many issues; they are too willing to cut benefits for the middle class, in my view. But together, on this issue, we share the belief that Members of Congress should be treated as any other citizen. There is no reason that the benefits of being a Member of Congress should be more generous than being a member of the middle class.

According to reports, 13 sitting Senators and 31 Members of the House of Representatives today have accrued annual pensions worth at last \$50,000, if they were to retire today. Meanwhile, American workers age 65 or older receive a median private pension payment of about \$8,000 a year.

Elected officials do not, frankly—I think you look around this body and you know that most House Members and Senators, at least a number of them, simply do not know enough people who work in construction, who work in a retail store, who work at a