

Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 1181

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 1181 intended to be proposed to H.R. 4366, a bill making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 1193

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH), the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 1193 intended to be proposed to H.R. 4366, a bill making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself and Mr. BRAUN):

S. 2803. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to allow for the electronic request of certain records, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I rise to introduce the Wounded Warrior Access Act, along with Senator BRAUN.

This legislation would streamline the process for veterans to submit a claim for benefits by giving them electronic access to their benefit claim file.

This legislation would require the VA to establish and maintain a secure online tool or website to enable a veteran or their representative to submit a request to receive their claims file, or C-File, electronically.

Allowing veterans to access their C-File electronically would allow veterans to access their information in a faster and more efficient manner.

When a veteran submits a claim for benefits to the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, a C-File is created. C-Files contain a veteran's service records, results of VA exams, additional information submitted by the veteran, and any material the VA deems necessary to decide a claim.

Currently, a veteran must travel to a regional VA location or mail in a form

to request a paper copy of their C-File, slowing down the process for individuals to gain access to their information.

The Wounded Warrior Access Act would require the VA to offer an online alternative for veterans to request their C-File. Online requests would dramatically modernize the C-File collection, decrease processing time, and reduce unnecessary appeals since more veterans will have access to all the information the VA used to decide their claims, ultimately saving the VA time and money.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to enact the Wounded Warrior Access Act as quickly as possible, and I thank Congressman PETE AGUILAR for his partnership on this legislation.

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MURPHY, and Ms. WARREN):

S. 2813. A bill to promote and support collaboration between Hispanic-serving institutions and local educational agencies with high enrollments of Hispanic or Latino students, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I rise to speak in support of the Hispanic Educational Resources and Empowerment Act of 2023, which I reintroduced today.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions, HSIs, provide incredible opportunities for millions of low-income and first-generation students. I am proud that my State of California is home to 170 HSIs and 47 emerging HSIs, the most in the country. That is why I launched the first-ever Senate HSI Caucus with my colleague, Senator MENENDEZ—to spotlight and advocate for the 572 HSIs across our country. These critical institutions educate our future leaders and help to build a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

During the pandemic, the number of HSIs in our country declined for the first time in two decades due to a decrease in higher education enrollment among Latino students during the pandemic. While the number of HSIs has since increased above prepandemic levels, this previous decrease illustrates the need for further investments in Latino youth. That is why I am reintroducing the HERE Act.

If enacted, this bill would support Latino students throughout secondary and postsecondary education. Specifically, the HERE Act would provide \$150 million for grants to create partnerships between HSIs and K-12 school districts that serve large populations of Latino students.

Schools could use this funding to provide academic support that better prepares students for postsecondary education. They could create new programs to foster a college-going culture

by exposing students and their families to postsecondary opportunities. And they could better support students through the college application and transition process. Additionally, schools could use grants to address non-academic needs that serve as barriers to college enrollment and completion—such as childcare, food insecurity, financial hardship, and more.

Latinos are the largest, youngest, and second fastest growing minority population in the United States. While making up about 20 percent of our country's population, Latinos comprise 26 percent of prekindergarten through grade 12 enrollment. Latino students are going to college more than ever before, but they still face lower educational outcomes, including lower grades, lower scores on standardized tests, and higher dropout rates.

As a Senator representing one of the most diverse States in the country, I am proud to work with my colleagues to ensure the American dream is a reality for every student.

I want to thank Congressman JOAQUIN CASTRO for introducing this bill with me, and I hope our colleagues will join us in support of this effort to empower Latino youth.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 2815. A bill to provide for a wage differential program to support new nursing school faculty members; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam 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. 2815

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 "Nurse Faculty Shortage Reduction Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. NURSE FACULTY GRANT PROGRAM.

Section 846A of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 296n-1) is amended—

(1) in the section heading, by adding "AND NURSING FACULTY GRANT PROGRAM" after "LOAN PROGRAM";

(2) by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

"(a) IN GENERAL.—To increase the number of qualified nursing faculty, the Secretary, acting through the Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration, may—

"(1) enter into an agreement with any accredited school of nursing for the establishment and operation of a student loan fund in accordance with subsection (b); and

"(2) award nurse faculty grants in accordance with subsection (c).";

(3) in subsection (b)—

(A) by redesignating clauses (A) through (D) of paragraph (2) as clauses (i) through (iv), respectively, and adjusting the margins accordingly;

(B) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (5) as subparagraphs (A) through (E), respectively, and adjusting the margins accordingly;

(C) in subparagraph (C), by striking “subsection (c)” and inserting “paragraph (2)”;

(D) by striking “(b) AGREEMENTS—Each agreement entered into under subsection (a) shall—” and inserting the following:

“(b) SCHOOL OF NURSING STUDENT LOAN FUND.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Each agreement entered into under subsection (a)(1) shall—”

(4) in subsection (c)—

(A) by striking “subsection (a)” each place it appears and inserting “subsection (a)(1)”;

(B) in paragraph (3), by redesignating subparagraphs (A) and (B) as clauses (i) and (ii), respectively, and adjusting the margins accordingly;

(C) in paragraph (6), by redesignating subparagraphs (A) and (B) as clauses (i) and (ii), respectively, and adjusting the margins accordingly; and

(D) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (6) as subparagraphs (A) through (F), respectively, and adjusting the margins accordingly; and

(E) in subparagraph (F)(ii), as so redesignated, by striking “subsection (e)” and inserting “paragraph (4)”;

(5) in subsection (e), by striking “subsection (c)(6)(B)” and inserting “paragraph (2)(F)(ii)”;

(6) by redesignating subsections (c) through (e) as paragraphs (2) through (4), respectively, and adjusting the margins accordingly; and

(7) by adding at the end the following:

“(c) NURSE FACULTY GRANT PROGRAM.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish and carry out a program described in subsection (a)(2) under which eligible schools of nursing receive a grant for purposes of supplementing the salaries to enhance recruitment and retention of nursing faculty members.

“(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—To be eligible to receive a grant under this subsection, an entity shall—

“(A) be a school of nursing; and

“(B) submit an application to the Secretary, at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require, including—

“(i)(I) to the extent such information is available to the school of nursing, the salary history of nursing faculty at such school who previously were nurses in clinical practice, for the most recent 3-year period ending on the date of application, adjusted for inflation as appropriate and broken down by credentials, experience, and levels of education of such nurses; or

“(II) if the information described in subclause (I) is not available, information on the average local salary of nurses in clinical practice, adjusted for inflation as appropriate and broken down by credentials, experience, and levels of education of the individual nurses, in accordance with such requirements as the Secretary may specify;

“(ii) an attestation of the average nursing faculty salary at the school of nursing during the most recent 3-year period prior to the date of application, adjusted for inflation, as appropriate, broken down by credentials, experience, and levels of education of such faculty members;

“(iii) the number of nursing faculty member vacancies at the entity at the time of application, and the entity’s projection of such vacancies over the ensuing 5-year period; and

“(iv) a description of the entity’s plans to identify funding sources to sustainably continue, after the 3-year grant period, the salary available to the eligible nursing faculty member pursuant to the program under this subsection during such grant program and to retain eligible nursing faculty members after the end of the grant period.

“(3) AWARDS.—A grant awarded under this subsection, with respect to supporting eligible nursing faculty members, shall—

“(A) be awarded to the school of nursing to supplement the salaries of eligible faculty members at the school of nursing, annually, for up to a 3-year period, in an amount equal to, for each eligible nursing faculty member at the eligible entity during the grant period, the difference between—

“(i) the average salary of nurses in clinical practice submitted under subclause (I) or (II) of paragraph (2)(B)(i); and

“(ii) the greater of—

“(I) the salary for the eligible nursing faculty member at the school of nursing; or

“(II) the average nursing faculty salary submitted under paragraph (2)(B)(ii) for faculty members with the same or similar credentials and level of education;

“(B) notwithstanding section 803(a), be used in its entirety to supplement the eligible faculty member’s salary; and

“(C) be conditioned upon the school of nursing maintaining, for each year in which the award is made as described in subparagraph (A), a salary for such faculty member at a level that is not less than the greater of the amount under subclause (I) or (II) of subparagraph (A)(ii).

“(4) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this subsection, the Secretary shall ensure the equitable geographic distribution of awards, and shall give priority to applications from schools of nursing that demonstrate—

“(A) the greatest need for such grant, which may be based upon the financial circumstances of the school of nursing, eligible nurse faculty members, the planned number of students to be trained or admitted off a wait list;

“(B) training or partnerships to serve vulnerable patient populations, such as through the location or activity of a school in a health professional shortage area;

“(C) recruitment and retention of faculty from underrepresented populations; or

“(D) other particular need for such grant, including public institutions of higher education that offer 4-year degrees but at which the predominant degree awarded is an associate degree.

“(5) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this subsection precludes a school of nursing or an eligible nursing faculty member receiving an award under this section from obtaining or receiving any other form of Federal support or funding.

“(6) REPORT.—Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of the Nurse Faculty Shortage Reduction Act of 2023, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Committee on Ways and Means and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives, a report that evaluates the program established under this subsection, including—

“(A) the impact of such program on recruitment and retention rates of nursing faculty, as available, and specifically for each faculty member participating in the program; and

“(B) recommendations and considerations for Congress on continuing the program under this section through the Medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act.

“(7) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

“(A) ELIGIBLE NURSING FACULTY MEMBER.—The term ‘eligible nursing faculty member’ means a nursing faculty member who—

“(i) was hired by a school of nursing within the 2-year period preceding the submission of an application under paragraph (2), or a prospective nursing faculty member;

“(ii) is currently employed at the school of nursing and who demonstrates the need for such support;

“(iii) previously worked as a nurse in clinical practice or as a nurse faculty member at another school of nursing; or

“(iv) may work on a part-time basis as a nursing faculty member, for whom such award amounts described in paragraph (3) shall be prorated relative to the amount of time participating in part-time teaching.

“(B) INFLATION.—The term ‘inflation’ means the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (all items; U.S. city average).

“(8) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—To carry out this subsection, there is authorized to be appropriated \$28,500,000 for each of fiscal year 2024 through 2028.”

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 342—CONGRATULATING THE PEOPLE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC ON THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND RECOGNIZING THEIR SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT TO UKRAINE AGAINST RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. RISCH, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Mr. RICKETTS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 342

Whereas, on January 8, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson called for the free “autonomous development” of the peoples of Austria-Hungary in the “Fourteen Points” address to a joint session of Congress, contributing to the support of an independent Czech and Slovak nation state;

Whereas the peoples of the present-day Czech Republic and Slovak Republic proclaimed independence on October 28, 1918, and October 30, 1918, respectively, forming the common state of the Republic of Czechoslovakia;

Whereas, on November 12, 1918, the United States and Czechoslovakia established formal diplomatic relations;

Whereas, in February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia seized power from the democratically elected government of Czechoslovakia;

Whereas, on August 20, 1968, 20 Soviet and Warsaw Pact military divisions invaded Czechoslovakia to crush the Prague Spring, a period of increased political and economic liberty following the appointment of Alexander Dubcek as First Secretary of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party;

Whereas, in the nonviolent Velvet Revolution of November 1989, the peoples of both nations overthrew 40 years of totalitarian communist rule and ended two decades of Soviet occupation;

Whereas, after the Velvet Revolution, the peoples of Czechoslovakia established vibrant, pluralistic, democratic political systems based on free-market economics, freedom of speech, a free press, free and fair elections, the rule of law, and respect for human rights—values embodied by Vaclav Havel, the first president of Czechoslovakia after the fall of communism in that country;

Whereas, on February 21, 1990, Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel delivered his historic address before the joint session of the United States Congress on Czechoslovakia’s path to democracy;

Whereas, on January 1, 1993, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic were formally created as independent nation states after the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia;

Whereas the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, owing to substantial support from the United States, joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on March 12, 1999, and March 29, 2004, respectively, and have made significant contributions to collective defense and the operations of NATO as well as international coalitions led by the United States around the world;

Whereas the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic continue to demonstrate their strong commitment to advancing democracy, free trade, respect for human rights, international peace and security, and the rules-based international order through their membership in the European Union and other international organizations;

Whereas the peoples of the United States, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic have forged a special relationship based on their shared historic ties, mutual respect, close cooperation, and the shared values of democracy, free trade, respect for human rights, international peace and security, and the rules-based international order;

Whereas, in 2023, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the National Guard State Partnership Program with the National Guards of Texas, Nebraska, and Indiana, a program which has contributed to military readiness and interoperability between the United States, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic;

Whereas the United States, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic stand united in support of the people and Government of Ukraine against Russia's unjustified and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine; and

Whereas the United States, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic are major contributors to political, humanitarian, economic, and military assistance to Ukraine: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) commends the peoples of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic for overthrowing totalitarian communist rule in 1989 and asserting their right to self-determination and affirming their allegiance to the values of democracy, free-market economics, and respect for human rights through the peaceful, nonviolent Velvet Revolution;

(2) celebrates the lasting contributions of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic to science, the arts, culture, music, literature, politics, trade, and international affairs;

(3) applauds the achievements of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic in building free, open, democratic, and prosperous societies over the past 30 years;

(4) congratulates the peoples of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic on the 30th anniversary of their independence and the 105th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic;

(5) congratulates the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic for their leadership in the European Union;

(6) expresses gratitude for the solidarity of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic as they stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine in their fight against Russia's brutal, unprovoked, and illegal invasion;

(7) reaffirms the historical and transnational ties that bind together the countries and peoples of the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, and the United States as freedom-loving peoples and members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization;

(8) recognizes the importance of the United States, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic partnership, as long-standing partners and as NATO allies, in addressing common threats and challenges, including in the areas of climate change, energy security, advanced technologies, cyber security, and resilience to disinformation and hybrid threats;

(9) applauds the commitment of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic to spend two percent of their gross domestic products on defense by 2024, an important commitment they have made as NATO allies; and

(10) expresses the United States commitment to further strengthen transatlantic ties and regional security through NATO, supports a faster pace of modernization of the Czech and Slovak armed forces in light of the clear threat to transatlantic peace and security posed by Russia's aggression in Ukraine, and reaffirms commitment to continue working to address new and emerging threats to our security, including the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, and other authoritarian actors.

SENATE RESOLUTION 343—SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF SEPTEMBER 17, 2023, AS “NATIONAL PHYSICIAN SUICIDE AWARENESS DAY” TO RAISE AWARENESS OF, AND PROMOTE A NATIONAL DISCUSSION ABOUT, PHYSICIAN SUICIDE AND TO REDUCE THE STIGMA OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Ms. STABENOW (for herself, Mr. KAINE, and Mr. REED) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

Whereas physicians work under intense pressure and are exposed to trauma on the job;

Whereas the risk of suicide within the medical profession is among the highest rates of any occupation;

Whereas each year in the United States roughly 300 to 400 physicians die by suicide;

Whereas the suicide rate—

(1) among male physicians is 1.41 times higher than the general male population; and

(2) among female physicians is even more pronounced, being 2.27 times higher than the general female population;

Whereas difficult working conditions, burdensome administrative tasks, long hours, grief over losing patients, and watching the families of patients suffer add a layer of extreme stress for many frontline workers;

Whereas mental health and physical health are equally important components of overall health;

Whereas there are structural barriers in place that discourage self-care and mental health help-seeking behaviors among physicians; and

Whereas a day of public awareness and education campaigns is held on September 17 each year to shine a light on the tragedy of physician suicide: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goal of National Physician Suicide Awareness Day to bring national attention to the mental health crisis affecting physicians in the United States;

(2) dedicates a day of reflection to honor the memory of physicians who have died by suicide;

(3) recognizes the need for greater research into understanding and addressing the issues surrounding physician suicide, including the barriers to treatment, help-seeking behav-

iors to address burnout, and mental care options to prevent physician suicide; and

(4) encourages the President to issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe National Physician Suicide Awareness Day with appropriate awareness and educational activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 344—URGING ALL MEMBERS OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION TO SPEND A MINIMUM OF 2 PERCENT OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT ON DEFENSE

Mr. KENNEDY (for himself and Mr. MANCHIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 344

Whereas, in 2006, member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (commonly known as “NATO”) first agreed to spend 2 percent of gross domestic product on defense;

Whereas, in 2014 at the NATO Summit in Wales, all member countries once again committed to maintain or move toward meeting the 2-percent defense spending minimum within 10 years;

Whereas, by 2022, only 11 member countries met the 2-percent minimum, including the United States and the United Kingdom, which were the only 2 major economies;

Whereas many member countries issued statements pledging to meet the 2-percent minimum following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, yet many member countries are projected to not reach the minimum until as late as 2035; and

Whereas, despite increased spending by some member countries, the United States, which accounts for more than 50 percent of the combined gross domestic product of NATO, ultimately pays 70 percent of the combined defense expenditures of NATO: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) agrees that the lack of sufficient progress towards 2-percent gross domestic product defense spending by member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (commonly known as “NATO”) is politically and economically unsustainable;

(2) views the failure of many of United States allies, including some of the largest member countries of NATO, to meet the 2-percent defense spending minimum has the potential—

(A) to undermine support for NATO by the people of the United States;

(B) to severely limit the ability of countries in Europe to contribute to a shared interest in defending against the Russian Federation; and

(C) to become a source of long-term instability in Europe and frustration for taxpayers in the United States;

(3) commends member countries, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, whose individual contributions constitute 10 percent or more of the NATO direct funding and programs budget;

(4) commends member countries that have contributed significant weapons and equipment at substantial individual cost in support of Ukraine against the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and the morally reprehensible destruction of civilian lives and infrastructure by the Russian Federation;

(5) commends member countries, such as Greece, the United Kingdom, Finland, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia, that have taken strides to either meet or exceed the spending commitment; and