

United States, including by developing disabling or fatal illnesses;

Whereas the Senate recognized the contributions, services, and sacrifices that those patriotic men and women made for the defense of the United States in—

(1) Senate Resolution 151, 111th Congress, agreed to May 20, 2009;

(2) Senate Resolution 653, 111th Congress, agreed to September 28, 2010;

(3) Senate Resolution 275, 112th Congress, agreed to September 26, 2011;

(4) Senate Resolution 519, 112th Congress, agreed to August 1, 2012;

(5) Senate Resolution 164, 113th Congress, agreed to September 18, 2013;

(6) Senate Resolution 417, 113th Congress, agreed to July 9, 2014;

(7) Senate Resolution 213, 114th Congress, agreed to September 25, 2015;

(8) Senate Resolution 560, 114th Congress, agreed to November 16, 2016;

(9) Senate Resolution 314, 115th Congress, agreed to October 30, 2017;

(10) Senate Resolution 682, 115th Congress, agreed to October 11, 2018;

(11) Senate Resolution 377, 116th Congress, agreed to October 30, 2019;

(12) Senate Resolution 741, 116th Congress, agreed to September 30, 2020;

(13) Senate Resolution 438, 117th Congress, agreed to February 25, 2022; and

(14) Senate Resolution 785, 117th Congress, agreed to December 22, 2022; and

Whereas those patriotic men and women deserve to be recognized for the contributions, services, and sacrifices they made for the defense of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates October 30, 2023, as a national day of remembrance for the workers of the nuclear weapons program of the United States, including the uranium miners, millers, and haulers, plutonium processors, and onsite participants at atmospheric nuclear weapons tests; and

(2) encourages the people of the United States to support and participate in appropriate ceremonies, programs, and other activities to commemorate October 30, 2023, as a national day of remembrance for past and present workers of the nuclear weapons program of the United States.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 1362. Mr. MERKLEY proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 126, recognizing the vital importance of the Mekong River to Southeast Asia and the role of the Mekong-United States Partnership in supporting the prosperity of the region.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 1362. Mr. MERKLEY proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 126, recognizing the vital importance of the Mekong River to Southeast Asia and the role of the Mekong-United States Partnership in supporting the prosperity of the region; as follows:

Beginning on page 12, line 20, strike “to support” and all that follows through “to contribute to” on page 13, line 3, and insert “to encourage”.

Beginning on page 13, strike line 23 and all that follows through page 14, line 2.

On page 15, line 1, strike “to support” and insert “to encourage”.

In paragraph (2), redesignate subparagraphs (D) through (Q) as subparagraphs (C) through (P), respectively.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 340

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 340) to impose sanctions with respect to foreign support for terrorist organizations, including Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Mr. MERKLEY. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME—H.R. 3774 and H.R. 6126

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I understand there are two bills at the desk, and I ask for their first reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the first time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3774) to impose additional sanctions with respect to the importation or facilitation of the importation of petroleum products from Iran, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 6126) making emergency supplemental appropriations to respond to the attacks in Israel for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes.

Mr. MERKLEY. I now ask for a second reading, and in order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The bills will receive their second reading on the next legislative day.

READ ACT REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2023

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration of S. 41 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title. The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 41) to reauthorize the READ Act.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MERKLEY. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

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

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. MERKLEY. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate on the bill, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 41) was passed, as follows:

S. 41

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 “READ Act Reauthorization Act of 2023”.

SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION.

Section 4(a) of the Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development Act (division A of Public Law 115-56; 22 U.S.C. 2151c note) is amended by striking “during the following five fiscal years” and inserting “during the following ten fiscal years”.

Mr. MERKLEY. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

RECOGNIZING THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF THE MEKONG RIVER TO SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE ROLE OF THE MEKONG-UNITED STATES PARTNERSHIP IN SUPPORTING THE PROSPERITY OF THE REGION

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 95, S. Res. 126.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 126) recognizing the vital importance of the Mekong River to Southeast Asia and the role of the Mekong-United States Partnership in supporting the prosperity of the region.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Affairs with an amendment to strike all after the resolving clause and insert the part printed in italic, and with an amendment to the preamble to strike the preamble and insert the part printed in italic, as follows:

S. RES. 126

【Whereas the Mekong River supports the livelihoods of approximately 60,000,000 people, making it the most important river in Southeast Asia and one of the most important rivers in the world;

【Whereas the Mekong-United States Partnership, comprising the United States, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, and the predecessor of that partnership, the Lower Mekong Initiative, have contributed greatly to the economic, social, and human resources development of the countries in the Mekong River Basin and the protection of the Mekong River;

【Whereas the United States has longstanding diplomatic relations with the countries in the Mekong River Basin, including a nearly 200-year-old relationship with treaty ally Thailand;

Whereas the development of the countries in the Mekong River Basin is critical for the unity, economic strength, and institutional development of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a strategic partner of the United States;

Whereas the Mekong River is increasingly imperiled by the threats from worsening and extreme changes in the environment, coupled with the construction of upstream dams that have altered the natural flow of the river and vital ecological processes supported by natural flow;

Whereas, since 2019, the flow of water in the Mekong River during the wet season has been abnormally low;

Whereas the Nuozhadu and Xiaowan Dams in China account for more than 50 percent of the water storage of all dams in the Mekong River Basin and can restrict up to 10 percent of the total wet season flow of the Mekong River, exacerbating drought conditions downstream;

Whereas the Mekong River Commission is an integral partner in ensuring the long-term health of the Mekong River;

Whereas the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy can be a leader in supporting river development and protection;

Whereas the Mekong Dam Monitor, funded partly by the Mekong-United States Partnership, has provided essential data and information about the impacts of hydropower dams along the Mekong River to the people and governments of the Mekong River Basin to allow them to prepare for irregular water flows and mitigate the economic and environmental impacts of those flows;

Whereas the Mekong River has become a hub for criminal elements to traffic in drugs, people, and wildlife, undermining the rule of law in the countries in the Mekong River Basin and impacting the world through the proliferation of illegal drugs and fauna that can cause spillover of zoonotic diseases;

Whereas the international community has committed to support the development of countries along the Mekong River through internationally recognized development goals;

Whereas the Friends of the Mekong, which includes the countries in the Mekong River Basin, the United States, Australia, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the Asian Development Bank, the Mekong River Commission Secretariat, and the World Bank, is committed to supporting the shared principles that have underpinned peace and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific for decades;

Whereas close coordination and collaboration with civil society groups throughout the Mekong River Basin is essential to the protection of the Mekong River;

Whereas, among the countries in the Mekong River Basin, there has been a negative trend toward the detention and detainment of civil society actors and journalists and an increase in violations of human rights;

Whereas the February 1, 2021, military coup in Burma was illegal and unjustified and has resulted in more than 2,000 deaths, more than 1,000,000 people displaced, and tens of thousands of people in detention, and continued violence threatens the stability of the entire region, especially those countries along the borders of Burma; and

Whereas diaspora communities from countries in the Mekong River Basin are a vital part of the United States and help build thriving people-to-people ties between those countries and the United States that lead to strong commercial, civil society, and cultural ties: Now, therefore, be it]

Whereas the Mekong River supports the livelihoods of approximately 60,000,000 people, mak-

ing it the most important river in Southeast Asia and one of the most important rivers in the world;

Whereas the Mekong-United States Partnership, comprising the United States, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, and the predecessor of that partnership, the Lower Mekong Initiative, have contributed greatly to the economic, social, and human resources development of the countries in the Mekong River Basin and the protection of the Mekong River;

Whereas the United States has longstanding diplomatic relations with the countries in the Mekong River Basin, including a nearly 200-year-old relationship with treaty ally Thailand;

Whereas the development of the countries in the Mekong River Basin is critical for the unity, economic strength, and institutional development of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a strategic partner of the United States;

Whereas the Mekong River continues to be affected by environmental changes, coupled with the construction of upstream dams that have altered the natural flow of the river and vital ecological processes supported by natural flow;

Whereas, since 2019, the flow of water in the Mekong River during the wet season has been abnormally low;

Whereas the Nuozhadu and Xiaowan Dams in China account for more than 50 percent of the water storage of all dams in the Mekong River Basin and can restrict up to 10 percent of the total wet season flow of the Mekong River, exacerbating drought conditions downstream;

Whereas the Mekong River Commission is an integral partner in ensuring the long-term health of the Mekong River;

Whereas the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy can be a leader in supporting river development and protection;

Whereas the Mekong Dam Monitor, funded partly by the Mekong-United States Partnership, has provided essential data and information about the impacts of hydropower dams along the Mekong River to the people and governments of the Mekong River Basin to allow them to prepare for irregular water flows and mitigate the economic and environmental impacts of those flows;

Whereas the Mekong River has become a hub for criminal elements to traffic in drugs, people, and wildlife, undermining the rule of law in the countries in the Mekong River Basin and impacting the world through the proliferation of illegal drugs and fauna that can cause spillover of zoonotic diseases;

Whereas the international community has committed to support the development of countries along the Mekong River through internationally recognized development goals;

Whereas the Friends of the Mekong, which includes the countries in the Mekong River Basin, the United States, Australia, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the Asian Development Bank, the Mekong River Commission Secretariat, and the World Bank, is committed to supporting the shared principles that have underpinned peace and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific for decades;

Whereas close coordination and collaboration with civil society groups throughout the Mekong River Basin is essential to the protection of the Mekong River;

Whereas, among the countries in the Mekong River Basin, there has been a negative trend toward the detention and detainment of civil society actors and journalists and an increase in violations of human rights;

Whereas the February 1, 2021, military coup in Burma was illegal and unjustified and has resulted in more than 2,000 deaths, more than 1,000,000 people displaced, and tens of thousands of people in detention, and continued violence threatens the stability of the entire region, especially those countries along the borders of Burma; and

Whereas diaspora communities from countries in the Mekong River Basin are a vital part of the United States and help build thriving people-to-people ties between those countries and the United States that lead to strong commercial, civil society, and cultural ties: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, [That the Senate—

(1) expresses sincere concern over the environmental, economic, and humanitarian threats to the Mekong River and the communities of the Mekong River and continued support to counter those threats; and

(2) declares it is the policy of the United States Government to—

(A) through the Mekong-United States Partnership and the Friends of the Mekong, promote the economic and environmental well-being of the people of Mainland Southeast Asia in the 5 countries through which the Mekong River flows, namely, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam;

(B) support a whole-of-government approach in providing and coordinating Federal aid and assistance throughout the Mekong River Basin under the Mekong-United States Partnership, including programmatic support provided by the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, and other Federal agencies;

(C) contribute to the development of quality infrastructure, the development of national electricity markets, cross-border energy trade, the facilitation of cross-border transport, clean energy acceleration and deployment, the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises, agriculture, transportation, the facilitation of trade and investment, strengthened subregional production linkages and supply chains, digital infrastructure, and the digital economy in the Mekong River Basin;

(D) promote engagement and buy-in of the United States private sector to support inclusive economic growth, resilience, global health, education, and long-term development in the region;

(E) leverage the expertise of the United States, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and other partners in high-quality infrastructure to support the economic development needs of the countries in the Mekong River Basin;

(F) support the development of quality infrastructure, including through projects financed by the United States International Development Finance Corporation, as appropriate, in the countries in the Mekong River Basin;

(G) encourage all members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to view the environmental, humanitarian, and economic threats to the Mekong River as a danger to the entire region;

(H) promote effective water use policies, natural resources management, and environmental conservation and protection, including—

(i) through support for a technically sound, well-coordinated, and consensus-based approach to managing the shared resources of the Mekong River Basin;

(ii) through support for environmental conservation, protection, and resilience in the Mekong subregion; and

(iii) by enhancing the capacity of countries in the Mekong River Basin in the sustainable conservation and management of natural resources, including fishery resources, for sustainable food security;

(I) continue the important work that provides vital data and monitoring to the people and Governments of the Mekong River;

(J) support the development of the capacity of the region to respond to a variety of threats, including countering transnational crime such as trafficking of drugs, wildlife, timber, and persons, and criminal activity

associated with illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and to improve health security, including emergency preparedness and response for pandemics and epidemics, cybersecurity, and disaster response and preparedness and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief;

[(K) promote the development of human capital through education, medical and public health partnerships, vocational training, youth empowerment, women's economic empowerment, gender equality, university cooperation, and educational and professional exchanges;

[(L) work together with countries in the Mekong River Basin to combat pollution, over fishing, natural resource degradation, and the effects that changes in the global climate systems are having on the Mekong River, and the communities that depend on the river, and to support the abilities of such communities to adapt and build resilience capacities of those countries;

[(M) encourage all countries in the Mekong River Basin to provide timely early warning for natural and unnatural operations of the river;

[(N) support freedom of expression in the countries in the Mekong River Basin through promoting independent journalism and the freedom to access information;

[(O) continue to call for the cessation of violence in Burma and support the return of Burma to a path of inclusive democracy, so that it can fully contribute to regional development;

[(P) prioritize the strengthening of people-to-people ties through United States exchange programs such as the Fulbright Program, the Peace Corps, the International Visitors Leadership Program, and the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Program, including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Academy at Fulbright University Vietnam; and

[(Q) recognize that strong democratic institutions, the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms, independent civil society, and free and fair elections are central to implementing the shared vision of a Mekong River region, and an Indo-Pacific region, that is free, open, secure, and prosperous.]

That the Senate—

(1) *expresses sincere concern over the environmental, economic, and humanitarian threats to the Mekong River and the communities of the Mekong River and continued support to counter those threats; and*

(2) *declares it is the policy of the United States Government—*

(A) *to, through the Mekong-United States Partnership and the Friends of the Mekong, promote the economic and environmental well-being of the people of Mainland Southeast Asia in the 5 countries through which the Mekong River flows, namely, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam;*

(B) *to support providing and coordinating Federal aid and assistance throughout the Mekong River Basin under the Mekong-United States Partnership, including programmatic support provided by the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, and other Federal agencies;*

(C) *to contribute to the development of quality infrastructure, national electricity markets, cross-border energy trade, cross-border transport, greater energy access, the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises, agriculture, transportation, the facilitation of trade and investment, strengthened subregional production linkages and supply chains, digital infrastructure, and the digital economy in the Mekong River Basin;*

(D) *to promote engagement and buy-in of the United States private sector to support inclusive*

economic growth, resilience, global health, education, and long-term development in the region;

(E) *to leverage the expertise of the United States, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and other partners in high-quality infrastructure to support the economic development needs of the countries in the Mekong River Basin;*

(F) *to support the development of quality infrastructure, including through projects financed by the United States International Development Finance Corporation, as appropriate, in the countries in the Mekong River Basin;*

(G) *to encourage all members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to view the environmental, humanitarian, and economic threats to the Mekong River as a danger to the entire region;*

(H) *to promote effective water use policies, natural resources management, and environmental conservation and protection, including—*

(i) *through support for a technically sound, well-coordinated, and consensus-based approach to managing the shared resources of the Mekong River Basin;*

(ii) *through support for environmental conservation, protection, and resilience in the Mekong subregion; and*

(iii) *by enhancing the capacity of countries in the Mekong River Basin on conservation and management of natural resources, including fishery resources, for long-term food security;*

(I) *to continue the important work that provides vital data and monitoring to the people and Governments of the Mekong River;*

(J) *to support the development of the capacity of the region to respond to a variety of threats, including countering transnational crime such as trafficking of drugs, wildlife, timber, and persons, and criminal activity associated with illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and to improve health security, including emergency preparedness and response for pandemics and epidemics, cybersecurity, and disaster response and preparedness and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief;*

(K) *to promote the development of human capital through education, medical and public health partnerships, vocational training, youth empowerment, women's economic empowerment, gender equality, university cooperation, and educational and professional exchanges;*

(L) *to work together with countries in the Mekong River Basin to combat pollution, over fishing, natural resource degradation, and the effects that environmental changes are having on the Mekong River, and the communities that depend on the river, and to support the abilities of such communities to adapt and build resilience capacities of those countries;*

(M) *to encourage all countries in the Mekong River Basin to provide timely early warning for natural and unnatural operations of the river;*

(N) *to support freedom of expression in the countries in the Mekong River Basin through promoting independent journalism and the freedom to access information;*

(O) *to continue to call for the cessation of violence in Burma and support the return of Burma to a path of inclusive democracy, so that it can fully contribute to regional development;*

(P) *to prioritize the strengthening of people-to-people ties through United States exchange programs such as the Fulbright Program, the Peace Corps, the International Visitors Leadership Program, and the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Program, including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Academy at Fulbright University Vietnam; and*

(Q) *to recognize that strong democratic institutions, the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms, independent civil society, and free and fair elections are central to implementing the shared vision of a Mekong River region, and an Indo-Pacific region, that is free, open, secure, and prosperous.*

Mr. MERKLEY. I ask unanimous consent that the Merkley amendment

at the desk to the committee-reported substitute amendment to the resolution be agreed to; the committee-reported substitute amendment to the resolution be agreed to; the resolution, as amended, be agreed to; the committee-reported substitute amendment to the preamble be agreed to; the preamble, as amended, be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The amendment (No. 1362) was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: To make technical amendments)

Beginning on page 12, line 20, strike “to support” and all that follows through “to contribute to” on page 13, line 3, and insert “to encourage”.

Beginning on page 13, strike line 23 and all that follows through page 14, line 2.

On page 15, line 1, strike “to support” and insert “to encourage”.

In paragraph (2), redesignate subparagraphs (D) through (Q) as subparagraphs (C) through (P), respectively.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 126), as amended, was agreed to.

The amendment to the preamble in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

The resolution, as amended, with its preamble, as amended, reads as follows:

S. RES. 126

Whereas the Mekong River supports the livelihoods of approximately 60,000,000 people, making it the most important river in Southeast Asia and one of the most important rivers in the world;

Whereas the Mekong-United States Partnership, comprising the United States, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, and the predecessor of that partnership, the Lower Mekong Initiative, have contributed greatly to the economic, social, and human resources development of the countries in the Mekong River Basin and the protection of the Mekong River;

Whereas the United States has longstanding diplomatic relations with the countries in the Mekong River Basin, including a nearly 200-year-old relationship with treaty ally Thailand;

Whereas the development of the countries in the Mekong River Basin is critical for the unity, economic strength, and institutional development of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a strategic partner of the United States;

Whereas the Mekong River continues to be affected by environmental changes, coupled with the construction of upstream dams that have altered the natural flow of the river and vital ecological processes supported by natural flow;

Whereas, since 2019, the flow of water in the Mekong River during the wet season has been abnormally low;

Whereas the Nuozhadu and Xiaowan Dams in China account for more than 50 percent of the water storage of all dams in the Mekong River Basin and can restrict up to 10 percent of the total wet season flow of the Mekong River, exacerbating drought conditions downstream;

Whereas the Mekong River Commission is an integral partner in ensuring the long-term health of the Mekong River;

Whereas the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy can be a leader in supporting river development and protection;

Whereas the Mekong Dam Monitor, funded partly by the Mekong-United States Partnership, has provided essential data and information about the impacts of hydropower dams along the Mekong River to the people and governments of the Mekong River Basin to allow them to prepare for irregular water flows and mitigate the economic and environmental impacts of those flows;

Whereas the Mekong River has become a hub for criminal elements to traffic in drugs, people, and wildlife, undermining the rule of law in the countries in the Mekong River Basin and impacting the world through the proliferation of illegal drugs and fauna that can cause spillover of zoonotic diseases;

Whereas the international community has committed to support the development of countries along the Mekong River through internationally recognized development goals;

Whereas the Friends of the Mekong, which includes the countries in the Mekong River Basin, the United States, Australia, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the Asian Development Bank, the Mekong River Commission Secretariat, and the World Bank, is committed to supporting the shared principles that have underpinned peace and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific for decades;

Whereas close coordination and collaboration with civil society groups throughout the Mekong River Basin is essential to the protection of the Mekong River;

Whereas, among the countries in the Mekong River Basin, there has been a negative trend toward the detention and detainment of civil society actors and journalists and an increase in violations of human rights;

Whereas the February 1, 2021, military coup in Burma was illegal and unjustified and has resulted in more than 2,000 deaths, more than 1,000,000 people displaced, and tens of thousands of people in detention, and continued violence threatens the stability of the entire region, especially those countries along the borders of Burma; and

Whereas diaspora communities from countries in the Mekong River Basin are a vital part of the United States and help build thriving people-to-people ties between those countries and the United States that lead to strong commercial, civil society, and cultural ties: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses sincere concern over the environmental, economic, and humanitarian threats to the Mekong River and the communities of the Mekong River and continued support to counter those threats; and

(2) declares it is the policy of the United States Government—

(A) to, through the Mekong-United States Partnership and the Friends of the Mekong, promote the economic and environmental well-being of the people of Mainland Southeast Asia in the 5 countries through which the Mekong River flows, namely, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam;

(B) to encourage the development of quality infrastructure, national electricity markets, cross-border energy trade, cross-border transport, greater energy access, the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises, agriculture, transportation, the facilitation of trade and investment, strengthened subregional production linkages and supply chains, digital infrastructure, and the digital economy in the Mekong River Basin;

(C) to promote engagement and buy-in of the United States private sector to support inclusive economic growth, resilience, global

health, education, and long-term development in the region;

(D) to leverage the expertise of the United States, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and other partners in high-quality infrastructure to support the economic development needs of the countries in the Mekong River Basin;

(E) to encourage all members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to view the environmental, humanitarian, and economic threats to the Mekong River as a danger to the entire region;

(F) to promote effective water use policies, natural resources management, and environmental conservation and protection, including—

(i) through support for a technically sound, well-coordinated, and consensus-based approach to managing the shared resources of the Mekong River Basin;

(ii) through support for environmental conservation, protection, and resilience in the Mekong subregion; and

(iii) by enhancing the capacity of countries in the Mekong River Basin on conservation and management of natural resources, including fishery resources, for long-term food security;

(G) to continue the important work that provides vital data and monitoring to the people and Governments of the Mekong River;

(H) to encourage the development of the capacity of the region to respond to a variety of threats, including countering transnational crime such as trafficking of drugs, wildlife, timber, and persons, and criminal activity associated with illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and to improve health security, including emergency preparedness and response for pandemics and epidemics, cybersecurity, and disaster response and preparedness and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief;

(I) to promote the development of human capital through education, medical and public health partnerships, vocational training, youth empowerment, women's economic empowerment, gender equality, university co-operation, and educational and professional exchanges;

(J) to work together with countries in the Mekong River Basin to combat pollution, over fishing, natural resource degradation, and the effects that environmental changes are having on the Mekong River, and the communities that depend on the river, and to support the abilities of such communities to adapt and build resilience capacities of those countries;

(K) to encourage all countries in the Mekong River Basin to provide timely early warning for natural and unnatural operations of the river;

(L) to support freedom of expression in the countries in the Mekong River Basin through promoting independent journalism and the freedom to access information;

(M) to continue to call for the cessation of violence in Burma and support the return of Burma to a path of inclusive democracy, so that it can fully contribute to regional development;

(N) to prioritize the strengthening of people-to-people ties through United States exchange programs such as the Fulbright Program, the Peace Corps, the International Visitors Leadership Program, and the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Program, including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Academy at Fulbright University Vietnam; and

(O) to recognize that strong democratic institutions, the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms, independent civil society, and free and fair elections are central to implementing the shared vision of a

Mekong River region, and an Indo-Pacific region, that is free, open, secure, and prosperous.

PERMITTING THE COLLECTION OF CLOTHING, TOYS, FOOD, AND HOUSEWARES DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON FOR CHARITABLE PURPOSES IN SENATE BUILDINGS

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 451, submitted earlier today.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 451) permitting the collection of clothing, toys, food, and housewares during the holiday season for charitable purposes in Senate buildings.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 451) was agreed to.

(The resolution is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR THE WORKERS OF THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to consideration of S. Res. 452, which was submitted earlier today.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 452) designating October 30, 2023, as a national day of remembrance for the workers of the nuclear weapons program of the United States.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 452) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE WEEK

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Committee