

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED
BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. TESTER, and Ms. LUMMIS):

S. 3711. A bill to provide tax relief with respect to certain wildfire relief payments; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I rise to introduce the Protect Innocent Victims Of Taxation After Fire Act. This legislation would provide tax relief for individuals and families who have received compensation for losses and damages suffered during a wildfire.

The Protect Innocent Victims Of Taxation After Fire Act would exclude from gross income certain qualified wildfire relief payments, including compensation for losses, expenses, or damages, such as compensation for additional living expenses, lost wages, personal injury, death, or emotional distress.

This legislation would provide much needed certainty and relief to victims by ensuring that any compensation they receive is not subject to Federal income tax and instead may be fully utilized for its intended purpose.

Pacific Gas & Electric, or PG&E, equipment was found to be responsible for three major fires in 2015, 2017, and 2018. In 2019, PG&E and victims of these wildfires reached a settlement that set up a Fire Victim Trust, funded with \$6.75 billion in cash and 477 million shares of PG&E stock, to compensate victims for losses and damages associated with these devastating wildfires.

Unfortunately, the taxability of funds received from the trust varies based on what type of loss is being claimed, which makes it difficult for recipients to determine what amount of their claims can be used to rebuild their lives or replace their losses. This financial and legal uncertainty is the last thing wildfire victims should be worried about in the aftermath of such tragedy.

This specific settlement is unfortunately no longer unique. Last Congress, I joined Senators Feinstein and HICKENLOOPER as well as our bipartisan House leads in introducing a version of this legislation designed to cover the Fire Victim Trust claimants. The bill introduced today expands protections to anyone receiving wildfire-related disaster aid payments. As the impacts of climate change continue to fuel the frequency and severity of wildfires across the Western United States, it is imperative that Congress enact this legislation and provide certainty to both past victims and those who may be impacted in the future.

I would like to thank Representatives LAMALFA and THOMPSON for leading this bipartisan legislation in the House, and I hope my colleagues will join us in supporting this bill to ensure wildfire victims receive full and proper compensation to help rebuild their lives and communities.

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. BUTLER, Mr. WELCH, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. WARREN, Mr. BENNET, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. KAINÉ, and Mr. BOOKER):

S. 3712. A bill to amend the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 to treat United States Citizenship and Immigration Services field offices as voter registration agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I rise to introduce the INVITE Act.

This legislation would require USCIS field offices to offer voter registration assistance at naturalization ceremonies to ensure that newly naturalized United States citizens are able to fully participate in our democratic process.

This legislation would designate USCIS field offices as voter registration agencies under the National Voter Registration Act and require them to support new citizens in registering to vote, including providing the registration application, offering assistance in completing the application, and returning the application to the State election official or agency.

It would significantly expand the agency's voter registration efforts to encompass all new United States citizens, not just those naturalized through USCIS administrative ceremonies.

USCIS policy currently only requires the agency to ensure that voter registration forms are distributed to new United States citizens at their naturalization ceremonies—not returned to the appropriate State election agency—and also fails to reach new United States citizens who are naturalized at judicial ceremonies or without a formal ceremony.

During the recent midterm elections, just 61 percent of all naturalized citizens were registered to vote, compared to 70 percent of native-born Americans, due in part to distinct obstacles, such as language barriers, that new citizens face.

The National Voter Registration Act has proven to be an effective tool for voter registration, with departments of motor vehicles accounting for almost 40 million new voter registration applications from 2018 to 2022.

USCIS, like the other agencies designated under the National Voter Registration Act, interacts with a significant population of eligible but unregistered voters. In 2022, the agency naturalized more than 900,000 new U.S. citizens.

New United States citizens deserve to be supported as they exercise their right to political participation, as guaranteed by our Constitution.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 536—HONORING THE LIFE, BRAVERY, AND MEMORY OF SERGEANT ROSE IDA LUBIN

Mr. OSSOFF (for himself and Mr. WARNOCK) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 536

Whereas Rose Ida Lubin (referred to in this preamble as “Rose”) was born on December 1, 2002, in Atlanta, Georgia;

Whereas Rose grew up in Dunwoody, Georgia, attending Vanderlyn Elementary School, Peachtree Middle School, and Dunwoody High School;

Whereas Rose was a talented and dedicated performer, artist, writer, athlete, and the only student of her graduating class of 2021 with varsity letters in both wrestling and cheerleading;

Whereas, at 12 years of age in her bat mitzvah speech, Rose spoke of the obligation to “do something great for the world” and not simply “wait for the world to do something great”;

Whereas Rose's peers said they saw her as a steadfast leader—someone they trusted and relied on as they became adults;

Whereas, according to Rose's family, Rose consistently extended a welcoming hand to those who felt isolated or alone;

Whereas Rose's brother Alec described Rose as “the most free-spirited person I know”;

Whereas Rose's family and friends described that her sense of community, her drive to excel, and her want to do more for others carried her to Israel to make aliyah in 2021;

Whereas Rose demonstrated her bravery by becoming a soldier in Israel after making aliyah;

Whereas Rose joined the Israeli border police, Magav, and graduated at the top of her class;

Whereas Rose served in the Old City of Jerusalem;

Whereas Rose found an adopted family at Kibbutz Sa'ad;

Whereas, in the midst of the terrorist attacks on kibbutzim across Israel on October 7, 2023, Rose fought heroically to protect her neighbors;

Whereas it is reported that in part because of Rose's efforts, no life was lost at Kibbutz Sa'ad on October 7;

Whereas, after surviving and protecting others during the terrorist attack of October 7, Rose was killed in a knife attack while she stood guard in Jerusalem, and Rose passed away on November 6, 2023, from wounds sustained in the line of duty;

Whereas thousands gathered on November 9, 2023, at Mount Herzl National Cemetery to honor the life and legacy of Rose Ida Lubin of Atlanta, Georgia, who from her earliest years as an athlete, scholar, soldier, friend, sister, and beloved daughter, was dedicated to selfless service and self-improvement; and

Whereas Rose is survived by her parents, Robin and David, her stepmother, Stephanie, her brothers, Alec, Joseph, and Isaac, her sister, Lily, and her grandparents and step-grandparents: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) honors the life and legacy of Sergeant Rose Ida Lubin for her contributions to her community, the State of Georgia, and the United States, and for her service to our ally the State of Israel;

(2) extends its heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Sergeant Lubin; and

(3) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the family of Sergeant Lubin as a demonstration of the respect and admiration that the United States Senate has for her memory.

SENATE RESOLUTION 537—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE 1994 GENOCIDE IN RWANDA AS “THE GENOCIDE AGAINST THE TUTSI IN RWANDA”

Mr. ROUNDS submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 537

Whereas, in 2018, the United Nations General Assembly amended the title of the annual observance of the genocide in Rwanda on April 7 to be the “International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda”;

Whereas United States officials have noted publicly that the genocide in Rwanda was “intended to destroy Tutsi”;

Whereas, on April 7, 2023, Secretary of State Blinken stated, “The U.S. stands with Rwanda . . . in remembering the Tutsi victims of genocide. We also mourn the others who were murdered for their opposition to a genocidal regime.”;

Whereas the United States Integrated Country Strategy for Rwanda (approved March 14, 2022) refers to the “1994 genocide against the Tutsi ethnic group”;

Whereas Rwandan officials, in appropriately opposing genocide denial or revisionism, aptly note that any nomenclature that does not specifically use the phrase “genocide against the Tutsi” is “ambiguous” and conducive to genocide denial or revisionism;

Whereas the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum notes in its public educational materials on the “genocide in Rwanda” that the victims were “predominantly Tutsi” and that the goal of Hutu extremist leaders was for “Rwandan Tutsis to be exterminated”;

Whereas the United States-based non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch, which played a central role in documenting the genocide in Rwanda and in supporting international efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice, found that the “Tutsi were being targeted for elimination”;

Whereas European diplomats refer to the “genocide against the Tutsi” in public statements;

Whereas, starting in 2022, the Government of the United Kingdom has used the terminology “genocide against the Tutsi”; and

Whereas the United States is the only major country in the world to publicly reject the terminology “genocide against the Tutsi”: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the United States should recognize the 1994 genocide in Rwanda as “the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda”;

(2) the Secretary of State should publicly affirm that terminology; and

(3) other types of atrocities occurred alongside the genocide against the Tutsi, and the history of the genocide should clearly affirm the other experiences of mass violence against Rwandans during the same period, including the killings and other violence experienced by Hutus and the Indigenous Twa community, perpetrated by Hutu extremist militias.

SENATE RESOLUTION 538—COM-MENDING BLUE MOUNTAIN CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY FOR 150 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI AND THE UNITED STATES

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH (for herself and Mr. WICKER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 538

Whereas Blue Mountain Christian University began its first session as a women’s institution on September 12, 1873, with a four-member faculty offering a liberal arts curriculum to 50 students;

Whereas Blue Mountain Christian University was chartered as a college in 1877 and managed by the Lowrey family until 1920 when the Mississippi Baptist Convention assumed ownership;

Whereas, in 1956, the Mississippi Baptist Convention voted to add a coordinated academic program for men preparing for church-related vocations;

Whereas, in 2005, the Board of Trustees voted to make Blue Mountain Christian University a fully coeducational institution;

Whereas, on October 7, 2022, the Board of Trustees approved changing the name of the institution from Blue Mountain College to Blue Mountain Christian University;

Whereas Blue Mountain Christian University has grown from 50 students to host more than 600 students participating in nine programs of study, including establishing graduate programs in education in 2006, business administration in 2019, and kinesiology in 2023, as well as a School of Nursing in 2022;

Whereas Blue Mountain Christian University has played a significant role in meeting the needs of its constituents for 150 years by educating women in the 1870s following a devastating war, by educating ministers in the mid-1950s when bi-vocational pastors were unable to travel to pursue higher education, by converting to coeducational status in 2005 when the education of both men and women became expedient to enhance community advancement and service, and by establishing a nursing program in the 2020s to address a critical shortage of trained personnel in the medical field;

Whereas the inaugural Southern Literary Festival was established at Blue Mountain Christian University in 1937 to foster creative writing and to provide exposure to successful authors;

Whereas Blue Mountain Christian University is renowned for academic excellence in education and ministry, producing both excellent “teachers and preachers” in particular and outstanding graduates broadly who are all academically and spiritually prepared to assume places of leadership in their professions and in the faith community;

Whereas Blue Mountain Christian University was a pioneer in women’s college athletics on the state and national levels, first by joining the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women and later the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics;

Whereas the athletic program of the Blue Mountain Christian University Toppers is now composed of 18 men’s and women’s intercollegiate varsity athletic teams that represent Blue Mountain Christian University in the Southern States Athletic Conference;

Whereas Blue Mountain Christian University is dedicated to supporting the academic success of student athletes while striving for on-field success; and

Whereas hundreds of students of all races, creeds, backgrounds, and beliefs receive a world-class, Christ-centered education at

Blue Mountain Christian University: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) commends Blue Mountain Christian University for its 150 years of service to the State of Mississippi and the United States;

(2) recognizes Blue Mountain Christian University for its academic, faith-based, and athletic excellence; and

(3) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate transmit an enrolled copy of this resolution to—

(A) the President of Blue Mountain Christian University, Dr. Barbara Childers McMillin;

(B) the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs of Blue Mountain Christian University, Dr. Sharon Ball Enzor; and

(C) the Director of Intercollegiate Athletics of Blue Mountain Christian University, Mr. Will Lowrey.

SENATE RESOLUTION 539—SUPPORTING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES AND CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mr. CASEY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 539

Whereas Catholic schools in the United States are internationally acclaimed for their academic excellence and provide approximately 1,700,000 students with more than an exceptional scholastic education;

Whereas Catholic schools instill a broad, values-added education emphasizing the lifelong development of moral, intellectual, physical, and social values in young people in the United States;

Whereas Catholic schools serve the United States by providing a diverse student population from all regions of the United States and all socioeconomic backgrounds with a strong academic and moral foundation, including 29.4 percent of students from racial minority backgrounds, 18.8 percent from Hispanic heritage, and 20.8 percent from non-Catholic families, according to the 2023–2024 National Catholic Education Association survey of elementary and secondary Catholic schools in the United States;

Whereas Catholic schools are an affordable option for parents, particularly in underserved urban areas;

Whereas Catholic schools produce students who are strongly dedicated to their faith, values, families, and communities by providing an intellectually stimulating environment that promotes spiritual, character, and moral development;

Whereas Catholic schools are committed to community service, producing graduates who hold “helping others” among their core values;

Whereas the total Catholic school student enrollment for the 2023–2024 academic year is 1,700,000, and the student-teacher ratio is 10 to 1, according to the 2023–2024 National Catholic Education Association survey of elementary and secondary Catholic schools in the United States;

Whereas the Catholic high school graduation rate is 98.9 percent, with 85.2 percent of graduates attending 4-year colleges;

Whereas the week of January 28, 2024, to February 3, 2024, has been designated as “National Catholic Schools Week” by the National Catholic Educational Association and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops;