

Maine (Ms. SNOWE) was added as a co-sponsor of S. Res. 453, a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of "National Public Health Week".

AMENDMENT NO. 3486

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a co-sponsor of amendment No. 3486 proposed to H.R. 1586, an act to modernize the air traffic control system, improve the safety, reliability, and availability of transportation by air in the United States, provide for modernization of the air traffic control system, reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes.

#### STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. WEBB:

S. 3148. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the treatment of Department of Defense health coverage as minimal essential coverage; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, today I introduced a bill that speaks directly to the welfare of our military service members and their families. TRICARE, TRICARE for Life, and the non-appropriated fund health plans are the programs that provide health care for our men and women in uniform, their families, retirees, and other eligible individuals. These programs, as well as today's military veterans health care system, exceed the minimum essential coverage required by the health care reform bill passed yesterday by the House of Representatives.

I am pleased to offer a companion bill to one introduced last week by my good friend, House Armed Services Committee Chairman IKE SKELTON, that explicitly protects TRICARE and NAF health plans. Representative SKELTON's bill, which passed Saturday by a vote of 403 to 0, makes it perfectly clear that no TRICARE or NAF health plan beneficiary will be required to purchase additional coverage beyond what they already have.

My companion legislation to Chairman SKELTON's provides a similar reinsurance to our servicemembers and their families. It will amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 in a way that stipulates that Department of Defense TRICARE health-care coverage will be treated as minimal essential coverage under the health care reform bill when it is signed into law by the President.

There has been a great deal of confusion over the past year surrounding the future of TRICARE and other military health care programs. False allegations have been raised, for example, that the administration planned changes to TRICARE for Life that would jeopardize its future or substantially raise its cost for beneficiaries. It is important to set the record straight.

In my capacity as the chairman of the Personnel Subcommittee of the

Senate Committee on Armed Services, I am committed to protecting the health care coverage programs in place for the military today.

Supporting this bill will reassure our service members that the coverage provided by TRICARE and nonappropriated health plans is properly protected in law as meeting the requirements for individual health insurance mandated by the new health care reform bill. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

By Mr. BEGICH (for himself and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. 3150. A bill to increase the mileage reimbursement rate for members of the armed services during permanent change of station and to authorize the transportation of additional motor vehicles of members on change of permanent station to or from nonforeign areas outside the continental United States; to the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I rise to introduce a bill entitled the Service Members Permanent Change of Station Relief Act—or PCS Relief Act. I am proud to introduce this legislation and thank my cosponsor Senator PATTY MURRAY. This bill will provide our servicemembers and their families much-needed financial relief during these hard economic times.

Like most families, our servicemembers are pinching their pennies too. Unfortunately, often they incur many unnecessary financial burdens related to their service and their sacrifice. For instance, right now, our servicemembers with spouses and children are only reimbursed for shipping one vehicle to or from Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam during a permanent change of station. This means if they get directed to move to a military base in Alaska from Texas, or to Texas from Alaska, they must pay to transport a second car themselves, or they must sell their vehicle and purchase a new car at the next location. This can be a costly option.

However, many military families cannot afford to ship a second vehicle or purchase another car. Without a second vehicle, spouses and children who accompany a servicemember on a permanent change of station may be unable to hold a job, run daily errands, or otherwise participate in their new communities. Many States have large military bases, such as Joint Base Elmendorf and Fort Richardson in Alaska. With housing on one end and base services on another, some families cannot even get to the grocery store or take their children to a doctor in an emergency.

Colleagues, it is unacceptable that we put our military families in a position where they have to make a choice between the inability to meet daily needs and take care of their family in an emergency, or pay more than \$1,500 to ship a second vehicle. Under the PCS Relief Act, our military families will

be able to ship a second car to and from Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam to ease the hardships and alleviate needless costs.

To further alleviate needless costs, the legislation will increase the gas mileage reimbursement rate during a permanent change in station. Currently, when our personnel drive from one military base to the next on their government-directed move, they are reimbursed less than half the amount they get under temporary duty assignments. The temporary duty reimbursement rate reflects the true cost of operating a vehicle. The current PCS reimbursement rate of 16 cents per mile does not, creating yet another financial burden for servicemembers.

It doesn't make any sense that gas mileage reimbursement rates are different amounts for PCS and TDY. Our servicemembers get official orders to move. It is not optional.

They are both official business expenditures. We already ask so much of our servicemembers and their families. They are fighting two wars. They move at the military services' direction, relocating themselves and their families to new military bases every few years. It is unfair we are asking them to pay out of pocket on these government-directed moves, or experience unwarranted and pointless hardships due to financial constraints.

In these tough economic times, it is more important than ever that we show our support for our servicemembers and their families. Relieving stress and strain during a permanent change in station is the least we can do. I ask my colleagues to support the Service Members PCS Relief Act.

#### SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 463—RECOGNIZING THE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NOWRUZ, EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO IRANIAN-AMERICANS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY, AND WISHING IRANIAN-AMERICANS AND THE PEOPLE OF IRAN A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. WEBB, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. BYRD, Mr. BURRIS, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. HATCH, Mr. KAUFMAN, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. CARDIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

Whereas Nowruz marks the traditional Iranian New Year, which originated in ancient Persia, and dates back more than 3,000 years;

Whereas Nowruz, meaning a "New Day", occurs on the vernal equinox and celebrates the arrival of spring;

Whereas Nowruz symbolizes a time of renewal and community, harkens the departure from the trials and tribulations of the previous year, and brings hope for the New Year;