

Home ownership has always been part of the American Dream. It is everyone's responsibility to keep it from just being a dream for working families.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce, with Senator WYDEN, the Affordable Housing Barrier Removal Act of 1998. According to the National Association of Home Builders, housing compromises 12 percent of the economy of the United States and the housing construction and remodeling industries employ approximately 2 million people each year. However, housing costs continue to rise and housing affordability continues to be a challenge for many American families.

Unnecessary regulations contribute significantly to the costs of housing. Layers of excessive and unnecessary regulation imposed by all levels of government—federal, state, and local—can add 20 to 35 percent to the cost of a new home.

Mr. President, the removal of regulatory burdens is essential to increasing the home ownership rate in the United States. Home ownership is the cornerstone of family security, stability, and prosperity. Congress has the responsibility to do all that it can to encourage and promote policies that increase homeownership.

Mr. President, it is for these reasons that Senator WYDEN and I introduce the Barriers bill today. This bipartisan bill has three major goals. First, the bill require federal agencies to evaluate any new rule or regulations to determine if they have an impact on the cost of housing. Second, the bill will encourage states and localities to bring together all the parties involved in the production of housing and those who regulate them to discuss barriers and how to remove them. Third, the bill will remove outdated requirements in the Federal Housing Administration's single-family mortgage insurance program to make the program more efficient.

In addition to the major goals of the legislation, the Barriers bill will authorize the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to become more involved in comprehensive efforts to encourage barrier removal activities. As the federal entity that oversees our national housing policy, HUD must be actively involved in strategies and activities to remove regulatory burdens to produce more affordable housing.

Mr. President, while there is no doubt regulations are necessary to protect our workers and our environment, there must be a commonsense approach to relief from excessive regulatory burdens that impact other sectors of the economy. I look forward to the input from my other colleagues and others involved in the housing industry about this legislation. I believe it opens an important and timely dialogue, and I commend Senator WYDEN for the leadership he is showing on this issue.

By Mr. KENNEDY (for himself and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 1878. A bill to amend the Immigration Nationality Act to authorize a temporary increase in the number of skilled foreign workers admitted to the United States, to improve efforts to recruit United States workers in lieu of foreign workers, and to enforce labor conditions regarding non-immigrant aliens; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

THE HIGH-TECH IMMIGRATION AND U.S. WORKER PROTECTION ACT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I am honored to join Senator FEINSTEIN to introduce legislation to grant a temporary increase in immigration quotas for high tech jobs, while taking additional steps to ensure that more American workers are trained for these jobs.

For the next decade, high tech industries will create over a million new jobs in the United States. Some have called for a permanent increase in the quotas, to ensure that companies have the workers they need to survive in this highly competitive market.

The problem is obvious. A permanent increase would permanently deny these good jobs to American workers, and that's not acceptable. The labor market will adjust in time, as it always does, as more and more Americans enter this field. It would be a mistake to tilt the balance unfairly against them.

Our immigration laws should not undercut the ability of young Americans, downsized defense workers, and others to enter this dynamic field.

This week, the General Accounting Office sent a clear warning on this issue, saying that the job market studies used by the industry are flawed, and do not prove that significant worker shortage exists.

Our legislation will accomplish three goals:

First, it provides a temporary increase in immigration quotas from 65,000 to 90,000 visas a year for the next three years. This increase will enable U.S. companies to hire the workers they need now.

Second, we invest in training U.S. workers. Americans want these jobs, and they deserve the training needed to get them. Our bill proposes a modest \$250 application fee for each foreign worker sought under the immigration quota. The fee will raise approximately \$100 million each year over the next three years to fund training opportunities for Americans.

Third, our bill strengthens the enforcement of the immigration laws. It gives the Labor Department greater authority and resources to ensure that employers pay the proper wage and meet other standards in hiring foreign workers. We specifically make it illegal for employers to lay off American workers and hire foreign workers to replace them. In other words, employers should hire at home first in obtaining new workers, before importing them from abroad.

We believe these steps meet the immediate needs of this important industry, while preserving the priority we own our own workers, and we urge Congress to enact them.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that additional material be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

KENNEDY-FEINSTEIN HIGH-TECH IMMIGRATION AND UNITED STATES WORKER PROTECTION ACT

Temporarily increases 65,000-visa immigration quota of temporary foreign professional and skilled workers ("H-1B visas").

FY 98-2000: 90,000 visas.

After FY2000, return to 65,000 visas annually.

Creates \$100 million training program funded through \$250 employer user fee.

\$90 million for loans to workers to obtain training.

\$10 million to local "regional skills alliances" to identify local labor market needs and develop strategies.

Enhances Accountability and Program Integrity.

Authority to investigate: Provides Labor Department independent ability to enforce labor laws against those who break the law instead of waiting for a complaint. Provides \$5 million for this purpose.

Requires attestation that companies will not lay off American workers: Bars employers from laying off U.S. workers and bringing in replacement foreign workers.

Requires attestation that companies will recruit at home first: Requires local recruitment efforts before employers can obtain foreign workers under the program.

Expedited process: Retains requirement that Labor Department process employer applications within 7 days to ensure that new requirements pose no additional delay.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 89

At the request of Ms. SNOWE, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. ROBB) was added as a cosponsor of S. 89, a bill to prohibit discrimination against individuals and their family members on the basis of genetic information, or a request for genetic services.

S. 153

At the request of Mr. MOYNIHAN, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. GRAMM) was added as a cosponsor of S. 153, a bill to amend the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 to allow institutions of higher education to offer faculty members who are serving under an arrangement providing for unlimited tenure, benefits on voluntary retirement that are reduced or eliminated on the basis of age, and for other purposes.

S. 1260

At the request of Mr. GRAMM, the names of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BOND) and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. FRIST) were added as cosponsors of S. 1260, a bill to amend the Securities Act of 1933 and the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to limit the conduct of securities class actions under State law, and for other purposes.

S. 1643

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. HOLLINGS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1643, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to delay for one year implementation of the per beneficiary limits under the interim payment system to home health agencies and to provide for a later base year for the purposes of calculating new payment rates under the system.

S. 1710

At the request of Mr. COCHRAN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was withdrawn as a cosponsor of S. 1710, a bill to provide for the correction of retirement coverage errors under chapters 83 and 84 of title 5, United States Code.

S. 1802

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1802, a bill to authorize appropriations for the Surface Transportation Board for fiscal years 1999, 2000, and 2001.

SENATE RESOLUTION 188

At the request of Mr. MOYNIHAN, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CONRAD) was added as a cosponsor of Senate Resolution 188, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding Israeli membership in a United Nations regional group.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET

MURRAY AMENDMENT NO. 2165

Mrs. MURRAY proposed an amendment to the concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 86) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal years 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003 and revising the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 1998; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR CLASS SIZE REDUCTION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In the Senate, revenue and spending aggregates and other appropriate budgetary levels and limits may be adjusted and allocations may be revised for legislation to reduce class size for students, especially in the early grades, provided that, to the extent that this concurrent resolution on the budget does not include the costs of that legislation, the enactment of that legislation will not increase (by virtue of either contemporaneous or previously-passed deficit reduction) the deficit in this resolution for—

- (1) fiscal year 1999;
- (2) the period of fiscal years 1999 through 2003; or
- (3) the period of fiscal years 2004 through 2009.

(b) REVISED ALLOCATIONS.—

(1) ADJUSTMENTS FOR LEGISLATION.—Upon the consideration of legislation pursuant to subsection (a), the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may file

with the Senate appropriately-revised allocations under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and revised functional levels and aggregates to carry out this section. These revised allocations, functional levels, and aggregates shall be considered for the purposes of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 as allocations, functional levels, and aggregates contained in this resolution.

(2) ADJUSTMENTS FOR AMENDMENTS.—If the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate submits an adjustment under this section for legislation in furtherance of the purpose described in subsection (a), upon the offering of an amendment to that legislation that would necessitate such submission, the Chairman shall submit to the Senate appropriately-revised allocations under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and revised functional levels and aggregates to carry out this section. These revised allocations, functional levels, and aggregates shall be considered for the purposes of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 as allocations, functional levels, and aggregates contained in this resolution.

(c) REPORTING REVISED ALLOCATIONS.—The appropriate committees shall report appropriately-revised allocations pursuant to section 302(b) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 to carry out this section.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

MEXICO DRUG DECERTIFICATION

• Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I voted yesterday against the legislation to disapprove the certification of Mexico as cooperating with U.S. counter-narcotics efforts. Given the level of attention that has been paid recently to continuing problems with Mexican anti-drug efforts, I want to make clear the reasons for my vote.

I am under no illusions about Mexican performance in combating drug trafficking and corruption. But the question we face is whether decertification would make the situation better or worse.

We have a long land border with Mexico. Our economies are closely linked. Our relationship with Mexico is much more diverse and significant than the single issue of drugs. We need Mexico's cooperation on drugs, and we need it on a host of other issues as well. If we were to decertify Mexico, we would kill all cooperation in the drug war and spoil the atmosphere in the rest of our relationship as well. We would be sending a message of a complete loss of confidence in Mexico. I do not believe that this is a message we really want to send.

Fighting the drug war is no simple task. A country's efforts cannot be reduced to a simple statement of "fully cooperating" with the United States or not. In this respect, the entire drug certification process is fatally flawed. While the senior leadership in Mexico is committed to fighting drugs, the task before them is enormous. Even the most strenuous efforts by a government could not guarantee 100 percent success against a multi-billion dollar industry. There is no black or white answer.

What matters most is that U.S. assistance to Mexico to help fight the

war on drugs serves U.S. interests. For as challenging as the situation is now, imagine how much worse it would be if there were no U.S. assistance to Mexico to combat drug trafficking at the source. We would be hurting our own interests as much as Mexico's if we were to decertify Mexico and dramatically reduce our counter-narcotics assistance.

Finally, we need to bear in mind that the only reason there is such a massive effort by the drug lords to supply drugs is because the United States provides such a massive demand. By all means, we must fight the supply chain by working together with our neighbors against drug production and trafficking. But we must also continue to take our share of the responsibility in the United States and fight the demand for drugs here at home.●

MEXICO DRUG DECERTIFICATION

• Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise in support of Senate Joint Resolution 42, the resolution of disapproval.

Much has already been said on this issue, and I will make my comments brief.

The United States Government has been working with the Government of Mexico for over a decade on fighting the flow of drugs.

Year after year, we have received promises, commitments, and declarations to reduce the flow of narcotics from Mexico. But we have not seen the concrete actions that are required to block the flow of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana into the United States.

For example, in 1997, Mexico agreed to facilitate the extradition of narcotics traffickers. In fact, no Mexican national has been extradited and surrendered to the United States as a result of that agreement.

In a recent hearing, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence heard from witnesses from the Justice Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Drug Enforcement Administration on the status of Mexican antidrug efforts.

While I cannot go into detail, their testimony was not at all optimistic and was, in fact, extremely disturbing to me.

Of greatest concern is the endemic corruption that runs rampant at all levels throughout those Mexican institutions tasked with combating narcotics trafficking.

The story on the front page of today's New York Times, describing corruption in the ranks of the Mexican military is, if accurate, especially disturbing, since the military is considered less corrupt than the Federal police force.

While Mexican officials often speak of efforts to prevent this corruption, no definitive steps have been taken to target the illicit drug monies that make this corruption possible. New laws are discussed, debated, in some cases even enacted, but they are not implemented.