

country illegally and were given this probationary card status through their Z card status.

I am not offering an amendment to take the earned-income tax credit away after they become legal permanent residents. So if they become a legal permanent resident, they would be entitled to have the earned-income tax credit.

Last year I offered an amendment that said that you would not get the earned-income tax credit until you became an actual citizen. That was voted down. Why? I still am not sure. I still don't think that was a good vote. But at least we ought not to give this credit to someone who was here illegally a few days ago, and now we give them some sort of probationary status and they immediately start getting paychecks from the Federal Government.

I don't think that is what this system is about. People would be given amnesty, they would be able to stay in the country legally, continue to work, and any family gets to stay with them. All of this is in this piece of legislation.

A lot of people think that is too generous, but that is what this legislation does. The next question is: What else do they obtain by virtue of having this legal status bestowed on them when they were illegal? They are not receiving the earned-income tax credit now. It is not something that is being taken away from them. It is a question of when are we going to bestow that additional benefit on people who were in our country illegally and how much of an incentive does this payment to them create for other people who want to come into our country illegally?

That is some of the confusion we have. In my view, the first thing you do to reduce the flow of illegal immigration into the country is to quit rewarding it by Federal largesse. That is the first thing. If you cannot go out and arrest everybody—and that is not practical—and we are not going to do these other things, at least don't give people extra financial benefits as a reward to coming into our country illegally.

I am very concerned about that. I think that it is not a little bitty matter because the—Madam President, I would ask that I be notified when there is 5 minutes remaining.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be notified.

Mr. SESSIONS. So what I would say to my colleagues is, this is going to cost a lot of money. You do not have to be trained in economics to understand that money comes from somebody. Who does the money come from? It comes from American workers and taxpayers, many of whom are having their wages depressed as a result of this huge flow of illegal labor. They are being asked to pay an earned-income tax credit check of \$1,800, on average, to individuals who were illegal a few months before and possibly still have not completed the full background

check. They still may not have completed the process to go to even a Z visa. Then they may be in a Z visa status for some time.

I know it is said it is not amnesty because they have to pay a fine. How much is the fine? \$1,000. They pay a \$1,000 fine. Well, they do not actually pay a \$1,000 fine. When they get this probationary status visa, they only pay \$200. They pay the rest of it on an installment. Nobody has stated and set out how they are going to pay it. Presumably, they can pay it for 8 years or more.

So a person here illegally under the legislation that is now before us, that person would obtain legal status in the country, be able to work, and would then be entitled to receive an earned-income tax credit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 5 minutes remaining.

Mr. SESSIONS. So they would receive that earned-income tax credit, which would be, on average, almost \$2,000, and they would pay only \$200. Now, that is a pretty good deal, if you can get it, it seems to me. It is not necessary. It is not necessary as a matter of law, and it is not necessary as a matter of morality. It is certainly contrary to sound principles of Government. We should not do that.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment. It is an amendment that would impact our Treasury by perhaps, according to the Congressional Budget Office, \$10 billion in the next 10 years—\$10 billion. So it is quite a sizable chunk.

Madam President, I see my friend, Senator LIEBERMAN is here. I yield the remainder of the time I have left to him. How much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 3½ minutes.

The Senator from Connecticut.

AMENDMENT NO. 1191

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Madam President, I thank my friend, Senator SESSIONS. I appreciate his kind gesture. That brings me back within 30 seconds of what I originally had. I appreciate that.

I am going to speak on amendment No. 1191, which is set down for a vote this evening. This is an amendment that would improve our Nation's treatment of asylum seekers, that is, people who come to our shores seeking refuge from persecution they have suffered in their home countries based on race, religion, nationality or political conviction.

As far as I know, this is the only amendment on the treatment of those seeking asylum that will be considered as part of this comprehensive immigration legislation. I offer this amendment because the Congressionally chartered Commission on International Religious Freedom has told us that our country, our Government, is failing in its historic duty to those "longing to breathe free" from the Statue of Liberty.

I believe, as the Commission outlined, we can address this serious chal-

lenge at very little expense, with no adverse affect on our Nation's security, and without impairing immigration enforcement operations. It is the right thing to do. It is consistent with our best values in our history. In fact, as you know, our Founding Fathers understood the Nation's role to be not just a haven for those seeking freedom but a haven for those seeking freedom from persecution.

Thomas Jefferson once likened the United States to a "New Canaan," the Biblical Canaan in mind, where victims of persecution, and I am quoting here, "will be received as brothers and secured against like oppressions by a participation in the right of self-government."

That is exactly what America has become. To the great benefit of this country, some of the greatest Americans in our history came here as refugees seeking asylum from persecution. Nobel Laureates Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann became neighbors in Princeton, NJ. Henry Kissinger and Madeline Albright came with their families to the United States, fleeing from the Nazis and Communists, respectively, and went on, of course, to become Secretaries of State.

If I might, on a point of personal privilege say, most special to me, on a day in 1949, then a child, my wife, Haddassah Freilich Lieberman, came here with her parents seeking asylum from Communist Czechoslovakia. This national duty to those fleeing persecution is emblazoned in a particular stanza on the Statue of Liberty that says:

Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
is the
imprisoned lightning,
And her name . . . Mother of Exiles.

Yet despite that lofty sentiment, too often today we are apparently turning asylum seekers away without the proper hearings guaranteed them by law, or confining them in prison conditions alongside convicted criminals while their cases are pending. That is what the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has reported to Congress. This group was established, I am proud to say, in 1998, pursuant to legislation I introduced along with then-Senator Nickles and still, fortunately, Senator SPECTER.

It was aimed at strengthening our Government advocacy on behalf of individuals around the world who were being persecuted for their faith. Congress in the year that we established the Commission on International Religious Freedom also expressed its concern that recently enacted expedited removal procedures might be causing our own Government to mistreat victims of oppression, religious oppression, who came to the United States seeking asylum.