

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. STABENOW). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EMERGENCY SENIOR CITIZENS RELIEF ACT

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, for more than three decades, seniors have relied on a COLA in their Social Security benefits to keep up with their increased expenses. Tomorrow it is expected that the Social Security Administration will announce that for the first time in 35 years, seniors will not be receiving a COLA. Based on the formula that by law they are obliged to use, they came to the conclusion that there is no inflation for seniors and, in fact, the prices for seniors have declined.

In my view, the current formulation for determining Social Security COLAs is wrong in terms of the needs of seniors because it does not accurately take into account their purchasing needs. In other words, if you are 19 years of age and you buy a laptop computer or an iPod or a new cell phone, the likelihood is that prices may well have gone down over the last year. On the other hand, most seniors are not buying iPods. What they are buying is prescription drugs and health care needs, and those costs have gone up.

I have long argued and when I was a Member of the House I introduced legislation with a whole lot of support to develop a separate index for seniors. Be that as it may, where we are right now is that the Social Security Administration will announce tomorrow a zero COLA.

I have some very good news. I have introduced legislation, and I and a number of us have urged the President to be cognizant of the fact that in the midst of this terrible economic recession, we just cannot turn our back on seniors. Many seniors are not only paying increased costs for prescription drugs and for their health care needs, they have seen a decline in their pensions. They have seen a significant decline, in many cases, in the value of their homes. Some have lost their pensions. Basically, we cannot say to them right now that we are not going to reach out and try to help you in whatever way we can.

I am very happy to announce that just this afternoon, President Obama will be supporting support for senior citizens. He will be supporting a \$250 payment to disabled veterans and those people who are on Social Security, some 50 million Americans in all. I applaud the President for not turning his back on seniors.

In his announcement, the President says:

Even as we seek to bring about recovery, we must act on behalf of those hardest hit by this recession. That is why I am announcing my support for an additional \$250 in emergency recovery assistance to seniors, vet-

erans, and people with disabilities to help them make it through these difficult times. These payments will provide aid to more than 50 million people in the coming year, relief that will not only make a difference for them, but for our economy as a whole, complementing the tax cuts we've provided working families and small businesses through the Recovery Act.

That is the statement President Obama is about to release. I thank the President for his support.

Obviously, the ball now comes to our court, and we have to move it forward. I think that in these hard times, when so many seniors are worried about how they are going to pay for their medicine, how they are going to pay for their health care, how they are going to pay to heat their homes in the wintertime, how they are going to take care of other basic needs, it is absolutely imperative we not forget about them.

I applaud the President for his action, and I look forward to working with Members of Congress to pass this legislation as soon as possible.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KAUFMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. KAUFMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

IN PRAISE OF ZALMAI AZMI

Mr. KAUFMAN. Madam President, I rise once again to recognize the service of one of America's great Federal employees.

This Monday, Americans across the country marked Columbus Day. It is a day that holds different meanings for different communities. I had such a meaningful experience attending the Columbus Day Mass and breakfast at St. Anthony's of Padua in Wilmington. I know in the Italian-American community, Columbus Day is a vibrant cultural celebration. But Columbus Day, above all, reminds us all that America is a patchwork; that we are—in the words etched on the wall behind you, Madam President—one Nation from many. This has always been a source of great strength for our country.

This is as true for our Federal workforce as it is for America as a whole. So many of our outstanding civil servants were not born in the United States. Some came as students and found in America jobs and a new home. Others came as infants, carried onto airplanes in the arms of loving parents seeking a new beginning for their families. Some traveled halfway around the world driven by the dream of a better life. Others braved the short but perilous journey over turbulent waves fueled only by the hope of freedom on our

shores. The diversity of our Nation is reflected in the diversity of those who choose to serve it.

The Federal employee I am recognizing this week has had a distinguished career in the Department of Justice, both in the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys and at the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Zalmai Azmi was 14 years old when he fled with his family from Afghanistan. He arrived in the United States speaking very little English, and he became fluent while in high school. Zalmai, wishing to give back to the Nation which gave him refuge, eventually joined the Marine Corps. He served in the corps for 7 years as a communications and intelligence specialist, and he also trained in special operations. While in the Marines, Zalmai studied computer science, and he later obtained a bachelor's degree in the field from the American University and a master's from George Washington University.

In the 1990s, Zalmai continued his Federal career by moving from the military into the civil service. He was working as chief information officer for the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys when the September 11 attacks occurred. Zalmai helped implement the Justice Department's continuity of operations emergency plan, and by September 12, he was at Ground Zero in New York setting up departmental field offices.

Just weeks after the attacks, he volunteered to be dropped into Afghanistan as part of a Marines special operations team. In the 2 years that followed, Zalmai, who is fluent in Dari, Farsi, and Pashto, served two tours of duty in Afghanistan. While at home, he was detailed to the CIA's Counterterrorism Center.

In 2004, FBI Director Robert Mueller appointed him as the Bureau's Chief Information Officer. In that role, Zalmai led the effort to revamp the FBI's virtual case file system and helped transform its IT infrastructure to meet the needs of a post-9/11 environment.

He was honored with the prestigious Arthur S. Fleming Award for Applied Science and Technology in 2002, which is presented annually to an outstanding public servant. Additionally, he won the Distinguished Presidential Rank Award.

Zalmai retired from the FBI late last year. His story, while unique, is reflective of the commitment to service and patriotism embodied by all of the immigrants who work in government and serve in our military. Just as America would not be as strong without our great Federal employees, that workforce would not be as vibrant or successful without those who, like Zalmai, came to this country from other lands.

I hope all my colleagues will join me in honoring his service, that of the men and women in the Department of Justice, and all immigrants who work in the Federal Government.

Madam President, I yield the floor.