

market democracies that can grow and prosper.

Mr. President, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright testified before the Foreign Relations Committee, she quoted an individual who appreciates what freedom means and that is not to be taken for granted. Czech President Vaclav Havel stated that "Even the costliest preventive security is cheaper than the cheapest war."

By admitting the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, NATO will be taking a giant step toward insuring that the freedoms won by Eastern and Central Europe at the end of this century will survive and prosper in the next. By expanding NATO, the West will ensure that the freedoms it preserved through the darkest days of World War II and the Communist threat of the 20th century will survive and prosper through the millennium.

In conclusion, NATO enlargement will enhance our national security and the stability of Europe. As my former Senate colleague and current Defense Secretary Bill Cohen stated, "a stable Europe is necessary to anchor America's worldwide presence."

The addition of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to NATO will mean a stronger NATO, and our approval of this enlargement will show that the United States is ready to do so in the 21st Century what it did for the latter half of this one: be a force, with other democracies, for the protection of freedom today and for the generations to come.

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

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

ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, as April draws to a close this week I want to remind my colleagues of Alcohol Awareness Month. I think the tireless efforts of many types of groups have raised our awareness about alcohol consumption. This includes efforts made by federal and state governments, citizen action groups, and the beverage alcohol industry itself. More than ever, Americans deplore the devastation of drunk driving. More than ever, Americans understand the consequences of failing to deal responsibly with alcoholic beverages.

Americans also need to understand that alcohol is alcohol. A standard serving of beer, wine, and distilled spirits contain the same amount of alcohol. Some fear that teaching alcohol equivalence would be paramount to promoting alcohol consumption. But I think it can actually have the opposite effect, promoting a rational approach to this topic and encouraging modera-

tion. The U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Transportation, Agriculture, and Education, as well as the Dietary Guidelines for Americans all define a drink as 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, and 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits. And the federal government is not alone in recognizing alcohol equivalence. Many leading organizations involved in this debate do as well.

Yet as recently as 1996, one survey found that only 39% of Americans understand that a 12 ounce can of beer, a 5 ounce glass of wine, and a mixed drink with 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits contain the same amount of alcohol. We owe it to Americans to do a better job of disseminating this information and providing basic facts on this topic. In recognition of Alcohol Awareness Month, it is the very least we can do.

WE THE PEOPLE—THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, on May 2-4, while their friends are celebrating the 124th running of the Kentucky Derby, some students from my home state will be answering questions about the Constitution, here in Washington, in a mock Congressional hearing. These students will be competing in the national finals of the We the People . . . The Citizen and the Constitution program. I am proud to announce that the class from Louisville Male High School will represent Kentucky. These young people have worked long and hard to reach the national finals, winning local competitions to get here.

I would like to recognize these students for their achievements. The members of this class representing Kentucky are Angela Adams, Perry Bacon, Katherine Breeding, Will Carle, Eric Coatley, Courtney Coffee, Brian Davis, Mary Fleming, Matt Gilbert, Amanda Holloway, Holly Jessie, Heath Lambert, Gwen Malone, Kristy Martin, Brian Palmer, Lauren Reynolds, Shane Skoner, LaVonda Willis, Bryan Wilson, Darreisha Wilson, Beth Wilson, Janelle Winfree, Treva Winlock, and Jodie Zeller.

I would also like to recognize their teacher, Mrs. Sandy Hoover, who clearly deserves a lot of the credit for the class' success. The district coordinator, Dianne Meredith, and the state coordinators, Deborah Williamson and Jennifer Van Hoose, also contributed their time and effort to help the class reach the national finals.

The We the People . . . The Citizen and the Constitution program is the most extensive educational program in the country developed specifically to educate young people about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The three-day national competition simulates a congressional hearing. Students are given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge while they evaluate, take, and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary constitutional issues. The simulated

congressional hearing consists of oral presentation by the students before panels of adult judges.

The We the People . . . program is run by the Center for Civic Education. The program has provided teaching materials to upper elementary, middle, and high schools for more than 75,000 teachers and 24 million students across the nation. Members of Congress and staff also contribute by discussing current constitutional issues with program participants.

This special program is designed to help students understand and appreciate the values and principles that unite us as Americans. The program also promotes the notion of citizenship—that the rights and benefits are tempered by the responsibilities of participation in effective government.

I wish these young people the best of luck testing their constitutional knowledge in the upcoming national finals of the We the People . . . program. I also congratulate them on reaching this level of competition.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, April 27, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,507,607,026,200.10 (Five trillion, five hundred seven billion, six hundred seven million, twenty-six thousand, two hundred dollars and ten cents).

Five years ago, April 27, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,234,899,000,000 (Four trillion, two hundred thirty-four billion, eight hundred ninety-nine million).

Ten years ago, April 27, 1988, the federal debt stood at \$2,500,616,000,000 (Two trillion, five hundred billion, six hundred sixteen million).

Fifteen years ago, April 27, 1983, the federal debt stood at \$1,247,506,000,000 (One trillion, two hundred forty-seven billion, five hundred six million).

Twenty-five years ago, April 27, 1973, the federal debt stood at \$456,773,000,000 (Four hundred fifty-six billion, seven hundred seventy-three million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,050,834,026,200.10 (Five trillion, fifty billion, eight hundred thirty-four million, twenty-six thousand, two hundred dollars and ten cents) during the past 25 years.

THE MURDER OF BISHOP JUAN JOSE GERARDI

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in one of the most outrageous, cold-blooded killings I can recall in a region where such despicable acts have been commonplace, Guatemalan Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi was murdered this past Sunday when his assailant crushed his skull with a cement block.

The way he died is horrifying enough. But what senators should also be aware of is that Bishop Gerardi had just completed an extraordinarily courageous investigation of the thousands of atrocities committed against Guatemala

citizens during thirty years of civil war. He undertook his inquiry after it became clear that the Guatemalan Clarification Commission would not seek to identify those responsible for even the worst atrocities. Bishop Gerardi's investigation, not surprisingly, attributed the overwhelming majority of human rights violations to the military and the death squads and paramilitary groups allied with them.

Mr. President, the United States bears more than a little responsibility for the slaughter in Guatemala that devastated that country in the years after the CIA-backed coup of 1954. Our government trained the Guatemalan armed forces, remained silent when they tortured and killed thousands of innocent people, withheld information about the atrocities, and justified our complicity as the necessary response to a guerrilla insurgency. In fact, during this period of political violence which is apparently not yet over, the principal victims were Guatemala's Mayan population of rural peasants who have been the target of discrimination and injustice for generations.

According to a statement by the Guatemalan Embassy, the Guatemalan Government "condemns and repudiates" this crime and has opened an investigation. Let us hope that this investigation can withstand the inevitable pressure from the forces who would intimidate anyone who seeks real justice in Guatemala. The Arzu Government deserves considerable credit for bringing the peace negotiations to a successful conclusion. But few weeks pass that I do not receive a report of a political crime in Guatemala, most of which go unsolved. Justice remains elusive for those who need it most.

How the Guatemalan government handles this investigation will either embolden or deter those who seek to undermine the peace accords, and, as the Ranking Member of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee I can say that as far as I am concerned it will also be important in determining our future assistance relationship with Guatemala.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Office laid before the Senate message from the President of the United States submitting one treaty and sundry nominations which were referred to Committee on Foreign Relations.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:40 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by

Ms. Goetz, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to the provisions of 22 U.S.C. 276h, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group: Mr. KOLBE, Chairman and Mr. GILMAN, Vice Chairman.

The message also announced that pursuant to the provision of 22 U.S.C. 276h, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House to the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group: Mr. HOUGHTON, Chairman.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second time by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. CHAFEE, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. REED, Mr. SANTORUM, Mr. TORRICELLI, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. DASCHLE, and Mr. SPECTER):

S. 1993. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to adjust the formula used to determine costs limits for home health agencies under medicare program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. COATS (for himself, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. COVERDELL, and Mr. SANTORUM):

S. 1994. A bill to assist States in providing individuals a credit against State income taxes or a comparable benefit for contributions to charitable organizations working to prevent or reduce poverty and to protect and encourage donations to charitable organizations; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. ABRAHAM (for himself, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. COATS, Mr. COVERDELL, Mr. HUTCHINSON, and Mr. SANTORUM):

S. 1995. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow the designation of renewal communities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. SANTORUM (for himself, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. COATS, Mr. COVERDELL, and Mr. HUTCHINSON):

S. 1996. A bill to provide flexibility to certain local educational agencies that develop voluntary public and private parental choice programs under title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

By Ms. MIKULSKI (for herself and Mr. FAIRCLOTH):

S. 1997. A bill to protect the right of a member of a health maintenance organization to receive continuing care at a facility selected by that member; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself, Mr. BENNETT, and Mr. BINGAMAN):

S. 1998. A bill to authorize an interpretive center and related visitor facilities within the Four Corners Monument Tribal Park, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mrs. HUTCHINSON (for herself, Mr. FAIRCLOTH, Mr. ASHCROFT, and Mr. MACK):

S. 1999. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to eliminate the marriage penalty by providing that the income tax rate bracket amounts, and the amount of the

standard deduction, for joint returns shall be twice the amounts applicable to unmarried individuals; to the Committee on Finance.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. CHAFEE, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. REED, Mr. SANTORUM, Mr. TORRICELLI, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. DASCHLE, and Mr. SPECTER):

S. 1993. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to adjust the formula used to determine costs limits for home health agencies under medicare program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

THE MEDICARE HOME HEALTH EQUITY ACT OF 1998

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, America's home health agencies provide invaluable services that have enabled a growing number of our most frail and vulnerable senior citizens to avoid hospitals and nursing homes and stay just where they want to be—in their own homes. Today, home health is the fastest growing component of Medicare spending, and the program grew at an astounding average annual rate of more than 25 percent from 1990 to 1997. As a consequence, the number of Medicare home health beneficiaries has more than doubled, and Medicare home health spending has soared from \$2.7 billion in 1989 to \$17.1 billion in 1996.

This rapid growth in home health spending understandably prompted Congress and the Health Care Financing Administration, as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, to initiate changes that were intended to make the program more cost-effective and efficient and protect it from fraud and abuse. However, in trying to get a handle on costs, we in Congress and the administration have unintentionally created problems that may restrict some elderly citizens' access to vitally needed home health care.

Critics have long pointed out that Medicare's cost-based payment method for home health care has inherent incentives for home care agencies to provide more services, which has driven up costs. Therefore, the Balanced Budget Act called for the implementation of a prospective payment system for home care by October 1, 1999. Until then, home health agencies will be paid according to what is known as an Interim Payment System.

Under the new IPS, home health agencies will be paid the lesser of: their actual costs; a per-visit cost limit; or a new blended agency-specific per beneficiary annual limit based 75 percent on an agency's own costs per beneficiary and 25 percent on the average cost per beneficiary for agencies in the same region. These costs are to be calculated from cost reports for reporting periods ending in 1994.

I spent some time going over the formula because it is important to understand what the importance of that very