

TRIBUTE TO THE SOLLEFTEA, SWEDEN/MADISON, MISSISSIPPI SISTER-CITY RELATIONSHIP

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the sister-city relationship between the City of Solleftea, Sweden and the City of Madison, Mississippi. This international partnership has provided opportunities for cultural and business exchanges, as well as providing Swedish and American citizens unique experiences to broaden cultural perspectives.

The Sister-City Program was inaugurated by United States President Dwight David Eisenhower in 1956. This business and cultural exchange was chartered to foster greater friendship and understanding between the people of the United States and other countries through the medium of direct personal contact. Since its inception, over 1,200 American state and local governments have joined with 2,100 foreign partners to create a network of international friendship.

The citizens of Solleftea and Madison have expressed their willingness and desire, through their respective councils, to become sister-cities and to adhere to the ideals set forth by President Eisenhower. These two cities also wish to encourage cultural exchanges that will lead to a lasting friendship between the communities.

The sister-cities agreement was signed by Solleftea and Madison on June 27, 1997 in Sweden. Since this time, three Swedish companies have opened or plan to open businesses in the City of Madison. Hagloff, Inc., Minitube and Logosol are three Swedish companies that should be commended for their efforts to further the spirit of the June 1997 compact.

The Solleftea and Madison friendship has served as a model for future sister-city partnerships. I commend the efforts of these two great cities and wish them continued success in the future.

AMTRAK

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I am concerned about Amtrak's future. Though Congress has worked to ensure its continued existence, the Administration has yet to fulfill its statutory responsibilities which are necessary if Amtrak is to have any hope of turning into a viable operation.

As my colleagues well know, the Senate has invested countless hours during the past several Congresses to enact legislation that would enable Amtrak to reinvent itself, both operationally and financially. After three long years, Congress achieved a bipartisan reform package that was signed into law by the President on December 2, 1997.

This package, the Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act, was touted as Amtrak's "last chance." It provided significant changes, allowing Amtrak to operate more like a business. Congress expected Amtrak to immediately

begin implementing the many reform provisions. Certain responsibilities concerning Amtrak's future were assumed by Amtrak's union and management employees, the American taxpayers, Congress and the Administration.

For their part, Amtrak's employees agreed to negotiate employee benefits just like other segments of industry in exchange for financial security. The taxpayers contributed considerably—\$2 billion for capital improvements in addition to the \$22 billion already given to Amtrak to date.

Congress fulfilled its part of the deal, too. The Congress appointed its members to the newly created Amtrak Reform Board. Further, the Senate recently adopted a provision in the budget resolution urging full funding for Amtrak to enable it to reach its goal of zero operating assistance by 2003.

Who is missing from this effort? Mr. President, I content it is the Administration.

In the past months, the Administration has missed numerous deadlines and issued contrary proposals.

First, the law requires the Department of Transportation (DOT) Inspector General to begin an independent audit of Amtrak's financial situation. The audit was supposed to begin within a month of enactment, which would have been this past January. The DOT Inspector General has worked to abide by the statute, but the Secretary of DOT has refused to allow the audit to go forward. DOT's refusal prompted both the House and Senate Appropriations Committee to provide specific funding to cover the audit's expense. DOT knows that funding is on its way, yet the Secretary has refused to permit the IG to begin the process.

Second, the law required the President to nominate a new 7-member Reform Board to replace Amtrak's current Board of Directors. Since the reform package required Amtrak to operate like a business. Congress and the Administration agreed that new leadership was imperative. After all, instilling a 'new culture' among Amtrak employees and management necessitated that changes start from the top.

The law requires the Reform Board to be in place by March 31, 1998—almost 1 month ago—yet we still have not received a single nomination from the President. Most troublesome is the fact that if the new Reform Board has not assumed the responsibilities of the Amtrak Board of Directors before July 1st, Amtrak's authorization lapses. I do not think the Administration would want this to happen.

Mr. President, in addition to the Administration's recent shortcomings, it has also failed to announce the names of individuals who will fill the Administration's three slots on the Amtrak Reform Council. Because the Council is expected to play a critical role in formulating passenger rail in the years ahead, I have encouraged the 8 members appointed by the Congress to

begin their work. I understand the first meeting of the Council should occur in early May.

The only action taken by the Administration thus far has been to propose a budget that underfunds Amtrak in fiscal year 1999. The Administration's budget submission seeks to take money away from capital expenditures and to use it to pay for Amtrak salaries and operating expenses. This diversion proposal is in direct violation of the statutory language in the law which established the capital funding subsidy.

Ms. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I share the Majority Leader's concerns about Amtrak. As the primary author of the Amtrak reform law, I am very concerned that Amtrak has yet to have the opportunity to avail itself of the statutory reforms we all worked so hard to provide. The Amtrak Reform Council positions are an essential element in the overall reform scheme.

Amtrak needs to make long-term plans and commitments. That action has not yet begun. I hope the Administration will take prompt action to fulfill its responsibilities and give Amtrak the opportunity to achieve what we all hope is possible—a fiscally sound and efficient national rail passenger system.

Mr. MCCAIN. My colleagues know all too well my frustrations with Amtrak. However, I worked in good faith with my colleagues and the Administration to move the Amtrak reform legislation through the legislative process. Therefore, I expected similar "good faith" to be applied in fulfilling the statutory provisions under the Act.

I find it unconscionable the Administration continues to obstruct the independent assessment. This is one of the most critical elements in the entire reform package. How can anyone determine if Amtrak is meeting its financial obligations if we don't have a baseline to start? What is it about Amtrak's finances the Administration is trying to keep covered up?

Equally troubling to me is the Administration's lack of regard for upholding the statute. A new Reform Board was to be in place nearly a month ago. These positions require Senate confirmation which necessitates hearings and review by the Commerce Committee. I have every intention to uphold our Committee's responsibilities. Yet, we have not received even ONE nomination from the President.

Worse still, the rumors we hear is that the Administration is considering reappointing current Board members. I have been very clear, that the Commerce Committee will not report favorably any Board hold-overs and I stand firm on that position. I would think even the Administration would acknowledge we didn't create a new Board only to reappoint the same members.

Why isn't the Administration interested in fixing Amtrak's problems while it is under their watch? I never cease to be amazed.

Mr. President, the Congress worked long and hard in a bipartisan fashion to give Amtrak one more opportunity to do what they keep telling us they can do given the chance. The President let Amtrak, Congress, and the taxpayers think Amtrak was being given that chance. Sadly, the Administrations subsequent lack of interest is quickly taking that chance away.

SENATOR BYRD RECEIVES CONGRESSIONAL AWARD'S LEADERSHIP AWARD

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, last night, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD was awarded the Congressional Award Program's highest honor, the Leadership Award. This award is given to someone who has exhibited extraordinary leadership in support of programs which benefit our Nation's youth and the Congressional Award Program. We all know Senator BYRD as a skilled legislator, master of the Senate's rules and procedures, award-winning historian of the United States Senate, a man of great honor and personal integrity, a fine example of true leadership, a colleague, and a friend. We may not be fully aware of his tireless efforts on behalf of the children of this country. The Leadership Award is presented each year to individuals who have displayed outstanding commitment to improving the lives of young Americans and who have provided critical support to the Congressional Award program in its efforts to make the Award a national opportunity for all of our young people.

Senator BYRD knows only too well the hardships many of our children face: plagued by poverty, challenged by a culture which all too often fails to glorify the values essential to a civil society, facing violence not present when we grew up, a world without the kinds of heroes that inspired Senator BYRD to personal achievement and a life of service to others. As he so clearly articulated last night at the Congressional Award's annual dinner and program, heroes fuel in us a desire for personal development. And Senator BYRD found out that he is a hero to many.

Grant Hill, NBA basketball star, talked of the great honor of competing against Michael Jordan, and the equally great honor of meeting Senator BYRD, "the Michael Jordan of the Senate." Mr. Hill was awarded the Horizon Award, which gives special recognition to individuals from the private sector who have contributed to expanding opportunities for young Americans through personal contributions to youth programs, and who have set exceptional examples for young people through their success in life.

Congress grants only two medals: The Congressional Medal of Honor and the Congressional Award. The Congressional Award was established by Congress through P.L. 96-114. Senator BYRD was a member of the first Congressional Award Joint Leadership Commission and helped set the stand-

ards for this bipartisan program which is available to young people aged 14-23. To earn an award, participants must set and achieve individually challenging goals in volunteer community service, personal development, physical fitness and expeditions.

Please join me in extending our congratulations to Senator BYRD for being the 1998 recipient of the Congressional Award's Leadership Award, and for receiving yet again another first: being named the "Michael Jordan of the Senate."

TRIBUTE TO SPEARFISH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FOR THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE 1998 "WE THE PEOPLE . . ." COMPETITION

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I want to commend an outstanding group of students from South Dakota who have participated in the We the People . . . The Citizen and The Constitution program across our state this year. The We the People . . . program is an annual nationwide competition sponsored by the Center for Civic Education.

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 We the People . . . program has provided curricular materials at upper elementary, middle and high school levels for more than 75,000 teachers and 24 million students nationwide. This program is designed to help students achieve a reasoned commitment to the fundamental values and principles that bind Americans together as a people. The program also fosters civic dispositions on traits of public and private character conducive to effective and responsible participation in politics and government.

Students from Marion High School, Harding County High School, Hot Springs High School, Rutland High School, and Spearfish High School showed a tremendous amount of talent and exhibited a great deal of diligent study in a state competition last month in Pierre, South Dakota. Students participated in simulated congressional hearings as the culminating state activity for the We the People . . . program. Each class, working in cooperative teams, prepared and presented statements before a panel of subject experts who acted as congressional committee members and posed challenging questions about the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and our democratic system. The format provided students an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of constitutional principles and their understanding of civic responsibility.

These teams had the support and guidance of their teacher and local advisors, which is essential in such a challenging competition. Curt Sage and Principal Mark Rockafellow from Marion High School, Paul Rystrom and Principal Allen Dvorak from Rutland

High School, Marty Wood and Principal Gary Peters from Hot Springs High School, and John Pfitzer and Principal Charles Maxon from Harding County High School are to be commended for their involvement and for providing an educational environment in their schools that encourages teachers and students alike to participate in this type of program.

The Spearfish High School team won the state competition and will be visiting Washington next week to compete in the national competition. The Spearfish team is well prepared for what will be an exciting and competitive final round here in Washington on May 2-4. The members of the Spearfish team representing South Dakota in the national finals are: Melissa Bauman, Tricia Beringer, Toni Bickford, Andy Binder, Pam Blair, Chelsea Collins, Christian Colaiacoro, Nicole Dana, Jason Delahoyde, Jacob Dell, Justin Huck, Lucas Humbracht, Sara Jensen, Brandy Lensegrav, Wade McDonald, Justin Nicholas, Eric Nies, Kirby Dana, Jason Schoental, Becky Stokes, Amy Sylvester, Mikayla Tetrault, Jonathon Watson, and James Williams. I am very proud of their accomplishments and wish them well in the national competition.

I would also like to recognize their teachers, Patrick Gainey and Tom Freece, for their tireless efforts over many months in working with these talented students. The district coordinator, Lennis Larson, also contributed a significant amount of time and effort in working with all South Dakota schools who participate in the program.

I commend all the South Dakotans Constitutional scholars who have participated and worked so hard. Our South Dakota student team from Spearfish is currently conducting research and preparing for the upcoming national competition. I wish the students and teacher the best of luck at the We the People . . . national finals, and I look forward to meeting them when they visit Capitol Hill and the Senate.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, April 29, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,512,958,788,432.21 (Five trillion, five hundred twelve billion, nine hundred fifty-eight million, seven hundred eighty-eight thousand, four hundred thirty-two dollars and twenty-one cents).

One year ago, April 29, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,348,145,000,000 (Five trillion, three hundred forty-eight billion, one hundred forty-five million).

Five years ago, April 29, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,237,171,000,000 (Four trillion, two hundred thirty-seven billion, one hundred seventy-one million).