us what we can say, or think—we should use the laws that are on the books to protect children, and assume that maybe somewhere, somehow, someplace parents ought to take responsibility instead of us always automatically passing a law to say what parents should or should not do.

Let me tell you what happens. When you start having all of this sudden censorship, well-meaning though it might be, it reaches too far.

We have left technological advancements, software barriers, access codes, increased enforcement of laws already on the books, and vigilant parenting unexplored as alternatives to overreaching Government regulation.

After a majority of my Senate colleagues rejected my position in June and incorporated a so-called Communications Decency Act in the telecommunications bill without hearings, without examination and without much thought, I still held out hope that they would proceed to learn something about the Internet, how it works, and its potential benefits for those who will be using it in the coming century. I was encouraged when the Speaker of the House agreed with me and remarked that the Senate's action was ''clearly a violation of free speech'' and ''very badly thought out.'' I, again, urge him to rejoin in the debate before it is too late.

We have already seen the chilling effect that even the prospect of this legislation has had on online service providers. Last week, America Online deleted the profile of a Vermonter who communicated with fellow breast cancer survivors online. Why?

They found in checking that this Vermonter had used the word ''breast.'' Nobody bothered to ask why. She is a survivor of breast cancer. She was using the Internet to have correspondence with other survivors of breast cancer to talk about concerns they might have—medical advances—a basic support group. But the censors looked in and so, because the word ''breast'' had been used, she was being stopped.

This is what we are opening ourselves up to. We should use the current laws already on the books, and we should ask parents to be a little more vigilant. Will some things get on the Internet that you, I, and other Members of the Senate might find objectionable? Of course, it will. But this objectionable material would be a tiny fraction of the vast materials available on the Internet. What we should protect is one of the greatest experiments we have seen in our age of the Internet where you have everything from the things you find most valuable to things you might find boring or repulsive.

We do not close down our telephone companies because somebody picks up the phone and calls somebody else and tells them a dirty joke, or reams them out in four-letter words. The behavior between the two may be reprehensible, and maybe they should discuss their personal relationship, but we do not close down the telephone company because that might happen.

Last June, I brought to the floor petitions from over 25,000 people who supported my proposal to study technological, voluntary and other ways to restrict access to objectionable online messages, before we lay the heavy hand of Government censorship onto the Internet.

This week, a number of organizations, including the Center for Democracy and Technology and Voters Telecommunications Watch, sponsored a National Internet Day of Protest over the telecommunications bill conference's proposal to censor the Internet. In just one day—Tuesday—over 18,000 people contacted the offices of conferees. This country will never accept the new temperance demagoguery that is leading us down the road to Government censorship of computer communications.

We have software parents can easily use to pull up on the computer and find out where their children have been going—what discussion, and what chat lines they have been on. If they find things in there they do not want, maybe the parents ought to take the responsibility to speak to their children. If you have books or magazines that you do not want your children to read, then maybe parents might just say, do not read it.

Somewhere there ought to be some responsibility left for mothers and fathers in raising their children, and not have this idea that we have to turn everything over to the heavy hand of Government.

In my years here I have seen rare instances where Senators and House Members in both parties have rushed pell-mell into having the Government step in to take over for parents. At a time when we hear that we have a new thrust in the Congress where we want to get Government off your backs, we want to get Government out of your life, we want to turn things back to people, we have a massive effort underway in the telecommunications conference to say we are going to tell you what to think; we are going to tell you what to do, when you go online.

Do you know why? I am willing to bet that three-quarters of the Congress do not have the foggiest idea how to get on Internet; do not have the foggiest idea how to use the Internet; have never corresponded back and forth on the Internet. They can say: ''We do not use it. It does not involve us. So let us screw it up for everybody else who might use it.'' But, ''everybody else'' are millions and millions of Americans.

I urge the full telecommunications bill conference to consider the threat its proposals to regulate online speech poses to the future growth of the Internet.

The interests of the young children are not in the stifling of speech or Government overreaching. They will be served by the growth of the Internet, the development of the World Wide Web and the creative, economic, and social opportunities that they can provide. And for those who want to abuse it, those who want to be involved in child pornography, we have laws on the books. We can go after those people. We can prosecute them. But let us not close down 99.9 percent of the Internet because of a few child pornographers. Go after them, but protect the Internet for the rest of the people.

Maybe those who are on the Internet ought to ask their Members of the House or the Senate, Do they use it? Do they understand it? Do they understand the computer? I do not want to ask them if they know how to do really technical things, like programming a VCR. Ask them if they can turn on the Internet? Can they actually talk with each other? And if they cannot, maybe Internet users ought to tell their Members, ''Then leave us alone. Leave us alone.''

LIHEAP

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the distinguished Presiding Officer and I both come from States where we know what winter weather is. I daresay the distinguished Presiding Officer has probably heard a weather report in his State—one of the most beautiful in this country—probably heard a weather report similar to one I heard in Vermont last weekend. In the news they said, ''By the way, we expect a dusting of snow tonight, accumulations of no more than 3 to 4 inches.'' And nobody thinks anything of it. If we have 10 inches of snow overnight, schools still open, people still go to work.

I contrast that with the situation we face in the Washington area. How many times have we turned on the TV in the morning and see we have remote locations and you have all the people out there bundled up, and the poor camera person has the bright lights on, trying to find one snowflake coming down. They say, ''Oh, and the latest report is the snow appears to be gathering and we switch now to the head meteorologist,'' who, in a state of panic, is saying, ''And we may get accumulations of up to an inch.'' An inch? My 86-year-old mother goes out with a broom and sweeps anything up to 2 or 3 inches off the walk. Schools will open, but here, if they open at all, it is 5 hours late. ''Two inches were spotted somewhere in the continental United States and it might be moving this way.''

Last night I drove home around midnight and I saw cars spinning off the road for two reasons. One, they did not know how to drive; and second, notwithstanding the fact that everybody knew an ice storm was coming, apparently nobody thought to send out the sand trucks and sand the road. This morning, at about 5:45 or so, when I drove with my wife to work—she was going to the hospital, she is on the morning shift—again, we saw cars spinning out all over the place. They come roaring down to an intersection, slamming on the brakes—of course they had

not bothered to sand the intersections—and looked amazed and surprised that the law of physics applied. You have a heavy object, you have no traction: It does not stop. It has some aspect to do with the law of friction and physics, something I suggest maybe we may want to teach.

We get into a situation around this area that the only effective snow or ice removal is a couple of days of warm weather. I once thought the reason we keep everything going in the little State of Vermont is we must have a lot more equipment and a lot more people. Apparently that is not so. Actually they have more down here. I think they are saving it, though. They do not want to use up this equipment. Maybe they are thinking someday another Ice Age will come and we will need it then.

But in Vermont we do have cold weather. I remember a year or so ago they closed down the Government here because it was about 25 degrees.

I was in Montpelier, VT, in the State capital that day and it was 15 degrees below zero. I walked from my office to the capitol. Every place was open, everybody went to work. I constantly got stopped by people on the streets who said, ''We heard on the news they closed down Government offices and everything in Washington because it is 25 degrees. They really mean 25 below, don't they?''

I said, ''No, 25 degrees. That is 40 degrees warmer than it is here where we are all going to work.''

But we do have that 25- to 30-degree below zero weather. I mention that, to be serious, because we need money in LIHEAP. In Vermont we have about 25,000 families eligible for LIHEAP, aid for those who need heating assistance. I think last year our families received slightly less than $400 a home. But because of the budget, in Vermont they can be promised only about $50 this year.

Mr. President, 70 percent of those recipients earn $8,000 a year or less, 30 percent of them are AFDC homes with children. Mr. President, 32 percent of them are working Vermonters who need help; 41 percent of the recipients are elderly or disabled. People are going to be dying from the cold. It does get cold back in my State. We have had many below-zero days already. We will have days where it will go down to 20 or 30 below zero.

Congress is no closer to passing a Labor-HHS bill with LIHEAP funding than they were back in September. If Congress feels that block grants are such a good idea for school lunches and Medicaid, at least show they are consistent and keep the LIHEAP block grant going. Food shelves are getting empty. Frost is on the windows day and night. People are down to the question of heating versus eating. If you are elderly or disabled, that is one heck of a question to have to ask.

We need to pass a LIHEAP budget. It is a gaping new hole in the welfare net and it is hurting Americans, especially those who live in the frost belt. I hope we will pass it.

Mr. President, I thank the Chair for its forbearance and I will be happy to join with the distinguished Presiding Officer in offering snowtime driving lessons to any of our colleagues who may wish them—certainly to the media who report on four or five snowflakes as though it was the coming of a new Ice Age.

LIHEAP

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, as my colleagues know, it is cold outside. This morning in my home State of Vermont it was minus one degree in Burlington, minus 9 degrees in our capital city of Montpelier and in the Northeast Kingdom, there were 18 inches of snow on the ground. This weekend the temperature fell below zero in Minnesota. It was 20 degrees in Delaware and it has even dropped to below freezing in Atlanta, GA.

With these cold temperatures, and the subfreezing days that are sure to follow, one has to wonder how nearly 6 million low-income American families are going to make it through the winter. In past years, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program [LIHEAP] has provided aid to these families.

LIHEAP is a block grant provided to the States that help low-income Americans with an average income of $8,000 heat their homes. This year however, states have not received sufficient funds to meet the needs of their low-income citizens.

Since we have yet to pass a fiscal year 1996 appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Resources, and Education, LIHEAP has been funded by the two continuing resolutions [CR's] that we have passed and the President has signed. These two CR's funded LIHEAP at 90 and 75 percent of last year's level respectively, but, and this is the key, the CR's limited LIHEAP spending to the proportional daily rate of the duration of the CR.

This cap on the spend-out rate means that States have received only 75 days' worth of funds. In past years States received 60 percent of their allotments in the first quarter. This year, they have received only slightly greater than 20 percent. The vast majority of LIHEAP funds are used for heating assistance. Requiring that LIHEAP funds be spent out evenly throughout the year makes no sense. While it may leave LIHEAP funds available in June, many low-income families would not be able to heat their homes this winter.

Last year at this time, the Department of Health and Human Services had dispersed around $800 million to the States. So far this year, States have received only $230 million. As Senator KENNEDY pointed out yesterday, LIHEAP funds were to be reduced by 10 or 25 percent, not 70 percent.

What has this meant in Vermont? Instead of the $4.5 million we had received last year by this time, Vermont has received only $1.3 million. This is not enough to meet the needs of the 25,000 low-income Vermonters who rely on LIHEAP to avoid freezing in the winter. Gov. Howard Dean has had to delay the start of this year's program until December, and I can assure my colleagues that it can get quite cold in Vermont in October and November.

I think it is fairly clear that we are not going to be able to pass all the remaining appropriations bills by the end of this week, so we are going to have to take up another CR. It is critical that this CR not include the spend-out limitation on LIHEAP. Last week Senator KENNEDY and I sent a letter to Appropriations Committee, MARK HATFIELD, asking him to address this problem.

Fifty-two other Senators, Republicans and Democrats joined us in signing this letter, and although the Northeast/Midwest Senate Coalition, which I cochair, coordinated the effort, Senators from all over the Nation cosigned. I ask unanimous consent that a copy of this letter along with the 54 Senators who cosigned the letter be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. JEFFORDS. Although most Senators who signed the letter would like to see LIHEAP increased, the letter does not ask for additional LIHEAP funding. It simply asks that States be allowed to spend the LIHEAP funds that have been appropriated under the two CR's this winter when the funds are needed. There are similar efforts being undertaken in the House. In addition to Senator KENNEDY, I want to thank Senators ABRAHAM, COHEN, SNOWE, MOYNIHAN, KOHL, LEAHY, and WELLSTONE for their assistance in gathering support for this letter. I also want to thank Senator SPECTER for his continued support of LIHEAP. I think we have made it very clear that this spend-out restriction cannot be included in the next CR.

Mr. President, LIHEAP is a lifeline for many seniors and families with small children, and cutting LIHEAP will drastically increase the energy burden of many American families. Some Members of the House have argued that LIHEAP is no longer needed, but for many low-income Americans, the energy crisis is not over. In some areas of the country, energy prices are still increasing; in Vermont over the last 3 years, prices have gone up 21 percent. Since 1980 however, real LIHEAP funding has gone down 65 percent.

In fact, no other discretionary formula grant program has seen its funding reduced as much as LIHEAP. The Congressional Research Service [CRS] performed a study of energy prices and LIHEAP funding. CRS concluded that, even taking changes in real energy prices into account, LIHEAP would have to be funded at between $1.75 and $2.39 billion to provide the same level of benefits as it did in 1980.