certain that considerable distance has been covered in improving procedures. And this kind of effective enforcement is, paradoxically, the best way to deal with the anti-immigration political climate. Legal immigrants and those who have valid claims for asylum will be the beneficiaries of policies that make the law work as it is meant to—and should—work.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE,

*Washington, DC, January 4, 1996.*

INS SUCCESSFULLY REFORMS U.S. ASYLUM SYSTEM

WASHINGTON. DC.—A Clinton Administration initiative to reform the U.S. asylum system has achieved dramatic success in its first year, INS Commissioner Doris Meissner announced today.

On the first anniversary of the initiative, Commissioner Meissner said that the unprecedented reforms have substantially lowered the incidence of fraudulent claims by eliminating the virtually automatic issuance of work authorization documents to all asylum applicants. ''INS has removed the primary incentive for baseless asylum claims,'' she said, ''resulting in the fair and prompt adjudication of newly filed cases for the very first time. With this attack on fraud, we have closed a back door to illegal immigration.''

Over the past year, the Administration's landmark reforms have reduced the number of new asylum claims filed with the INS by 57 percent. In addition, these initiatives enabled INS asylum officers to double their productivity, completing 126,000 cases during 1995 compared with 61,000 in 1994. INS' new regulations to improve productivity and prevent misuse became effective on January 4, 1995.

Commissioner Meissner said, ''The U.S. asylum system was broken for many years, but today our asylum system is fair and efficient. The 57 percent reduction in new asylum cases is evidence that the INS has eliminated incentives for asylum abuse. At the same time, we have greatly improved the system's ability to quickly provide protection to those who deserve it.''

In response to a mandate from President Clinton in July 1993 to overhaul the inefficient and long-neglected U.S. asylum system, INS established asylum reform as a top priority. New regulations which took effect one year ago today eliminated easy access to work authorization and streamlined the process.

Applicants for the first time are required to personally appear at an asylum office to receive notification of the asylum decision. At that time, the applicant is granted asylum or is served with charging documents which formally begin deportation proceedings.

The Administration also sought the resources necessary to improve and update the system and secured them through the 1994 Crime Bill. In addition to more than doubling the authorized number of INS asylum officers from 150 to 325, the Crime Bill significantly increased the number of Immigration Judges from 112 to 179.

Additional indications of the success of asylum reform include:

Currently 84 percent of individual claims for asylum are heard by the INS within 60 days.

In 1995, the issuance of charging documents doubled (from 29,000 in 1994 to 65,000 in 1995), placing twice as many applicants directly in deportation proceedings.

''By limiting the availability of work authorization to only those applicants who are granted asylum or are not promptly adjudicated, the Administration has significantly reduced the potential for baseless claims. At the same time, INS has streamlined the entire asylum system. And we will continue to make dramatic progress in resolving this long-standing problem,'' Commissioner Meissner added.

[From the Washington Post, Nov. 12, 1995]

DON'T GUT POLITICAL ASYLUM

(By Philip G. Schrag)

For many years, the United States has granted political asylum to victims of persecution who come to our country and seek our protection. Now, however, Congress is on the verge of abolishing the right of political asylum.

Congress is not proposing to repeal the asylum provisions of the Refugee Act of 1980. An outright repeal would probably never pass, because many in Congress, recalling America's sorry treatment of refugees during the Holocaust, accept the humanitarian premises underlying asylum. Rather, the abolition is in the form of a new, apparently innocuous ''procedural'' requirement. The House Judiciary Committee recently adopted, as an amendment to this year's immigration reform act, a proviso that denies asylum to any person who applies for it more than 30 days after arriving in the United States. A Senate subcommittee has approved a similar proposal.

If this bill becomes law, the asylum process will shut down because, as a practical matter, it is impossible for an applicant to file that quickly. Most refugees fleeing persecution must give top priority to searching for their American relatives and acquaintances. In many cases, they do not speak English. They are not permitted to hold jobs in the United States. They must immediately find ways to feed themselves and their children. It takes weeks for them to find minimal housing and to achieve the most basic orientation to American culture. Months may pass before they even learn that if they want asylum, they have to file an application with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) on Form I–589.

After refugees learn about asylum and obtain the form, they will discover the daunting task ahead of them. The form itself is quite complicated: seven pages, plus eight pages of fine-print instructions. It is only available in English and must be completed in English. It requires applicants to prove that they have a well-founded fear, should they be deported, that they will be ''persecuted'' because of their ''race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group''—all legal terms of art that have been interpreted by many courts. Because the legal standard has been embellished by judicial decisions and because a lawyer can help * * * case effectively, an applicant is well advised to have an attorney help compile and organize the supporting documentation. Mistakes can literally be fatal, resulting in deportation into the hands of a persecutor.

At present, most asylum applicants need weeks or months to find a lawyer, especially if they need one who will handle the application free of charge. Even now, only a few neighborhood offices that offer free legal help to the poor handle asylum cases, and Congress is slashing the budget of the Legal Services program.

Once the applicant finds a willing lawyer, however, more inevitable delays are in store. The instructions for the application form ''strongly urge'' applicants to ''attach additional written statements and documents that support'' their claims, including ''newspaper articles, affidavits of witnesses or experts, periodicals, journals, books, photographs, official documents, other personal statements, or evidence regarding incidents that have occurred to others.''

The law students who help prepare these applications under my supervision in an asylum law clinic at Georgetown University Law Center spend at lest a month of nearly full-time work putting together just one application for a client. Obtaining supporting affidavits or even such elementary documentation as birth and death records typically includes, among other things, making repeated telephone calls to people in the country from which the applicant has fled (sometimes with interpreters on the line) and exchanging numerous faxes with witnesses and officials there. These communications are expensive as well as time-consuming.

Similarly, obtaining accounts of arbitrary imprisonment, torture, rape and other human rights violations from local * * * many weeks of investigative effort. Finding experts who know about human rights violations against the applicant's tribe or ethnic group is also an arduous and lengthy process.

The attachments to support an application can include several hundreds of pages of evidence, and the file can be several inches thick. It is not reasonable to expect a refugee to develop such a file within 30 days after arriving in the United States, with or without the help of a lawyer.

A few years ago, the asylum program was abused by large numbers of applicants who were not genuinely eligible for it, but the federal government closed this loophole by ceasing to issue work permits for people whose applications have not yet been approved. In July, Commissioner of Immigration Doris Meissner reported that ''after years in which fraudulent asylum claims were routinely filed as a backdoor way to enter the U.S., INS finally has * * * stopped the abuse.''

Congress should preserve the asylum program. At the very least, Congress should not abolish asylum by invisibly and irresponsibly imposing a procedural requirement that is impossible to satisfy. Fewer than one percent of the 900,000 people who immigrate into the United States each year are asylees. This small immigration program poses no serious problems and is worth keeping. When we give sanctuary to victims of oppression we demonstrate to everyone the most humanitarian impulses of the American spirit.

## CONGRESSMAN FLOYD SPENCE NAMED THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES 1996 MINUTEMAN OF THE YEAR

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, on January 24, 1996, my able colleague from South Carolina, FLOYD SPENCE, the chairman of the House National Security Committee, received the 1996 Minuteman of the Year Award from the Reserve Officers Association of the United States. He is most deserving of this high honor. Throughout the 25 years that FLOYD SPENCE has served in the House of Representatives, he has been a strong advocate for ensuring that our Nation's defense capabilities are second to none, and he has demonstrated great leadership ability as

the chairman of the House National Security Committee in the 104th Congress. FLOYD SPENCE is a man of character and integrity, and it is a privilege to work with him. He is truly dedicated to the freedoms that we as Americans hold so dear.

Mr. President, I was so impressed with the remarks that Chairman SPENCE made when he received the 1996 Minuteman of the Year Award, that I would like to share them with my colleagues. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the address made by FLOYD SPENCE to the Reserve Officers Association of the United States on January 24, 1996, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

ADDRESS BY CONGRESSMAN FLOYD D. SPENCE TO THE MID-WINTER BANQUET AND MILITARY BALL OF THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES JANUARY 24, 1996

It is a privilege for me to be in the presence of so many great Americans this evening, and to join the list of famous people who have received the Minuteman of the Year award from the Reserve Officers Association of the United States. I never thought that I would be honored in this way. I would like to thank you. I also would like to thank God, for it is through him that I received a double-lung transplant in 1988, that has extended my life and allowed me to continue my work in the Congress.

It is indeed an honor to be selected as the 1996 Minuteman of the Year. I joined the Navy when I was 17 years old, and after graduating from college, I was commissioned as an ensign in the Naval Reserve. As a retired Captain in the Navy and a member of the Reserve Officers Association, not a day goes by that I do not think about my time in the Naval Reserve and relate it to my work as Chairman of the House National Security Committee. I use those experiences in looking for ways to do what is best for our men and women in uniform and for our National Security. To be recognized as I mark my first anniversary as Chairman, this award really means a lot to me.

A Chairman of a Committee, in either the House or the Senate, is only as good as the people that he serves with. Over my 25 years in the House, I have had the privilege of serving with some of the finest Members that the United States Congress has seen. And, although my dear friend and colleague from Mississippi could not be here tonight, due to back surgery, I would like to take a moment to recognize Sonny Montgomery for his infinite support for our veterans, and our Reserve and National Guard programs.

Sonny will be retiring at the end of this term after 30 years in the House. But, we, his family of veterans, Reservists and members of the National Guard, can all take comfort in knowing that the Congress is a better place due to his service. I do not need to say any more. I am certain that because of Sonny Montgomery, either you or someone that you know was able to go to college through the Montgomery GI Bill. I will be sure to pass along your warm greeting to Sonny.

I am sometimes accused of being too supportive of the military. To my accusers, I say that it is impossible to be too supportive of the military that helped this country to gain and keep its freedom. When I was appointed Chairman, last year, my first proposal was to change the Department of Defense's name to the Department of Offense. When people quote scripture to me, it is often from Isaiah and references the beating of swords into plowshares. My immediate response is to quote Joel 3:9—''wake up mighty men and beat plowshares into swords and pruning hooks into spears.''

Article 1, Section 8, of the Constitution gives the Congress the responsibility of providing for the defense of our Nation. We have conducted a survey of the status of our defense, which concludes that defense spending has been cut too deeply and that the President's defense plan underfunds the Bottom-Up Review force structure and the overall National Military Strategy for two major regional contingencies.

In my 25 years on the Hill, I have seen leaders come and go; budget fights won and lost; and changes in threat, weapons systems and strategies, and even a ''hollow'' military. I have seen hot wars, cold wars, contingency, peacekeeping and even peace enforcement operations; yet, I have never been more concerned about the state of our National Security than I am now.

Unlike during the Cold War, when the consensus on the threat generally dictated our national strategy, forces, budgets and weapon systems decisions, there is no consensus on the threat to our national interest in the post-Cold War world, as we cannot see the threat. As the former Director of the CIA testified several years ago, in the post-Cold War world it is as if a mighty dragon had been slayed and the result is a jungle full of deadly snakes.

In this new environment, we still face weapons of mass destruction, low technology and inexpensive delivery systems. We still face a growing range of nationalist, ethnic and religious conflicts that transcend traditional borders. The only people who have seen the end of war are the dead themselves. Whether or not this country will next go to war is not a question of ''if'' but a question of ''when.''

Yet, we have cut back too severely over the last decade. For example, over the last decade of declining defense budgets, we have cut back dramatically on modernization spending—procurement spending by 70 percent and research and development spending by 20 percent. As a consequence, there will be a dramatic modernization shortfall beginning early in the next century.

As for force structure, just since the end of Desert Storm, we have cut back: active duty force structure by almost 30 percent, Army divisions by 30 percent, combat ships by 32 percent, and warplanes by 36 percent. Currently, many experts doubt that we could conduct another campaign like we did in the Persian Gulf in 1991.

One year ago, in an effort to begin revitalizing our National Security, the Chairman of the National Security Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, Bill Young, and I worked with the Republican Leadership to stop the ''hemorrhaging,'' to freeze defense spending and to end the decline. We managed to reach an agreement to add approximately $30 billion to defense over the next 7 years.

The defense authorization Conference Report, that the House adopted earlier today, reflects this additional funding, as well as our focus on four basic priorities: improving military quality of life, sustaining core readiness, reinvigorating lagging modernization programs, and beginning long overdue reform of The Pentagon. As this group knows, our Reserves will be critical to this revitalized United States National Security posture.

I am sure that you are aware that Congressman Greg Laughlin is working to ensure that the Reserves are an integral part of that National Security posture. As sponsor of the ''Reserve Forces Revitalization Act of 1995,'' Greg has introduced legislation that, if passed in its present form, will result in many substantive changes in the way that the Reserve components are organized and administered.

As a retired Naval Reservist, I am acutely aware of the challenges and sacrifices that you face. The ''Reserve Forces Revitalization Act of 1995'' is intended to address many of the administrative and organizational inefficiencies that have developed in Reserve programs, and it is designed to reinforce the ''Total Force Concept.'' As the demands on our active forces are spread thinner than ever across the world, our Committee and The Pentagon are continually looking for ways to increase reliance on the Reserve components of all of the branches of the Armed Services.

During the Fiscal Year 1997 authorization cycle, the National Security Committee's Personnel Subcommittee, which is chaired by Congressman Bob Dornan, will conduct hearings on the aspects that fall under the Committee's jurisdiction. But, you do not need to wait until next year. The Fiscal Year 1996 Defense Authorization bill, which was passed by the House today by a 287 to 129 vote, has already accomplished a few of the Revitalization Act's objectives. As soon as the President signs the bill, the following programs will become active:

Mobilization Income Insurance Program for Ready Reserve members. This new insurance plan is voluntary and will be financed by premiums paid by the participants.

Medical and Dental Care for Members of the Selected Reserve for early deploying Army Reserve and National Guard units. The Conference Report also establishes a shared-cost dental insurance program for all members of the Selected Reserve, which will be fully implemented in Fiscal Year 1997.

Military Technician Full-Time Support Program. The Committee felt that the Military Technician Full-Time Support Program is essential to Reserve component readiness, and to the Reserve components' ability to relieve active duty units suffering under the duress of consistently high operating tempos. Therefore, the conferees agreed to increase military technician endstrength by 1,400 over the Administration's request and to prohibit reductions below established endstrengths, except for those occurring as a result of force structure changes.

Increase in the Number of Members in the Grades of O–4, O–5, and O–6 Authorized to Serve on Active Duty in Support of the Reserves. and

Continued Support for the Off-Site Agreement for the Army Reserve and the National Guard.

As always, the National Security Committee is fully supportive and will remain fully committed to each of the Reserve components and the National Guard.

In closing, I want to thank the members of the Reserve Officers Association for their leadership in Reserve affairs. As Chairman, I look to the ROA for your insight and perspective on all matters relating to the Reserve forces. Thank you for bestowing the honor of being Minuteman of the Year for 1996 upon me. I look forward to working with you as we begin to address the authorization process for the next fiscal year. Thank you. God bless you and our great Country.

## THE BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, as of the close of business Tuesday, February 6, the Federal debt—down to the penny—stood at exactly $4,987,288,825,759.77 or $18,930.18 on a per capita basis for every man, woman, and child in America.