

begin the process of protecting our Nation's children from an industry that kills 410,000 Americans each year. And we can't let the tobacco lobby undercut this effort.

The rule that goes into effect today would bar the sale of cigarettes to persons under the age of 18. Additionally, in order to ensure that no children slip through the cracks, stores would be required to check the identification of any individual who appears to be 26 or younger. This Federal rule is necessary because recent studies have shown that kids are able to buy cigarettes over the counter 67 percent of the time.

I have seen evidence of this problem firsthand. I went along on a sting operation in my home State in which I witnessed children purchase cigarettes with ease. It was very disturbing, but typical.

Mr. President, the rule that goes into effect today is a historic first step toward eradicating the epidemic of children's smoking plaguing our Nation. David Kessler, the outgoing Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration has called this problem a pediatric disease and he is right. Of the 3,000 kids who start smoking every day, 1,000 will die of smoking-related illness.

So, Mr. President, I again commend the administration for their battle against teen smoking. And I pledge here and now that if anyone tries to undermine that effort, I will fight it every step of the way.

After all, we're talking about saving lives here. The lives of our children and grandchildren. And all of us have a responsibility to stand up to the tobacco lobby, and do the right thing.●

#### TRIBUTE TO MEGAN CHAMBERLAIN ON BEING HONORED WITH THE GIRL SCOUT GOLD AWARD

● Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Megan Chamberlain for receiving the Girl Scout Gold Award by the Swift Water Girl Scout Council in Manchester, NH.

Megan is a member of Girl Scout Troop No. 1487 and has diligently served her community and the people of Manchester. She started working toward the Girl Scout Gold Award in 1995. Megan had to earn four interest project patches, which are the Career Exploration Pin, the Senior Girl Scout Leadership Award, the Senior Girl Scout Challenge and design and implement a Girl Scout Gold Award Project. She completed her project in the areas of community service and environmental awareness.

Megan received outstanding accomplishments in the areas of leadership, community service, career planning, and personal development. The Swift Water Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest attainable rank for a young woman between the age of 14-17. Megan has every reason to be proud of this recognition.

Megan promotes citizenship, character-building, and community service among the girls of our country. She also provides a respectable, solid role model for the youth of our Nation and teaches commitment, dedication and hard work. As a member of the Swift Water Girl Scout Troop, Megan learned valuable skills that will serve her for a lifetime.

I am proud to honor Megan for her outstanding accomplishments and congratulate her on this truly deserved award.●

#### R&D TAX CREDIT

● Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I believe that the Congress must make permanent the research and development [R&D] tax credit. The R&D credit has proven to be critical to the United States' economic growth and international competitiveness. The credit has led to many successes in U.S. scientific research and innovation, such as extraordinary accomplishments in pure mathematics; unprecedented growth in the power and availability of information technology; and rapid progress in finding cures for life threatening diseases such as AIDS, cancer, and multiple sclerosis.

For my State of North Dakota, the new information technologies mean that information industries are creating thousands of jobs. Despite these accomplishments, and the obvious long-term benefits, the R&D credit continuously faces challenges to its existence. Because the R&D credit has never been made permanent, it has had to be extended seven times by Congress since its inception. This transitory treatment of the R&D credit has forced R&D companies to be more hesitant in planning future research projects. Unfortunately Mr. President, this on-again off-again process also led to an unnecessary and disturbing circumstance in 1996. For the first time in the history of its consecutive extensions, last year the R&D credit was not extended retroactively, leaving a gap in the law from July 1, 1995 through July 1, 1996. The gap has, and will continue to, adversely affect our country's R&D efforts. The gap has already contributed to decreased investment in R&D and less planning for future R&D projects by many companies. Currently, the R&D credit is due to expire on May 31, 1997.

Mr. President, we must act now to permanently extend the R&D credit and send the right signal to our Nation's innovators. Failure to act will not only jeopardize our Nation's research efforts, but it will also threaten the United States' world leadership in R&D. Our Nation's growth in R&D investment over the past decade has already been slow compared to Japan, Germany, Italy, and France. Budget realities are forcing the United States to further curtail discretionary spending for basic research. In fact, United States non-defense R&D investment has been flat at 1.9 percent of GDP

after peaking at 2.0 percent in 1985, while Japan's has continued to grow to 3.0 percent. Although Germany's R&D commitment has been fairly stable at 2.7 percent since 1987, it is significantly higher than in the United States. One of the main reasons the United States lags behind these countries in R&D investment is because these countries offer their innovators generous tax incentives for R&D, including both deductibility of current expenses and special tax credits. Future economic challenges to the United States are also likely to come from developing countries in Asia as they boost R&D investment to catch up to the rest of the world.

New realities are being shaped by rapidly growing international R&D capabilities. These new R&D capabilities have created both global options as well as competitive pressures whose dimension are barely understood. Unless Congress decides to adapt to these realities and to enact a permanent R&D credit, the United States' leadership in the global arena may plummet. Such a result will not only adversely impact the United States internationally, but at home as well in lost jobs, diminished economic growth and a decreased standard of living.

As we prepare for the 21st century, we must remain committed to providing an environment that fosters technological investment, scientific exploration, and global competitiveness. Future economic growth and the prosperity of all Americans depends on continued R&D. America's well being depends on it. Let's remove the uncertainty surrounding the R&D credit's extension once and for all, and extend the credit permanently.●

#### STAND DOWN OF A-6E INTRUDER

● Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I am proud today to honor the retirement of the Navy's A-6E Intruder. Attack Squadron 196 at Whidbey Naval Air Station in my home State and Attack Squadron 75 in Virginia Beach will stand down the final two Intruder squadrons in simultaneous ceremonies today.

As the backbone of carrier attack aviation for the past 36 years, the A-6E Intruder stood ready to face the enemy in any weather, day or night. The A-6 put teeth in the term "carrier forward presence." It saw combat in Vietnam, Lebanon, Libya, in the waters of the Arabian Gulf and over the shores of Kuwait and Iraq. It delivered iron bombs, laser guided bombs, and every air-to-ground missile available in the Navy inventory for the past three decades. The A-6E Intruder was the hardest working plane on the flight deck.

The pilots and bombardier/navigation who flew the Intruder had great affection and respect for the aircraft and its ability to withstand heavy enemy fire. They too should be honored for their courage and dedication to this great nation. They will truly miss the A-6.