you can charge a reclamation fee, and we calculate that is worth $750 million over the next 5 years. Do we need a reclamation fee? The Bureau of Mines says there are 250,000—listen to this—sites on BLM land that have been abandoned and need to be reclaimed, 2,000 claims in national parks, if you can believe it—abandoned, and the Mineral Policy Center says there are 557,000 mines that have been abandoned in this country on both public and private lands—557,000 mine sites that need to be cleaned up. Do you know what they estimate the cost of cleaning them up to be? Somewhere between $32.7 billion and $71.5 billion.

So here we have given away 3 million acres that had $243 billion worth of gold, silver, platinum, and palladium under it, and what have we gotten in return? We have gotten 250,000 sites that we have to clean up on BLM sites and 2,000 in the national parks. Sometimes I have a hard time believing my own words. If I did not do so much research on this all the time, I would not believe it. So why not charge a reclamation fee and say we are at least going to start cleaning up these sites.

Now, these people not only get the land for $2.50 per acre, they not only get $1 billion worth of gold for which they pay the U.S. Government not one cent, they also leave an unmitigated environmental disaster. Listen to this; 59 of the sites on the Superfund National Priority List are directly related to hardrock mining. Who could argue that we need to charge a reclamation fee to help reclaim the hundreds of thousands of acres that have been abandoned by the mining companies.

And finally, Mr. President, I have already alluded to the fact that our bill contains a fourth provision and that is a depletion allowance repeal. I forget exactly what it is. I think it is 15 percent for gold, for silver and copper, and 22 percent for palladium and platinum. We have always allowed depletion on oil because it was a depleting resource, gas because it was a depleting resource, and, yes, a depletion allowance on private land would make some sense. But to allow people to get land from the U.S. Government for virtually nothing, leave us an unmitigated disaster to clean up, and then get a 15 to 22 percent depletion allowance to deplete a resource that they paid nothing for. That is absurd.

Congressman MILLER and I will be working very hard to pass this bill this year. I would like to think that the time has come when Senators did not feel they could just accommodate their good friends. They are my good friends, too. Some of the people I debate this with—and the debate could get very loud and raucous—are my best friends. It is kind of like trial lawyers. Trial lawyers fight all day long and go out to dinner together. I have done that, too. This is not aimed at anybody individually. This is aimed at trying to bring some fundamental fairness to what simply is so intolerable it cannot be tolerated any longer.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, May 9, 1997, the Federal debt stood at $5,331,940,681,736.92. (Five trillion, three hundred thirty-one billion, nine hundred forty million, six hundred eighty-one thousand, seven hundred thirty-six dollars and ninety-two cents.)

One year ago, May 9, 1996, the Federal debt stood at $5,088,829,000,000. (Five trillion, eighty-eight billion, eight hundred twenty-nine million)

Twenty-five years ago, May 9, 1972, the Federal debt stood at $426,455,000,000 (four hundred twenty-six billion, four hundred fifty-five million), which reflects a debt increase of nearly $5 trillion—$4,905,485,681,736.92 (four trillion, nine hundred five billion, four hundred eighty-five million, six hundred eighty-one thousand, seven hundred thirty-six dollars and ninety-two cents), during the past 25 years.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1997

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 46, S. 717.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 717) to amend the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, to reauthorize and make improvements to that act, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Jim Downing, a fellow with the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, and Mark Hall, a fellow with the leader's office, be accorded privilege of the floor during Senate consideration of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, S. 717.

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

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, today is a special occasion for me and I am proud to be with my distinguished colleagues to consider S. 717, the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997.

I was there in the beginning, in 1975, Congress faced with a patchwork of court decisions, first took the historic step in assuring educational opportunities for some of the most vulnerable in our society, children with disabilities.

In 1975, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, or Public Law 94–142, was enacted to assist States in meeting the goal of providing a free appropriate public education and offering an equal educational opportunity to all children.

Public Law 94–142 has done much to meet the educational needs of children with disabilities.

Over the life of this historic legislation we have seen many advances toward the attainment of these goals—advances in educational technique, advances in technology, advances in opportunity, and advances in our expectations. Children with disabilities are now being educated alongside their peers in unprecedented numbers. Children with disabilities are now achieving beyond our wildest dreams.

Before Public Law 94–142, society placed little value on the lives of children with disabilities. Millions of children with disabilities were denied access to education, and we invested few resources in anything more than simple caretaking. We have now learned that investment in the education of children with disabilities from birth throughout their school years has rewards and benefits, not only for children with disabilities and their families, but for our whole society.

We have proven that investment in educational opportunity for all of our kids enriches society. We have proven that promoting educational opportunity for our children with disabilities directly impacts their opportunity to live independent lives as contributing members to society. Most importantly, we have learned to value all of America's children.

Public Law 94–142 was written in different times to address basic concerns. Concerns that have evolved into expectations. With this evolution in expectations has come an evolution in other concerns that its drafters could never have anticipated. Concerns that must be addressed if we are to continue in the advancement and development of educational programs that have done so much for America's children, our children.

This year, Mr. President, I have worked hand in hand with majority leader TRENT LOTT and Chairman GOODLING in the development of this agreement. We have also worked hand in hand with Senators KENNEDY and HARKIN here in the Senate. A bicameral, bipartisan agreement has been reached.

The process in itself is historic, one in which Democrats, Republicans, the