

MORNING BUSINESS

(During today's session of the Senate, the following morning business was transacted.)

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, September 18, 1997, the Federal debt stood at \$5,374,488,603,408.56. (Five trillion, three hundred seventy-four billion, four hundred eighty-eight million, six hundred three thousand, four hundred eight dollars and fifty-six cents)

One year ago, September 18, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,193,857,000,000 (Five trillion, one hundred ninety-three billion, eight hundred fifty-seven million)

Five years ago, September 18, 1992, the Federal debt stood at \$4,036,814,000,000. (Four trillion, thirty-six billion, eight hundred fourteen million)

Ten years ago, September 18, 1987, the Federal debt stood at \$2,353,225,000,000. (Two trillion, three hundred fifty-three billion, two hundred twenty-five million)

Twenty-five years ago, September 18, 1972, the Federal debt stood at \$436,926,000,000 (Four hundred thirty-six billion, nine hundred twenty-six million) which reflects a debt increase of nearly \$5 trillion—\$4,937,562,603,408.56 (Four trillion, nine hundred thirty-seven billion, five hundred sixty-two million, six hundred three thousand, four hundred eight dollars and fifty-six cents) during the past 25 years.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION AND THE BOY SCOUTS

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to note a recent injustice done to one of America's most valuable associations, the Boy Scouts, by one of our most valued institutions, the Smithsonian. I also rise to express my appreciation to Smithsonian Secretary I. Michael Heyman for his assurance that such an injustice will not occur again in the future.

Mr. President, in January of this year the Smithsonian Institution denied an application from the Boy Scouts of America to use the National Zoo's auditorium for a Court of Honor ceremony for District of Columbia area Scouts.

Why would the Smithsonian deny such an application from a group known for its commitment to environmental conservation? According to Robert J. Hoage, Chief of the Smithsonian's Office of Public Affairs, the Smithsonian's policy prohibits co-sponsoring events with any organization that exercises bias on the basis of religious beliefs.

Asked about this decision, the Smithsonian's communications director, David Umansky, explained: "Our lawyers have documented cases of the Boy Scouts denying membership to

atheists, and that violates our non-discrimination code." The Smithsonian also claimed that the honor court event was not sufficiently relevant to the National Zoo's mission. But that claim stretches credulity because of the Boy Scouts' myriad programs devoted to environmental education and conservation. Indeed, the Scouts' highest honor, awarded to only about 1,000 Scouts since 1914, recognizes exceptional work for environmental conservation.

In a letter to my colleagues dated September 12, I expressed my dismay that the Boy Scouts, an organization that has helped literally millions of American boys reach responsible manhood, should be denied access to a federally supported institution because it exercises its constitutional right to free exercise of religion. I also expressed concern that the Smithsonian Institution should enforce a policy diametrically opposed to the principles on which our nation was founded. The Smithsonian, our premier teaching museum, is entrusted with, among other treasures, the Star Spangled Banner, the flag that Francis Scott Key saw flying when he penned our national anthem. I recently sponsored legislation appropriating \$8 million to the Smithsonian for restoration of that flag. I was frankly disturbed to see that the institution to which it has been entrusted was acting in this manner.

However, Mr. President, I am now relieved to report that Secretary Heyman, in a September 15 letter to my distinguished colleague, Senator FRIST, who serves as a regent to that Institution, has apologized for this action. Further, Secretary Heyman's letter expressed his conviction that "our special events policy clearly allows the sponsorship of events by all groups, including religious groups, that are consistent with the mission and tradition of the Smithsonian."

Recent events at the Smithsonian, including the proposed *Enola Gay* exhibit, with its misleading and inaccurate treatment of the Second World War, and a number of new exhibits distorting history to cast America and American values in a bad light, have caused me to worry about the future of this distinguished and crucially important institution. I thank Secretary Heyman for his courageous statement of fundamental policy and hope that it heralds a new, more positive era at the Smithsonian.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the full text of my September 12 letter to my colleagues and the September 15 letter from Secretary Heyman to Senator FRIST be printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, September 12, 1997.
Smithsonian Snubs Boy Scouts

DEAR COLLEAGUE: I want to bring to your attention the latest in an unfortunate series

of decisions made at the Smithsonian Institution, America's premier teaching museum. It has come to my attention that in January of this year the Smithsonian denied an application from the Boy Scouts of America to use the National Zoo's auditorium for a Court of Honor ceremony for District of Columbia area Scouts. The application was denied on the grounds that the scouts require members to believe in God and that the event supposedly did not meet the "relevance requirement" needed for Smithsonian cosponsorship.

In a letter to T. Anthony Quinn, president for District Operations for the National Capital Area of the Boy Scouts of America, Robert J. Hoage, Chief of the Smithsonian's Office of Public Affairs stated that "the Smithsonian's policy prohibits co-sponsoring events with any organization that exercises bias on the basis of religious beliefs." Asked by a reporter from the newsweekly Human Events to explain this decision, David Umansky, communications director for the Smithsonian responded: "Our lawyers have documented cases of the Boy Scouts denying membership to atheists, and that violates our non-discrimination code."

I find it deeply disturbing that the Boy Scouts, one of America's most important private organizations, which has helped literally millions of American boys reach responsible manhood, should be denied access to a federally supported institution because it exercises its Constitutional right to free exercise of religion. I also am disturbed that the Smithsonian Institution, the repository of so many objects central to our heritage as a people, should enforce a policy diametrically opposed to the principles on which our nation was founded.

In an August 14 follow-up letter to Mr. Quinn, Smithsonian Under Secretary Constance Berry Newman failed to so much as mention the "anti-discrimination" motivation behind this rejection. Instead the Under Secretary detailed two Smithsonian events involving Boy Scouts, both of which took place several years ago. Her argument was that Smithsonian "policy emphasizes that the activity or event proposed by the outside organization should have some Smithsonian involvement and participation in the proposed activity or event." That an event put on by the Boy Scouts, an organization devoted to outdoor activities and knowledge of the natural world, should be found "irrelevant" to the National Zoo stretches credulity to the limit. Further, recent events at the National Zoo clearly have had little to do with that institution's mission. Events have included a naturalization ceremony by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and a Washington Singers musical concert.

I urge you to contact Smithsonian Secretary Michael Heyman and/or members of his staff to express your deep concern that the Boy Scouts, an institution of longstanding importance to our culture, traditions and public life, is receiving such inappropriate treatment. Further questions on this matter can be directed to Bruce Frohnen of my office at extension 4-8841.

Sincerely,

SPENCER ABRAHAM,
U.S. Senate.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION,
Washington, DC, September 15, 1997.
Hon. WILLIAM H. FRIST,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FRIST: As was discussed in this morning's meeting of the Board of Regents, and knowing of your concern on this issue, I am writing to apologize for an unfortunate decision that denied the use of facilities of the National Zoo to District of Columbia Boy Scouts last February. In a letter