

Act of 1997. This legislation will also be introduced in the House by Representatives HORN and MALONEY. This commonsense piece of legislation will improve the quality of an important function of the Federal Government while reducing its cost.

The current Federal statistical system is in disarray. There are more than 70 Federal agencies responsible for gathering and analyzing statistics. Many of these agencies expend resources attempting to gather the same information from the same sources. This duplication is unnecessarily burdensome on both taxpayers and respondents. Although a small group of people in the Office of Management and Budget [OMB] is nominally responsible for coordinating Federal efforts, no one in the Federal Government is held accountable for maintaining the quality of the Government statistics or overseeing the modernization of the statistical system.

The Federal Government spends \$2.6 billion each year to finance this thicket of Federal statistical programs. Yet, in spite of the resources we dedicate to gathering and analyzing statistics, Americans have lost confidence in the quality of Government data. For example, over the past several years, a debate has raged over the accuracy of the Consumer Price Index. According to the General Accounting Office, the 1990 census was inaccurate and the 2000 census is a high-risk project that may produce unsatisfactory data again. And, according to a recent Wall Street Journal article, the Department of Treasury is unable to account for the source of billions of tax receipts this year.

Mr. President, the Federal Statistical System Act of 1997 is a necessary first step to consolidate the Federal statistical system and improve the quality of Government data. This legislation would establish a Federal Commission on Statistical Policy to recommend how the Federal statistical system should be reorganized and streamlined, and to draft legislation to consolidate the three largest Federal statistical agencies—the Bureau of the Census, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis—into a single Federal Statistical Service.

After the Federal Statistical Service legislation is enacted, the commission shall then study and develop recommendations on which other Federal statistical organizations should be consolidated, eliminated or reorganized. The commission shall also make recommendations on issues regarding privacy of information collected by the Federal government, the use of statistical data in Federal funding formulas, and standards of accuracy of Federal data.

Finally, Federal Statistical System Act of 1997 will allow the Federal Government to reduce further the cost and improve the accuracy of statistical programs while reducing the reporting

burden on respondents. This will be achieved by certain agencies to share nonidentifiable statistical information, exclusively for statistical purposes. This provision will also ensure that existing avenues and limitations for public access to Government information under the Privacy Act of Freedom of Information Act are retained without change.

Mr. President, we cannot improve the effectiveness and reduce the cost of Government programs unless we have a firm grasp on the measures we use to implement and judge them. We cannot make an accurate assessment of our economic progress unless our relevant activity in today's economy is measured. Finally, we cannot make informed assessments on the state of our urban or rural areas and communities unless we have accurate and meaningful economic and social indicators. I believe Federal Statistical System Act of 1997 is an important first step in streamlining Government and improving the quality of Government information, and I urge my colleagues to support this measure. ●

HEROES SHINE IN NORTH DAKOTA FLOOD

● Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I rise today to draw the Senate's attention to some truly remarkable people, people whose work speaks volumes about what special people North Dakotans are.

As my colleagues in the Senate are well aware, one of the Nation's worst weather-related disasters this year was the devastating flooding in Grand Forks, ND, and the entire Red River Valley. This historic flood captured the attention of the Nation in late spring as over 95 percent of the residents of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks were evacuated from their homes and much of North Dakota's second largest city's downtown district was ravaged by fire and water.

History will have a dramatic record of the loss and devastation of the flood. The hardship and heartbreak endured by so many of our friends and neighbors will be forever etched into our memory.

But this year has also shown that North Dakota is a State blessed with wonderful and resilient people, and with real-life heroes. It's often said that difficult times bring out the best in people, and that certainly was the case in North Dakota. So now that a few months have passed since the waters have subsided, I would like to take a moment to reflect back on some of the many heroes, people that stepped up when their community needed them, whose efforts shined in the midst of the rising waters.

In a disaster, maintaining a working communication system is critical in fighting back and preserving the safety of those in the area. Today, I would like to recognize the efforts of several US West Communications employees

who worked tirelessly to maintain critical telephone service to the Grand Forks area throughout the flooding.

On April 19, 1997, before the flooding hit Grand Forks, a crew of nine central office technicians barricaded themselves into the US West building in the heart of the city to keep the area's communication systems up and running during the disaster. Their extensive preventive work to prepare for the flooding would soon be tested as the waters rushed into town. As the entire city was evacuated, their building was surrounded by 4 feet of water, and sat just one block away from a raging fire. But these brave men and women hung in and sustained phone service, service which was essential to the rescue and recovery efforts of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Aviation Administration, State and local emergency workers, and so many others in the flooded region.

To give you an idea of the challenges facing each of these brave heroes, they labored alone, night and day to keep the wires dry as 26 inches of water threatened basement cables. Sustained by the food, clothing, and cots delivered via boat by the National Guard, these folks stayed on in a flooded town whose entire population had been ordered to leave. Armed with only high-volume pumps, drying machines, and sandbags, these courageous people kept the communications system working.

These heroes deserve to be recognized by name for their dedicated service. The members of the initial emergency team were: Denny Braaten, Linda Potucek, Larry McNamara, Bob Schraeder, Dan Kaiser, Dale Andrews, Glenda Wiess, Rick Hokenson, and Lew Ellingson.

Two days later, US West reinforcements arrived to provide additional support and hard work. I would like to recognize these workers now: Don Jordan, Ray Jacobsen, Tim Kennedy, Roger Jones, Bruce Bengston, Gary Boser, Jim Falconer, Bion McNulty, Jack Olson, and Tim Rogers.

These people, along with the many others who volunteered and continue the rebuilding effort today, are part of the story of this year's flood that doesn't get told nearly enough, of people helping their neighbors in extremely hard circumstances, and of extraordinary acts of heroism performed by everyday people.

I can't express my admiration enough. ●

STRIPED BASS CONSERVATION ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1997

● Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, I rise today in support of H.R. 1658, the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act Amendments of 1997. This legislation will allow the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service to continue their important work with the States to ensure the continued recovery of the striped bass fishery.