

would have the ability to be with their kids on occasions when current guidelines prohibit. In my case, my job as a security guard occasionally calls for overtime. Under this legislation, I would be allowed the choice to receive pay or to be more involved in coaching, attending school events and other general activities my kids are involved with.

Our government serves people in many ways, but there is no better way to serve than building strong families, which the Family Friendly Workplace Act obviously seeks to accomplish.

There is a security guard that I think feels capable of making judgments about whether or not he wants to be paid for all of his overtime, or whether he would like to be able to opt to have some time off. I am just delighted that there are moms and dads in America that would like to be more involved in coaching, attending school events, and other general activities with kids. Yet, our Government is keeping that from happening.

Here is a letter from a 29-year-old working mother:

I am a 29 year old working mother. I have a two-year-old daughter and am pregnant and due. . . .

I recently heard about your Family Friendly Workplace Act. Under the current law, the law firm in which I am employed does not allow me to have a flexible work schedule.

No wonder it doesn't; the law doesn't allow it.

In my current condition, I need to be able to take off for doctor appointments. Due to the fact that I have a complication in my pregnancy, I have more appointments than average. If I was able to take time in one week and work more the next, it would be very helpful to me and other mothers. . . .

My two-year-old daughter is healthy, but there are some days when she needs extra attention and some days that she is sick. Some days she is just two!

Those of us who are parents are familiar with kids that are "just two."

If I was able to take the time I needed for some mornings and make it up the next week, it would make my life much easier.

Well, these letters are just a few. As we debate these issues during this session and over the next few days or as we approach voting on this particular measure, I would just say that it is fundamentally important for us to recognize the need to provide America's working families with the same kind of advantage, with flexible time, which American families that work for Government have. If it's good enough for Government workers, it is good enough for private workers. If Government workers are smart enough to know when they want comptime as compared to pay and are able to figure that out and when they would like to be able to rearrange their schedules to be involved with their children, I firmly believe that private workers have the same kind of intelligence and capacity. I think it is incumbent upon those of us in Government to make sure that we begin to legislate policy which is consistent with the principles of America and the principle of strong families, which is one we ought to be careful to understand and reinforce.

So I think we are going to have a great opportunity in this session. I expect that it will be a great opportunity as we legislate in this particular matter. We are going to have the opportunity to provide flextime and comptime to America's private-sector hourly workers. It is a privilege that is understood by the salaried workers in the private sector, understood by both the hourly and salaried workers in Government. Flextime is understood by people in the Federal Government system. Comptime is understood by, and enjoyed by, people in government systems everywhere, State, local and Federal.

We have delayed this benefit package for too many days. I say "we," and I have done that to label the U.S. Senate. But the delay has come from the other side of the aisle. No amendments were offered when we brought this up before, but no vote was allowed. It's time that we have serious amendments, serious negotiations, and that we seriously embark upon providing the people of this country with this opportunity to serve their families.

Today's speeches about how we need to debate openly and bring amendments on a family-friendly agenda could not be more on point. So let's have the debate, let's have the family-friendly agenda, let's have those amendments as it relates to the opportunity for hourly workers in the private sector to be able to spend time with their families as a result of voluntary agreements with their employers, to have flexible working arrangements and compensatory time arrangements similar to those of salaried workers and similar to those of Government workers.

We are going to debate and act on flextime and comptime this year. I look forward to the debate very much. I am grateful for the opportunity to submit this amendment in this respect.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGEL). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES— H.R. 2472

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to the order of February 12, 1998, the Chair appoints the following conferees to H.R. 2472.

The Chair appointed Mr. MURKOWSKI, Mr. NICKLES, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. THOMAS, Mr. BUMPERS, Mr. BINGAMAN, and Mr. AKAKA conferees on the part of the Senate.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a

period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

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

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, March 20, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,538,571,184,190.64 (Five trillion, five hundred thirty-eight billion, five hundred seventy-one million, one hundred eighty-four thousand, one hundred ninety dollars and sixty-four cents).

One year ago, March 20, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,369,250,000,000 (Five trillion, three hundred sixty-nine billion, two hundred fifty million).

Twenty-five years ago, March 20, 1973, the federal debt stood at \$456,695,000,000 (Four hundred fifty-six billion, six hundred ninety-five million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,081,876,184,190.64 (Five trillion, eighty-one billion, eight hundred seventy-six million, one hundred eighty-four thousand, one hundred ninety dollars and sixty-four cents) during the past 25 years.

#### MUHAMMAD ALI—ATHLETE OF THE CENTURY

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I am delighted that my dear friend Muhammad Ali has been named by Gentlemen's Quarterly as Athlete of the Century.

We have had many noteworthy athletes in this century—the century that has brought us modern sport. Excellence has been personified by such sports heroes as Lou Gehrig, Babe Didrickson Zaharias, Bobby Orr, Walter Payton, and Michael Jordan. But, to my mind, though this company is clearly outstanding, GQ made the obvious choice.

Muhammad Ali's road to sports immortality began on January 17, 1942, in Louisville, Kentucky. Introduced to boxing at the age of 12, Ali won National AAU and Golden Gloves titles. He brought home the Olympic gold medal from Rome in 1960.

After turning professional, he stunned the sports world by defeating the also great boxer Sonny Liston in 1964. His victories over such accomplished opponents as Liston, Floyd Patterson, Ernie Terrell, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, and Ken Norton make him, in my mind, the greatest boxer of all time.

But Ali's greatness goes beyond his physical strength and athleticism. In 1964, he converted to the religion of Islam, adopting a set of beliefs for which he would sacrifice a great deal. In 1967, at the height of his career, he was convicted of draft evasion and stripped of his heavyweight title. For a period of three years, Ali was shunned by the boxing world and vilified by many who had previously hailed him.

The conviction was eventually overturned by the United States Supreme