

Finally, the amendment does not guarantee employee choice. The employer chooses who works overtime and when an employee can use accrued comp time. The employer is free to assign all the overtime work to employees who will accept comp time. Those employees who need the money the most, who can't afford to take time off, would be hurt the most. Their paychecks would be smaller. This is discrimination, and it is wrong—but the proposal does nothing to prevent it.

And nothing in the proposal guarantees that workers can take time off when they want to or need to. The proposal does not guarantee any worker the right to use compensatory time under any circumstances. Even if the employee has a legal right under the Family and Medical Leave Act to take time off, the amendment does not give the employee the right to use earned compensatory hours for that purpose.

This amendment is a cruel hoax. It does not help working men, it does not help working women, and it does not help working families.

Many organizations that have historically struggled for the rights of working women and their families recognize the fatal flaws in this proposal. 9 to 5, the National Association of Working Women; the American Nurses Association; the Business and Professional Women; the National Council of Jewish Women; the National Women's Law Center; the Women's Legal Defense Fund; the League of Women Voters; the American Association of University Women—the list goes on and on.

These organizations have fought for years to improve working women's lives on the job and in the home. They have supported affordable and high-quality child care. They have supported a living wage on the job. They were in the forefront of the battle to achieve Family and Medical Leave. From pay equity to pension equity to equal opportunity at home and at work, these organizations and others like them have worked tirelessly with and for working women.

Yet these groups uniformly oppose this proposal. Last spring they sent a letter to Senators LOTT and DASCHLE, expressing their belief that the bill "fails to offer real flexibility to the working women it purports to help while offering a substantial windfall to employers."

These organizations understand that working women may want more time with their families, but they cannot afford to give up overtime pay. As the letter to Senators LOTT and DASCHLE explained, "Women want flexibility in the workplace, but not at the risk of jeopardizing their overtime pay or the well-established 40-hour work week."

Democrats in Congress understand these concerns, and we are prepared to honor them. Unfortunately, this legislation either ignores these problems or makes them worse.

This is a bad bill, and the President has rightly promised to veto it should

it ever reach his desk. But it should never leave the Senate.

The Senate was right to reject this proposal last year, and we would have done so again today.

DISASTER RELIEF NEEDS OF U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN CALIFORNIA

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, as I did during the Appropriations Committee mark-up of the emergency supplemental bill, I wanted to take a few moments and thank Senator STEVENS and Senator BYRD for their efforts on this important legislation. Once again, my state of California will be able to rebound from a devastating natural disaster, thanks to the leadership of these two distinguished Senators.

One of the consequences of El Nino has been extensive damage to the military infrastructure in my state. High winds and massive flooding have left a trail of destruction that must be addressed. This legislation includes important disaster funding that is critical to the readiness of our Armed Forces and to the quality of life of our military personnel.

I was pleased that the administration requested \$50 million in contingency funding for El Nino related disasters. I am also thankful that a portion of these funds have been designated to repair Marine Corps facilities and Air Force family housing in California. However, it is my understanding that damage estimates from California are still evolving and it is likely that the current allotment for California will not be sufficient.

I would like to ask Senator STEVENS, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, if it is his intention during conference committee to increase disaster funding for California military installations when better estimates from the Defense Department are made available?

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, in the bill being reported by the House today, the House of Representatives has included additional funds for damages incurred from these storms. This amount is based on updated figures that have become available, subsequent to the President's submission to the Congress.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I thank my friend, Chairman STEVENS, for his continued leadership. His assistance is greatly appreciated. These funds are very important to California and to those serving our nation in the Armed Forces.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

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

ANNIVERSARY OF THE EDISON, NJ, PIPELINE ACCIDENT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the anniversary of the tragic and frightening natural gas explosion that occurred four years ago near Edison, New Jersey. According to the National Transportation Safety Board, that accident was caused by a gouge in a major natural gas pipeline from unreported external damage during excavation. This dramatic accident caused Congress to focus on underground damage prevention.

Mr. President, I knew then that we needed to act to prevent future damage to the American underground infrastructure. I started working with Senator Bradley and Senator LAUTENBERG to develop "one-call" legislation to improve state laws so as to require excavators to call before they dig, and facility owners to mark their underground facilities accurately when notified. In spite of the clear need to act to reduce the number of dangerous and disruptive accidents at our underground facilities, the consensus needed to pass a one-call bill has eluded Congress for four years. This Congress is going to be different.

Mr. President, the Senate has twice passed a one-call bill in this Congress. The Senate has made a great start. The Senate has a bipartisan bill. The Senate has a bill passed by all 100 members. The Lott-Daschle one-call bill (S.1115) passed the Senate unanimously. In the House, the Baker-Pallone one-call bill (H.R. 3318) is moving ahead. I believe this legislation is a compatible component for the ISTE A bill. There is an overwhelming logic that as this Congress deals with the surface infrastructure it should deal with our underground infrastructure. ISTE A is the right legislative vehicle for one-call.

I promised my good friend, Bill Bradley, when he left the Senate that I would continue the legislative effort. This Congress is not going to let another anniversary pass without enacting a one-call bill into law. This Congress will not turn its back on Edison, New Jersey. This Congress will not turn its back on a common sense safety procedure. This Congress will not allow future Americans to be subjected to the tragic consequences of an avoidable natural gas explosion.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, March 23, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,539,832,909,123.38 (Five trillion, five hundred thirty-nine billion, eight hundred thirty-two million, nine hundred nine thousand, one hundred twenty-three dollars and thirty-eight cents).