

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE YEAR 2000
TECHNOLOGY PROBLEM

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on the Year 2000 Technology Problem be permitted to meet on September 17, 1998 at 9:30 a.m. for the purpose of conducting a hearing.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FORESTS AND PUBLIC LAND
MANAGEMENT

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Forests and Public Land Management of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be granted permission to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 17, for purposes of conducting a subcommittee hearing which is scheduled to begin at 2:00 p.m. The purpose of this hearing is to receive testimony on S. 2385, a bill to establish the San Rafael Swell National Heritage Area and the San Rafael National Conservation Area in the State of Utah.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, HISTORIC
PRESERVATION AND RECREATION

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on National Parks, Historic Preservation and Recreation of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be granted permission to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 17, for purposes of conducting a subcommittee hearing which is scheduled to begin at 2:00 p.m. The purpose of this hearing is to receive testimony on S. 1175, a bill to reauthorize the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Citizen Advisory Commission for 10 additional years; S. 1641, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to study alternatives for establishing a national historic trail to commemorate and interpret the history of women's rights in the United States; S. 1960, a bill to allow the National Park Service to acquire certain land for addition to the Wilderness Battlefield, as previously authorized by law, by purchase or exchange as well as by donation; S. 2086, a bill to revise the boundaries of the George Washington birthplace National Monument; S. 2133, a bill to designate former United States Route 66 as "America's Main Street" and authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide assistance; S. 2239, a bill to revise the boundary of Fort Matanzas National Monument, and for other purposes; S. 2240, a bill to establish the Adams National Historical Park in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and for other purposes; S. 2241, a bill to provide for the acquisition of lands formerly occupied by the Franklin D. Roosevelt family at Hyde Park, New York, and for other purposes; S. 2246, a bill to amend the Act which established the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, by modifying the

boundary, and for other purposes; S. 2247, a bill to permit the payment of medical expenses incurred by the United States Park Police in the performance of duty to be made directly by the National Park Service, and for other purposes; S. 2248, a bill to allow for waiver and indemnification in mutual law enforcement agreements between the National Park Service and a State or political subdivision, when required by State law, and for other purposes, S. 2285, the Women's Progress Commemoration Act; S. 2297, a bill to provide for the distribution of certain publication in units of the National Park System under a sales agreement between the Secretary of the Interior and a private contractor; S. 2309, the Gateway Visitor Center Authorization Act of 1998; S. 2401, a bill to authorize the addition of the Paoli Battlefield site in Malvern, Pennsylvania, to Valley Forge National Historical Park, and H.R. 2411, a bill to provide for a land exchange involving the Cape Cod National Seashore and to extend the authority for the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission.

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

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

211TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
SIGNING OF THE CONSTITUTION

• Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this is a great date in the history not only of the United States, but of all free people, and of all people who would be free. On September 17, 1787, a small group of truly remarkable Americans gathered to sign one of the greatest documents in all of human history, the Constitution of the United States.

George Washington signed it as the President of the Constitutional Convention and deputy from Virginia. The names of other signers are familiar to all Americans: Benjamin Franklin, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. Other names should be more familiar than they are, names like Morris and Pinkney and Dickinson and Rutledge.

We owe them a great debt. They have given us a firm foundation on which has been built our great and abiding stability. Even when this Nation was torn by a terrible fight over the institution of slavery, the Constitution allowed us to recover with amazing speed, become one Nation again, and avoid the generations of smoldering conflict that afflict so many other countries.

Our Constitution is at once solid and flexible. It can and has been amended from time to time to improve the machinery of government and to expand the rights that citizens enjoy. Throughout our history we have sought to follow Madison's wise advice to limit amendments to "certain great and extraordinary occasions."

In Federalist No. 43, James Madison wrote that the Constitution establishes

a balanced system for amendment, guarding "equally against that extreme facility, which would render the Constitution too mutable, and that extreme difficulty, which might perpetuate its discovered faults." The Constitution is profoundly conservative, in the best sense of that word. As Madison expressed in Federalist No. 49:

[A]s every appeal to the people would carry an implication of some defect in government, frequent appeals would, in great measure, deprive the government of that veneration which time bestows on everything and without which perhaps the wisest and freest governments would not possess the requisite stability.

It is remarkable that although some 11,000 constitutional amendments have been offered in our history, and more than 100 in the 105th Congress alone, the elected representatives in Congress and in the States have adopted only 17 since the original Bill of Rights. We have rejected many amendments that seemed to be good ideas at the time, but which on further reflection proved to be unnecessary. We have found that we could achieve the same results by statute, or have on sober reflection recognized that the amendments would have been mere symbolic gestures. We have avoided turning the Constitution into a mere bulletin board on which we "send a message." We have respected it and, most importantly, we have resisted the temptation to limit the fundamental freedoms of Americans. We have rejected the temptation to erode the Bill of Rights.

I cannot ignore the fact that Congress and the States did succumb once to what looked like a good idea without carefully considering the consequences of their action. The eighteenth amendment imposed prohibition and conjured up a swarm of gangsters, bootlegging, and wholesale disobedience of the law. It was a bad idea that had to be undone by another constitutional amendment. We should regard the eighteenth amendment as a reminder that we should go slow, and stop and consider carefully all of the implications of any change before we put it in the Constitution.

I submit that the Constitution of the United States is a good document—not a sacred text—but as good a law as has been written. That is why it has survived as the supreme law of the land with so few alterations throughout the last 200 years.

It has contributed to our success as a Nation by binding us together, rather than tearing us apart. It contains the Great Compromise that allowed small States and large States to join together in a spirit of mutual accommodation and respect. It embodies the protections that make real the pronouncements in our historic Declaration of Independence and give meaning to our inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The Constitution requires due process and guarantees equal protection of

the law. It protects our freedom of thought and expression, our freedom to worship or not as we each choose, and our political freedoms, as well. It is the basis for our fundamental right of privacy and for limiting government's intrusions and burdens in our lives.

I oppose what I perceive to be a growing fascination with laying waste to our Constitution and the protections that have served us well for over 200 years. The First Amendment, separation of powers and power of the purse should be supported and defended.

When we embarked in this Congress, we each swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution. That is our duty to those who forged this great document, our responsibility to those who sacrificed to protect and defend our Constitution, our commitment to our constituents and our legacy to those who will succeed us.

The Framers gave us a remarkable document, an extraordinary system of government and protections for our individual liberties. So I celebrate this day, not with the parades or fireworks of the Fourth of July, but with solemn consideration of how the Framers guaranteed our freedom through checks on government power. Most of all, I mark this day with a renewed commitment to cherish and to protect this most precious of legacies, to resist easy amendments, to resist assaults on our Bill of Rights, and to preserve the Constitution for our children and grandchildren.●

WOMEN'S ST. CLAIR SHORES CIVIC LEAGUE 60TH ANNIVERSARY

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the St. Clair Shores Civic League, in St. Clair Shores, Michigan on its 60th Anniversary. The mission of the League, "to maintain a high standard of civic life . . . by activities designed to stimulate citizen participation in government and to promote the cultural growth of the city" is very respectable and has led the organization to be very successful.

The Women's St. Clair Shores Civic League has grown tremendously over the course of over six decades. The committee of six women that eventually became the League, was formed in 1930 to aid the youth of the community and assist in civic improvements. In an effort to better handle their increasing tasks, the committee became the Women's St. Clair Shores Civic League in 1939. Some the League's projects over the years have included consolidating three school districts, building a municipal park, and incorporating St. Clair Shores. These achievements, few among many, are testament to the devotion and hard work of the Women's St. Clair Shores Civic League.

I am proud to congratulate this special organization on 60 years. The Women's St. Clair Shores Civic League will undoubtedly enjoy continued success.●

SCHOOL MODERNIZATION TAX INCENTIVES

Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN. Mr. President, today, 39 of my colleagues and I are sending a letter to the Senate Majority Leader, Senator LOTT, and the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator ROTH, urging them to include school modernization tax incentives in any tax legislation considered by the Senate this year. While we may have different positions on the advisability of enacting such legislation, and different positions on what that legislation should include, we are united in believing that any tax legislation must include significant relief for communities seeking to rebuild and modernize their schools.

This month, according to a recent report from the Department of Education, a record number of students are pouring into our nation's classrooms. 52.7 million children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools this year, a 500,000 student increase from last year. Ten years from now, according to the report, enrollment is expected to reach 54.3 million. We cannot continue to pack these children into today's schools. We need to build an estimated 6,000 new schools over the next 10 years just to keep up with rising enrollment.

In addition, the U.S. General Accounting Office has documented \$112 billion worth of deferred maintenance and neglect of existing school buildings. It will cost \$112 billion nationwide—\$13 billion in Illinois alone—to bring existing school buildings up to good, overall condition. That is not the cost of equipping them with new computers, or even of retrofitting them so teachers have a place to plug in new computers. That is just the cost of bringing existing buildings up to good, overall condition.

Crumbling and overcrowded schools are found in every type of community, all across the nation. The GAO found that 38 percent of urban schools, 30 percent of rural schools, and 29 percent of suburban schools are crumbling down around our children.

The problem is so pervasive because it is a symptom of our failed school finance structure. For more than 100 years, we have relied on local property taxes to finance our schools. This system may have made sense when the nation's wealth was held and measured in terms of property, but it does not make sense today.

According to the GAO, our school finance system actually militates against most communities' best efforts to improve their schools. In 35 states, poor districts have higher tax rates than wealthy districts, but raise less revenue because of lower property values.

In 11 states, courts have actually declared school finance systems unconstitutional. In nearly every case, states have complied by raising property or sales taxes to fund school improvements. Similar litigation is pending in

another 16 states, and many of these lawsuits appear likely to result in higher state and local taxes as well.

The Senate has an opportunity this year to break this cycle of crumbling schools and higher local taxes. We have an opportunity to create a new partnership between the federal government, states, and communities to improve our schools. We can do this in a way that does not reduce the projected budget surplus, which is properly being reserved for Social Security, and in a way that maintains continued fiscal discipline.

In last year's Taxpayer Relief Act, the Congress took the first steps toward the creation of this new partnership, when it enacted the Qualified Zone Academy Bond program. Under this program, school districts issue zero-interest bonds, and purchasers of these bonds receive federal income tax credits in lieu of interest. This mechanism can cut the cost of major school improvements by 30 to 50 percent. In Chicago, the school system will presently issue \$14 million worth of these bonds for a school renovation project. By using these bonds instead of regular municipal bonds, the school system will save Chicago taxpayers \$7 million in interest costs. In other words, this project will cost \$14 million, instead of \$21 million.

I propose that we use the same mechanism to facilitate school improvements nationwide. According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, we can supply \$22 billion worth of these special bonds to states and communities at a cost of only \$3.3 billion to the federal treasury over the next five years. That \$3.3 billion cost actually represents tax relief for purchasers of these school modernization bonds. Under this plan, communities get better schools and children get a better education; local property taxpayers and federal income taxpayers get lower bills. This is the kind of innovative partnership we need to rebuild and modernize our schools for the 21st century.

Last week, President Clinton, Vice President GORE, governors, members of Congress, cabinet members, parents, teachers, and school officials gathered at 84 sites around the country to focus attention on the urgent need to create a new partnership to modernize our schools. Speaking at a school in Maryland, President Clinton said our "children deserve schools that are as modern as the world in which they will live." He went on to say that, "Nothing we do will have a greater effect on the future of this country than guaranteeing every child, without regard to race or station in life or region in this country, a world-class education. Nothing."

That statement could not be more true. The rungs on the ladder of opportunity in America have always been crafted in the classroom, and in the emerging global economy, the importance of education continues to grow. As H.G. Wells noted, "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe."