

your intentions for the future of the Kissimmee project.

Senator MACK and I remain committed to forward progress on the Kissimmee River restoration. We would like to work with the committee to identify potential reprogramming opportunities within the Army Corps budget that might allow forward progress on this project which is so critical to Everglades restoration.

We would also like to work with the committee during the fiscal year 2000 appropriations process to ensure that the Kissimmee River restoration is funded at appropriate levels.

Mr. DOMENICI. I recognize the importance of this project to the state of Florida, and I look forward to working with the Senators from Florida to identify any potential funding alternatives or reprogramming options for the Kissimmee River project. We will work together in the next year to include appropriate funding levels for the Kissimmee River restoration project in the fiscal year 2000 appropriations bill.

Mr. REID. I would like to echo the comments of Senator DOMENICI by stating my support for the Kissimmee River restoration project. I, too, look forward to working with both Senators GRAHAM and MACK in the next week to identify any funding or reprogramming opportunities for the Kissimmee River project.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I rise to engage the chairman of the Subcommittee, Senator DOMENICI, in a brief colloquy. It has come to my attention that, due to some confusion regarding the funding of an on-going Section 1135 ecosystem restoration project of a similar name, the conference report to accompany the Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill eliminated funding for the Duwamish and Green River Basin study. Would the chairman agree that neither the Committee nor the conferees are opposed to the ongoing Duwamish and Green River Basin study?

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, the Senator from Washington is correct. There has been some confusion regarding this study and the funding for the Green-Duwamish ecosystem restoration project under the Section 1135 program.

Mr. GORTON. Would the Chairman also agree that the Corps of Engineers should seek a reprogramming of funds to keep this important project on schedule and, if sought, would the chairman be inclined to approve such a request?

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I agree that, if appropriate, the Corps of Engineers should seek to reprogram funds to keep this study moving forward. I am not aware of any opposition to the project and do not anticipate a problem with a reprogramming request.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I rise today to thank the distinguished Senator from New Mexico, the Chairman of the Energy and Water Subcommittee, for the outstanding work he has done on this bill. This is an extremely tough bill covering a diverse range of issues

from our nation's nuclear defenses, to scientific research to water projects impacting each and every state. He has done a superb job in balancing these needs. I wish to especially thank him for recognizing the special needs for Positron Emission Tomography work at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, South Carolina.

Mr. DOMENICI. I thank the Senator from South Carolina. I appreciate his interest in this bill and in medical research. The Subcommittee appreciated the Senator bringing the Medical University of South Carolina's needs to the Committee's attention last year and he has again made a convincing case for them this year.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Cancer rates in South Carolina are some of the highest in the nation, with more than 17,000 new cases diagnosed and more than 8,100 deaths each year. The funding in this bill is critical to our efforts to combat cancer in South Carolina as well as the nation and I thank the Senator.

In closing, there may be some slight confusion regarding the funds for the Medical University of South Carolina. I want to make sure everyone understands these funds are to build upon last year's efforts and are to be used to design and construct an expansion of the Medical University of South Carolina's cancer research center to provide space for Positron Emission Tomography treatment. Is that your understanding?

Mr. DOMENICI. The Senator from South Carolina is correct. I thank him for clarifying this matter.

Mr. HOLLINGS. I thank the Senator from New Mexico. I yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I have read and agree with the subcommittee's views on improving the efficiency of Nuclear Regulation Commission regulation. There is significant evidence that different, but equally protective, approaches to regulation could result in more efficient regulatory practices.

As I am sure the Senator from New Mexico is aware, there are some areas within the Commission's purview that will be challenged to keep up with the growing workload even in the face of significant improvements in efficiency. An example is the Spent Fuel Project Office (SFPO) which is responsible for approving domestic use new dual purpose canister systems for the safe storage and transportation of spent nuclear fuel; ensuring the safety of existing technologies that have been deployed throughout the nuclear energy industry as needs for out-of-pool storage have emerged; reviewing and approving cask technologies necessary to support high priority non-proliferation activities of the United States, including the DOE Foreign Research Reactor Spent Fuel Receipt Program; reviewing and approving the transportation technologies for nuclear materials other than spent fuel; and reviewing and ap-

proving or providing support to a host of other spent fuel storage and transportation initiatives sponsored by either the federal government or private interests.

Does the Chairman agree with me that this plays an important role and does he believe that the agency recognizes the importance of the office's work?

Mr. DOMENICI. I agree with the Senator's observations. The licensing of technologies to handle the storage and transportation of various types of spent fuel is one of the few areas within the Commission's budget in which the demand for regulatory activity is clearly increasing.

In addition, I hope the agency will examine further management initiatives, such as those currently under review, that might be necessary in the short term to address existing budget constraints and to ensure that the resources that are available are being utilized to maximize the likelihood of succession review of application for new technologies.

I agree with the Senator from Georgia that the Commission should continue to monitor the workload of the SFPO to ensure that adequate resources are available to meet demand for application reviews.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, all time is yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to the conference report.

The conference report was agreed to.

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

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

SENATE TASK FORCE ON PLUTONIUM DISPOSITION

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, the end of the Cold War served to greatly reduce the threat of global instability, but the world is far from being a safe place today. Challenges to continued world peace—from increased terrorist activities to display of nuclear weapon capabilities by new countries—seem to occur weekly. To date, we have not had to face the dreaded combination of terrorists with nuclear arms, but that possibility must be considered as we evaluate new terrorist threats.

Designs for crude nuclear weapons, potentially more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb, are readily available today. The only hurdle for terrorists to overcome is acquisition of the plutonium or highly enriched uranium needed to build the weapon.

Senator PETE DOMENICI, my colleague from New Mexico, has grappled with these issues for many years. He

led the Senate's efforts through the U.S./Russian Agreement on Highly Enriched Uranium to secure 500 tons of this material from Russia, enough for perhaps 20,000 bombs.

More recently, Senator DOMENICI has focused his attention on 50 tons of weapons-grade plutonium that Russia has declared to be surplus; that's enough material for almost 10,000 nuclear weapons. He has led efforts to ensure that this surplus plutonium won't present us with a future threat.

His trips to Russia, first last July with Senator THOMPSON and Senator GRAMS, and then more recently to the Moscow Summit, focus on this issue. Through those trips, Senator DOMENICI is well known to the leadership of the Russian weapon programs. His proposals for rapid progress on this surplus plutonium have been thoroughly studied throughout the world, from Japan to France.

Senator DOMENICI discussed his proposals with President Clinton in late July and encouraged that plutonium disposition be a focus of this past Summit. The protocol on plutonium disposition at the Moscow Summit is an important first step, but it is only the first step.

We have to go far beyond just signing the protocol to secure the benefits that it can provide—to ensure that the material is never rebuilt into weapons or found in the hands of terrorists or rogue states. Furthermore, the Senate needs to advise the Administration on the detailed agreements that will enable real progress.

Today, I'm appointing a Senate Task Force on Plutonium Disposition to provide this input from the Senate to the Administration. I'm pleased that Senator DOMENICI has agreed to chair this task force, to continue his leadership on this vital topic.

Also serving on the task force will be Senator RICHARD LUGAR of Indiana, Senator FRANK MURKOWSKI of Alaska, Senator JON KYL of Arizona, Senator CARL LEVIN of Michigan, Senator JEFF BINGAMAN of New Mexico and Senator PATTY MURRAY of Washington. Each of these Members brings knowledge and concern that will be valuable in guiding the Senate on this issue.

As agreements are finalized, the Senate may be called upon to approve programs or provide resources; we will depend on this task force to provide information for informed debates on these subjects.

Disposition of the current 50 tons of Russian excess weapons-grade plutonium is an important national goal. We have a golden window of opportunity to rid the world of nuclear materials for thousands of nuclear weapons. We must seize this moment.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, September 28, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,525,125,982,443.88 (Five tril-

lion, five hundred twenty-five billion, one hundred twenty-five million, nine hundred eighty-two thousand, four hundred forty-three dollars and eighty-eight cents).

Five years ago, September 28, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,386,349,000,000 (Four trillion, three hundred eighty-six billion, three hundred forty-nine million).

Ten years ago, September 28, 1988, the federal debt stood at \$2,587,978,000,000 (Two trillion, five hundred eighty-seven billion, nine hundred seventy-eight million).

Fifteen years ago, September 28, 1983, the federal debt stood at \$1,354,464,000,000 (One trillion, three hundred fifty-four billion, four hundred sixty-four million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,170,661,982,443.88 (Four trillion, one hundred seventy billion, six hundred sixty-one million, nine hundred eighty-two thousand, four hundred forty-three dollars and eighty-eight cents) during the past 15 years.

WELLSTONE AMENDMENT TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I supported Senator WELLSTONE's amendment to the Higher Education Act and I regret that it was not included in the conference report. The amendment would have increased educational opportunities for people on welfare. It passed the Senate with a bipartisan majority, but was rejected by House Republicans, even though it was also supported by the White House, and by more than 150 social welfare groups.

The goal of this amendment is to correct a serious deficiency in the harsh welfare reform law enacted two years ago. Too often, welfare reform around the country has focused on immediate work experience as a means to achieve financial independence, but the focus is excessive, because it reduced options for welfare recipients who wish to complete to two- or four-year college degrees.

Welfare reform around the country has tended to focus on immediate work experience as a means to achieve financial independence. The new direction of welfare reform at both state and federal levels has generally reduced the options available for welfare recipients who wish to complete a two- or four-year college degree. It is extremely difficult for single parents to be full-time students and work part-time and still give adequate time to their families.

The welfare reform program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, is based on the idea that work is the best way to achieve independence, especially if the work comes with job security and fair wages. For many people, education is the best road to jobs that achieve these goals. Higher education is often the best way to earn higher wages, achieve independence from welfare, and provide protection from future poverty and unemployment.

Recent studies have found that the average wage for a person who was previously on welfare and then earned a degree is \$11.00 an hour, and that each year of education completed by welfare recipients increases wages by as much as \$1.14 per hour. A study of 4,500 working mothers in the Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation found that a college degree is worth an additional \$2.58 per hour for working mothers, compared to the wages of high school graduates. The special importance of higher education for women is emphasized by other data showing that women need a college degree to make the same amount of money that men earn with only a high school education.

The results of these studies are hardly surprising. We know the importance of higher education and the advantages it opens up. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in March 1995 that adult workers with less than a high school diploma earned an annual average of only \$13,697. Adult workers with a high school degree earned \$20,248. With an associates degree, they earned \$26,363, and with a bachelor's degree they earned \$37,224.

The job and career benefits of higher education are also demonstrated by the poverty statistics of the Department of Labor. In 1995 only 1.5 percent of those with a four-year college degree were living in poverty compared to 3.3 percent of those with an associates degree, 6.1 percent of those with a high school diploma, and 17.2 percent of those without a high school diploma.

The evidence for the Wellstone amendment is overwhelming, and a bipartisan majority of the Senate was right to pass it. Under its provisions, 24 months of post-secondary education or vocational educational training would be permissible work activities under welfare reform.

I commend Senator WELLSTONE's leadership on this important issue. States should have the flexibility to create responsible ways to move people from welfare to work, by allowing welfare recipients to include higher education as a part of their effort to achieve financial independence and provide effectively for their families. The House conferees were wrong to reject this positive reform, and we should do all we can to enact it as soon as possible.

CONGRESS NEEDS TO ACT ON HEALTH INSURANCE FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, this weekend, the New York Times reported on the latest data on Americans without health insurance. According to the Census Bureau, the number of uninsured has now reached 43.4 million of our fellow citizens—an increase of 1.7 million since last year. This increase is on top of the growth in the uninsured of one million last year. The proportion of Americans without health insurance is now higher than it has been