people are living longer and better lives in our country. At the start of this century, you were expected, on average, to live to be 48 years old. Now, at the end of the century, you are expected to live on average to about 78 years of age—a 30-year increase in life expectancy.

For a lot of reasons—better nutrition, breathtaking breakthroughs in medical science, better medical facilities—a whole series of things contribute to the success. But the result of the success is that people are living longer, and that puts strains on the Social Security system. But we ought not shrink from the challenge of those strains.

We can solve this issue. We can make Social Security solvent for at least the next 75 years and beyond. Let's not at this point decide that the 106th Congress cannot deal with the Social Security challenge. Of course we can.

President Clinton and Vice President GORE made a proposal at the start of this Congress. Just as a starting point, they put forward a proposal to let us sink our teeth into this issue, and make it a priority.

I know there is a lot of controversy about how you might reform and change and improve the solvency of the Social Security system for the long term. But I think the best way to approach this—I agree with Vice President GORE—is for both parties to resolve that this shall be a priority; we, together, should decide to save Social Security in this Congress.

I ask the majority leader here in the Senate and others to agree with President Clinton and Vice President GORE that this ought to be job No. 1 for this Congress. Let us together reform the Social Security program, and make the changes that are necessary to extend its solvency for the long term into the future.

Again, while we do it, let me remind those who listen to this debate that the problems confronted by the Social Security system are not problems of a program that doesn't work. It works, and works well. They are problems resulting from longer and better lives for many older Americans in this country.

THE TRAGEDY IN LITTLETON, COLORADO

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I would like to talk just for a moment about the horrible tragedy that occurred in Littleton, CO, last week.

I am a North Dakotan. I have been a North Dakotan all of my life. I did, however, leave our State to go to graduate school in Colorado. Following graduate school, I worked in Colorado, and worked, in fact, in Littleton, CO. It is a nice community, a suburb of Denver.

Last week, I was, along with all other Americans, horrified to see the pictures on television of the school shooting at Columbine High School that took the lives of so many innocent young boys and girls, and also a teacher. And I asked myself, what is causing this? What is at the root of this kind of violence? The Littleton, CO, shooting is just the latest in a series of school shootings. Unfortunately, there have been many others in the last several years.

I can't watch the television set without getting tears in my eyes. Moments ago, I was turning on a television set and I saw the funeral for a very brave teacher who died that day in that school in Colorado. We ask ourselves over and over and over again, what has changed? What is causing all of this?

On Friday, I met with a high school assembly in North Dakota. We talked at great length about these issues. This morning I spent all morning at a youth detention facility called Oak Hill and talked to young folks at that facility from 12 years old on up, young people who had committed violent crimes and who are now committed to that detention facility not more than an hour from this Capitol Building.

I don't have any better answers perhaps than anyone else in America about these issues. I have some thoughts about some of it. Obviously, first, it all starts at home. There isn't a substitute for good parenting.

One of the young boys this morning at the Oak Hill Detention Center, who has been involved in drugs and violent crime, said he only had one parent. He said his parent checked on him from time to time but he said, ''Checking in on young folks from time to time isn't enough.''

Another part of the problem is drugs and the accessibility of drugs. In addition, a country with 220 to 240 million guns, and with seemingly easy accessibility to guns by children, makes parenting more difficult.

How about the violence children are exposed to every day? By the time children graduate from high school they will spend about 12,000 hours in a classroom and about 20,000 hours in front of a television set. Study after study after study, year after year after year shows that the steady diet of violence seen by our young people on television affects their behavior. Does it turn them into murderers? No. Does it affect their behavior? Yes, of course it does.

Corporations spend $200 billion a year in this country advertising in the media. Yet when we are suggesting through studies that the steady diet of violence offered to our young children on television is hurting them, the same people will say, ''Gee, the media has no influence on our children.'' If that is the case, why is $200 billion a year spent advertising tennis shoes, jerseys, and more? If it doesn't work, why do we see it used so extensively? Of course the media has an enormous influence.

Last week, while these shootings at school were taking place, as horrifying as it was for everyone in America to watch SWAT teams move into the building and young children run from the building in panic, one of the networks broke for a commercial. The commercial break was to encourage us to watch a new program called ''Mr. Murder.'' I thought to myself, I guess that says a lot, doesn't it? We are watching these children at this high school under siege by young gunmen, and then there is an advertisement for the new program, ''Mr. Murder.''

Is a murder program on television causing these murders in the school? That is not my allegation at all. Does it hurt our children? The pop culture of increasingly violent television, increasingly violent movies—or how about increasingly violent lyrics in music? There is a man in Minot, ND, whose young boy put a bullet through his brain. When he found his son, he was lying on his bed with his earphones connected to a compact disk that was playing over and over and over and over again lyrics to a Marilyn Manson song saying the way to end all of this ''is with a bullet in your head.'' For 3 months, he obsessed on this kind of music, and then his father found him lying on his bed with a bullet in his head. The teacher of a young boy named Mitchell, who killed 4 of his classmates and 1 teacher and wounded 10 others, testified before the Senate Commerce Committee last June.

She talked about 13-year-old Mitchell. She was Mitchell's teacher, taught Mitchell English. He was always respectful, she said, saying ''Yes, ma'am,'' ''No, ma'am.'' She never saw him exhibit anger. After the killings, she said the classmates had a discussion. They discovered Mitchell had been obsessing on an entirely new kind of music—Bone Thugs and TuPac. And she told us the lyrics that Mitchell had been listening to in ''Crept and We Came'' by Bone Thugs:

Cockin the 9 and ready to aim
Pullin the Trigger
To blow out your brains
Bone got a gang
Man we crept and we came.

This song has about 40 murder images, like ''puttin them in the ground and pumpin the gun.''

That is what Mitchell was listening to.

''Body Rott,'' by Bone Thugs. Or here are the lyrics from ''I Ain't Mad at Ya'' by TuPac.

I can see us after school
We'd bomb on the first [blank blank]
With the wrong [blank] on. And from ''2 of Amerikas Most Wanted:''
Picture perfect, I paint a perfect picture.
Bomb the hoochies with precision . . .
Ain't nuttin but a gangsta party.

These lyrics are from Mitchell's teacher who wanted us to know what he was listening to.

Is this part of the culture? Does this hurt our children? Is it easy to parent with these kinds of images, these kinds of thoughts coming from our television set, from compact disks? Should we think through all of this—not just at the surface with parenting, drugs, and guns—but also the issue of pop culture?

If $200 billion is spent advertising in the media because it influences behavior, should we as parents and should we

as legislators start understanding that the media then has a profound impact on children as well. Should we understand when the media pumps images—thousands and thousands and thousands of images—of murder that tell our young children the way adults solve their problems is to kill someone, to stab someone, to murder someone? That is the way adults solve their problems, according to television programs.

Yes, it is fiction, but how do children know that? Yes, you can say parents should do a better job of seeing what their children are watching, but it is very hard.

I have a lot more to say about this but I know colleagues are waiting. I am sure I join all of my colleagues in saying we are heartbroken by what is happening in this country and what happened in Littleton, CO. My thoughts and prayers go to all of those families and friends who lost loved ones.

I watched the images of the funerals today in Littleton, and I want to be part of anything any of us can do to try to find reasons and try to develop policies to see if we can't steer all of us in a more constructive direction. In the meantime, my thoughts and prayers are with all of those in Colorado and around this country who today grieve for those young children and the teacher who lost their lives.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST DAM REMOVAL

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, dam removal as a serious option for salmon recovery on the Snake River died last week. It was killed by the National Marine Fisheries Service, the arm of the Clinton administration assigned to save those endangered salmon.

Why and how?

Three runs of salmon on the upper Snake River were listed as endangered in 1991 and 1992. On April 14, NMFS announced its determination that only 19 percent of salmon smolts barged around the dams, die. In fact, we now know that downriver survival rates are at least as high as they were in the 1960's before the Snake River dams were built!

As a result, NMFS now believes that the chance of recovery for the endangered runs is only 64 percent if all four Snake River dams are removed, as against 53 percent by continuing to transport smolts around the dams. The difference is barely statistically significant.

We can assume that NMFS science is the best available. That science is a vital component of public policy, but only one component of good public policy and not absolutely determinative to the exclusion of all other concerns.

So against the modest 11-percent improvement in survival chances for these populations of salmon from dam removal, we must weigh the immense costs of removal. Earlier this month at a Senate Energy Committee field hearing, a representative from Bonneville Power testified that BPA would lose approximately $263 million in power revenues in each average water year in perpetuity under medium future economic conditions. BPA also estimates that removal of the four lower Snake River dams is likely to increase its power rates by as much as 30 percent. The cost of removal itself, the destruction of navigation, the loss of irrigated farms and the human and community devastation add untold billions to that figure. That cost is vastly out of proportion to the salmon recovery goal, much less to the extremely modest improvement even in the prospects for recovery.

So dam removal as a rational option is dead. We in the Pacific Northwest, specifically residents in eastern, rural Washington, have been waging this war with the environmental community. It gives me great pleasure today to present my assessment of the recently released National Marine Fisheries Service report on Snake River dams and salmon recovery options.

I cannot support the effort to dismantle the world's most productive hydroelectric system when the costs are so great in relation to the benefit to a few selected salmon runs. Under the current management of the Columbia/Snake River system, Northwest ratepayers have contributed $366 million per year on average since 1995 to salmon recovery. The plan requires flow augmentation, dam spill, surface bypass, juvenile and adult fish passage improvements, water supply studies, PIT tag monitoring, and additional salmon barges. Although many, myself included, have been highly critical of Federal salmon recovery efforts, the results are beginning to show signs of progress. Based on new technology for salmon monitoring using Pit-Tags, NMFS estimates a significant increase in downriver survival for juvenile salmon. It estimates salmon are now surviving at a rate of 50 to 68 percent for juvenile salmon that migrate through eight Snake and Columbia River dams. Since about 60 percent of juvenile salmon are barged at a survival rate of 98 percent, the combined salmon survival rate to Portland, past eight dams, exceeds 80 percent.

Why are some in such a rush to consider dam removal when faced with these statistics? According to NMFS, these statistics may be further enhanced during the next three to four years of monitoring the adult fish returning to the river. However, the single-interest advocacy groups claim we can't wait any longer—they say we must remove the dams now.

Let me reemphasize one glaring fact. The overall survival rate past the four lower Snake dams is at least as high today as it was in the 1960's before the dams were built, according to NMFS' own biologists. Much of this recent improvement in survival rates can be attributed to technical and operational improvements at the dams. There is much more that can be done to improve survival rates past the four lower Snake dams. Unfortunately, the Army Corps of Engineers has been waiting to see if these dams are going to be removed before spending any more money on further improvements that could provide immediate benefits.

Although the passage survival is much higher now, adult salmon returns continue at a distressed level. A likely theory is that declines are due to the rise in ocean temperatures. During the Easter recess, my Interior appropriations subcommittee held a field hearing on Northwest salmon recovery in Seattle. One of NMFS' own fisheries biologists expressed optimism that the likelihood of decreasing ocean temperatures off the coast in the Pacific Northwest as indicative of an improving climate for salmon in the Northwest.

We are likely to obtain valuable new information about adult salmon returns and likely will witness a dramatic change in the ocean environment. Even under current circumstances, the difference between removing dams, to save fish or barging them around dams is too close to call. And when all the costs of dam removal are factored into this equation, it is hard to imagine why anyone would want to take this dubious course of action.

In the meantime, the debate over dam removal has led to unfortunate consequences. More realistic and cost effective salmon recovery measures with a proven track record have been delayed. I am committed to securing the funds necessary not only for dam improvements but also for local salmon enhancement groups and other conservation organizations to continue their efforts to restore salmon habitat throughout the state. Salmon recovery will take place when local people who care passionately about local watersheds have the freedom and the resources to take the steps needed on a stream-by-stream and river-by-river basis.

At my recent field hearing, I was most impressed with the way people in my state are coming together in unprecedented ways. Rather than focusing on past differences, farmers, loggers, fishermen, conservationists, locally elected officials, and countless others representing a vast array of interests and perspectives are working together to develop habitat restoration and watershed improvement plans throughout the state that will not only provide immediate benefits to our salmon resource but will do so in ways that will take into consideration the economic and social needs of our communities.

A good example of how collaborative efforts can achieve positive results for the salmon resource recently took place in the Hanford Reach area of the Columbia River. Ten years ago, the fall