which said, for example, that those who purchased guns at gun shows would be subject to a background check. I don't think that is an outrageous idea.

We passed the Brady law. We said, if you want to buy a gun, we want to know if you have a history of committing a crime, a violent crime, because if you do, we are not going to sell you a gun; or if you have a history of violent illness, mental illness, we won't sell you a gun. That has worked. It has kept guns out of the hands of hundreds of thousands of people. At least it slowed them down, at a minimum, but maybe it stopped them from owning a gun.

It turns out that a substantial portion of firearms are sold outside the law. They are sold at gun shows. We have them all over Illinois, all over the United States. People who own guns and collect them get together and sell them to one another, no questions asked. Because no questions are asked, it has become a supply operation for a lot of criminal elements.

In Illinois, the State police found that 25 percent of the guns used in crime came out of those gun shows. One of the things we put into law in the Senate was that there would be a background check, similar to the Brady law, to find out if a person purchasing at a gun show had, in fact, a criminal background or a history of mental illness.

The National Rifle Association doesn't like that. When they got the bill over in the House, they said, you can't take more than 24 hours to do the check. The gun shows occur on weekends, of course, and the wheels that are spinning forward to check the backgrounds of people may not be as available on weekends. As a consequence, they watered down the bill until it was meaningless.

A second provision we put into law—Senator HERB KOHL of Wisconsin was the author—suggested we not sell guns in America unless they had a trigger lock, a child safety device. Thirteen kids every day in America are killed by guns. Some are gangbangers who shoot away in Washington, DC, in Chicago, IL. Others, though, are kids who go out and get a gun off a shelf from their father's closet, start to play with it, discharge it, and shoot themselves, a brother, sister, or playmate. Thirteen kids a day die that way.

We want to lessen the likelihood of those tragic accidents. Trigger locks, safety devices on guns, do that. That was in our bill. That was sent to the House. That was rejected.

The final point is one that Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN of California proposed, a proposal that tries to close a loophole in the law. When we passed gun control a few years ago, we said, we are going to prohibit the manufacture of these high-capacity ammunition clips, clips that can literally hold up to 240 bullets. Unfortunately, we left a loophole and didn't stop the importation of these clips from overseas. So we stopped the domestic manufacturing, and they started flooding in from overseas.

Frankly, it raises a serious question: Who needs a gun with a 240-bullet high-capacity ammunition clip? If you need an AK–47 and 240 bullets to shoot a deer, you ought to stick to fishing.

Unfortunately, they are coming into this country for no purpose other than to be used for criminal purposes.

Senator FEINSTEIN was successful. She passed that amendment in the Senate. We sent it to the House. It got nowhere.

Those are the kinds of things we did to try to deal with some of the problems we have identified. Having done those things, and having seen the National Rifle Association do its work in the House, we have a lot more work to be done.

I hope when the debate is concluded at the end of this 106th Congress, we can point with pride to having succeeded in passing import elements in law that improve the quality of life in America, that reduce the likelihood of violence in schools, that reduce the likelihood of guns getting in the hands of criminals, that increase the opportunities for families across America to have good health insurance and be able to trust their doctor's decisions, and several other things that I think are very important as part of the agenda.

One of them has to deal with increasing the minimum wage of $5.15 an hour. Imagine, if you will, trying to raise a family or even take care of yourself for $5.15 an hour. It has been years since we have increased it. It is time we bring that up to a wage that more accurately reflects the cost of living in America. I hope before we leave this year we can address that.

We cannot leave, as well, without addressing the future of Medicare. This has been a banner week for Medicare with the President's announcement that we now have a reestimate of the budget. We believe if the economy continues to grow, as we believe it will, we are going to have an additional surplus. With that surplus we can do some extraordinary things.

I first came to Congress 17 years ago. When I came, we were facing all sorts of red ink and all sorts of deficits. We have been through a lot of tortuous effort to try to reduce. Now we have reached the point where we can honestly see a surplus in our future. I think we can use that surplus to solidify Social Security and Medicare and, most importantly, while we do that, eliminate the publicly held national debt in America. To move from the point where a large portion of our budget is being spent on interest on the debt to the point where virtually none is being spent on interest on our debt is a great legacy to leave our children. I hope we can achieve that on a bipartisan basis.

I yield the floor.

ELECTION OF EHUD BARAK

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge the election of Ehud Barak to Prime Minister of Israel and his efforts to form a new government. I congratulate him, not only on his most impressive victory, but also for his commitment to reinvigorate the Middle East peace process. As Mr. Barak enters the critical stage in his efforts to forge a coalition government, I wish him luck. And I applaud his initial steps of talking with Egyptian President Mubarak and declaring his intent to form a ''peace administration'' of three negotiating teams, one each for Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians, reporting directly to him. We must not risk losing momentum toward achieving a lasting peace.

As Israel continues to take risks for peace, it is all the more important that America's commitment toward Israel be unquestioned. Our strong commitment helps Israel take risks and makes it clear to Israel's neighbors that Israel is a permanent reality that must be dealt with directly. Our dedication to Israel must take many shapes. We must continue aid to Israel. We must help Israel militarily. We must actively support the peace process. We must maintain our support for Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

America's support for the peace process, for the security of this region, and for Israel itself must be unwavering. Israel, the only pluralistic democracy in the Middle East, deserves our continued strong support. Helping Israel survive and thrive is the right thing to do. In a particularly volatile part of the world, Israel is strategically important to America's interests. We cannot help but benefit by strengthened economic, political, military and cultural ties with Israel.

I have the greatest respect for Israel, its citizens, and its founders. The creation of the state of Israel is a remarkable story of a great people who overcame the Holocaust, rebuffed repeated foreign hostility, and created an industrialized democracy in a desert. The story of Israel appeals to me because it is a story of faith and it is a story of justice. I respect all who stand up to powerful forces against great odds for a just cause.

No issue is more important to our relationship than aid to Israel. It is one of America's most cost-effective foreign policy investments. The economic and military aid that America provides Israel serves the interests of both countries by promoting peace, security, and trade. Israel recently initiated an agreement with the United States under which the United States will gradually reduce the amount of economic aid in the coming years while ensuring an adequate amount of military assistance. I commend Israel for this initiative, and I believe that the United States should stand by it.

The Middle East's unstable mixture of unconventional weaponry, advanced military technology, political instability, and radical fundamentalism

threatens both Israel's security and America's vital interests in the region and around the world. I am committed to the expansion of the United States-Israel strategic cooperation that was formalized in 1983.

In addition, it is our national interest to help ensure that Israel maintains her qualitative military edge. Furthermore, the Unites States should not sell sophisticated weaponry that could erode that edge to nations hostile toward Israel. And, of course, the United States must do all it can to stop the development or acquisition of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons by rogue states such as Libya, Iraq and Iran.

True and lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors can be achieved only through direct negotiations between the parties. Nevertheless, the United States has played a critical role with Israel and her neighbors in helping bridge the differences between them. We must continue to invest the time and energy necessary to help continue this very complex series of negotiations.

Israel's capital of Jerusalem is important to Jews, Christian, and Muslims. I commend Israel for allowing all three faiths open access to worship at their holy places. Jerusalem is and ought to remain a united city under Israeli sovereignty.

Israel is the only country where the United States chooses not to locate our embassy in that country's capital city. I support the Jerusalem Embassy Act that recognizes the united city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and mandates the moving of our embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Finally, I want to discuss Israel's special relationship with my home state of North Carolina. Since 1993, North Carolina and Israel have had one of the most comprehensive official exchange programs in the country. Both North Carolina and Israel have economies that depend on high technology, agriculture, and education. Both states benefit from their ongoing economic, social, and cultural exchanges. I look forward to doing all I can to promote this valuable relationship between Israel and the great state of North Carolina.

Mr. President, I look forward to working with Israel's soon-to-be formed government to pursue our nations' many mutual interests. I wish Mr. Barak and his government the best as he pursues peace, security, and prosperity in the twenty-first century.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF HEARINGS

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, for the information of the Senate I would like to announce that S. 1273, the Federal Power Act Amendments of 1999; and S. 1284, the Electric Consumer Choice Act have been added to the hearing to be held before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on Tuesday, June 29 at 9:30 a.m. I would also like to announce that the hearing before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources previously scheduled for July 1, 1999 has been postponed until July 15, 1999 at 9:30 a.m. in SH–216 of the Hart Senate Office Building. The Committee will receive testimony on S. 161, the Power Marketing Administration Reform Act of 1999; S. 282, the Transition to Competition in the Electric Industry Act; S. 516, the Electric Utility Restructuring Empowerment and Competitiveness Act of 1999; S. 1047, the Comprehensive Electricity Competition Act; S. 1273, the Federal Power Act Amendments of 1999; and S. 1284, the Electric Consumer Choice Act. For additional information you may write to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510.

Mr. President, I also announce for the public that a hearing has been scheduled before the full Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The hearing will take place on Tuesday, July 27, 1999, at 9:30 a.m. in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

The purpose of this hearing is to receive testimony on S. 1052, to implement further the Act (Public Law 94–241) approving the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America, and for other purposes.

Those wishing to testify or who wish to submit written statements should contact the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Washington, D.C. For further information, please call James Beirne, Deputy Chief Counsel at (202) 224–2564, or Betty Nevitt, Staff Assistant at (202) 224–0765.

COSPONSORSHIP OF S. 680

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I am happy to announce that I have decided to cosponsor S. 680. This bill, which was introduced by Senators HATCH and BAUCUS, makes the tax credit for research and development permanent so as to encourage investment by companies and external investors in research activities. It has been shown through studies conducted by the General Accounting Office and the Bureau of Labor Statistics that R&D tax credit stimulates domestic R&D spending by U.S. companies. This continued spending on R&D is very important for the U.S. economy as we head into the next century, and I believe this bill serves an important purpose in achieving this goal.

I look forward to cosponsoring this bill and gaining support for it in the days ahead.

THE MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE INTERSTATE TRANSPORTATION AND LOCAL AUTHORITY ACT OF 1999

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, on June 10, 1999 I joined as a co-sponsor of legislation introduced by my Midwestern colleagues, the Junior Senator from Ohio, Mr. VOINOVICH, and the Junior Senator from Indiana, Mr. BAYH, S. 872, The Municipal Solid Waste Interstate Transportation and Local Authority Act of 1999. I am pleased to be working with them on this very important issue. I know that they, as former Governors, are intimately aware of the concerns that the growing trash trade poses for the States we represent.

We in the Midwest, especially those of us fortunate enough to be from the Great Lakes States, enjoy a very high quality of life—beautiful scenery, small, neighborly towns, and spectacular natural resources. We hold it as a particular point of pride that we, in many instances, have the luxury of avoiding many environmental problems and we have structured our State and local governments in Wisconsin to try to be sure that we continue to avoid them. However, Mr. President, we in Wisconsin are unable to protect our communities, which have done a good regulatory job, from having to deal with the solid waste mess created by our neighboring communities in other States. Instead, my State has been forced to accept other States' municipal solid waste in ever increasing amounts.

We need to enact legislation to reempower States to be able to control the flow of waste into state-licensed landfills from out-of-state sources. This legislation would give States the tools to do just that. It gives states, like mine, the power to freeze solid waste imports at the 1993 levels. States that did not accept out of State waste in 1993 would be presumed to prohibit receipt of out-of-State waste until the affected unit of local government approves it. Facilities that already have a host community agreement or permit that accepts out-of-State waste would remain exempt from the ban. States would also be allowed to set a Statewide percentage limit on the amount of waste that new or expanding facilities could accept. The limit can not be lower than 20 percent. Finally, States, under this bill, are also given the ability to deny the creation of either new facilities or the expansion of existing in-State facilities if it is determined that there is no in-State need for the new capacity.

My home State has tried to address this issue repeatedly on its own, without success. On January 25, 1999, a federal appeals court struck down as unconstitutional a 1997 Wisconsin law that prohibits landfills from accepting out-of-State waste from communities that don't recycle in compliance with Wisconsin's law. We are now examining options for limiting out-of-State trash in Wisconsin including: appealing the decision to the United States Supreme Court, which refused to hear an appeal of a similar Wisconsin case in 1995, passing new State legislation, or pursuing the option before us today—seeking specific authority from Congress to regulate trash from other States.