have worked hard toward the development of the slot amendment concerning O'Hare and the New York Airports and their interest is well noted and I intend to do what I can in conference to provide for a mechanism along the lines that they proposed be agreed to in the conference.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWNBACK). The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report H.R. 1000 by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1000) to amend title 49, United States Code, to reauthorize programs of the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all after the enacting clause of H.R. 1000 is stricken and the text of S. 82, as amended, is inserted in lieu thereof. The question is on third reading of the bill.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill (H.R. 1000), as amended, was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 1000), as amended, was passed, as follows:

(The bill will be printed in a future edition of the RECORD.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. S. 82 is returned to the calendar.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I thank the Presiding Officer. I want to thank some folks because this is important to do. I thank Senators HOLLINGS, GORTON, MCCAIN, DASCHLE, Majority Leader LOTT, and Senator DODD, obviously, on the slot question. I thank very much Senators SCHUMER, DURBIN, HARKIN and ROBB for their cooperation.

On the Democratic Commerce staff, I thank Sam Whitehorn, Kevin Kayes, Julia Kraus and Kerry Ates, who works with me; and on the GOP Commerce staff, Ann Choiniere and Michael Reynolds; and on Senator GORTON's staff, Brett Hale. They have all done wonderful work and I thank them.

Mr. CRAPO addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

SUCCESSFUL INTERCEPT TEST OF THE NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am sure that by now Senators have heard the news that this past weekend a key element of our national missile defense system was successfully tested when a self-guided vehicle intercepted and destroyed an intercontinental ballistic missile in outer space some 140 miles above the Pacific Ocean.

This test was another in a string of successes of our new missile defense technology. The test last Saturday evening follows two consecutive successful intercepts each for the PAC–3 and THAAD theater missile defense systems.

The timing of this good news is fortunate, coming as it does a few weeks after our intelligence community released an unclassified summary of a new intelligence estimate which shows both theater and long-range ballistic missile threats continue to grow. That summary states:

The proliferation of [Medium Range Ballistic Missiles]—driven primarily by North Korean No-Dong sales—has created an immediate, serious, and growing threat to U.S. forces, interests and allies in the Middle East and Asia and has significantly altered the strategic balances in those regions.

Our new theater missile defense systems such as PAC–3, THAAD, and the airborne laser, and the Navy's area and theaterwide systems will help redress those balances and ensure the security of our forces and our allies.

The summary of the new intelligence estimate also discloses that new ICBM threats to the territory of the United States could appear in a few years and that those threats may be more sophisticated than previously estimated. The summary states:

Russia and China each have developed numerous countermeasures and probably are willing to sell the requisite technologies.

It states that countries such as North Korea, Iran, and Iraq could ''develop countermeasures based on these technologies by the time they flight-test their missiles.

The Washington Times reported recently that China's recent test of the DF–31 ICBM employed such countermeasures, and if the Chinese are willing to share this technology with rogue states such as North Korea, as the intelligence summary estimates, the threat we face may be more sophisticated than previously anticipated.

The intelligence summary notes a related trend that was also illustrated in a recent news report. It states:

Foreign assistance continues to have demonstrable effects on missile advances around the world. Moreover, some countries that have traditionally been recipients of foreign missile technology are now sharing more amongst themselves and are pursuing cooperative missile ventures.

Recently, the Jerusalem Post reported Syria is, with the help of Iran, developing a new 500 kilometer-range missile based on the North Korean Scud C. According to the summary of the National Intelligence Estimate, Iran is receiving technical assistance from Russia, and North Korea from China.

These disturbing trends suggest the ballistic missile threat—both to our forces deployed overseas and to our homeland—continue to increase, and it makes the recent successes all the more important. I congratulate the Army, the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization, and the contractor teams on their successes.

Saturday's success does not mean all the technical problems in our missile defense programs are solved, but the successful intercepts do confirm that the test programs are proving the technology of missile defense is maturing and that, with the appropriate resources, the talented men and women in our military and defense industries who are working on these programs are making very impressive progress on the development of workable theater and national missile defense systems. We should be very pleased with these successes and continue to support a robust missile defense program.

I yield the floor.

MILLENNIUM DIGITAL COMMERCE ACT

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I wonder if the Chairman of the Banking Committee, Senator GRAMM, would agree to a short colloquy with respect to the issues we are currently addressing in S. 761, the Millennium Digital Commerce Act.

Mr. GRAMM. I am pleased to discuss this legislation with my colleague from Michigan.

Mr. ABRAHAM. It is my understanding that the Banking Committee is currently reviewing this legislation and the impact it might have on banking regulations and law.

Mr. GRAMM. As I understand it, one proposed amendment to S. 761 contains language which would preclude the use of electronic records by business in instances where there is a state law or regulation affecting that record and that notification and disclosure requirements in particular would be precluded from being sent electronically.

Mr. ABRAHAM. That is correct.

Mr. GRAMM. That, Mr. President, is what causes some concern. I would say to the Senator from Michigan that I understand what your legislation intends to do and I support the goals of this bill, but notification and disclosure requirements are the responsibility of the Banking Committee. At this time, the Federal Reserve is formulating regulations for the use of electronic records by banks and mortgage providers, and notification and disclosure requirements will be a part of the proposed rules.

For that reason, I believe the Banking Committee should have the opportunity to consider this matter.

Mr. ABRAHAM. I thank my colleague for explaining his thoughts on

this bill. While I would note that the opportunities presented by electronic records go beyond banks, it is certainly not my intention to have this bill interfere in the jurisdiction of the Banking Committee. Therefore, I would ask the Chairman whether the portion of the language pertaining to records would best be removed from the bill and left for further work by the Banking Committee.

Mr. GRAMM. Yes it would. I would also say to the Senator from Michigan that, with this modification, I would have no further objection to the consideration of this bill. Also, I want to once again express my support for what the Senator is seeking to accomplish and pledge to assist him in this effort.

Mr. ABRAHAM. I thank the distinguished Chairman for his input.

Mr. GRAMM. I thank my colleague from Michigan.

CLEMENCY OFFER TO FALN MEMBERS

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, as you know I have been a strong critic of the President's recent decision to offer clemency to the 16 members of the Puerto Rican terrorist organization FALN. I have held hearings on this matter and have seen the outrage this action has prompted in many of my constituents and the public at large. I have received numerous communications regarding this situation which criticize the President's decision and question his motives. In particular, I would like to thank Larry Stewart of Lynchburg, Virginia, one of the first to bring this matter to my attention. His interest in this action and its effect on our overall terrorism policy have been appreciated and helpful to me as our work on this issue has progressed.

THE MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES ACCESS TO CARE ACT

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I speak today in support of Senator DASCHLE's bill titled the Medicare Beneficiary Access to Care Act, S.1678. I am proud to cosponsor this important bill because it will provide relief for health care providers suffering under drastic cuts resulting from the Balanced Budget Act (BBA) of 1997. That legislation has had a very negative impact on the Medicare program and the financial viability of our medical establishments providing care under that program. The Senate Minority Leader's legislation will scale back some of the BBA reductions and therefore provide the necessary reimbursement for providers who give needed medical services to patients. Let me be clear, patients will be the ultimate beneficiaries when this bill is enacted. A basic fact is that any person seeking medical attention will likely visit a medical establishment currently being affected by BBA payment reductions. If medical facilities close due to BBA cuts, it will adversely impact not only Medicare beneficiaries, but all of the citizens in that same community who need access to health care.

Back in 1997, I did not support the Balanced Budget Act. In fact, when this came up for consideration back then I said ''Mr. President, this is a huge mistake - a huge mistake.'' Realizing the vital role of Medicare in our country, I thought that we should be going in the opposite direction - providing the opportunity for all Americans to access decent healthcare. Although BBA passed, I did hope that it would not severely impact Medicare beneficiaries or the healthcare establishments that provide their care. Unfortunately, my worst fears have come true.

I have had an almost continuous stream of people from Minnesota come into my office and tell me about the dramatic, draconian effects that BBA has had on the ability of medical establishments to provide needed medical services to people in my state. We have heard from large academic teaching hospitals, small rural clinics, home healthcare agencies, skilled nursing facilities, hospices and physicians. It is hard to think of a medical establishment that has not been impacted by these cuts. According to the hospitals in my state, the total impact of BBA cuts for Minnesota over 5 years will be $908 million. The prognosis is really disturbing. We hear many service providers tell us they can not continue their operations because of these cuts. They are going to close their doors and shut down. Some of these establishments are located in rural settings where they are the only hospital or clinic or nursing facility within dozens and dozens of miles. What is going to happen when these facilities close? The answer is that peoples' health will suffer and the communities will suffer economically. The communities will suffer because they don't have a hospital. Businesses will be reluctant to locate in a community that does not have access to healthcare.

It doesn't have to be this way. In the United States Senate, we have the opportunity to fix some of the problems created by BBA. Senator DASCHLE's bill will lessen the impact of the BBA cuts on providers, thus benefitting patients. I think this package will make a substantial difference.

This bill will help our teaching hospitals by limiting further decreases in the Indirect Medical Education payments. Teaching hospitals are important not only because they train future physicians, but also because they treat a large number of Medicare beneficiaries. For skilled nursing facilities, this bill will repeal the $1500 therapy caps for three years until a new system can be implemented. For Home Healthcare Agencies, this bill postpones the 15% cut in payments for 2 years. For physicians, this bill would smooth out the fluctuations in physician payment rates. For Medicare Plus Choice, this bill provides enrollees with additional time to switch plans if their plan terminates. For clinics, this bill will create a new payment system that is linked to 1999 costs along with subsequent updates. For hospices, this bill will increase hospice payments by the full market basket updates.

This bill will allow many medical facilities in my state to continue operating. I'm sure the same holds true for most states. We need to pass this bill now. Health care is too important an issue. Even though not everybody has access to it, we do have a great health care system and it needs to be preserved. The BBA was a mistake, and now is the time to limit some of the resulting adverse consequences. I hope that my colleagues will join me in support of this bill.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, October 4, 1999, the Federal debt stood at $5,654,411,268,306.82 (Five trillion, six hundred fifty-four billion, four hundred eleven million, two hundred sixty-eight thousand, three hundred six dollars and eighty-two cents).

Five years ago, October 4, 1994, the Federal debt stood at $4,692,027,000,000 (Four trillion, six hundred ninety-two billion, twenty-seven million).

Ten years ago, October 4, 1989, the Federal debt stood at $2,878,049,000,000 (Two trillion, eight hundred seventy-eight billion, forty-nine million).

Fifteen years ago, October 4, 1984, the Federal debt stood at $1,572,268,000,000 (One trillion, five hundred seventy-two billion, two hundred sixty-eight million).

Twenty-five years ago, October 4, 1974, the Federal debt stood at $476,919,000,000 (Four hundred seventy-six billion, nine hundred nineteen million) which reflects a debt increase of more than $5 trillion—$5,177,492,268,306.82 (Five trillion, one hundred seventy-seven billion, four hundred ninety-two million, two hundred sixty-eight thousand, three hundred six dollars and eighty-two cents) during the past 25 years.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 9:32 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

S. 1606. An act to reenact chapter 12 of title 11, United States Code, and for other purposes.

S. 323. An act to redesignate the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument as a national park and establish the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2084. An act making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

The enrolled bills were signed subsequently by the President pro tempore (Mr. THURMOND).