an additional $725 million to restore funds previously appropriated for this program but released last month for clean water SRF's.

Unfortunately, delays in enactment of the Safe Drinking Water Act amendments precluded in VA–HUD subcommittee's consideration of the many additional funding requirements associated with implementation of this legislation.

However, the conference agreement acknowledges that the new legislation will require resources, and states ''the conferees expect EPA to address any funding requirements for implementation of [this] important statute, such as drinking water health effects research, in the agency's operating plan.''

Funding for drinking water health effects research—outside of the amounts included in the science and technology account—was not in either House or Senate version of the VA-HUD bill, and hence was not an issue in conference. While I object to off-the-top setasides from State revolving funds, I fully support funding for health effects research from the science and technology account, which funds all of EPA's research activities. Should EPA propose to increase the relative priority for health effects research as part of its operating plan, and request additional funding for such research within the $542 million appropriated for science and technology, it is my expectation that this would be favorably received.

In conclusion, I encourage EPA to consider carefully the funding requirements associated with this new legislation, and propose a redirection of funds for these important activities within the $6.7 billion fiscal year 1997 appropriation.

COORDINATED TRIBAL WATER QUALITY PROGRAM

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I want to thank the subcommittee for its hard and diligent work on this bill. In particular, I appreciate the earmark of $500,000 for the Coordinated Tribal Water Quality Program for fiscal year 1997.

This program began in 1990 when the 26 tribes and tribal organizations in Washington State came together with a cooperative intergovernmental strategy to accomplish national clean water goals. As a result of Federal court decisions, the State of Washington has recognized the tribes as comanagers of water quality in the State. This program has been an effective tool for leveraging scarce public funds to create viable, watershed-based water quality protection plans.

It is my understanding that the $500,000 earmark in the committee report is not intended to preclude the Coordinated Tribal Water Quality Program from receiving the needed additional $2 million from the Environmental Protection Agency's existing funds under section 104(b)3 of the Clean Water Act.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, the Senator from Washington is correct. The earmark is intended to be a floor from which the EPA may supplement the Coordinated Tribal Water Quality Program. The additional funding will allow the tribes to fulfill their roles as comanagers of water quality in Washington State.

Mrs. MURRAY. I thank the distinguished Chairman for this clarification.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to the previous order, the conference report accompanying H.R. 3666, the VA–HUD appropriations bill, having been received, the conference report is agreed to, and the motion to reconsider is tabled.

The conference report was agreed to.

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

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

Mr. KENNEDY. I ask unanimous consent to proceed for 5 minutes.

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

STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993 was a true landmark for America's families. For the first time, millions of working men and women were freed from the threat of job loss if they needed time off for the birth of a child or to care for a sick family member.

The act has worked well—for employees and for their employers. Employees are now able to take a leave of absence to be with their children or with a sick relative at a crucial time for the family, so that they can provide the special care and compassion which are the glue that binds a family together. In the 3 years since its enactment, it has already helped millions of American families.

For seriously ill children it is particularly important. Having the emotional support of close family members can be a crucial element in their recovery. Allowing a parent the time to be with his or her child under these circumstances can truly make a difference.

The impact on employers has been negligible. A research survey commissioned by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that 93 percent of businesses incurred little or no additional cost due to the Family and Medical Leave Act. There was no noticeable effect on productivity, profitability, and growth resulting from the new law, according to 87 percent of the businesses surveyed.

In light of these facts, it is particularly shocking that Bob Dole would attack the Family and Medical Leave Act as he did the other day. He criticized the Family and Medical Leave Act as an example of ''the long arm of the Federal Government'' interfering with the rights of business owners. As he stated, ''My view is, why should the Federal Government be getting into family leave? * * * the Federal Government ought to be out of it.''

Bob Dole is wrong about family and medical leave and many other issues. In more and more American homes today, both parents must have jobs in order to support their families. A substantial majority of children live in families where neither parent is at home during the day because of their jobs. If we value families—if we are serious about helping parents meet the needs of their children—then family medical leave is essential. Family members must be allowed time off from work to care for a newborn infant, to nurse a sick child back to health, or to be with a sick parent or spouse in a time of medical crisis.

The price of meeting these family responsibilities should not be losing your job. That is why family and medical leave is essential. Bob Dole may not understand this, but American people, by an overwhelming majority, do understand it.

The current law has made a dramatic difference for working families. But, it does not address another very important issue for such families—the need for a brief break in the workday to meet the more routine, but still very important, demands of raising children. At a time when more children than ever are growing up in one parent homes or in families where both parents work outside the home, this flexibility is becoming more and more essential.

Every working parent has experienced the strain of being torn between the demands of their job and the needs of their children. Taking a child to the pediatrician, meeting with a teacher to discuss a problem at school, accompanying a child to a school event, watching a child perform in a special recital or in the big game—all of these often require time off from work. No parent should have to choose between alienating the boss and neglecting the child.

Many employers understand this, and allow their workers to take time for family responsibilities. But many other companies refuse to accommodate their workers in this way. The ability of parents to meet these family obligations should not be dependent on the whim of their employer. In a society that genuinely values families, it should be a matter of right.

Under proposed Democratic amendments to the Family and Medical Leave Act, working parents would be entitled to 4 hours of unpaid leave a month, up to a total of 24 hours of leave a year, to participate in their child's school and community activities or to take that child to the doctor.

Employers would have to receive at least 7 days advance notice of each absence, so that employers will have ample opportunity to arrange work schedules around the brief absence of the employee.

Clearly, this legislation is needed. A recent survey of 30,000 PTA leaders found that 89 percent of parents cannot be as involved in their children's education as they would like because of job demands. A Radcliffe Public Policy Institute study completed last year found that the total time that parents spend with their children has dropped by a third in the past 30 years. This disturbing trend must be reversed.

Greater involvement of parents in their children's education can make a vital difference in their learning experience. A big part of that involvement is more regular contact between parent and teacher, and more regular participation by parents in their children's school activities.

Many of those meetings and activities are scheduled during the workday. As a result, millions of parents are unable to participate because their employers refuse to allow time off. Permitting a modest adjustment in a parent's workday can greatly enrich a child's schoolday. All children will benefit from this kind of parental support and encouragement, and so will the country.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRIST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

WIFE AND CHILD ABUSERS CAN STILL OWN GUNS

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, on September 12, the U.S. Senate, by a vote of 97 to 2, approved an amendment that I sponsored to ban wife beaters and child abusers from having guns. Last night, I learned something about this place that shocks me, and I am here now for 14 years. I learned that even a mandate, voted on 97 to 2, can be dispensed with by a wink of the eye and a nod of the head, with the Rifle Association looking over Members' shoulders. I was told last night that, behind closed doors, the Republican leadership has decided to entirely gut this legislation and say that someone who beats his wife and beats his child ought to be able to own a gun. In other words, the gun is more valuable than the life that may be in jeopardy.

According to the information I received, the continuing resolution now will contain language that seems to have been drafted directly by the National Rifle Association. This new language would allow child abusers to have guns. It also lets off the hook all wife beaters who are convicted in a bench trial, that is, as opposed to a jury trial, just a judge sitting there. And it contains special notification requirements that will allow many wife beaters to hold on to their guns, and that will say to these wife beaters: For you, unlike for everyone else in our society, ignorance of the law is an appropriate excuse.

Mr. President, perhaps it is obvious, but I am absolutely outraged by this proposal, and I hope Americans across our Nation will be outraged, particularly those who have a sister, a mother, a daughter, those who care about what happens with women in our society. It represents a complete cave-in to the most radical fringe of the gun lobby. It will jeopardize the lives of thousands of battered women and children around our Nation.

I am especially outraged because the language approved by the Senate had won such broad, bipartisan support. Among those who approved this legislation were Senator CRAIG, Senator LOTT, the distinguished majority leader, and Senator HUTCHISON from Texas. They all agreed to this. That is why my amendment passed this body by a vote of 97 to 2.

Unfortunately, the gun lobby is now intruding in the legislative process and emasculating this legislation. The NRA language, apparently being placed in the CR, would completely gut the protections in our amendment. It would put guns directly in the hands of people who have beaten their wives or abused their kids. The end result, without any question, would be more shootings, more injuries, and more death.

Mr. President, this new language has several flaws, and I want to take a moment to explain them. First of all, this amendment would completely exempt child abusers from the ban on firearm possession. OK, you can beat your kid, you can still have your gun. Is that the kind of society that we want? I don't think so.

As I have explained, my proposal, as approved by the Senate, applies both to those who abuse their spouses and those who abuse their children. The new language in the Republican bill stands for the proposition that child abusers may continue to possess their guns.

Mr. President, that is absurd, it is outrageous, infuriating, and it is an insult to women in our society. It is an insult to men who think positively about the females in their lives. If someone assaults his own child and is convicted for it, that abuser, in my legislation, has sacrificed any claim to a gun. That is the way I think it ought to be, and 97 Senators agreed with me. That was the second vote, by the way, on my legislation. One time it was unanimous, by a voice vote, with not one objection. More importantly, the child needs protection, and he or she deserves it.

If we can't protect the most vulnerable among us, our abused children, what does that say about us? What does it say about this cowardly Congress? What does it say about the power the National Rifle Association has over our entire society?

Mr. President, excluding child abusers from this ban would be reason enough to defeat this amendment. But there is more. This amendment would also allow many wife beaters to continue to possess firearms. The amendment would entirely exempt from the ban anyone who has been convicted in a trial that was heard solely by a judge. Only convictions from a jury trial would be subject to this watered-down ban.

Mr. President, I can tell you that many wife abusers in my State of New Jersey are convicted in a bench trial. They are brought before the judge and he renders a verdict. These convictions are entirely valid. They can send someone to jail or declare it a misdemeanor. There is no basis for excluding those charged and convicted by a judge—excluding them from the prohibition.

Mr. President, States vary considerably with respect to the types of crimes for which a jury trial is required. In some States, jury trials are used in most domestic violence cases. But in others, judges handle many of these cases.

So the effect of this amendment would be to exclude from the ban a large number of wife beaters, who happen to beat their wives in a State that has a bench trial rather than a jury trial. These wife beaters may have been just as violent as those in other States, where other abusers would be tried by a jury. But under this new language, these wife beaters would have a special exemption. They would be off the hook. ''Aha, you didn't try me by a jury, so I want my gun while I beat my wife.'' Meanwhile, the wives and kids will remain unprotected from gun violence and, for some, that will mean, very simply, they are going to die. The difference often between the beating and a murder is the presence of a gun. Mr. President, it is wrong.

It is time to establish a very clear rule. If you are convicted of beating your wife or your child, you lose your gun. If you are convicted of abusing your child, you lose your gun, no ifs, ands, or buts.

Mr. President, another problematic provision in the new CR language—the continuing resolution is going to determine how we finance most of Government, and I want everybody to understand that, starting with the fiscal year, October 1. That is how we are going to finance Government. In that is this language that gives special exemption to wife beaters. The new language says to wife beaters: We are going to create a special exemption for you if you have been convicted by a judge.