Senator DOLE supported it. Congressman NEWT GINGRICH supported it. The Senate voted 89 to 8 in favor of the increase. The House of Representatives voted 382 to 37 in favor of the increase. In fact, 80 percent of the Republicans in Congress in 1989 voted for a 90-cent increase in the minimum wage, and Republican President George Bush signed it into law.

In 1989, the minimum wage equaled $3.35 an hour. At that time, after adjusting for inflation, it was at its lowest level since 1955. That's why there was overwhelming bipartisan support for a fair increase.

The minimum wage is now $4.25 an hour, but once again, it is nearing a 40-year low. If Senator DOLE and our Republican friends could support a fair increase in the minimum wage as recently as 1989, when its value had sunk to its lowest point since 1955, why can't they support a fair increase in 1996, when its value is once again reaching its lowest point since 1955?

Our Republican friends say, "Oh dear, we're worried that many of those nice young hard-working men and women will lose their jobs if we raise the minimum wage." Spare us those crocodile tears. A hundred and one of the Nation's most respected economists say that raising the minimum wage by the 90 cent's I'm proposing won't cause any significant job loss. The only real tears that our Republican friends are shedding are for business profits, not workers' jobs.

In fact, a great deal more evidence is available today about the job effect of a minimum wage increase than was available in 1989. Studies of the 1989 Federal increase, as well as studies of recent State increases above the Federal level, provide no evidence that these increases have had a significant adverse effect on jobs.

Professor Richard Freeman of Harvard University—one of the Nation's preeminent economists—concluded in a review of these studies:

> . . . at the level of the minimum wage in the late 1980s, moderate legislated increases did not reduce employment and were, if anything, associated with higher employment in some locales.

Professor Freeman goes on to say that the fact that "moderate increases in the minimum wage transferred income to the lower paid without any apparent adverse effect on employment . . . at the turn of the 1990s is no mean achievement for a policy tool in an era when the real earnings of the less skilled fell sharply."

These studies have convinced the overwhelming majority of leading economists to support a minimum wage increase. In the fall of 1995, 101 economists, as I have mentioned—including three Nobel Prize winners—signed a strong statement of support for a higher minimum wage.

Even the Employment Policies Institute Foundation—a think-tank which is funded primarily by the restaurant industry and which is vigorously opposed to an increase in the minimum wage—was forced to admit in a paper by Kevin Lang of Boston University that "this author can find little effect on employment levels from changes in the minimum wage."

This strong support from leading economists for a moderate increase in the minimum wage was not available in 1989. The quantity of evidence of the substantial benefits and the negligible costs of raising the minimum wage was not available at that time. And yet, Senator DOLE, Speaker GINGRICH and many other Republicans who are leading the opposition to a higher minimum wage today were still able to vote for a minimum wage increase in 1989.

Some opponents of an increase today argue that the 1989 increase was more acceptable because it set a lower minimum wage for teenagers working at their first jobs. The 1989 legislation included a so-called training wage which expired in 1993. It permitted employers to pay teenage workers 85 percent of the minimum wage for up to 90 days.

But again, we know now what we did not know in 1989—the youth subminimum wage was a failure. The Labor Department submitted a study to Congress in 1993 summarizing three surveys which found that very few employers actually used the subminimum wage. In the 27 States where State law allowed employers to pay a subminimum wage, not more than 5 percent of employers chose to use it.

Employers did not like the youth subminimum wage, and they did not use it. They did not use it because they could not find workers willing to work for that low a wage. Also, employers did not want two workers, side-by-side doing the same job, with one paid less because he or she was younger than the other.

The youth subminimum provision cannot explain the change of heart of those in Congress who supported a minimum wage increase in 1989 but oppose it today.

Issues do not get any clearer than this. More than 80 percent of all Americans support an increase in the minimum wage. In every segment of our society and every region of the country, a large majority of Americans want a fair increase in the minimum wage.

It is easy to understand why raising the minimum wage has such broad support among the American people. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to understand this issue, because it is an issue of fundamental fairness. One of the major challenges of 1996 is the economic insecurity facing the vast majority of families. Americans are working harder and earning less. They hear the talk about prosperity, but they do not see it in their lives. Millions of families feel left out and left behind, and those at the bottom of the ladder are being left the farthest behind.

A simple vote in the Senate can change all that. Our message is clear—raise the minimum wage.

The economic evidence supports an increase in the minimum wage. The American people support an increase in the minimum wage. A majority in the Senate and the House support an increase in the minimum. The time has come for an up-or-down, yes-or-no vote on increasing the minimum wage.

Let the Senate vote. Raise the minimum wage. No one who works for a living should have to live in poverty.

FOREIGN OIL CONSUMED BY UNITED STATES? HERE'S THE WEEKLY BOX SCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the American Petroleum Institute reports, for the week ending April 26, that the United States imported 8,052,000 barrels of oil each day, 10,000 barrels less than the 8,062,000 barrels imported during the same period a year ago. This is one of those rare weeks when less oil was imported in 1996 than for the same week in 1995.

In any case, Americans now rely on foreign oil for more than 50 percent of their needs, and there are no signs that the upward trend will abate. Before the Persian Gulf war, the United States obtained about 45 percent of its oil supply from foreign countries. During the Arab oil embargo in the 1970's, foreign oil accounted for only 35 percent of America's oil supply.

Anybody else interested in restoring domestic production of oil—by U.S. producers using American workers? Politicians had better ponder the economic calamity sure to occur in America if and when foreign producers shut off our supply, or double the already enormous cost of imported oil flowing into the United States—now 8,052,000 barrels a day.

POLISH-GEORGIAN CREDIT UNION PARTNERSHIP

Mr. NUNN. Mr. President, I would like to take this time to bring to the Senate's attention an exciting movement which is currently under way in Poland. It is a movement to create and develop credit unions for the benefit of Polish citizens.

A unique partnership now exists between the Polish National Association of Cooperative Savings and Credit Unions and the Georgia Credit Union Affiliates. Georgia-based credit unions will provide assistance in the development and implementation of new credit union services and products for the benefit of Polish credit union members. This relationship provides the opportunity for the exchange of information, experience, and expertise which is critical to the formation of sound financial institutions.

Many Polish citizens now enjoy some of the same benefits of credit union membership that many here in America have long taken for granted. One of the more important benefits is the ability to play a role in the appointment of the credit union's officers through direct election. This democratic function instills greater confidence and trust in the credit union by insuring that its officers are responsive to the members' concerns and interests. It also provides hands-on experience in local democratic institutions, which are the building blocks of strong national democracies.

Along with the personal benefits associated with credit union membership comes the more important collective benefit of capital formation. Financial institutions such as banks and credit unions have always served an important function in providing capital for new businesses and in turn economic growth. This is based on the fundamental relationship between savings and investment. Greater individual savings leads to greater business investment. This investment leads to more productivity and greater competitiveness, and we know that greater competitiveness means better jobs and higher standards of living. The bottom line is that a critical component to Poland's prospects for long-term economic development and growth must be the assurance that all Polish citizens have access to sound financial institutions for their hard earned savings and that these institutions serve their communities well.

I applaud the ongoing efforts to build and strengthen Poland's private financial institutions. In particular, I want to recognize Grzegorz Bierecki who has been instrumental in the development of the credit union movement in Poland. I also want to thank Mike Mercer, president of the Georgia Credit Union Affiliates, for bringing this matter to my attention. I believe this movement is worthy of the Senate's attention and support.

RETIREMENT OF BERNICE HARRIS

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, this is a sad day in the U.S. Senate.

Mrs. Bernice Harris, a loyal and hard-working employee in the Russell Coffee Shop, leaves the Senate today after more than three decades of dedicated service.

In a body which is divided on many issues, it is safe to say there is total agreement on Bernice.

Bernice made the Senate, and in particular the Russell Building, a better place in which to work. Each morning, we could count on seeing Bernice's smiling face and her friendly greeting, undoubtedly helping us get through a hectic day.

We will all miss Bernice's unflinching good cheer as well as her unique outlook on life. Bernice has such a wonderful perspective that she never failed to improve my day and many days of many others in the Senate community.

So although it's a sad day in the Senate, it is a happy day in the house—the household of Bernice Harris. It is hard for me to relate how much we will miss Bernice. I am sure my colleagues will join with me in wishing Bernice well for her much-deserved retirement.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, a great many Americans don't have the faintest idea that the Federal debt is so incredibly enormous. Quite often, I ask friends if they know how many millions of dollars are there in a trillion?

Few know, but one thing they do know is that it was the U.S. Congress that ran up the enormous Federal debt that is now over $5 trillion.

To be exact, as of the close of business yesterday, May 1, 1996, the total Federal debt—down to the penny—stood at $5,096,321,323,731.34. On a per capita basis, every man, woman, and child in America owes $19,249.10.

So, Mr. President, there are a million million in a trillion, which means that the Federal debt is now in excess of 5 million million dollars.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Thomas, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:30 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Goetz, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate.

H.R. 2149. An act to reduce regulation, promote efficiencies, and encourage competition in the international ocean transportation system of the United States, to eliminate the Federal Maritime Commission, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2641. An act to amend title 28, United States Code, to provide for appointment of United States marshals by the Attorney General.

The message also announced that the House agrees to the report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendments of the House to the bill (S. 641) to reauthorize the Ryan White CARE Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that pursuant to the the provisions of 22 U.S.C. 276h, the Speaker appoints the following Members on the part of the House to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group for the Second Session of the 104th Congress; Mr. KOLBE of Arizona, Chairman, Mr. BALLENGER of North Carolina, vice Chairman, Mr. GILMAN of New York, Mr. DREIER of California, Mr. GALLEGLY of California, Mr. MANZULLO of Illinois, Mr. BILBRAY of California, Mr. DE LA GARZA of Texas, Mr. RANGEL of New York, Mr. MILLER of California, Mr. GEJDENSON of Connecticut, and Mr. FILNER of California.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and second times by unanimous consent and referred as indicated:

H.R. 2149. An act to reduce regulation, promote efficiencies, and encourage competition in the international ocean transportation system of the United States, to eliminate the Federal Maritime Commission, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 2641. An act to amend title 28, United States Code, to provide for appointment of United States marshals by the Attorney General; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC–2391. A communication from the Comptroller General of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of comments on the second, third, and fourth special messages for fiscal year 1996; referred jointly, pursuant to the order of January 30, 1975, as modified by the order of April 11, 1986, to the Committee on Appropriations, to the Committee on the Budget, to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, to the Committee on Armed Services, to the Committee on Foreign Relations, and to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC–2392. A communication from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the annual report for fiscal year 1995; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC–2393. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, Executive Office of the President, transmitting a report entitled, "Job Creation and Employment Opportunities: The United States Labor Market, 1993–1996"; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

EC–2394. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulation, Department of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, a notice of funding priorities for the Special Studies Program; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

EC–2395. A communication from the Commissioner of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of to Education, transmitting, pursuant law, the annual report on Federal activities related to the Rehabilitation Act for fiscal year 1993; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

EC–2396. A communication from the Director of the National Science Foundation, transmitting a draft of proposed legislation to authorize the Foundation for fiscal years 1997 and 1998; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

EC–2397. A communication from the Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Pension Benefit Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a notice of three final rules; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

EC–2398. A communication from the Thrift Depositor Protection Oversight Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report on the activities and efforts of the Resolution Trust