

that basis and, on Tuesday, move to a conference committee, a piece of farm legislation passed by the U.S. Senate in a bipartisan manner.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mrs. KASSEBAUM. Mr. President, I just say, in answer to the Senator from North Dakota, I feel confident that Senators on both sides of the aisle want to reach an agreement on a substantial, constructive farm bill. Nothing is more important, and it is prime legislation. I feel sure that I can speak on behalf of Senators on my side of the aisle that would say we are going to reach that agreement, and we will all work together in good faith to achieve what is very important, coming from a farm State, as I do myself.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. KASSEBAUM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for the transaction of routine morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 5 minutes each.

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

NATIONAL APPRECIATION WEEK FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, during this National Appreciation Week for Catholic Schools I would like to take a few moments to recognize the high quality and the hard work of the Catholic School System.

Our thanks and praise should go to the Catholic Schools for their special efforts to put children first. In the midst of increased school drop-outs, illiteracy, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, youth violence and growing pressures on teenagers and children—Catholic Schools provide their students a safe and healthy environment for learning. These schools give pupils an advantage by helping them develop a solid moral foundation.

In today's challenging society, mere words and good intentions are not enough. Catholic Schools' actions demonstrate their commitment to children. With a 99.98 percent graduation rate and 85 percent college matriculation rate, South Dakota Catholic Schools are proving that a solid combination of educational and spiritual guidance is the key to healthy living. In assisting pupils to build better lives, Catholic Schools reaffirm the value of life.

Catholic Schools extend the lessons we try to teach children at home: respect and love of our fellow neighbors, respect of the individual, personal discipline, individual responsibility and concern for the larger community. Catholic schools reinforce these family values which are the key to strong communities. We want the best for our families, our communities, and South Dakota. We must work to put the best tools in the hands of the future—our children. The Catholic schools give stu-

dents the tools to be responsible adults and concerned citizens.

I want to thank all the individuals who have contributed to Catholic School Systems' continued success and growth—the teachers, administrators, and of course the parents, many being graduates of Catholic schools themselves. One special week each year is a modest way to pay special tribute and thanks to the Catholic Schools across our country for the service they provide to our communities and our future.

GOOD THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN MALTA, MONTANA

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, at a time when we hear so much about what is wrong with America, I want to take a moment to talk about a place where good things are happening. That place is Malta, Montana.

Malta is a small community in Northern Montana, up along what we in Montana call the "Hi-Line". Like any small Montana town, it is a place where people work hard and don't think twice about helping out a neighbor or a friend in need.

This past Christmas Eve, a fire destroyed Malta's high school and junior high school. But folks in Malta pitched right in to get a temporary school up and running.

Students, teachers, and others from the community have spent the past month salvaging lost items and fixing up temporary school sites. Almost every Montana community has helped by sending items to start up the new schools. Also, Federal and State Agencies, Veterans groups, private as well as small businesses and many other organizations have contributed to this effort.

And I was privileged to spend a day working as part of this effort. While the entire community deserves credit, I would like to recognize three individuals who have taken a leading role in this undertaking. First, I would like to acknowledge the Principal of Malta High, Marty Tyler, who quickly took control of the situation and led the students and the community in the effort to rebuild the schools. For example, Principal Tyler and members of the student council collected about 4,000 bricks to construct an entrance sign when the new school is built. During my work day at the Malta schools I participated in building windbreaks in front of doors and collecting bricks with Schoolboard Chairman Doug Ost and School Superintendent Bill Parker. Both of whom deserve a big thanks for the commitment and support they have given to the Malta School District.

Finally, this fire also prompted the creation of PRIDE, People Rebuilding Investing and Developing Education, a local group to offer advice and manpower to the school district. I would like to extend my sincere thanks for their community involvement.

Mr. President, it is an honor and a privilege for me to recognize the

achievements of the students, teachers, administrators, and citizens of the Malta community and all others who have helped to get this project off to a great start.

A STRONG NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, over the last month I've traveled to every county in South Carolina. And one of the things that I heard from people was that they want America to keep a strong National Guard.

As a veteran, I know that a strong National Guard is vital to national security. Time and again, National Guard troops proved themselves to be as competent—if not more so—as regular troops in the active military. Air National Guard troops from South Carolina routinely are rated among the best in the service. They flew countless missions in the Persian Gulf War and flew them with skill, accuracy and expertise. Army National Guard troops from South Carolina proved themselves to be ready to mobilize and fight almost at the drop of a hat.

Mr. President, a strong National Guard also makes common sense. In these days where dollars are stretched thin, we can get three qualified and highly trained guardsmen for the cost of one active-duty soldier. Perhaps more importantly, however, having a strong Guard builds community support for the military. Think about it—the men and women who serve in the National Guard work in towns and counties every day across the country. They work in stores, construction sites, mills, factories and offices. And they set the example of public service for everyone. When their units are called up, their co-workers all turn out to support their efforts.

Mr. President, a couple of weeks ago when I was in Laurens, South Carolina, Rich Browne, the local newspaper editor, and I discussed the value of a strong Guard. His comments in a recent column are to-the-point. I hope every Senator would read this wise column and resist efforts to reduce the size of our National Guard units.

Mr. President, I ask that Rich Browne's column from the January 4 edition of the Laurens County Advertiser be reprinted in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

The column follows:

AVOIDING MILITARY ADVENTURES

[From the Laurens County Advertiser by Rich Browne]

This should be an interesting year for the U.S. military.

With the active duty services once again calling on reserves to support the efforts to police the peace in Bosnia, according to news reports, the Department of Defense once again is leading a charge to reduce the role of National Guard units in preparing for the defense of the nation.

Well, the truth be known, the Department of the Army would like for all the combat arms units in the National Guard to just go away—they are a threat to the active Army's jobs. I saw this first-hand in Desert Storm

and despite the Pentagon's contention that it would save the military a billion dollars per year to shift the focus of reserve units from fighting units to support units, the Army wants to deny that it would be cheaper and more effective to reduce the active component even further while increasing the number of troops in the reserve components.

However, don't look for this to happen and I'll tell you why.

First, it drastically would cut the number of active duty staff officer positions at the Pentagon and they are the ones who are drawing up the plans to downsize the military. No one, and I mean no one, is willingly going to say "Eliminate me and destroy my career," when an option can be made to eliminate someone else's job (even if they do it at less than half the cost).

Second, it is a matter of control. Because of its dual state-federal role, the National Guard is not totally under the control of federal army, something senior staff members resent and dream up ways to eliminate. Even though, again speaking from personal experience, Guard and reserve units often meet or exceed the standards set for active duty units, despite the fact they don't practice at the job 270 days a year.

Third, it limits the options of the executive branch to use the military in questionable operations. Note that the hue and cry about the use of U.S. forces in the Balkans and places like Somalia and Haiti are muted when the troops used are professional, full-time volunteers when compared to the times when the political leadership has to bite the bullet to tap into every village and hamlet to send forces in harm's way.

The civilian and military leadership in the Pentagon knows these things full well and, hence, would rather keep their jobs and control of careers, while keeping open the options for ticket-punching operations that are so vital to career progression.

The argument is that the combat units in the National Guard won't go to war and are ill-prepared to fight if they are sent, which—to borrow a phrase from retired Gen. H. Norman "Stormin' Norman" Schwarzkopf—is just so much bovine scatology.

When the Arm went to war in the Persian Gulf, its units were no more prepared than many National Guard units. Most used the months preceding the ground attack to "train up" in the desert and bring their troops up to the needed "combat readiness."

The three National Guard armored brigades that were mobilized during Desert Storm where held in the U.S. not so much because their training was not up to snuff but because if they had gone to the desert and acquitted themselves well . . . well, it would have disproved the myth that reserve soldiers can't perform up to the same standards as active duty soldiers.

Imagine what Congress and the budget cutters would have thought then. Gee, for 40 cents on the dollar, we can field a capable force that doesn't need all the full-time auxiliary services like housing, medical care and other benefits that we have to give the active duty force. We might be able to get a lot more bang for our buck.

Lay aside those arguments, and the arguments about all the support and benefits to national defense that come from a truly citizen army, and there is one vital reason why the political leadership in Washington and the Pentagon should not be allowed to reduce the Army to just professional soldiers: It removes the political cost on military adventures overseas.

If the civilian leadership has to go to every hamlet and village to draw men (and now women) to carry rifles and man tanks and artillery pieces, then it has to be able to justify the mission to the American people.

This can be a tough sell and can be avoided if it is just a matter of sending in the professionals that have slipped under the radar of the folks back home. Hey, they volunteered for the job and it goes with the territory.

But don't look for that argument to be made. Even though we learned that lesson in Vietnam, when we didn't have large scale mobilizations of the reserve components and paid the price in 58,000 lives, we have forgotten it again. Gone, now, is the leadership that created the "Total Force", the Army that was built so that the civilian leadership couldn't commit U.S. forces in substantial numbers without paying the political price of getting the American people on board.

The new leadership wants to be able to go anywhere, anytime and not worry about support back home. It saves their careers.

HONORING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I rise today to salute the fine work South Carolina Educational Television is doing to promote Black History Month. On Wednesday, February 21, SC ETV will feature the ninth annual Black History Teleconference live from the campus of Benedict College in Columbia, S.C.

"The Struggle Continues: African-American Women as Nurturing and Contributing Forces in America" will feature eight South Carolina high school seniors who will question a panel of nationally acclaimed African-American leaders. The 90-minute teleconference will be broadcast live via satellite to more than 500 school districts nationwide, colleges, and universities.

The eight high school panelists for South Carolina are Dion Alexander of Woodruff High School, LaShonda R. Davis of Bishopville High School, Felicia DuRante of Mauldin High School, Latasha Johnson of Baptist High School, Tahnee Johnson of Walterboro High School, Juontonio Pinckney of Battery Creek High School, Lemekia Stewart of Lockhart High School, and Joey Walker of Silver Bluff High School. I send my congratulations to each of them for their academic and civic achievements.

Also, I would like to commend Dr. Marianna Davis of Keenan High School in Columbia. She has been the driving force behind this annual event. She is an inspiring role model for our youth because she encourages them to set high goals and to work hard to reach them.

Mr. President, I also commend Henry Cauthen, president of South Carolina ETV; Dr. Davis; the students; and the panelists of "The Struggle Continues" for their continuing devotion to cultural excellence in broadcasting. We are very proud of our fine educational network in South Carolina. It serves as an example for the Nation in presenting this teleconference during Black History Month.

THE BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, about 4 years ago I commenced these daily re-

ports to the Senate to make a matter of record the exact Federal debt as of close of business the previous day.

In that report, February 27, 1992, the Federal debt stood at \$3,825,891,293,066.80, as of close of business the previous day. The point is, the Federal debt has escalated by \$1,161,545,065,098.40 since February 26, 1992.

As of the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, January 31, 1996, the Federal debt stood at exactly \$4,987,436,358,165.20. On a per capita basis, every man, woman and child in America owes \$18,930.74 as his or her share of the Federal debt.

BOX SCORE ON IMPORTS OF FOREIGN OIL BY THE UNITED STATES

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the American Petroleum Institute reports that, for the week ending January 26, the U.S. imported 6,895,000 barrels of oil each day, 5 percent more than the 6,550,000 barrels imported during the same period 1 year ago.

Americans now rely on foreign oil for more than 50 percent of their needs, and there are no signs that this upward trend will abate.

Since a barrel of oil is 55 gallons, this means that the United States purchased 379,225,000 gallons of oil from foreign countries this past week.

Anybody else interested in restoring domestic production of oil—by U.S. producers using American workers? If the American people don't become concerned perhaps they had better ponder the economic calamity that will 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 6,895,000 barrels a day.

UNITED STATES-GERMANY AVIATION RELATIONS

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss a critically important international aviation matter I have raised in this body on numerous occasions. I refer to the significant opportunity that has presented itself to fully liberalize our aviation relations with the Federal Republic of Germany.

I am delighted to inform my colleagues that this morning the United States and Germany agreed on a framework for an open skies agreement. This is a major step in liberalizing aviation relations with one of our most important trading partners. A United States-Germany open skies agreement would produce significant new air service opportunities for all U.S. passenger carriers. Now that the mutually agreed upon structure for a liberalized air service agreement is in place, a round of formal talks has been scheduled for February 22 in Washington to finalize any remaining details.

Mr. President, I would like to praise both the Department of Transportation