

REGISTRATION OF MASS MAILINGS

The filing date for 1997 third quarter mass mailings is October 27, 1997. If your office did no mass mailings during this period, please submit a form that states "none."

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THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, October 8, 1997, the Federal debt stood at \$5,412,240,204,620.07. (Five trillion, four hundred twelve billion, two hundred forty million, two hundred four thousand, six hundred twenty dollars and seven cents)

One year ago, October 8, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,221,529,000,000. (Five trillion, two hundred twenty-one billion, five hundred twenty-nine million)

Five years ago, October 8, 1992, the Federal debt stood at \$4,052,485,000,000. (Four trillion, fifty-two billion, four hundred eighty-five million)

Ten years ago, October 8, 1987, the Federal debt stood at \$2,372,340,000,000. (Two trillion, three hundred seventy-two billion, three hundred forty million)

Fifteen years ago, October 8, 1982, the Federal debt stood at \$1,132,671,000,000 (One trillion, one hundred thirty-two billion, six hundred seventy-one million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,279,569,204,620.07 (Four trillion, two hundred seventy-nine billion, five hundred sixty-nine million, two hundred four thousand, six hundred twenty dollars and seven cents) during the past 15 years.

AMTRAK CRISIS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, Amtrak is at a crisis point. Actually, it faces two crises: a strike and the financial crisis brought about by failure to reform the railroad. Reform is a prerequisite to accessing the much-needed capital Congress provided for the railroad in the Balanced Budget bill. Congress decided when that bill was passed that it did not make sense to provide that money unless the railroad was able to act more like a business. I strongly support intercity passenger rail but believe that reform is essential before putting this major financial commitment in place.

First, and most immediately, Amtrak is facing a possible national shut down because of an impasse between the Brotherhood of Maintenance of

Way Employees (BMWE) and Amtrak over wages and work rules. At question is Amtrak's ability to pay for any increase in wages during the difficult financial times the railroad is currently going through.

Using the Railway Labor Act, the President has named a Presidential Emergency Board to recommend a solution to the dispute. It concluded its investigation and made its recommendations. The parties are now in a 30 day "cooling off" period to consider the recommendations. If no agreement is reached by the end of this period, which falls on October 22nd, we could have a strike or a management "lockout of employees". Either action would have the effect of shutting down all commuter operations, as well as other services, across the country. A strike would not be confined to the Northeast Corridor, but would affect all of the passengers in the entire Amtrak system.

Amtrak's largest operations are in the Northeast Corridor, where a large number of commuter authorities between Washington, New York and Boston depend on that infrastructure to operate their railroads.

They include: the MBTA or Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, CONNDOT, Long Island Railroad, NJ Transit, the SEPTA or Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, and the two local services, the MARC or Maryland Commuter service and the VRE or Virginia Railway Express. Each one of these commuter authorities use the Northeast Corridor. If Amtrak cannot operate the Corridor, these services come to a halt. In addition, freight carriers such as Conrail who use the Corridor would be seriously affected, because Amtrak operates much of the track on the Northeast corridor.

Mr. President, let me put this in perspective. When a 60-day cooling off period recently expired in California, the San Francisco Bay Area's commuter railroad was shut down by a strike which stranded 270,000 commuters.

Dispatchers at Norfolk Southern, which carries commuters between Manassas, Virginia, and Washington, DC recently called a "wildcat" strike for three hours and the VRE had to cancel one-half of its afternoon trains.

But if Amtrak is shut down, it won't be one commuter authority paralyzed as we saw in San Francisco or Virginia, it will be many. It won't be thousands of commuters, it will be millions.

If this happens, the strike in San Francisco will pale by comparison.

Mr. President, my colleagues need to be aware of this situation, because the Senate needs to address it head-on before we leave in November.

Congress has to act because the future of America's railroad depends on it. Amtrak is simply in a no-win situation. Amtrak cannot afford the terms of the PEB and it cannot afford a strike.

The PEB recommended a package of wage increases recently implemented

by the profitable freight railroads. The freight deal for the BMWE would cost Amtrak \$25 million in FY98. If it were extended to all of Amtrak's employees, it would cost Amtrak \$250 million. I seriously doubt that Congress would appropriate funds for these wages. As it is, the railroad is currently borrowing just to meet existing daily expenses.

Mr. President, my colleagues have to be realistic. I look forward to working with both the Majority Leader and Senate Labor Committee Chairman to find the right solution to this dilemma.

Mr. President, in that spirit, I plan to move forward on Amtrak's reform legislation. I have had extensive discussions with the Majority Leader on this matter and he feels the same way.

Mr. LOTT. The Senator from Texas is correct. Amtrak is an important part of the national transportation system, not just for the Northeast Corridor, but for the entire interstate passenger rail system. This summer, in the Taxpayer Relief Act, Congress provided Amtrak with a secure source of funding for capital assets—some \$2.3 billion for infrastructure. I worked hard for those funds, against considerable opposition, as did the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Surface Transportation.

Rail transportation will continue to play a critical role in the American intermodal passenger system through the 21st century. However, rail transportation of passengers cannot be done without federal and state funding. It simply cannot be done. Just as commercial air transportation of passengers would have never gotten off the ground without federal and state assistance, rail transportation of passengers will not progress unless Congress provides infrastructure assistance.

Congress is willing to support Amtrak, on the condition that Amtrak be reformed. That is why we insisted that not one dime of that \$2.3 billion be spent until a reform package is approved by Congress.

If Amtrak is to survive, it is critical that we complete our work on the authorizing legislation. However, the Senate still has some colleagues who are holding up the authorization bill over labor provisions. These provisions are essentially identical to language that labor supported just last year. Now some of our colleagues find them unacceptable. Organized labor has joined the Administration in creating a moving target. If this continues, Amtrak may never get the capital we provided.

Mr. President, there will be no capital, I repeat, no \$2.3 billion in capital funds provided until an authorization is enacted.

I support a national rail system, but I will not support continued inefficient use of taxpayers money.

If Amtrak is ever going to operate like a business, it must have flexibility. It needs freedom from federal laws

that tie its hands at the collective bargaining table. Amtrak's labor rules must be the same as the private sector's, just like in other transportation modes. Labor's unwillingness to negotiate makes it appear that severance packages are more important than rail passenger service.

Mayor John Robert Smith, of Meridian, Mississippi, has noted that rail labor's message seems to be that they are more willing to allow Amtrak to go under and sacrifice all 23,000 Amtrak employees to unemployment than to allow collective bargaining in the reform bill. Like me, he is appalled that the rail union leadership, supposedly representing its workers, would abandon them for its own purposes. Equally amazing is the fact that the Amtrak reform language is language that the union leadership itself once drafted, supported, and came in my office to ask me to support. And I did.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. The Majority Leader has summed up this situation exactly. If we really care about our national rail passenger system, the communities that it serves, the employees that work there and the role it plays in our transportation infrastructure, then we need to take up and pass the Amtrak authorization bill that has been reported from the Commerce Committee. If the Senate wants to give Amtrak the tools it needs to run a national system and collectively bargain with the employees, the Senate needs to act now.

The clock is ticking and time is running out. Congress needs to act or there most likely will be a national rail strike, crippling transportation of people and goods across the country. Congress also needs to act on the Amtrak reforms to ensure it receives adequate capital funding and becomes solvent. If Congress doesn't act, there will be no national rail passenger system.

Mr. LOTT. Senator HUTCHISON and I are committed to bring the Amtrak reform bill to the floor, but not against a swell of opposition. It's a very clear cut choice. My colleagues need to decide if they want a national rail system or not.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I join with my colleagues in celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month. Hispanic Heritage Month pays a special tribute to a group of Americans that have made important and lasting contributions to this country's political, cultural and intellectual life.

Hispanic Americans are people of diverse background. Their forebears came from Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Central and South America, and Spain—at different times and for different reasons. Nonetheless, they share a common culture and a deeply held belief in the American Dream. They came here to share in the freedom and prosperity that we have achieved as a nation and have added greatly to that richness.

It is true that Hispanic-Americans faced discrimination in this country. In recent years, however, we have made great strides to eliminate legal and societal barriers to their full integration into American life. Since the passage of laws barring employment discrimination, Hispanics have made great advancements economically and, with the passage of the Voting Rights Act, have increased their participation in the political process. There are currently 17 members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

Just recently, a great Hispanic Congressional leader, Congressman HENRY B. GONZALEZ, announced his retirement to the great sadness of his colleagues. HENRY GONZALEZ has served as the dean of the Hispanic Caucus and is the former chairman, and now ranking member, of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services.

I proudly worked with him when I served in the House of Representatives and witnessed for myself his hard work and commitment to doing what is right. Dean GONZALEZ has given 36 years of dedicated service to his constituents in Texas, the Hispanic community and the American people. He came to Washington in 1961, after serving in the San Antonio City Council and the Texas State Legislature, and was the first Hispanic Congressman ever elected from the State of Texas. And back in December, 1976, Dean GONZALEZ, with 4 other members of Congress, founded the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

Dean GONZALEZ has served as a leader and trail blazer for Hispanic-Americans and an inspiration to all Americans. He demonstrated to all of us that, as a nation, we are capable of coming together, of overcoming discrimination, and of celebrating the cultural bounty brought by people of all backgrounds. When he leaves the House later this year, I know that he will be sorely missed by his colleagues in the House of Representatives and by those of us in the Senate who had the good fortune to work with him.

Dean GONZALEZ is just one of many great Hispanic-Americans. I am proud to add my tribute to these Americans and thank them for enriching our social, intellectual and artistic life.

THE STRATEGIC RATIONALE FOR NATO ENLARGEMENT

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, this week the Committee on Foreign Relations began a comprehensive series of six hearings on NATO enlargement. I commend Chairman HELMS for holding these hearings at this busy time. He and I have met at great length to construct the agenda as preparation for the committee's acting expeditiously next year to consider the enlargement amendment to the Washington Treaty.

At the committee's first hearing on October 7, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright outlined the administration's strategic rationale for

enlargement. Mr. President, I ask permission for the text of Secretary Albright's statement be printed in the RECORD. Following my remarks.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. BIDEN. The second hearing today will feature testimony of distinguished experts who are for and against enlargement. Later in the month the committee will hear examinations of cost and burden-sharing, of the qualifications for membership of the three candidate countries—Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, and of the new relationship between NATO and Russia. The final hearing will be reserved for public testimony from individuals and groups with special interest in the NATO enlargement issue.

Through these hearings, the Committee on Foreign Relations hopes to inform not only the entire Senate on this critically important issue, but also the American public.

Mr. President, as my colleagues know, I have spoken many times in some detail on this floor about the issue of NATO enlargement. As the Committee on Foreign Relations launches its series of hearings, I would like briefly to recapitulate why I believe NATO enlargement is in the best interest of the United States.

Europe remains a vital area of interest for the United States for political, strategic, economic, and cultural reasons. A sizable percentage of the world's democracies are in Europe, and the continent remains a major global economic player and partner of the United States. The European Union, with a combined population a third larger than ours, has a combined gross domestic product that exceeds ours.

While the United States has a larger and less balanced trading relationship with Asia than with Europe, we invest far more in Europe. Several new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe have highly educated work forces, already boast rapidly expanding economies, and already attract considerable American investment. Moreover, most Americans trace their ethnic and cultural roots to Europe, and millions retain personal ties to it.

Other than North America, no other part of the world can match Europe's combination of political, economic, military, and cultural power. By any geopolitical standard, it would be a catastrophe for U.S. interests if instability would alter the current situation in Europe.

Of course no one believes that the Russian Army is poised to pour through the Fulda Gap in Germany—NATO's horror scenario for 45 years. Rather, the threats to stability in Europe have changed, but they are, if anything, even more real than those of the cold war: ethnic and religious hatred as horrifyingly shown in the hundreds of thousands killed, raped, made homeless, or otherwise brutalized in Bosnia, and the well-organized forces of