

welfare reform. Benefits most at risk include Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a monthly benefit (averaging \$400 per recipient) that augments the incomes of the aged or disabled; Medicaid, which helps the same group pay medical bills; and food stamps.

But many lawmakers say revising the law to soften its impact on immigrants is unlikely.

"It's just not going to happen," says Rep. Clay Shaw Jr. (R) of Florida, who led the charge for welfare reform in the last Congress.

For one, federal budgeteers would fight such a move. About one-fourth of the savings expected from welfare cuts will come from ending benefits to legal immigrants.

While Congressman Shaw expects to feel more pressure to revise the law as welfare reform kicks into effect over the next four months, he says. "We've really got to believe in what we are going to accomplish with this, because we are going to be dogged all the way." He points out that 51 percent of SSI benefits go to elderly noncitizens, something he says was never intended by the authors of the original legislation.

Shaw and other Republicans are open to one possible compromise that would provide states with additional block-grant money for programs like food stamps. Mr. Clinton has sought to restore \$10 billion in benefits. But Republicans on Capitol Hill would approve no more than a total of \$2 billion for states.

The pending cut in benefits has prompted a large number of legal immigrants to apply for US citizenship. Almost 2 million are expected to apply this year, three times more than applied in 1995.

But for elderly immigrants, the naturalization process can be daunting. The US Immigration and Naturalization Service reports that only 9 percent of immigrants older than 65 ever naturalize. Such is the case for the elderly Iranian woman now living in Denver. Her son, who asked not to be named, explains that the entire family fled to the US after the Khomeni government took power in the late 1970s.

"She has gone through this before. She was a wealthy woman and had everything taken from her," he says. Undergoing the naturalization process, including the exams to become a citizen, would be difficult. "Her English is still not very good," he says. "There is no way she could pass the test."

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, March 12, the Federal debt stood at \$5,361,482,510,992.32.

One year ago, March 12, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,017,284,000,000.

Five years ago, March 12, 1992, the Federal debt stood at \$3,854,311,000,000.

Ten years ago, March 12, 1987, the Federal debt stood at \$2,247,042,000,000.

Fifteen years ago, March 12, 1982, the Federal debt stood at \$1,048,967,000,000 which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,312,515,510,992.32—during the past 15 years.

HERE'S WEEKLY BOX SCORE ON U.S. FOREIGN OIL CONSUMPTION

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the American Petroleum Institute reports that for the week ending March 7, the United States imported 7,510,000 barrels of oil each day, 195,000 barrels more than the 7,315,000 imported during the same week a year ago.

Americans relied on foreign oil for 53.8 percent of their needs last week, and there are no signs that the upward spiral will abate. Before the Persian Gulf war, the United States obtained approximately 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 7,510,000 barrels a day.

RATIFICATION OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it is time—long past time—for the Senate to end the embarrassing delay and ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention. The convention is the most significant nonproliferation agreement to come before the Senate since the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is a major step toward eliminating this entire class of weapons of mass destruction. U.S. ratification of the convention, before it takes effect on April 29 of this year, is vital to our national security. U.S. support for the convention will demonstrate our continued commitment to halting the spread of these weapons of mass destruction. This is far too important a subject for further delays. It is time to end the stalling and bring the convention to a vote. There is no justification for a handful of Senate opponents of the convention to bottle it up in the Foreign Relations Committee.

This treaty is clearly bipartisan. It was negotiated under President Reagan, concluded and signed by President Bush, and submitted to the Senate for advice and consent by President Clinton. It has broad bipartisan support in the Senate, and it should be voted on by the Senate, now.

The Chemical Weapons Convention deserves this broad support, because it makes sense for America's national security. We have the opportunity now to move forward and rid the world of these senseless weapons.

The United States initially led by example, by unilaterally destroying our stockpile of chemical weapons. The Chemical Weapons Convention will extend this requirement to all other nations that approve the convention.

The convention also provides for monitoring and controls to reduce the proliferation of the chemicals and technology used to make such weapons. These restrictions will make it much more difficult for terrorists and rogue nations to develop these weapons of mass destruction. The convention also contains provisions to investigate and punish violators, including short-

notice inspections of chemical manufacturing sites and other facilities.

Opponents of the convention argue that since it is not being ratified by all nations, it will not stop rogue countries from acquiring these deadly weapons. But no international treaty starts with worldwide support. Countries suspected of chemical arms violations will be subjected to broad economic and arms embargoes. In fact, the convention specifically restricts the export or transfer of controlled chemicals to nonparticipating nations, a clear deterrent to rogue countries.

American leadership is essential to halt the proliferation of these deadly weapons. It is already a serious international embarrassment that the United States, the leading country in the development of the convention, has taken over 4 years to ratify it. If not us, who? If not now, when? As of today, 71 nations have ratified the treaty, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Canada. We stand with Iraq, North Korea, Libya, and Syria as nonsigners. The Senate needs to act now to end the unconscionable delay in ratifying this urgently needed convention. The longer we delay, the greater the danger of the proliferation of these devastating weapons.

Protecting our own soldiers and civilians from chemical attack is and will continue to be a high priority. Without U.S. support for this convention, rogue nations will have a greater incentive to acquire chemical weapons, and our military and civilian populations will face greater risk of chemical attack. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, those directly responsible for the men and women who are most at risk from chemical attack, fully support this convention.

It is clearly in our national interest to ratify the convention before April 29, so that this country can be involved in the initial implementation legislation, the budget negotiations, and the verification provisions for tracking chemical weapons worldwide.

Critics of the convention say that it will impose high costs on the U.S. chemical industry. But our industry and defense representatives have been involved in the development of the convention from the beginning. They helped draft the convention's language to ensure that their interests will not be compromised. The chemical industry supports ratification, because they know that if the convention enters into force without U.S. support, they will lose hundreds of millions of dollars in annual trade. This economic burden more than offsets the marginal costs that compliance with the convention will impose on the industry.

Opponents also argue that the convention will reveal U.S. trade secrets to foreign inspectors. But the United States will always be the target of industrial espionage, with or without this agreement. Issues relating to the confidentiality of product and processes received a great deal of attention

during the negotiations, and they are addressed in detail in the convention.

In addition, the Commerce Department's expertise in protecting the proprietary interests of U.S. companies will continue to assist our chemical industry. The strong support for the convention by the Chemical Manufacturers Association, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, and the National Federation of Independent Business is a tribute to the fact that the concerns of these industries are fully protected.

Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention is vital to America's national security. I commend all those who have done so much to make this achievement possible. It represents arms control at its best, and I urge my colleagues to vote for ratification.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report the pending business.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 18) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to contributions and expenditures intended to affect elections.

The Senate resumed consideration of the joint resolution.

Mr. FEINGOLD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I rise today to oppose the proposed constitutional amendment offered by the junior Senator from South Carolina and the senior Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. President, first I would like to say a few words about the Senator from South Carolina. Our colleague, Senator HOLLINGS, has been calling for meaningful campaign finance reform for perhaps longer than any other Member of the U.S. Senate. I disagree with this particular approach. But I certainly do not question his sincerity or commitment to reform.

Mr. President, when the U.S. Senate last had an extended debate on the issue of campaign finance reform back in 1993, the junior Senator from South Carolina offered a sense-of-the-Senate amendment to take up a constitutional amendment very similar to the one that is before us today.

I remember we had a very short period of time before that vote came up, and I made a decision and I voted with the Senator from South Carolina on that day. I did so because I believed that other than balancing the Federal budget, there was perhaps no more fundamental issue facing our country than the need to reform our election laws.

Such a serious topic I believed at the time merited at least a consideration

of a constitutional amendment. And I will confess to a certain level of frustration at that time with the fact that the Senate and the other body had not yet acted to pass meaningful campaign finance reform in that Congress.

But, Mr. President, to be candid, I immediately realized, even as I was returning to my office, that that might not have been the best vote I ever cast. I started rethinking right away whether I really wanted the U.S. Senate to seriously consider amending the first amendment to address even this subject of which I and so many other Americans feel passionately about.

Then, 18 months later, my perspective on this question began to change even more as I was presented with two new developments here in the U.S. Senate.

First, I was given the privilege of serving on the Senate Judiciary Committee, and, second, I would soon learn that the new 104th Congress was to become the engine for a trainload of proposed amendments to the U.S. Constitution. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, I had a very good seat to witness first hand what was being attempted here with regard to the basic document of our country, the Constitution.

It started with a proposal right away for a balanced budget constitutional amendment, and we were considering a term limits constitutional amendment, and then a flag desecration constitutional amendment, then a school prayer amendment, then a supermajority tax increase amendment, and then a victims rights amendment. In all, Mr. President, 135 constitutional amendments were introduced in the last Congress.

As I saw legislator after legislator suggest that every social, economic, and political problem we have in this country could be solved merely with enactment of a constitutional amendment, I chose to strongly oppose not only this constitutional amendment but others that also sought to undermine our most treasured founding principle. I firmly believe we must continue this reflective practice of attempting to cure each and every political and social ill of our Nation by tampering with the U.S. Constitution. Mr. President, the Constitution of this country was not a rough draft. We must stop treating it as such.

I want to say, because the Senator from South Carolina has just arrived and I know that he is not one who has engaged in such an attitude toward the Constitution, I know very well he only makes a proposal like this with the most serious consideration and for the goal of trying to do something about campaign spending. What I am addressing here, what I saw in the last Congress was a wholesale attempt to try to amend what seemed to be almost virtually every part of the U.S. Constitution.

We must also understand that even if this constitutional amendment were to

pass this body today, which it will not, but even if it did, it would not take us one single, solitary step closer to campaign finance reform. It is not a silver bullet. This constitutional amendment merely empowers the Congress to set mandatory spending limits on congressional candidates. Those are the same kind of mandatory limits that were struck down in the landmark Buckley versus Valeo decision.

Here is the question I pose for supporters of this amendment: If this constitutional amendment were to pass the Congress and be ratified by the States, would campaign finance reformers have the necessary 51 votes—or more likely what would be required would be 60 votes—to pass legislation that included mandatory spending limits?

Mr. President, in January I joined the senior Senator from Arizona in introducing the first bipartisan campaign finance reform proposal in over a decade. That proposal, unlike the law that was considered in Buckley versus Valeo, includes voluntary spending limits. That is to say, Mr. President, we offer incentives in the form of free and discounted television time to encourage but not require candidates to limit their campaign spending. When the Senator from Arizona and I bring that legislation to the floor of the Senate, I have no doubt that we will be met with strong resistance from a number of Senators. So the notion that this constitutional amendment will somehow magically pave the way for legislation that includes mandatory spending limits simply ignores the reality of the opposition that campaign finance reformers face here in the Senate and I think would face in the Senate at the time of ratification of any such amendment.

Mr. President, this amendment certainly, if ratified, would remove the obstacle of the Supreme Court. But it will not remove the obstacle of those Senators such as the junior Senator from Kentucky who believe that we need more money, not less, in our political system.

Most disconcerting to me, Mr. President, is what this proposed constitutional amendment would mean to the first amendment. I find nothing more sacred and treasured in our Nation's history than the first amendment. It is perhaps the one tenet of our Constitution that sets our country apart from every mold of government form and tested by mankind throughout history. No other country has a provision quite like the first amendment.

The first amendment is the bedrock of the Bill of Rights. It has as its underpinnings the notion that each individual has a natural and fundamental right to disagree with their elected leaders. It says that a newspaper has an unfettered right to publish expressions of political or moral thought. It says that the Government may not establish a State-based religion that would infringe on the rights of those