

Secretary Brown took these differences into account and has been instrumental in helping Nevada be more responsive to the needs of the men and women who have served our country. The Department of Veterans Affairs has begun to reallocate its resources so that Federal funds are made available where veterans' needs are most critical. In southern Nevada, where approximately 118,000 veterans already crowd existing facilities, new projects will allow Nevada's veterans to access doctors, counselors, and other benefits to which they are entitled. The Secretary has helped Nevada's underserved veterans gain access to the services they deserve through his active support for efforts to construct and expand desperately needed medical facilities in southern Nevada. Secretary Brown has come to the aid of Nevada's veterans during crises, as well, stepping in to help find a solution when one of the VA facilities in Nevada faced administrative problems.

While I could go on much longer just discussing Secretary Brown's contributions to Nevada's veterans, I would be amiss if I did not mention the profound impact he has had on all American veterans and their families. He has tackled the most sensitive issues facing veterans, including his work to enact laws authorizing the VA to provide compensation and treatment for Persian Gulf war veterans' undiagnosed illnesses. He also expanded services to women veterans, which is evident at the new Addeliar D. Guy III Ambulatory Care center soon to open in Las Vegas. Finally, Secretary Brown confirmed the VA's commitment to all veterans in need by convening the first summit on the issues facing homeless veterans, and followed up on this by adding homeless programs to the services provided at VA medical centers. Again, this effort has a great impact in Las Vegas, where a large number of homeless veterans have needs that have, until now, largely gone unmet. With the help of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, however, Las Vegas will soon boast a new initiative that joins hands with the city and county to provide assistance to the homeless veterans in Las Vegas.

Mr. President, I have only touched upon a few of the many positive changes and initiatives launched by Secretary Brown, and I have not even made mention of his previous service to his country as a soldier in Vietnam or as the director of the Washington office of the Disabled American Veterans. I am sure that Secretary Brown will continue to make this world more livable and more enjoyable for veterans in whatever challenges he pursues in the future, buoyed by his commitment to "putting veterans first." Whether guaranteeing a home loan for a veteran just returned from a tour overseas, streamlining health care procedures at a local walk-in clinic, or intervening to prevent the eviction of elderly VA nursing home residents, Jesse Brown

has proven that he, and the agency he led, do indeed put veterans first. When he announced his resignation, Secretary Brown said he wanted to be remembered as "someone who made a difference in the quality of veterans' lives." I speak for the veterans of Nevada, and across the country, when I say that Jesse Brown will be remembered not only for improving veterans' access to needed benefits, but also for leading this agency with skill, with compassion, and most of all with an appreciation for the noble service of our Nation's veterans. ●

BALANCED BUDGET ACT OF 1997

AMENDMENT NO. 450

● Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague in offering this amendment.

Last year during the welfare reform debate, as part of the effort to balance the budget, the 104th Congress made dramatic cuts to programs for low-income families. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, more than 93 percent of the cuts in entitlement programs in the 104th Congress came from programs for low-income people. Congress reduced entitlement programs by \$65.6 billion over the period from 1996 to 2002.

I am deeply concerned about the extent to which legal immigrants are being harmed under the Welfare Reform act. The Act cut \$22 billion in services to legal immigrants—a full 44 percent of the overall legislation.

The House Ways and Means Committee reconciliation mark provided the least generous allocation of funding for legal immigrants as compared to the budget agreement and the Senate Finance Committee mark. The \$9 billion allocation in the Ways and Means mark violates the budget agreement, and it covers fewer people. Since it does not cover those who, in the future, could be eligible for SSI assistance, it will leave many without any means of support. According to the Social Security Administration, 125,000 fewer people will be served by the House agreement compared to the Budget Agreement. In Minnesota it puts 1,145 elderly immigrants at risk of losing benefits.

Moreover, it puts an additional 161,000 people at risk of losing their benefits because their citizenship is unknown or difficult to prove. Probably the worst provision in this agreement is that it makes an inhumane and irrational distinction among disabled people based on an arbitrary date on the calendar. If you were disabled and receiving SSI on August 22, 1996, then you retain eligibility. If not, there is no hope for receiving future benefits.

The Durbin/Wellstone amendment restores food stamp benefits to legal immigrant families with children 18 years old and under at a cost of \$750 million over 5 years. Our offset is achieved by placing limits on the amount of Federal money that States can use to off-

set their cost share requirements in the food stamp and Medicaid programs. Our amendment would take a small step toward addressing the use of these funds and target the savings into food stamp benefits for legal immigrants who have dependent children. Over 5 years, we hope to save \$1 billion, which fully covers the cost of restoring food stamp benefits.

Unlike other low-income families in this country, legal immigrants are banned from receiving food stamp benefits. Food stamps are the Nation's largest and most successful food assistance program and cuts to this program made up half of the savings in last year's welfare reform effort. According to CBO, 17 percent of the immigrants receiving food stamps are children. This means more than 150,000 children have lost access to this critical program. In Minnesota roughly 15,900 individuals are expected to lose food stamp benefits. According to INS, most of these immigrant families will naturalize within 10 years, making them eligible to apply for food stamps. CBO estimates that it will cost \$750 million to restore food stamp benefits for children 18 years and under. Senator DURBIN and I have provided an offset that achieves that amount over 5 years. No matter what your position on the overall budget deal, you must agree that no purpose is served by denying children food.

According to the Food Research and Action Center, approximately 13.6 million children under age 12 are at risk of hunger during some part of the year. FRAC reports that although families who face real issues of hunger may not be hungry every day of the month, or even every month of the year, the hunger affecting most low-income families is not a one-time or infrequent occurrence. It is characterized—and this is according to FRAC—by food shortages and chronic insecurity about whether the family will have enough food.

We are now benefiting from scientific research that points to the significance of the early years on development of the brain. A consistently nutritious diet is one of the most important if not the most important ingredient to a child reaching his or her potential. In a 1995 study entitled Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project; a Survey of Childhood Hunger in the United States, FRAC determined that undernourished children suffer from two to four times as many health problems. I quote from the survey:

Hungry children are more likely to be ill and absent from school.

The infant mortality rate is closely linked to inadequate quantity or quality in the diet of the infant's mother.

Iron deficiency anemia in children can lead to adverse health effects such as developmental and behavioral disturbances that can affect children's ability to learn and to read or do mathematics. According to the Centers for Disease Control, anemia remains a significant health problem among low-income children.

Hungry children are less likely to interact with other people or to explore or learn from their surroundings. This interferes with their ability to learn from a very early age.

According to the Tufts University Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy, evidence from recent research about child nutrition shows that, in addition to having a detrimental effect on the cognitive development of children, undernutrition results in lost knowledge, brainpower, and productivity.

Hunger and insecurity about whether a family will be able to obtain enough food to avoid hunger, also have an emotional impact on children and their parents. Anxiety, negative feelings about self-worth, and hostility toward the outside world can result from chronic hunger and food insecurity.

The food stamp is designed to reach those families most in need and there is plenty of evidence that the children most at risk of hunger are in poor or low-income families. A 1996-study reported about 6.1 million children under 6 were living in poverty in 1994. An additional 4.8 million young children lived near the poverty line, according to Columbia University's National Center for Children in Poverty. Sixty-two percent of poor children lived with at least one parent or relative who worked. Fewer than one-third of the children's families relied exclusively on welfare. The poverty rate grew fastest among Hispanic children, rising 43 percent since 1979, compared with a 38-percent rise among white children and 19 percent among black children.

Last year's reform banned legal immigrant families with dependent children from food stamp benefits. This amendment is about restoring critical food assistance to those children. We cannot say we are for children and then turn our backs on legal immigrant children. This amendment is reasonable. It's paid for and it makes imminent sense.●

DECISION STRIKING DOWN PART OF BRADY LAW

● Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I rise to discuss today's Brady law decision, in which a deeply divided Supreme Court put judicial activism over public safety. At a time when the United States leads the world in gun carnage, surely the Federal Government is entitled to enlist the aid of States to keep guns out of the hands of felons, illegal immigrants, and the criminally insane. Asking local police to conduct background checks—and nothing more—hardly amounts to a Federal power grab, as the majority has claimed. Instead, the majority's opinion should make us fear what the Supreme Court could do next.

Will the Court prohibit Congress from requiring States to report missing children? Will it bar Congress from requiring states to get lead out of school drinking water? Will it stop Congress from requiring States to publicly disclose where hazardous waste is being stored?

All of these requirements are now current law, and all of them are now in peril.

We will have to consider these troubling issues in the future. But as for today, this decision alone is hardly a

fatal blow to the Brady law itself. Since its enactment, Brady background checks have stopped over 186,000 persons from obtaining guns. And these Brady checks will continue for two reasons. First, virtually all of the police officers we have spoken to say they will continue to do the Brady check voluntarily—even if they are not required to do so. The reason why is simple: they know these checks save lives. Second, the provision struck down by the Court only relates to the so-called interim Brady law. By the end of next year, Brady requires that a permanent instant check system be implemented. And that system, operated by Federal officials, will be immune from constitutional challenge.

Still, the Supreme Court's misguided decision opens up the possibility that, before the instant check system becomes fully operational, a handful of rogue police officers will refuse to do background checks. As a result of such inaction, at least a few felons will commit violent crimes with guns they never should have been able to obtain.

For this reason, we are working with the President to draft legislation that will ensure 100 percent Brady compliance—for example, by allowing gun dealers to obtain background checks from any police chief in their State, not just the chief in the jurisdiction where the buyer resides. Because the vast majority of police will continue to conduct Brady checks voluntarily, this approach will clearly preserve our no check, no sale policy.

Mr. President, today's Supreme Court ruling, while unfortunate, does not take away from how effective the Brady law has been or will be. But it is nevertheless a bad decision that will hurt us in our fight against crime. We'll introduce bipartisan legislation to fix it, and I hope my colleagues will support our efforts.●

GARRETT RUSSELL

● Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the achievements of a remarkable young man from the city of Midland, MI. Garrett Russell, an 8-year-old second grade student at Siebert Elementary School, collected more than 100 bicycles and \$25,000 worth of toys to give to victims of the flooding in Grand Forks, ND.

When Garrett saw footage of the flooding he was immediately moved into action. He asked his classmates to help him provide toys to the thousands of the children in Grand Forks who were forced to leave their belongings behind as they fled from their homes. Word of Garrett's "Kids Helping Kids" campaign spread quickly and caught the imagination of the generous people of the Tri-City area. Donations arrived daily, reaching a total of more than 3,000 toys and 100 bicycles.

Garrett, his sister Elise, and his parents, Dean and Kathy Russell, loaded the toys into a truck and drove to Grand Forks to distribute them to the

children there. Lutheran Social Services of Grand Forks held a festival on Saturday, June 14, 1997, at which Garrett gave away most of the toys to the 1,200 children who attended. The following day, Garrett and his family gave the rest of the toys away as they visited the homes of families who had lost almost everything they owned.

Garrett has received praise from many people since he began his campaign to brighten the spirits of the children of Grand Forks, especially from his classmates and from the people who benefited from his endeavors. The Midland Daily News quoted his friend, 7-year-old Anna Brown, who said, "I think it was generous of him because most kids don't start a campaign just because they see something on the news." Grand Forks resident Judy Holweger, whose son, Joel, received a bicycle at the festival, said, "It really lifts these kids' spirits. They've lost a lot." Garrett's schoolmate, Claire Liang, may have put it best when she said, "Not everyone has a big heart like Garrett."

We can all take inspiration from Garrett Russell's example of generosity and selflessness. I know my colleagues join me in commending Garrett for his outstanding accomplishments, and in wishing the people of Grand Forks, as well as all those affected by the flooding this spring, a speedy and complete recovery.●

KIRSTEN FROHNMAYER

● Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the remarkable life of Kirsten Frohnmayer. Kirsten, the daughter of University of Oregon president Dave Frohnmayer and his wife Lynn, died last week after a courageous battle with Fanconi anemia, a rare genetic disease that also claimed the life of her sister, Katie.

Kirsten lived much of her 24 years on Earth with the knowledge that she was battling a vicious disease. Yet she never gave up, and she never allowed herself to wallow in despair. Rather, as her family and friends have testified, she maintained an optimistic spirit that inspired countless men, women, and children. Kirsten also willingly volunteered to undergo experimental medical procedures, in hopes that others with the same disease might benefit from what doctors learned through the procedure.

Mr. President, the Eugene Register Guard recently published an eloquent tribute to Kirsten which contains her own inspiring words. I ask that this tribute be printed in the RECORD immediately following my remarks.

Mr. President, let me conclude by simply saying that the entire State of Oregon joins with me in extending our thoughts and prayers to the entire Frohnmayer family.

The tribute follows: