

MORNING BUSINESS

(During today's session of the Senate, the following morning business was transacted.)

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, September 18, 1997, the Federal debt stood at \$5,374,488,603,408.56. (Five trillion, three hundred seventy-four billion, four hundred eighty-eight million, six hundred three thousand, four hundred eight dollars and fifty-six cents)

One year ago, September 18, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,193,857,000,000 (Five trillion, one hundred ninety-three billion, eight hundred fifty-seven million)

Five years ago, September 18, 1992, the Federal debt stood at \$4,036,814,000,000. (Four trillion, thirty-six billion, eight hundred fourteen million)

Ten years ago, September 18, 1987, the Federal debt stood at \$2,353,225,000,000. (Two trillion, three hundred fifty-three billion, two hundred twenty-five million)

Twenty-five years ago, September 18, 1972, the Federal debt stood at \$436,926,000,000 (Four hundred thirty-six billion, nine hundred twenty-six million) which reflects a debt increase of nearly \$5 trillion—\$4,937,562,603,408.56 (Four trillion, nine hundred thirty-seven billion, five hundred sixty-two million, six hundred three thousand, four hundred eight dollars and fifty-six cents) during the past 25 years.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION AND THE BOY SCOUTS

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to note a recent injustice done to one of America's most valuable associations, the Boy Scouts, by one of our most valued institutions, the Smithsonian. I also rise to express my appreciation to Smithsonian Secretary I. Michael Heyman for his assurance that such an injustice will not occur again in the future.

Mr. President, in January of this year the Smithsonian Institution denied an application from the Boy Scouts of America to use the National Zoo's auditorium for a Court of Honor ceremony for District of Columbia area Scouts.

Why would the Smithsonian deny such an application from a group known for its commitment to environmental conservation? According to Robert J. Hoage, Chief of the Smithsonian's Office of Public Affairs, the Smithsonian's policy prohibits co-sponsoring events with any organization that exercises bias on the basis of religious beliefs.

Asked about this decision, the Smithsonian's communications director, David Umansky, explained: "Our lawyers have documented cases of the Boy Scouts denying membership to

atheists, and that violates our non-discrimination code." The Smithsonian also claimed that the honor court event was not sufficiently relevant to the National Zoo's mission. But that claim stretches credulity because of the Boy Scouts' myriad programs devoted to environmental education and conservation. Indeed, the Scouts' highest honor, awarded to only about 1,000 Scouts since 1914, recognizes exceptional work for environmental conservation.

In a letter to my colleagues dated September 12, I expressed my dismay that the Boy Scouts, an organization that has helped literally millions of American boys reach responsible manhood, should be denied access to a federally supported institution because it exercises its constitutional right to free exercise of religion. I also expressed concern that the Smithsonian Institution should enforce a policy diametrically opposed to the principles on which our nation was founded. The Smithsonian, our premier teaching museum, is entrusted with, among other treasures, the Star Spangled Banner, the flag that Francis Scott Key saw flying when he penned our national anthem. I recently sponsored legislation appropriating \$8 million to the Smithsonian for restoration of that flag. I was frankly disturbed to see that the institution to which it has been entrusted was acting in this manner.

However, Mr. President, I am now relieved to report that Secretary Heyman, in a September 15 letter to my distinguished colleague, Senator FRIST, who serves as a regent to that Institution, has apologized for this action. Further, Secretary Heyman's letter expressed his conviction that "our special events policy clearly allows the sponsorship of events by all groups, including religious groups, that are consistent with the mission and tradition of the Smithsonian."

Recent events at the Smithsonian, including the proposed *Enola Gay* exhibit, with its misleading and inaccurate treatment of the Second World War, and a number of new exhibits distorting history to cast America and American values in a bad light, have caused me to worry about the future of this distinguished and crucially important institution. I thank Secretary Heyman for his courageous statement of fundamental policy and hope that it heralds a new, more positive era at the Smithsonian.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the full text of my September 12 letter to my colleagues and the September 15 letter from Secretary Heyman to Senator FRIST be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, September 12, 1997.

Smithsonian Snubs Boy Scouts

DEAR COLLEAGUE: I want to bring to your attention the latest in an unfortunate series

of decisions made at the Smithsonian Institution, America's premier teaching museum. It has come to my attention that in January of this year the Smithsonian denied an application from the Boy Scouts of America to use the National Zoo's auditorium for a Court of Honor ceremony for District of Columbia area Scouts. The application was denied on the grounds that the scouts require members to believe in God and that the event supposedly did not meet the "relevance requirement" needed for Smithsonian cosponsorship.

In a letter to T. Anthony Quinn, president for District Operations for the National Capital Area of the Boy Scouts of America, Robert J. Hoage, Chief of the Smithsonian's Office of Public Affairs stated that "the Smithsonian's policy prohibits co-sponsoring events with any organization that exercises bias on the basis of religious beliefs." Asked by a reporter from the newsweekly Human Events to explain this decision, David Umansky, communications director for the Smithsonian responded: "Our lawyers have documented cases of the Boy Scouts denying membership to atheists, and that violates our non-discrimination code."

I find it deeply disturbing that the Boy Scouts, one of America's most important private organizations, which has helped literally millions of American boys reach responsible manhood, should be denied access to a federally supported institution because it exercises its Constitutional right to free exercise of religion. I also am disturbed that the Smithsonian Institution, the repository of so many objects central to our heritage as a people, should enforce a policy diametrically opposed to the principles on which our nation was founded.

In an August 14 follow-up letter to Mr. Quinn, Smithsonian Under Secretary Constance Berry Newman failed to so much as mention the "anti-discrimination" motivation behind this rejection. Instead the Under Secretary detailed two Smithsonian events involving Boy Scouts, both of which took place several years ago. Her argument was that Smithsonian "policy emphasizes that the activity or event proposed by the outside organization should have some Smithsonian involvement and participation in the proposed activity or event." That an event put on by the Boy Scouts, an organization devoted to outdoor activities and knowledge of the natural world, should be found "irrelevant" to the National Zoo stretches credulity to the limit. Further, recent events at the National Zoo clearly have had little to do with that institution's mission. Events have included a naturalization ceremony by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and a Washington Singers musical concert.

I urge you to contact Smithsonian Secretary Michael Heyman and/or members of his staff to express your deep concern that the Boy Scouts, an institution of longstanding importance to our culture, traditions and public life, is receiving such inappropriate treatment. Further questions on this matter can be directed to Bruce Frohnen of my office at extension 4-8841.

Sincerely,

SPENCER ABRAHAM,
U.S. Senate.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION,
Washington, DC, September 15, 1997.

Hon. WILLIAM H. FRIST,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FRIST: As was discussed in this morning's meeting of the Board of Regents, and knowing of your concern on this issue, I am writing to apologize for an unfortunate decision that denied the use of facilities of the National Zoo to District of Columbia Boy Scouts last February. In a letter

denying the request, a determination was made that the event did not comply with a requirement that all events be relevant to the mission of the Smithsonian and further that the Boy Scouts violated standards of non-discrimination with regards to religion. I have reviewed this determination and reversed it. Scouting is an important American institution that helps in educating young men and women about the outdoors with special emphasis on protection of the environment, a mission relevant to and shared by the National Zoo.

Further, as I mentioned in our meeting, I believe that our Special Events Policy clearly allows the sponsorship of events by all groups, including religious groups, that are consistent with the mission and tradition of the Smithsonian. This event certainly complied with that standard and its denial on that ground was in error.

The Smithsonian and the Scouts have over the years jointly sponsored many events too numerous to mention here. I apologize for this unfortunate mistake and look forward to continuing our long standing and mutually productive relationship with the Boy and Girl Scouts of America.

Sincerely,

I. MICHAEL HEYMAN,
Secretary.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. McCathran, 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 appropriate committees.

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

ENROLLED BILL PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on September 19, 1997 he had presented to the President of the United States, the following enrolled bill:

S. 910. An act to authorize appropriations for carrying out the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act 1997 for fiscal years 1998 and 1999, and for other purposes.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second time by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. HOLLINGS, and Mr. ROBB):

S. 1199. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 regarding income protection allowances for certain students; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

By Mr. CAMPBELL:

S. 1200. A bill to provide that countries receiving foreign assistance be conducive to United States business; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. MURKOWSKI:

S. Con. Res. 53. A concurrent resolution commending Dr. Jason C. Hu, Representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. HOLLINGS, and Mr. ROBB):

S. 1199. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 regarding income protection allowances for certain students; to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

THE WORKING STUDENTS' INCOME PROTECTION ACT

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today, I am introducing the Working Students' Income Protection Act, a bill to increase the number of working students who are eligible for Federal Pell grants. I am pleased to have Senator SNOWE, Senator HOLLINGS, and Senator ROBB as cosponsors.

This bill will correct a problem created by the 1992 amendments to the Higher Education Act that unfairly denies aid to hundreds of thousands of deserving students. Let me explain the problem.

The formula used to determine the eligibility for Federal financial aid includes an income protection allowance, known as an IPA, which enables working students to retain a portion of their earnings to pay their basic living expenses. This allowance is not counted in determining eligibility for student aid. A portion of earnings above the IPA is used to calculate the contributions students can make to their education expenses. As students' incomes rise above the IPA, their eligibility for Federal student aid, especially for Pell grants, declines.

The 1992 amendments to the Higher Education Act dramatically and drastically lowered the income protection allowances. For single students, financially independent of their families, the IPA was reduced from \$6,400 to \$3,000. The IPA for working dependent students was lowered from \$4,250 to \$1,750. As a result, the amount a typical independent student can receive under the Pell Grant Program begins to decline when his or her income exceeds \$3,000, and the student becomes completely ineligible at an income level of \$10,000.

Because of this decrease in IPA's, the number of independent students receiving Pell grants declined from over a million in 1992 to about 750,000 in 1993—a loss of over a quarter of a million grants to independent working students.

This change has three unfortunate consequences:

First, many nontraditional students are not able to pursue post-secondary education. Typically these are older individuals with jobs who are attempting to improve their skills. Because the IPA is not enough to meet living expenses, independent students find themselves unable to pay tuition and meet their basic living expenses. They are forced to defer or even forgo higher education.

Second, the current law creates a disincentive to work. If a student knows that earning more than \$3,000 will reduce the size of his or her Pell grant award, the student can easily conclude that there is no reason to try to earn more than \$3,000 a year.

Third, it penalizes students who are trying to pay for their education through work rather than by borrowing. This is particularly unfair to the almost 75 percent of dependent undergraduates who are working while studying to pay college expenses. When earnings result in lower grants, these students must turn to larger loans to finance their education.

The Working Students' Income Protection Act will make great strides toward correcting these problems. It will allow single independent students to retain \$6,000 of their earnings for basic living expenses, married working independent students to retain \$9,000, and working dependent students to retain \$4,200 before they begin to lose their Pell grants. This will not only make higher education more affordable for these students, it will also encourage and reward work, a worthwhile objective.

Moreover, these changes will correct an injustice by providing benefits to a segment of the student population that has been largely overlooked by the changes in student aid recently passed or currently under consideration. Increasing Pell grants by \$300, for example, a move that I strongly support, which was included in the budget agreement, will not help the working students who are ineligible for these grants because of the inadequate level of the current IPA. Similarly, the tuition tax credit will not help them because they are not earning enough to pay taxes. By increasing the IPA, these students will be able to share in the government assistance available to those seeking to pursue a higher education.

I would like to give you some examples from the University of Southern Maine, a State-supported institution serving 10,000 students. These students have an average age of just under 30 years. They are largely independent students and they are balancing jobs, school, and often family responsibilities. When these students have incomes above the IPA, which they must have to survive, they are not eligible for Pell grants under the current law. Let me describe two of these students to you.

Both are single students. The first is a 25-year-old junior recreation therapy