colleagues on the conference to find funding for this important project in FY 2000.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my friends from Florida for their comments and I appreciate their support for the facility. Should this matter come before the conference, you can be assured I will give it due consideration. I thank my friends for bringing this matter to my attention.

Mr. MACK. I thank the Chairman for his assurances.

REUSABLE AND ALTERNATIVE WATER PROJECTS

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I rise today with my friend from Florida, Senator GRAHAM, to engage the distinguished Chairman, Senator BOND, in a colloquy. Specifically, I wish to make the Chairman aware of two critical projects in Florida that did not receive funding in this bill. The first is the City of West Palm Beach's water reuse project. This wetlands-based potable water reuse program is critical not only to the water supply of the City of West Palm Beach but also to the Everglades restoration effort.

During dry season, the City takes water from Lake Okeechobee which is a critical primary source of water for the Everglades. West Palm Beach is attempting to eliminate this water use through their innovative water reuse project. The City has received federal support in each of the past three fiscal years. Work is progressing on schedule, but a final installment of federal funding is needed to complete the work and bring the project on line.

I would point out to the Chairman that this project is funded in the House VA/HUD and Independent Agencies appropriations bill. I would urge the Chairman to work with our House colleagues during the upcoming conference to ensure that funding for this critical project is completed in this fiscal year.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of my friend from Florida and understand the importance of this project to his State. I will do all I can with my colleagues in the House to secure funding for this project during the conference.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, if I could have the attention of the Chairman for a moment to address another important project to the State of Florida, the Alternative Water Source Projects. These central Florida water projects are providing valuable assistance to local governments in devising alternative and expanded water supplies for the region. To date, the federal government has provided $46.6 million toward this important effort. This project was also funded in the House of Representatives but did not receive funding in this bill. I would also appreciate the Chairman's consideration of Florida's ongoing water-related needs as this bill goes to conference with the House.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Florida for his comments and understand the merits of this project. I would like to assure both my colleagues that I will do my best to work with the other members of the conference to provide funding for this project.

Mr. MACK. I thank the Chairman for his assurances.

WATER TREATMENT

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I rise today with my friend from Florida, Senator GRAHAM, to engage the distinguished Chairman, Senator BOND, in a colloquy. Specifically, I wish to make the Chairman aware of an important priority for the State of Florida which was not funded in this bill. The city of Sarasota, Florida has long been working with the federal government to address its water treatment system problems. Many of the city's residents are still on septic tanks and the federal government has been interested in addressing this problem because of polluted runoff into the Sarasota Bay National Estuary.

Mr. GRAHAM. I would agree with the comments of my Florida colleague and add that the federal government has been working through the National Estuary Program to help it address this problem in previous years. During this year's appropriations process, we requested a grant out of the State and tribal assistance grant portion of this bill to continue this process. It would be my hope that the Chairman would work with us and with the other members of the upcoming conference committee to find funding for this project. It has the full support of Florida's House delegation and I would appreciate the Chairman's support as we move toward the next stage of the process.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my friends from Florida for their comments and I am familiar with this project from previous years. If an opportunity arises in the conference to fund it, I will work with my colleagues from the House to do so. I thank my friends for bringing this matter to my attention.

Mr. MACK. I thank the Chairman for his assurances.

NORTHEAST STATES FOR COORDINATED AIR USE MANAGEMENT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to engage the Chairman in a colloquy. First, let me thank the Senator from Missouri for his diligence in balancing funding for the wide variety of programs within the VA–HUD Appropriations bill under very difficult budget constraints. Under these constraints, you were able to increase funding for the Environmental Programs and Management over Fiscal Year 1999. However, one very important organization in the Northeast was not funded this year. For more than a decade, this body has supported an organization called the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management or (NESCAUM) with a modest $300,000 line item. NESCAUM is a non-profit organization that provides technical assistance to the Northeast states and the nation on a host of important air quality issues. By providing recommendations for consistent regional action, NESCAUM helps both states and regulated industry avoid a costly patchwork of differing regulatory requirements. While I know that this is a very difficult year, I believe that NESCAUM provides a valuable service and is strongly supported by the Senators from our region. At a minimum, I believe the Environmental Protection Agency should be encouraged to allocate $300,000 from the Environmental Programs and Management account to NESCAUM.

Mr. BOND. I recognize that we have provided NESCAUM this support for many years. The same can be said for several entities that do not receive line-item funding in this year's legislation. However, recognizing the broad support for NESCAUM's activities from a number of states, I concur in supporting encouraging EPA that it seek to provide NESCAUM with $300,000 of general support consistent with previous years.

Mr. LEAHY. I thank the Chairman and look forward to working with him and the Environmental Protection Agency to continue the good work of this organization. It has been a model of state collaboration. Most recently, its efforts to develop market-based approaches to air quality improvement have helped move our region toward specific steps to reduce emissions within our states.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I opposed the District of Columbia appropriations conference report for a number of reasons but the reason I speak out today is my grave concern with provisions in the report that continue to prohibit the government of the District of Columbia from engaging in needle exchange programs. These valuable programs curb the spread of HIV/AIDS by allowing injecting drug users to exchange their used, potentially contaminated needles for sterile ones. Yet, the District of Columbia appropriations conference report not only banned the use of Federal funds but prohibited the District from using its own monies to support this valuable program.

We in the Senate wisely did not include such a provision in the DC appropriations bill that passed this body, and it should not have been in the conference report.

Therefore, I opposed the conference report because it was an attack on this city's public health. AIDS is the leading cause of death for D.C. residents ages 30 to 44, an AIDS death rate seven

times the national average. What this conference report did to needle exchange programs was both unnecessary and unjustifiable. Indeed, including a needle exchange prohibition in this conference report is a hazard to the public health.

The prohibition in this report is unnecessary because there was already a ban on Federal funding for needle exchange programs. This ban dates to 1989, when Congress declared that no Federal funds could be spent to support needle exchange programs until there was scientific evidence that the programs, first, could reduce the spread of HIV and, second, did not encourage drug use. There are thus two main questions facing us as we decide the fate of federal needle exchange program funding: Do these programs achieve their public health purpose of slowing the spread of a deadly, infectious disease? And do these programs compromise our drug abuse prevention efforts by encouraging illicit drug use? Science has provided answers to these questions.

A preponderance of evidence shows that needle exchange programs cause a decrease in HIV infection rates. The National Institutes of Health found that needle exchange programs reduce risk behaviors by as much as 80 percent in injecting drug users while reducing HIV infection rates by an estimated 30 percent. In addition, a 1997 study published in Lancet, the respected British medical journal, compared HIV seroprevalence over time among injecting drug users in 29 cities with needle exchange programs and 52 cities without needle exchange programs. While seroprevalence increased by 5.9 percent per year in the 52 cities without needle exchange programs, it decreased by 5.8 percent per year in the 29 cities with programs.

Similarly, in the city of Baltimore, HIV infections among IV drug users have declined 30 percent since the start of its needle exchange in 1993 while the infection rate has increased 5 percent in Baltimore County, which has no exchange program. Numerous studies also show that needle exchange programs decrease needle sharing; decrease unsafe disposal of syringes; decrease re-use and passing of syringes; and increase needle disinfection.

Needle exchanges also do not encourage drug use—they compliment our efforts to stop drug use. Needle exchange programs can be linked with greater entry of addicts into drug treatment. After using a needle exchange program for more than 6 months, 58 percent of participants report having enrolled in detox or drug treatment. In New Haven, Connecticut, drug treatment entries doubled in the three years following the opening to its needle exchange. In Tacoma, Washington, needle exchange programs constitute the largest referral source for drug treatment, accounting for 43 percent of treatment participants.

In addition, injection drug users referred by needle exchange programs are more likely to enter drug treatment and to be retained, even in the face of the greater severity of drug use and psychosocial problems common among this population. Needle exchanges therefore supply a valuable opportunity to provide additional preventive services to difficult-to-reach individuals. Furthermore, studies show that needle exchange programs decrease the frequency of injection among participants and do not tempt individuals to begin using drugs.

These overwhelmingly conclusive results have fostered wide support for improving access to sterile needles. Groups supporting needle exchange programs include: the American Medical Association, the National Institutes of Health, the National Academy of Sciences, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Foundation for AIDS Research, the American Public Health Association, the National Association of County & City Health Officials, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. As a National Institutes of Health Consensus Statement concludes ''There is no longer any doubt that these programs work, yet there is a striking disjunction between what science dictates and what policy delivers. . . . Can the opposition to needle exchange in the United States be justified on scientific grounds? Our answer is simple and emphatic—no.''

Because of this evidence I believe policies that inhibit the creation and expansion of needle exchange programs are unjustifiable. I am baffled and outraged by such policies. We all come to Washington to make laws that help the American people, that combat social ills and that raise the quality of life in our country. We all want to win the war on drugs. We all want to stop the spread of HIV. So then why, when we have evidence that needle exchange programs work, do we continue to put millions of citizens at unnecessary risk? Cutting funding to these programs is a death sentence to thousands of men, women, and children.

I want you all to think for a moment about those children. It is imperative to realize that needle exchange programs go far beyond aiding addicts; they protects the partners and children of addicts. 70 percent of cases of women of childbearing age with HIV are directly or indirectly linked to IV drug use, causing 75 percent of the cases of babies born HIV positive to be the result of the use of dirty needles. For this reason, the American Academy of Pediatrics supports needle exchange programs as a means of reducing the spread of HIV to infants, children and adolescents. These programs are pro-family and pro-child.

We should not be undermining the District of Columbia's local control of pubic health decisions and to setting a dangerous precedent for the many states and localities that fund needle exchange programs through a combination of local, state, and private funds. Right now more than 110 communities in 30 states use needle exchange programs to slow the spread of HIV. Despite continued lack of federal funding, needle exchange programs have expanded in terms of the number of syringes exchanged, the geographic distribution of programs, and the range of services offered. Needle exchange programs were able to do this because they are supported by two-thirds of the American people as well as many state and local governments.

In Minnesota, needle exchange programs are an important component of efforts to decrease the transmission of HIV and to end drug use. Minnesota has two successful needle exchange programs. One program, Women with a Point, has exchanged approximately 63,000 syringes in the past 18 months while providing on-site HIV testing, referrals for chemical abuse recovery programs, information on risk reduction techniques and Hepatitis C, and case management for HIV positive injection drug users. The other, Minnesota AIDS Project, has also exchanged thousands of needles and provided users with HIV testing, needle disinfection kits, numerous services for HIV positive individuals, and information about risk reduction techniques.

We must face the reality that the second most frequent reported risk behavior for HIV infection is injecting drug use. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that approximately one-third of AIDS cases in the United States are directly or indirectly associated with injecting drug use. Moreover, according to a report in the American Journal of Public Health, 50 percent of new HIV infections are occurring among injection drug users.

We know that lowering the rate of injection-related HIV infections requires increasing the availability of drug treatment and increasing access to clean needles. We have scientific evidence that broad implementation of needle exchange programs would aid us in our battle against HIV.

In other words, we have scientific evidence that legal impediments to clean needle possession encourage high-risk behavior and do nothing to reduce drug use. We should not therefore be passing legislation that further hinders the establishment and expansion of needle exchange programs. We should instead of pushing for the removal of the Federal ban on funding—not enacting legislation that prohibits local governments, like the District of Columbia, from adopting good public health practices, practices that have been shown in communities across the United States to reduce the circulation of contaminated needles and the rate of HIV infection.

My colleagues in the Senate, President Clinton has threatened to veto this conference report because of its unwarranted intrusion into the public health of the citizens of the District of

Columbia. And he is right. Colleagues, I ask you to avoid that veto, and to send this report back to the conference committee so this intrusion can be eliminated. Please join me and vote ''no'' on this conference report as it now reads.

EMPOWERMENT ZONES AND ENTERPRISE COMMUNITIES ACT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I rise today to let my colleagues know that I am a cosponsor of S. 1473, the Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Act. I believe this bill is an important step in the right direction, though I still have serious concerns about the discrepancy of funding levels between rural and urban Empowerment Zones.

First, let me say I strongly support the Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Community concept. Areas that are designated as Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities combine tax credits and social service grants to promote long-term economic revitalization. These communities take a grassroots approach to revitalization by building partnerships with local government, non-profit groups and the private sector—thus allowing the federal government to support the work done on a local level.

The problem, Mr. President, is that Round II Empowerment Zones are not fully funded and are not receiving the same tax benefits as Round I Empowerment Zones. Will Rogers once said, ''I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts.'' I'm afraid this holds all too true for those who have struggled to see the Round II Empowerment Zones live up to their expectation. When the Griggs/Steele Empowerment Zone in eastern North Dakota was designated a Round II Empowerment Zone last year, the federal government made a commitment to help leaders in these communities create jobs and economic opportunity. Unfortunately, however, this Empowerment Zone still hasn't received one dime of federal funding. Those who live in the Griggs/Steele Empowerment Zone are now beginning to question the commitment of the federal government to make good on its promises.

I am co-sponsoring this bill because I think Congress has a responsibility to do the right thing and fully fund Round II Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities throughout this country. Having said that, I am very concerned about the discrepancy in funding between rural and urban areas. Like far too many proposals we debate here in Congress, this bill disproportionately grants much more funding for urban areas than rural areas. Of the $1.75 billion this legislation would provide over 9 years, urban areas receive almost 86% of the total funding. Although I recognize that we've made some progress and narrowed the gap that existed between rural and urban areas in the original proposal, I hope we can do more to help rural areas of this country currently facing so many challenges to economic prosperity.

Despite my concerns about the bill on these grounds, I am cosponsoring this legislation because I recognize that Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities need this funding in a timely manner to accomplish the economic revitalization the federal government promised. I will continue to work to ensure that rural Round II EZ/ECs receive the full funding and tax benefits they deserve.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, September 21, 1999, the Federal debt stood at $5,634,836,758,964.63 (Five trillion, six hundred thirty-four billion, eight hundred thirty-six million, seven hundred fifty-eight thousand, nine hundred sixty-four dollars and sixty-three cents).

One year ago, September 21, 1998, the Federal debt stood at $5,510,750,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred ten billion, seven hundred fifty million).

Five years ago, September 21, 1994, the Federal debt stood at $4,685,969,000,000 (Four trillion, six hundred eighty-five billion, nine hundred sixty-nine million).

Fifteen years ago, September 21, 1984, the Federal debt stood at $1,566,880,000,000 (One trillion, five hundred sixty-six billion, eight hundred eighty million) which reflects a debt increase of more than $4 trillion—$4,067,956,758,964.63 (Four trillion, sixty-seven billion, nine hundred fifty-six million, seven hundred fifty-eight thousand, nine hundred sixty-four dollars and sixty-three cents) during the past 15 years.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, 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.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:40 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hanrahan, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills and joint resolutions in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 468. An act to establish the Saint Helena Island National Scenic Area.

H.R. 834. An act to extend the authorization for the National Historic Preservation fund, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1231. An act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey certain national forest lands to Elko County, Nevada, for continued use as a cemetery.

H.R. 1243. An act to reauthorize the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

H.R. 1431. An act to reauthorize and amend the Coastal Barrier Resources Act.

H.R. 2079. An act to provide for the conveyance of certain National Forest System lands in the State of South Dakota.

H.R. 2116. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a program of extended care services for veterans and to make other improvements in health care programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R. 2367. An act to reauthorize a comprehensive program of support for victims of torture.

H.J. Res. 54. An act to extend the authorization for the Upper Delaware Citizens Advisory Council.

H.J. Res. 62. An act to provide that the provisions of Executive Order 13107, relating to the implementation of certain human rights treaties, shall not have any legal effect.

The message also announced that the House disagrees to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, H.R. 2084, making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes, and agrees to the conference asked by the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon; and appoints Mr. WOLF, Mr. DELAY, Mr. REGULA, Mr. ROGERS, Mr. PACKARD, Mr. CALLAHAN, Mr. TIAHRT, Mr. ADERHOLT, Ms. GRANGER, Mr. YOUNG of Florida, Mr. SABO, Mr. OLVER, Mr. PASTOR, Ms. KILPATRICK, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. FORBES, and Mr. OBEY as the managers of the conference on the part of the House.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 4:42 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

S. 1059. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2000 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed forces, and for other purposes.

The enrolled bill was signed subsequently by the President pro tempore (Mr. THURMOND).

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills and joint resolution were read the first and second times by unanimous consent and referred as indicated:

H.R. 468, An act to establish the Saint Helena Island National Scenic Area; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 834. An act to extend the authorization for the National Historic Preservation Fund, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 1231. An act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey certain National Forest lands to Elko County, Nevada, for continued use as a cemetery; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 1243. An act to reauthorize the National Marine Sanctuaries Act; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.