

and more disillusioned with the politics that they think is dominated by money and special interests.

Does the Senator from California agree people want to see a piece of legislation passed that has some teeth in it, that will make a difference and provide some protection?

My question is, Do the Senators think this patient protection legislation, what we are trying to do, is a test case as to whether or not the Senate belongs to the insurance companies, or whether or not the Senate belongs to the people in this country?

Is that too stark a contrast, or does it ultimately boil down to that core question?

Mrs. BOXER. I think the Senator has put his finger on it exactly right.

Who is supporting our Patients' Bill of Rights? It is every patient advocacy group, every provider who has an organization, including the nurses and the doctors. And who is on the other side? The insurance companies.

What do we have? Two bills. The bill on our side is supported by these advocacy groups and doctors; the other is supported by the insurance companies.

My friend is right. People are getting so upset that this place seems dominated by the special interests.

I yield the remaining time to my friend from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. I thank the Senator from California.

Let me follow up and perhaps engage in a brief dialog. I think the Senator from Minnesota made a good point about the heart of the Republican legislation. The most telling point, in my view, is the coverage. It simply covers one-third of the eligible private-insured individuals throughout the country.

As I understand the legislation, it is aimed at those self-insurers. These are businesses that contract with HMOs simply to manage the health care of their employees, so the only people who will directly be impacted by their legislation are those individuals who are essentially insured by their employers directly through self-insurance.

Mrs. BOXER. That is correct.

Mr. REED. In a sense, the only protections in the Republican bill are protections for the insurance industry. They are completely without risk. All of their patients, all of the people they directly insure, where they directly assume the risk, are exempt from coverage by this legislation.

The Democratic bill covers all of those who are private-insured HMOs throughout the United States. If the logic is these protections are good enough and necessary enough for those in employer-sponsored self-insured plans, why aren't they good enough, important enough, necessary enough, for those who are direct insurers of HMOs?

The answer, frankly, is that the legislation has been designed to protect the insurance companies from any additional risk. It is fine if we put it on

employers; it is fine if they have to pay extra or if they have to do these things.

However, the only consistent pattern if you look at the coverage, this is not a patients' protection bill; this is an insurance industry protection bill.

I yield to the Senator for her comments.

Mrs. BOXER. It perplexes me that my friends on the other side have a bill that doesn't cover everyone.

It perplexes me it is called the Patients' Bill of Rights. As my friend points out, if you look at the differences, whether it is the appeals process—and my friend last week came to the floor and pointed out that under the Republican proposal it doesn't look as if there is an outside entity looking over the HMO decision but, rather, someone essentially selected by the HMO itself.

I thank my friend for yielding.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). Under the previous order, the time from now until 4:15 shall be under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

NATIONAL CHARACTER COUNTS WEEK

Mr. DOMENICI. On behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 148, S. Res. 98.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 98) designating the week beginning October 17, 1999, and the week beginning October 15, 2000, as "National Character Counts Week."

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, the resolution I have just alluded to is a bipartisan resolution. A number of years ago we started this approach to character education called Character Counts. Senator Nunn was the cosponsor of a resolution that passed the Senate on innumerable occasions, perhaps as many as five times. It declares for all of America that one week during the year will be known as called Character Counts Week.

Frankly, from this Senator's standpoint, we hear so much about what we ought to do and what we can do to help our young people as they grow up in this very difficult society and often very difficult time. We all understand that there are many people who have primary responsibility for our children. We are not in any way talking about negating that primary responsibility, that of relatives and grandparents and mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters to help raise a child with good

values. But we have found, starting about 6 years ago, that the teachers in our public schools have been yearning for something they would like to teach our children that for some reason had been eliminated from both the public and private school agenda. It is sometimes referred to as character education.

I chose to call it "Character Counts" and I chose to speak about a specific program that is being used in many public schools in our country, and certainly in my State of New Mexico, whereby the teachers take six pillars of character and they embrace those within the classroom—on a day-by-day basis, not as a special class. But let me just mention a few of the Character Counts traits that are part of this program and used in many schools.

Let's start with the first one. It is trustworthiness. In some public schools and private schools, especially in the grade schools, for one entire month, the school would promote the idea of trustworthiness by students and teachers, who have lesson plans and programs that articulate what trustworthiness is. They use this with the students, and they from time to time engage in discussions, engage in activities around the school that epitomize trustworthiness. I think we all understand trustworthiness is one of those characteristics and qualities of character that says you should not lie. It says if you agree with somebody to do something, you should live up to your agreement. Trustworthiness has a quality of loyalty to it.

Then maybe the next month, one of the other six pillars would be discussed and woven into the curriculum. The next month, it may very well be "respect." The same kind of thing might happen during that month in some grade school in New Mexico or Idaho or the State of Tennessee or the State of Connecticut, where an awful lot of activity in Character Counts education is taking place.

Maybe the next month it might be the third trait, which is "responsibility," and then maybe the next would be "fairness," and "caring," and "citizenship."

I have been part of this now for a number of years. It is a joy to visit public schools, parochial schools, and other kinds of schools, and visit a class and just talk to the young people about the word of the month; to see the teachers, how excited they are that for that month the children have been talking about responsibility; they have been talking about that in terms of their classmates, their teacher, their responsibilities at home.

Then if you are lucky, you might choose to visit a school at the time once a month when they are having an assembly. During Character Counts assemblies, schools bring all the students together, and they present awards to the students that month who were most responsible. One way of reinforcing the importance of good character is to reward those who did more

things than anyone else that month to demonstrate "trustworthiness," or "responsibility," or "caring," or "respect," or "citizenship."

Actually, Character Counts and its Six Pillars are not the only character education idea and program taking place in our country. But it is one of the best. The resolution we have just adopted resolves and proclaims the week beginning October 17 of this year, and the week beginning October 15 in the year 2000, to be National Character Counts Week. We request that the President issue a proclamation calling upon people and interested groups to embrace the six core elements of character identified by the Aspen Declaration, which are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. That week the people in the country observe as National Character Counts Week, with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

There are many Senators who have already joined in this effort from both sides of the aisle. Some are very active in their home States, and some are not. But I can say to any Senator who would be interested, there is a format which is very simple and at the same time very effective and profound, where a Senator or any elected official can get together with the superintendent of schools and others and talk about joint sponsorship of Character Counts in that particular public school. If the board of that school condones it and says it is a good idea, then it is all a question of leadership and who wants to pursue it and push Character Counts. So when graduation at a Character Counts school occurs, you can attend and you can see what the 9 months of character education have done. At schools where arithmetic was taught, grammar was taught, reading was taught, all of a sudden the young kids also know something about these six pillars of character.

Frankly, people ask what has gone wrong with our country and what should we do about it.

I am no prophet, and I am not one who thinks he knows all the answers, but I say what is missing in the United States more now than 20 or 30 years ago is character. The old Greek philosophers talked about character. I think it was Plato who said a country without character is a country that cannot exist for long, and that for a country to have character, the people in the country must have character.

What we are speaking of is our little mission and our part in trying to change the quality of lives of young people by letting them know that some things are better than other things, there are some things that are right and some things that are wrong.

Nobody seems to object across this land to these six pillars, these six words. It used to be whenever one talked about behavior and said values, people would wonder, whose values?

In our America, under our Constitution, we surely cannot decide which re-

ligions values are to be taught in the schools, for as soon as we do that, we have to ask which ones are being left out. And as soon as we do that, we begin to break down the wall of separation between church and State, which is such a formidable part of America as it started under our forefathers and continues today.

It is interesting. I have asked in many assemblies of adults whether there was any objection in the community—be it the community of Gallup, NM, or Clovis, NM, or Las Cruces, NM, or Albuquerque, my home city—to these six pillars. If one thinks them through, they are so fundamental and desperately needed that hardly anyone can object to them.

I wish the Governors of our country—and I am going to ask them, along with my good friend and chief cosponsor, Senator DODD of Connecticut—might adopt this in their States. I want to work with the Governors to move together with the public institutions of education and the private institutions of education to begin a broader-based promotion of Character Counts in more States.

Frankly, a number of our Senators have been involved in the past. Senator DODD has brought this idea to his State, and Senator LIEBERMAN works with him. Senator FRIST of Tennessee has had great success in getting it started, and now it is multiplying in his State. I have had a rather phenomenal success in New Mexico. In my small State, over 200,000 young people, one way or another in classrooms across our State, are learning and living these six words, these six pillars of character, as part of their 9 months of education. It is having a profound effect.

On the other hand, there are cynics. They ask: How do you know? Are you sure?

We do not know for sure, although we are beginning to get some objective analysis that seems to indicate that some of the things going wrong in the schools before are not going wrong when the six pillars of character are utilized, are popular and preeminent and where the children are participating in building their character around them.

I believe we are better off trying character education than not. If I had to guess what might change things, I would say if the young people in our country can build individually and collectively into their daily lives the six pillars of character celebrated in this resolution, so they feel part and parcel and immersed in the ideas of respect, trustworthiness, caring, and the other three pillars I have mentioned heretofore, we have a better chance of effecting some change for the positive than almost anything else we can do.

I am going to do my share to keep this going in my State. I am also going to join Senator DODD in meeting at the next opportunity with the Governors in a bipartisan way to see if they will en-

gage us in a discourse and dialog about character education and, in particular, how Character Counts works in the places it is being tried.

There is not an organization that dictates Character Counts for the Nation, nor does it promote it nationwide. This is an activity left up to localities. The only thing is, it is coordinated in our country by an entity which came up with these six pillars, the Josephson Institute of Ethics. That institute helps provide materials and the know-how for localities, schools, Boy Scouts, athletic clubs and others to promote these six pillars. But, it is up to the locality to do something about it.

But today, we are going to adopt this resolution celebrating Character Counts in the hope of raising awareness and encouraging states and localities to consider using this approach in their communities.

I note the presence on the floor of my cosponsor who has done a wonderful job in his State, and also speaks about Character Counts and the six pillars in various places in this country. He has had a significant degree of success. The way it is run in his State is different than our State, but, nonetheless, the six pillars are becoming prominent.

These six pillars are becoming prominent in the education of young people. We might never have thought we could include them, but in the backs of our minds we always thought they must be used.

How can we raise children without responsibility, without caring and respect being meaningful to them?

I am very pleased to be part of this again this year. Like I said, I am going to try to be a little more effective in expanding Character Counts to a few more places with the help of my colleague, Senator DODD. As I said in Senator DODD's absence, we are going to ask Governors to take the lead. We will join them and get the Josephson Institute and any others that are involved in character education and move it ahead so that many States will be like Senator DODD's and mine where it will be flourishing among young kids.

Mr. President, I say again, today, for the sixth consecutive year, we will adopt a resolution designating the third week of October as National Character Counts Week. Once again, this resolution has received overwhelming bipartisan support with 57 cosponsors. Through this measure, this body—the United States Senate—pledges its support and encouragement of character education and training by setting aside one week for a celebration. Yes, National Character Counts Week, October 17-23, 1999 and October 15-21, 2000 will be an opportunity for schools, communities, and youth organizations all over America to celebrate the ideals of good character and honor those who have worked so hard throughout the year to promote values such as trustworthiness, caring, fairness, respect, responsibility, and citizenship.

I believe it is time to reclaim the importance of these values in our daily lives. Many Americans, I regret, have become too cynical about the role of character in modern society. For too long, we have declined to discuss fundamental moral principles in our schools for fear of offending someone or imposing our beliefs. However, we nearly forgot that this nation was founded upon basic values. These values have bound our citizens together and sustained them through wars, depressions and other adversities. Indeed, it is our belief in these core values that continues to make the United States a beacon of hope and opportunity to people around the globe.

The "Six Pillars of Character" concept reflects these core values. They are the building blocks to helping our children recognize the difference between right and wrong, and they deserve a place in our schools alongside lessons in math and reading. Although parents do bear ultimate responsibility for teaching children the value of human dignity and character, we, as a community, have a duty to support these messages outside the home. To that end, Senator DODD and I are exploring ways to expand the role of character education in schools and after-school programs, and we urge our colleagues to join us. I can assure the Senate, character education programs have been phenomenally well received in school systems throughout the country.

In my own State of New Mexico, teachers have told me they finally feel empowered to discuss what it means to be a good citizen and a good person with their students, and they love it. Schools across the state have walls covered with posters on what "responsibility" means, and students who demonstrate outstanding acts of caring, for example, are celebrated at pep rallies. These simple lessons are taking root among our children, and they must be encouraged.

I am not suggesting that character education is the magic elixir that will prevent tragedies like the Columbine High School shooting from happening, but it's a start. We, as a society, need to tell our children that lying is not acceptable, under any circumstance. Stealing cannot be allowed. Breaking the law will not be tolerated. We also need to reinforce positive values, and programs like Character Counts do just that. I applaud the Senate for passing this resolution designating a National Character Counts Week for this year and next, and I encourage my fellow Senators to continue to work with me to ensure that our children receive strong and consistent messages on the essential values our society must embrace in order to succeed.

This is Republican time, but I am going to yield on Republican time to my colleague, Senator DODD.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from New Mexico for yielding to me. Far more important, I thank

him for his leadership on this issue. We have worked on this issue together, along with several of our colleagues for the last 5 or 6 years.

It all began because the Senator from New Mexico discovered this program and brought it to the attention of the Senate and asked a group of his colleagues if we wanted to get involved in this idea of Character Counts.

I will not go through the long history of it, but one can imagine how provocative a meeting it was in Aspen, CO, when educators, child psychologists, and Lord knows who else, gathered together—quite a group of people—to try to come to some conclusion about six pillars of character. Apparently the debate went on for some time on which pillars they could agree on. They finally settled on respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, loyalty, honesty, and fairness.

This is not an all-inclusive list. There may be other ideas. There may be synonyms for each of these words that others find more acceptable to their particular community.

The point is not to be rigid about the words or rigid about how to best promote these values among our young people. What is important is that there be community efforts, efforts at the neighborhood level to promote the idea of strong values in our young people, not only young people but young adults and adults as well.

One of the beauties of this program is it does not focus just on the children in the schoolroom. But when the issue of trustworthiness is raised as an issue that the school is going to focus on for a particular period of time—a day, a week, a month—everybody in the school is involved with the issue of trustworthiness. The administrators, the teachers, the coaches, the faculty advisers, as well as the students, share in coming to a better understanding of how that particular value can be enhanced and understood and promulgated within the community.

This has been a tremendously successful program. In my State of Connecticut, there are now some 10,000 young people who have gone through a Character Counts Program. I do not know the exact numbers in my colleague's State of New Mexico, but it is easily that or more. We are small States. We are not large States. But it is a good indication of how successful this program has been. It has expanded primarily as a result of word of mouth, good reputation, one teacher telling another teacher in another community how it works, one principal telling another principal how well it works. That is why it has expanded as much as it has in my State of Connecticut.

Education, as we all know, is a central activity in any child's life. We teach them to walk, to talk, to read, and to write. But one of the most important things that a child can learn is how to get along with others and to be a part of the larger community, to be a responsible, caring, loyal, honest, fair,

respectful citizen. You can add other words, as I said.

Regrettably, today, for a lot of reasons which we do not need to go into this afternoon, young people are entering a school system not having learned these basic values. It has nothing to do with economics. It has nothing to do with race or religion.

I can show you communities in my State that are some of the most affluent in the country where children are entering a school system without these values. I can also take you to some of the poorest neighborhoods in my State and show you where children are entering school with these values. I could also show you children out of those communities who do not have those values.

So it was decided a number of years ago we ought to try to weave into the educational process the teaching of these values, and to do so in a way that would not confront, if you will, the agenda that a teacher, a school system, has on a daily basis, but to weave it into the seamless garment of a student's daily life.

So instead of having, say, 15 minutes at the outset of the school day in which the principal comes on the loudspeaker and says: We are now going to talk about trustworthiness for 15 minutes—and if any of us here recall those kinds of discussions growing up as children, we all know what happened: We yawned; we fell asleep; no one paid much attention; we hardly remember what the principal had to say—what Character Counts says is, we are not going to do it that way; we are going to take the word "trustworthiness," or "loyalty," or "respect," or "citizenship," and we are going to ask you to weave it into the daily life of a student—not for a day or a week, but for a month.

That is what we have done in Connecticut—a month. So from the beginning of the day, whether it is math class or science class or whether the student is going to band or working on the school newspaper, or showing up on the athletic field—whatever the activity is—that school tries to take one of those pillars and make it a part of that teaching experience, for the full program, in a sense, to weave it into it so that everybody in school, for that period of time—in our case, a month—works on that word—"respect," "trustworthiness." What does it mean? What is the absence of it? How do you become more respectful, more trustworthy? What are examples when it does not happen? It becomes, as I said, part of the seamless garment of that educational experience.

I have to tell you, you may say: Well, this sounds wonderful, Senator. It is a nice idea. I wonder how it is working.

It is working remarkably well. I can tell you, on the basis of countless conversations I have had with people all across my State, they point to this particular effort as having had success in changing the culture of a school. I

am telling you it has had a profound effect not just on the students I mentioned earlier but on the teachers, administrators, faculty, student advisers. They have all benefited as a result of weaving these Character Counts programs into their school life.

We spent a lot of time over the last couple months after the tragedy of Littleton, CO, talking about what we might do to solve the problem. Without belaboring the point, we sort of resort to our old bromides. We have one group of us here that will convince you it is gun control that is the answer to the problem, and if we could just deal with gun control, we could solve the problem. I happen to believe that is part of the answer. We have others who say: Look, if we can clean up Hollywood, the videos games, that is the answer to the problem. I would not argue, there is certainly an element that contributes to what happened.

But frankly, what happened at Littleton, CO, did not happen all at once. The event did. But I suggest to you that what happened in Littleton, CO, what happened in Arkansas, and Kentucky and Oregon, and other places, in my own State, isolated cases of violence began a long time before the events. There was a breakdown at home. There was a breakdown that occurred weeks, months, years before, that culminated in the tragic events of those days that we all remember with such painful clarity.

What Character Counts does here is, it tries to get at the source of the problem early to try to see if we can begin to change the direction, to offer a foundation in basic values to students so that you might change a young person's ideas on how they relate to each other—understanding differences, respecting differences, not having to feel alienated because you are different, not making someone feel isolated and alone because maybe they are not a good athlete or a great student—maybe their clothes are not the ones you would wear or I would wear; they may listen to music that you and I would not particularly find appealing—but to understand that each person is God's creation and that if we can inculcate them with a basic sense of decency, of understanding that they are part of a larger community, as I said at the outset, learning to respect each other, to trust each other, to be honest with each other, then we can begin to change the kind of culture, in my view, that contributes to this growing sense of violence we too often see among our young people.

I again thank my colleague from New Mexico. He is the leader on this issue. I am his blocking guard here. I get involved whenever he asks me to, because I am so committed to it and so believe in what he is trying to do.

I think the idea of getting our Governors involved is a tremendous idea. We hope that every Governor in the country, if they are not already involved in this, will be willing to join

with us and in some public relations efforts, if you will, to raise the level of awareness.

We do not have a fixed idea in mind. My colleague mentioned Mr. Josephson and his program. It is a fine program. There are others who have a different point of view on how best to make this work. We have learned to respect what works in, say, a Native American community in the Southwest or a highly ethnic community in my State of Connecticut where you may have differences on how you approach these particular values. We let local communities and school districts and others try to sort out what size fits them best and how to make it work.

That is what we want to support, we want to recognize, we want to bring attention to. We want to promote and expand this. Again, we do not have any simple answers here for how you stop some of the problems we are seeing that are becoming too frequent in our society.

But I stand here today and tell you that if more communities would adopt a Character Counts program, if they would at least try this—just try it; and we can get you the information; we can put you in touch with people who can help you work through how to start it and get it going so you do not have to make it up on your own—then I promise you, if you try this, if you really give it a chance, you can make a difference not only in your school's life but the individual lives of the people who enter those institutions.

It need not be just elementary schools or middle schools. We have not tried it extensively, but I know of one in my State at the high school level where Character Counts has worked, where the principal said: We're going to try it. And it made a difference at that senior high school.

So many say: Kids are too old then. They are not too old. They are looking for some direction, some ideas they can hold on to and grasp as roadmaps on how to proceed with their lives.

I think the 2 weeks we have designated—October 17 of this year and October 15 of the year 2000—as National Character Counts Week bring us one major step forward, bringing some needed recognition to this very worthwhile program that has made such a difference already in the lives of thousands of people all across our country.

Again, I commend my good friend and colleague from New Mexico for his distinguished leadership on this issue.

Mr. DOMENICI. I thank the Senator very much.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GORTON). The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. DOMENICI. I have been a Senator for a long time. I have participated in a number of events that made me feel very good about my work and about my community and the citizens of my State. But I do not believe there has been anything as satisfying as to work with the communities in New Mexico and school boards and super-

intendents and teachers on the six pillars of character in Character Counts. It has been absolutely something that I just will never forget.

I am quite confident that while it is not the only answer, the elixir, to all of our problems, it is certainly a very positive thing going on in the lives of our young people. We ought to be proud of these efforts and certainly encourage Character Counts, where we can.

I would say to the Senate, if any of you get involved in Character Counts, it is very difficult for the schools to have success at the high school level, but a lot of work is being done there. It is among the grade school children where this program starts. As they move through those years, when they have been exposed to character education for 4 or 5 years, there is a real difference in how they perceive their relationship to their teachers, to their parents, and to their community.

Mr. President, I understand that I have a number of minutes remaining under my control on the Republican side of this.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has the remaining 15 minutes between now and 4:15.

Mr. DOMENICI. If there are any Republican Senators who would like to speak, they may certainly come and do that now. I will yield the floor to them.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, on May 6, 1999, I was pleased to join my friend, the distinguished Senator from New Mexico, (Mr. DOMENICI), in introducing a Senate Resolution designating the third week in October, 1999 and 2000 as Character Counts Week. I am delighted today that we are approving this legislation, just as we have approved similar legislation in the Senate every year since 1994.

In 1993, the Josephson Institute of Ethics convened a conference of ethicists, educators and other leaders to examine the issue of character development. The result of that conference, held in Aspen Colorado, was the Aspen Declaration on Character Education.

The elements of character described in the Aspen Declaration were: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. They are often referred to now as the Six Pillars of Character.

Today, more than 300 member organizations, including community groups, schools and businesses are part of a nationwide Character Counts Coalition. These organizations sponsor programs that emphasize the importance of good character traits in our society. American society is dependent on the strength of the character of her citizens.

Never have we seen a time in the life of our society that good character has been more important. Solid lessons in character must be taught by parents and families, schools, and religious groups.

A 1996 National School Boards Association report on Character Education

in our schools showed a significant trend toward adopting character education programs in schools.

Character Counts! suggests three steps to teach young people for making the decision to do the right thing:

1. Think about the welfare of all people likely to be affected by your actions and make choices that avoid harm to and promote the well-being of others.

2. Demonstrate character by living up to all ethical principles of the Six Pillars of Character even when you must give up other things you want.

3. If you cannot live up to one ethical principle without giving up another, do the thing that you sincerely believe will promote a better society and should be done by all.

The National School Boards Association report found that schools with character education programs reported improvement in student leadership, discipline, violence, vandalism, academic performance, attendance and drug and alcohol incidents. It also stated, "Ultimately, . . . character education may be a long-term investment as improvement and contribution levels often increase over time."

As we work to train our children well, we must keep in mind that we are building the foundation for new generations. The examples we set about how we treat others, and what we accept in social behavior will influence not only our children, but all children.

In Mississippi, the Noxubee County Competitive Community Program, the Ocean Springs Chamber of Commerce, Kids With Character, and the Junior Auxiliary of Clinton are organizations who have joined the Character Counts! Coalition. They make specific commitments including:

To integrate character education into new and existing programs and to encourage young people and their parents to adopt and model the Six Pillars. And, to participate in CHARACTER COUNTS! Week.

I congratulate them on their important efforts and hope that this year more groups and communities will become involved in similar programs.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to this resolution appear in the RECORD.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 98) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 98

Whereas young people will be the stewards of our communities, the United States, and the world in critical times, and the present and future well-being of our society requires an involved, caring citizenry with good character;

Whereas concerns about the character training of children have taken on a new sense of urgency as violence by and against youth threatens the physical and psychological well-being of people of the United States;

Whereas more than ever, children need strong and constructive guidance from their families and their communities, including schools, youth organizations, religious institutions, and civic groups;

Whereas the character of a nation is only as strong as the character of its individual citizens;

Whereas the public good is advanced when young people are taught the importance of good character, and that character counts in personal relationships, in school, and in the workplace;

Whereas scholars and educators agree that people do not automatically develop good character and, therefore, conscientious efforts must be made by institutions and individuals that influence youth to help young people develop the essential traits and characteristics that comprise good character;

Whereas although character development is, first and foremost, an obligation of families, the efforts of faith communities, schools, and youth, civic, and human service organizations also play a very important role in supporting family efforts by fostering and promoting good character;

Whereas the Senate encourages students, teachers, parents, youth, and community leaders to recognize the valuable role our youth play in the present and future of the United States and to recognize that character is an important part of that future;

Whereas in July 1992, the Aspen Declaration was written by an eminent group of educators, youth leaders, and ethics scholars for the purpose of articulating a coherent framework for character education appropriate to a diverse and pluralistic society;

Whereas the Aspen Declaration states, "Effective character education is based on core ethical values which form the foundation of democratic society.";

Whereas the core ethical values identified by the Aspen Declaration constitute the 6 core elements of character;

Whereas the 6 core elements of character are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship;

Whereas the 6 core elements of character transcend cultural, religious, and socioeconomic differences;

Whereas the Aspen Declaration states, "The character and conduct of our youth reflect the character and conduct of society; therefore, every adult has the responsibility to teach and model the core ethical values and every social institution has the responsibility to promote the development of good character.";

Whereas the Senate encourages individuals and organizations, especially those who have an interest in the education and training of our youth, to adopt the 6 core elements of character as intrinsic to the well-being of individuals, communities, and society as a whole; and

Whereas the Senate encourages communities, especially schools and youth organizations, to integrate the 6 core elements of character into programs serving students and children: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

- (1) proclaims the week beginning October 17, 1999, and the week beginning October 15, 2000, as "National Character Counts Week"; and

- (2) requests that the President issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States and interested groups to—

- (A) embrace the 6 core elements of character identified by the Aspen Declaration, which are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship; and

- (B) observe the week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

THE ECONOMIC AGENDA

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I would like to speak a little about the President of the United States, his staff and his renewed focus on the domestic and economic issues of this country.

Across the land, it has been heralded that the President is once again coming back to address economic issues and wants to become a part of the economic agenda. He wants to be involved with what we are doing here in Congress in our work on approving money for programs, talking about Medicare, Social Security, and other things. I will say at the outset that it wasn't too many months ago that the President of the United States was promoting a plan that was considerably different from what he is espousing today. It wasn't long ago that you felt satisfied with saving only a portion of the Social Security surplus and using the rest for your spending initiatives. Yet, as of today, the President's plan has come the Republican way. We both say now that we should save 100 percent of the money that belongs to the Social Security recipients of our country and we should not let it be squandered on anything else.

This means that we are going to save the \$1.8 trillion dollar Social Security surplus over the next decade. In the Congressional plan, the only way that we can touch these funds is if they are needed to undertake substantive reforms of Social Security to ensure that the program works well for seniors. Nothing else.

In order to guarantee such restraint, we have developed a lockbox proposal—I came up with the basic idea and Senator ABRAHAM has taken a lead in promoting it. While the President's lockbox is different from ours, at least we are speaking the same language—even the President is saying that we must make sure not to spend any of the Social Security surplus. That puts us on the same path. He is following us. We thank him for that and are pleased to have him on board.

However, now is the chance for him to show his commitment to this principle. Up until now, we have faced opposition on our lockbox bill, both in our budget resolution and on the Senate floor. I would remind you that we have not been able to vote on this proposal here yet because the Democratic minority doesn't want to let us vote on our lockbox. We are going to ask them another time, very soon, to give us an opportunity to vote on it. This lockbox has the name, Abraham-Domenici. It is a real lockbox.

We are also joined by the distinguished junior Senator from Missouri as our third cosponsor, Mr. ASHCROFT. We wish others would join. We wish Senators from the other side would join. Let us make sure that when we say to the seniors that we are putting their Social Security funds in a lockbox, that it is real and is the most real one we can do. As a matter of fact,