the minimum wage in its current form; you would not see the community renewal, a massive new Federal Government program.

Frankly, with all the spending the President has requested in the Labor-HHS appropriations bill—and the President is now requesting more spending in that bill than his initial budget request—to add, as this bill does, some $16 billion for school construction, which is two-thirds of the President's request, I think is a major step towards helping in this new area, which traditionally has been the responsibility of the local school districts.

We have heard there is a desire for more and more spending. That is not surprising. That is the habit of our friends on the other side of the aisle. They have never seen a tax surplus they did not want to spend. Tax cuts are very unpalatable to them. But we want to leave some of the taxes in the pockets of the people who earn them.

I have not seen the figures—I do not know the study the minority leader came up with to say that 60 percent only get 5 percent of the tax cuts—but I think, if my memory serves me correctly, the lowest income 40 percent of the population do not pay any income taxes. I imagine the lowest 60 percent probably pay not more than a couple of percent of the total tax burden.

Now that is not to say there has not been some fuzzy math with respect to the figures we presented, but only to say that if you are going to have tax cuts, the people who get the tax cuts are going to be the people who pay the taxes. It sounds logical, sounds simple, but that is the fact of the matter.

I might add, also, that small rural school districts will be benefited in school construction because their exemption has been raised from $10 million to $15 million.

When we hear talk that the Democrats have not had anything to say about this, the tax bill includes bills that have already been voted on and passed, been voted out of the House, been voted out of the Finance Committee. Certainly the small business portion of the bill, which I am going to talk about, has been passed, as usual, out of the Small Business Committee on a unanimous vote, a bipartisan vote.

If I remember correctly, when the bills that are included in the small business section came before this body, there was only one dissenting vote, and that was on my side of the aisle.

But if there is ever a bipartisan measure, it is the measures we have reported out of the Small Business Committee.

On the Retirement Security and Savings Act of 2000, when the House passed the pension bill earlier this year, it was a vote of 401–25. It was reported out of the Finance Committee last month by a unanimous vote. I was not there for the vote, but I assume there were some Democrats there—there usually are—who voted for it unanimously.

So it stretches credulity beyond any acceptable measure to say that this does not incorporate measures adopted and supported by our colleagues on the other side of the aisle—certainly measures demanded by the President.

We had a caucus on our side, and many people thought it would be difficult to vote for a bill because there were so many priorities from the Democratic side. But under the measure that has come before us, there are clearly many important Democratic priorities.

Excuse me, I misspoke a few moments ago when I indicated what the percentage of total taxes was paid by the lowest income taxpayers. The lowest income taxpayers, the bottom 56 percent pay 6 percent of the taxes. So that is roughly the figure.

H.R. 2614—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. BOND. Let me move to the bill before us. It has been thoroughly covered with faint praise. Maybe it deserves a hearing in its own right before this thing gets pasted all over the place. I would like my colleagues and our constituents to know what is in it because I think there are some good things in it.

The conference report on H.R. 2614, the Certified Development Program Improvement Act, has grown over the past week to include not only a 3-year reauthorization bill for the Small Business Administration, but it includes extensive tax legislation, provisions to reform and improve the Medicare program, and, as I mentioned, pension reform. We might call this bill ''Small Business and Friends.'' A lot of important luggage is being carried on the train that our little small business bill is pulling.

As chairman of the Committee on Small Business, I will comment first on the Small Business Reauthorization Act of 2000. This is, as I said before, the result of many months of work by the Senate and House Committees on Small Business. The bill is the conference agreement to reauthorize most small business programs at the Small Business Administration, and it reauthorizes the Small Business Innovation Research Program.

To summarize the provisions briefly, this includes an 8-year reauthorization of the Small Business Innovation Research Program, the SBIR Program. This program was initially implemented in 1983 and allows Federal agencies to award research grants and contracts to small research firms. This is vitally important to develop the capacity in the economy as a whole, and the country as a whole, to do high-quality research needed by the Federal Government.

Some 50,000 SBIR awards have been made since the inception of the program. It contains measures to ensure that small businesses receive the appropriate allocation of Federal R&D funds, to require that agencies retain more comprehensive information on the program's operations that will improve its management, and to protect the intellectual property of the small businesses that participate in the program.

The conference report also establishes what we call the FAST program, a matching grant initiative to provide incentives to States to assist in the development of high-tech small businesses.

We have noted, particularly those of us from the heartland, that companies on the east and west coasts generally receive the vast majority of SBIR awards, while companies in the South, Midwest, and Rocky Mountain States receive proportionally very few awards. Out in the heartland, we, too, have technology. We have research capabilities. The FAST program will help even out the concentration of the awards by providing wide latitude to States to provide the type of help their high-tech businesses need to succeed and create high-paying quality jobs for their citizens.

The Small Business Reauthorization Act of 2000 also includes a comprehensive reauthorization of the credit and management assistance programs that are included in the broad umbrella of small business programs administered by the SBA. The omnibus bill includes the flagship 7(a) guaranteed business loan program, the Small Business Investment Company program, and the Microloan program. Certain improvements were made to the Microloan program championed by the ranking member of the Committee on Small Business, the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. JOHN KERRY. The Microloan program has been expanded. We also included aspects which will be especially beneficial to women-owned small businesses across the United States.

In addition, this extensive legislation would reauthorize and make improvements in the management assistance programs, including the SCORE and Small Business Development Center program. As a result of the continuing oversight responsibilities of the Committee on Small Business, the bill includes a significant improvement package for the HUBZone program. This is a program which I was pleased to present and have adopted by Congress, signed by the President, that provides set-aside contracts to bring jobs and economic opportunity to areas where there has been high unemployment and high poverty. This is a geographically based program, which actually takes the jobs to the communities that need them to help people get from welfare to work by using the power of the Federal Government as a purchaser to create business opportunities.

First and foremost, the bill, H.R. 5545, addresses the inadvertent exclusion of Indian tribal enterprises and Alaska Native corporations from the program. These provisions resulted from extensive negotiations between the Committee on Small Business, the Committee on Indian Affairs, and the Alaska congressional delegation. The HUBZone section of the bill also seeks to clarify the effects of the HUBZone price evaluation preference on commodity procurements in which the range of bid prices tends to be small, and the HUBZone price evaluation preference would be overwhelmingly decisive.

In addition, the legislation makes other improvements and clarifications in a variety of SBA programs to make them more effective. For example, there has been some confusion among the Federal agencies about contract preferences for service-disabled veterans. This bill would make it absolutely clear that service-disabled veterans are on the same preference level as the small disadvantaged businesses and women-owned small businesses for Federal contracting opportunities.

The conference report incorporates the new market venture capital program of 2000. The purpose of this program is, similarly, to promote economic development, new investment, and job opportunities in low-income areas. It accomplishes this goal by providing incentives to encourage small venture capital firms to invest in targeted low-income communities and economically distressed inner cities and poor rural counties.

This is a program that has been developed with bipartisan support. This is certainly something that will assist us in this country in getting more people off of welfare, making sure that job opportunities go to the places and the people who most need them.

When the Congress enacted my HUBZone legislation 3 years ago, it established the Federal contracting incentives to lure small businesses into distressed cities and rural counties. I believe this new market venture capital program will add an additional building block in our strategy to make sure these economically distressed areas are attractive to small businesses and that they will be able to bring job opportunities and new vitality to these historically neglected areas of the Nation.

As everybody now has heard from the other side, the conference report does deal with taxes. I believe it is a great victory for the American taxpayers. The tax portion has four sections. First, the legislation includes the Foreign Sales Corporation Repeal and Extraterritorial Income Exclusion Act of 2000. I can see that is going to be a real winner. That title really rolls off your tongue, the FSC Repeal and Extraterritorial Income Exclusion Act of 2000. That one will be a winner. But it is must-do legislation, seriously. We have to do it by November 1, if we are to avoid a potential trade war—at least sanctions —with the European Union.

Second, the conference report includes a House-Senate compromise on the Retirement Security and Savings Act of 2000, which has enormous bipartisan support, having passed the House earlier this year by a vote of 401–25 and being reported out of the Senate Finance Committee by unanimous vote. That legislation includes sweeping changes encouraging retirement savings, expanding pension coverage by increasing contribution limits on IRA and other types of pension plans, increasing portability, and providing meaningful relief for women who often take time off to raise their families. And it contains a number of provisions to reduce regulatory burdens that are very excessive and will be especially helpful to small businesses, our constituency in the Committee on Small Business.

The third part of the tax portion of the conference report is a minimum wage increase and a package of small business tax provisions. I raised questions about raising the minimum wage when it first came here. I think it can be detrimental to small business. I do not believe it is good economics. We know it is good politics. It is always nice to promise somebody a raise, particularly when you don't have to come up with the money that they are being paid. This is great election year politics. I know everybody wants to do something. It makes you feel good to give somebody a raise out of someone else's pocket.

The problem is, right now it probably won't hurt small businesses too much because most small businesses I know of, if they are hiring reasonably competent workers, have to pay well over the minimum wage. The real downside is that the very people it is supposed to help are the ones who may not get the jobs. Right now we see people who have never had a job before, teenagers, first-time employees, perhaps persons with disabilities, often minority students coming out of college, have trouble getting jobs. If the minimum wage is raised, we may see in the United States, as we do in Europe, high unemployment among teenagers.

What the minimum wage does is make it very difficult to get on the first rung of that ladder of economic progress. It is like putting grease on that first rung of the ladder and saying, boy, this is going to make it easy to slip onto that first rung. Unfortunately, the grease on the first rung of the ladder too often slips people off, when businesses find they just can't make a profit, hiring people at an inflated minimum wage.

I hope we will continue, as a result of the economic and fiscal restraint of the Republican-led Congress, if we can keep the economy going as it has since the Republicans took control of the Congress beginning in 1995, we hope that wages will continue to go up and productivity will continue to go up so we don't need the minimum wage. If the time comes when there are tight economic times, the victims of the increased minimum wage will be the small businesses, the smallest businesses, the ones with the lowest profit margin and the most needy workers, the workers very often not supporting their families but trying to get on the first rung of the economic ladder so they can build a bank account and make enough money to start a family.

In addition to the minimum wage, however, there are small business advantages from this bill. I appreciate the work of Chairman ROTH to include a significant package of small business tax relief items, including something that has been my top priority since we began in 1995, and that is 100 percent deductibility of health insurance for the self-employed starting in 2001. I have been working on it for over 5 years to ensure that the self-employed are on a level playing field with their corporate competitors.

In the past we said, you can have it, but it was 2007 and then 2003. A lot of self-employed people said: That is nice, but I can't wait until 2007 or 2003 to get sick. Well, now I hope we will have it in 2001, so they will be able to afford the health insurance for themselves and their families. Coupled with a new above-the-line deduction for employees who pay for the majority of their health insurance costs, we will now reach more than a million of the uninsured and help them get the coverage they need and deserve.

Second is a repeal of the Clinton-Gore installment limitation, which has been an unforeseen barrier to small businesses looking to sell all or part of their business assets, in many cases to fund the small business owner's retirement.

Third, a clear safe harbor for small businesses to use the cash method of accounting. This has been a real nightmare for the smallest businesses, to have to come up with accrual accounting. They are in business to make widgets or sell hamburgers, not to be accounting specialists who have to come up with an accrual system. Now small businesses with gross receipts under $2.5 million can continue to use cash accounting. It also lets the IRS know that it can stop its campaign to force small businesses into using the more burdensome accrual accounting rules.

We will increase expensing of equipment up to $35,000 per year, which will reduce compliance costs by allowing small firms to deduct purchases rather than setting up elaborate depreciation schedules to figure out how to deduct them over many years.

Something we are proud of, particularly in the Ninth Congressional District in Missouri, which is represented by my colleague on the House side, who has been a champion of this measure, and my Senate colleague to the north, Senator GRASSLEY, is the new farmer, fisherman, and ranch risk management accounts —the FFARRM accounts— which permit farmers, fishermen, and ranchers to make tax-deductible contributions of up to 20 percent of the income in good years for use during subsequent economic declines. The bill also provides important alternative minimum tax—or AMT—relief for farmers who use income averaging, and it extends the work opportunity tax credit through June 30, 2004.

The fourth component of the tax package is the Community Renewal and New Markets Act of 2000, which is intended to reinvigorate our distressed communities. This portion of the legislation includes the House-Administration compromise on empowerment zones/renewal communities and new markets tax credit, which creates 40 renewal communities and 9 empowerment zones.

This certainly was not my recommended legislation, but this was part of the bipartisan compromise we reached with the President and incorporated it in the bill. These renewal communities would have a zero capital gains rate, and the legislation creates a new-markets tax credit for equity investments in qualified low-income communities. The goal of this program is to bring the innovation and creativity of America's businesses—and especially small businesses—into these renewal communities to make real economic change for the future.

The legislation also increases the low-income housing tax credit and private-activity-bonds volume caps, which are key financing features for renewal communities. They included provisions to help clean up brownfields by allowing expensing of brownfield cleanup costs, except Superfund sites, through 2003. That is good for communities and for the environment.

These four core components of the tax package provide important tax relief for Americans throughout our economy.

The legislation also addresses several other priorities, such as the school construction bond provision which I have already mentioned. This is another avenue to address construction and modernization needs without a Federal stranglehold. It is my belief that local school districts know best how to address their needs. While providing them this assistance, it keeps the Federal camel's nose out from under the tent.

The adoption tax credit, which is very important and has been addressed previously on the floor, is to encourage loving families to adopt children. It also makes other strides toward improving and reforming our Tax Code as which we are going to have to rely. The White House leadership, next year, I believe will complete that work.

Medicare. This legislative package addresses the problems caused by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, as implemented with the chronic incompetence of the Health Care Financing Administration. I have heard time and time again health care providers talk about what is happening to them under the BBA. When you ask the questions, you find out it is how HCFA has implemented the BBA. They have used the BBA to cut far more than Congress ever mandated.

What they seem to want to do is to cut out choice for patients—cut out the choice they have of going into a Medicare insurance plan such as we have or an HMO plan as is available to FEHBP members; it puts out their choices to use home health care.

HCFA has gone about doing everything in its power to collapse the present system. I guess—and I can only surmise —that they would like to see the kind of health care plan that was so infamously run up the flagpole in 1993 without getting any salutes.

I remember hanging around here in August of 1993 as they talked about Mrs. Clinton's health care plan and kept waiting for somebody to try to introduce it and get a vote on it. But as we looked at that June bug longer and longer, as people got to look at it more and more, the minimum amount of enthusiasm I saw initially grew even less. But HCFA has never given up. By killing off parts of our health care system one at a time, they hope maybe we can have a totally Government-run health care system.

The Vice President on the campaign trail has said he hopes to be able to go to a European system within a few years. Well, if you let HCFA in control long enough to kill the existing health care system, there may not be anything left.

This Medicare bill, just very briefly, provides benefits to patients and providers worth $32 billion, benefits for nearly 40 million Americans relying on Medicare. Glaucoma screening, colonoscopy screening, mammography, nutrition therapy services for some patients, additional coverage of immunosuppressive drugs —all have been added to the Medicare program. Help for just about every type of Medicare provider to allow them to continue to provide high-quality care to seniors and the disabled. Hospitals, particularly rural hospitals, home health care, nursing homes, hospice providers, and Medicare HMOs that have been driven out of the field by cuts, and targeted help for particular health care providers that are most in need. As one who lives in a rural community, the bill targets $1.7 billion for rural health care providers to help them deal with the unique challenges of rural health care, which I think is very important.

More than $6 billion to Medicare HMOs will help address the widespread withdrawals from the Medicare program we have seen in the last couple of years.

Why have HMOs been leaching Medicare? Not because they are evil incarnate, as some would have us believe. If that were the case, the seniors losing their HMO coverage would not be so upset. No, these providers left because the payment system for HMOs is seriously flawed and in many areas has provided inadequate reimbursement. This new funding will address this issue.

Approximately $1.5 billion in assistance to home health care providers. Home health care patients have, by far, borne the greatest brunt of HCFA's maladministration of the BBA. They were supposed to save $16 billion over 5 years, and they are on the path to save $55 billion to $60 billion by eliminating too much of home health care and making it unavailable. It has been devastating. Tens of thousands of seniors previously receiving home health care lost it during the crisis of the last few years. The bill postpones for 1 additional year the potentially devastating 15 percent cuts which are addressed in this legislation. They would be the death knell of home health care.

Next year, we need to get rid of that completely. We need to get a brand new Medicare system, such as the bipartisan deal that was worked out in the Breaux-Frist commission before the White House pulled the plug on it.

Finally, this bill helps community health centers, the clinics that exist in more than 3,000 urban and rural medically underserved areas nationwide, ensuring that they continue to receive adequate reimbursement from the State Medicaid programs so they can pursue their mission of providing care to those Americans who would otherwise not get any.

There is a long list of more than 40 organizations, led by the American Hospital Association, supporting this legislation.

I ask unanimous consent to have a letter from the AHA to Chairman BILL THOMAS on the House side listing the letters of support for the provisions printed in the RECORD at the end of my remarks.

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

(See Exhibit 1.)

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, overall I believe this is an excellent package that is badly needed by seniors, the disabled, hospitals, nursing homes, and other providers.

Finally, we have already had a lot of discussion about the Pain Relief Promotion Act. Obviously it is controversial. The bill simply amends the Controlled Substances Act to prohibit the use of federally regulated drugs to help his or her life.

Let me be clear about that. Simply put, this would prevent any effort to assist in a suicide by using controlled substances such as powerful pain killers. The bill goes further in its efforts to provide appropriate relief to people suffering great pain. It provides a variety of provisions and educational programs to encourage appropriate pain relief. Indeed, under this legislation for the first time ever the Controlled Substances Act would explicitly recognize that aggressive pain relief is an appropriate and fully warranted use of controlled substances.

I believe a vast majority of Americans share a simple belief—that I hold very strongly—that doctors we rely on to nurture and extend our lives should not be party to efforts actively to promote someone's death. The bill simply recognizes that consensus.

It looks like we are going to have lots of discussion and have an opportunity to hear many different views on this legislation. But before we paint it as the most ugly duckling coming down the path, I thought my colleagues and those who may be watching or listening still at this late hour would like to know that there are some beautiful limbs and beautiful facets of this that are very important bipartisan measures.

I hope we can pass this because there are many priorities that the President has asked for, that leaders on the Democratic side have asked for, and I believe our side wishes as well that are beneficial to a great number of American people who are waiting for our response.

I thank the Chair. I apologize to my colleague from Nevada whom I misled into thinking that it was going to be a short set of remarks.

EXHIBIT 1

AHA, ADVANCING HEALTH IN AMERICA,
Washington, DC, October 26, 2000.

Hon. BILL THOMAS,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Health, House Ways and Means Committee, Washington DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS: On behalf of the 5,000 members of the American Hospital Association (AHA), I am writing to express our views regarding the ''Beneficiary Improvement and Protection Act of 2000'' (BIPA). We believe this legislation will take another step forward in addressing the unintended consequences of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA). Consequently, as we approach the remaining hours of the congressional session, we are urging Members to vote in favor of this legislation, and have recommended that the President not veto the legislation.

As we understand the provisions of the legislation, it includes a number of provisions that provide much needed relief to hospitals and health systems throughout the country. Such provisions include: a full market basket inflationary update in FY2001, and elimination of half of the reduction in FY2002; temporary elimination of the reductions in Medicaid DSH state allocations in FY 2001 and 2002, and allow the program to grow with inflation in those years; increase the adjustment for Indirect Medical Education to 6.5% in 2001 and 6.375% in FY 2002, and establish an 85% national floor for direct Graduate Medical Education payments; equalize payments to rural hospitals under Medicare DSH; increased flexibility for critical access, sole community, and Medicare dependent hospitals; increased bad debt payments from 55% to 70% for all beneficiaries; and a full market basket update for outpatient hospital services.

The bill will also provide relief to home health agencies and skilled nursing facilities. As our members operate approximately one-third of the home health agencies and one fourth of the skilled nursing facilities, relief in this area is also vitally necessary, and is an important feature in the bill. In addition, the bill includes important beneficiary protections, particularly the execrated reduction in beneficiary coinsurance for hospital outpatient services.

At the same time, we are disappointed that certain provisions we have advocated, such a full market basket increase in FY2002 for both inpatient and outpatient hospital services, complete elimination of the impact of the BBA's reductions in Medicaid DSH, and maintaining the IME adjustment of 6.5% beyond FY 2001, were not included. We are also concerned that additional reductions in the hospital inpatient market basket in 2003 were included in the bill. We look forward to working with you in the next congress to achieve these additional changes.

Again, we appreciate your efforts to achieve additional BBA relief this year.

Sincerely,

RICK POLLACK,
Executive Vice President.

MEDICARE, MEDICAID & SCHIP IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2000—LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Federation of American Hospitals,
National Association of Community Health Centers,
American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association,
HealthSouth,
National Association of Long Term Hospitals,
Acute Long Term Hospital Association,
National Association of Children's Hospitals,
Kennedy Krieger Institute,
National Association of Rural Health Clinics,
National Association of Urban Critical Access Hospitals,
American Medical Group Associates,
Mississippi Hospital Association,
Tennessee Hospital Association,
The University of Texas System,
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems,
Healthcare Leadership Council,
National Association for Home Care,
American Association for Homecare,
American Federation of HomeCare Providers,
Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care,
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging,
Visiting Nurses Associations of America,
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization,
National PACE Association,
Association of Ohio Philanthropic Homes, Housing and Services for the Aging,
John Hopkins Home Care Group,
Patient Access to Transplantation Coalition,
LifeCare Management Services,
American Cancer Society,
Alliance to Save Cancer Care Access,
Intercultural Cancer Center,
The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation,
National Kidney Foundation,
The Glaucoma Foundation,
Juvenile Diabetes Foundation,
National Multiple Sclerosis Society,
American College of Gastroenterology,
American Academy of Ophthalmology,
American Optometric Association,
American Dietetic Association,
American Association of Blood Banks/America's Blood Centers/American Red Cross,
Association of Surgical Technologists,
AdvaMed,
GE Medical Systems,
Landrieu Public Relations,
National Orthotics Manufacturers Association,
American Orthotic and Prosthetics Association,
UBS Warburg.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SESSIONS). The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senator from Missouri did not mislead me. He never has. The fact is, he didn't contemplate our leader coming forward and saying a number of things that the Senator felt deserved a response. I enjoyed listening to the Senator from Missouri, even though I may not have agreed.

Mr. President, first of all, just a couple of comments on what my friend from Missouri just said.

With the pension provision in the bill—now some $64 billion—it is true there was some action taken in the Finance Committee. But not a single second was spent on this floor dealing with the $64 billion provision which is jammed into this bill.

On the budget amendment, $80 billion—nothing in finance. In fact, the chairman of the Finance Committee said he would allow a vote in the Finance Committee if all the Members promised not to bring up prescription drugs in any way, or Patients' Bill of Rights. The minority would not agree to that. It seems totally reasonable in the Finance Committee that this is something that should have been brought up. As a result of the chairman's action, the matter was not brought before the Finance Committee. And again this $80 billion matter received no floor consideration.

New markets initiative: $25 billion—nothing in the Finance Committee; no action taken on the floor.

Keep in mind that I have gone over just a few things; in fact, three. We are already up to about $200 billion, and not a single minute spent on the Senate floor with $200 billion of the taxpayers' money. That doesn't take into consideration foreign sales. That is $4.5 billion. The Finance Committee spent a little time on that; nothing on the floor. Why? Because the outlandish proposition was made that if this came to the floor, someone was going to offer an amendment. Pardon me. But isn't that what the Senate is all about? People have a right to offer amendments to pieces of legislation. But because there was this terrible threat that on a piece of legislation a Senator will offer an amendment, we have no floor action on it; again, $4.5 billion.

I also say there is going to be plenty of debate tomorrow on a number of these issues. But on this bill itself, there has been no conference and no Democratic involvement at all in bringing this bill to the point where it is. The Democrats were not even allowed to see the document until it came here.

These are members of the Finance Committee. One of the most bipartisan and, I would say, nonpartisan people I have ever worked with is the senior Senator from Louisiana, JOHN BREAUX, a senior Member of the Finance Committee. He was not allowed to look at any of the papers. He was not happy about that.

Today the bill was dumped in our lap.

I would also say about the assisted suicide that there will be lots of debate on it tomorrow. The Senator from Oregon, Senator WYDEN, feels very strongly about this, as he should. Why? It doesn't matter how you feel on this issue. The fact is that the voters in the State of Oregon said we feel this way on assisted suicide. As a result of the people of Oregon passing a law in the State of Oregon, we now have this action.

It seems to me those who keep talking about States rights should leave a State alone. People of the State of Oregon voted a certain way. If you disagree with what the people of the State of Oregon did in voting in favor of assisted suicide, then let's at least have the ability on the Senate floor to debate the issue which we have been prevented from doing.

My friend from Missouri, for whom I have the greatest respect, talked about health care.

They always throw in the 1993 Clinton health care plan. Let's bring this down to reality so people really understand what this is all about.

When the health care debate started, 80 percent of the people of America favored reforming the health care system. But then comes Halloween and the masquerade by the health insurance industry. They spent over $100 million trying to abuse and frighten the American people. They succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams. They were probably even surprised on how they succeeded in frightening the people of America with their Harry and Louise ads and with their clever manipulations.

As a result of that, we got no health care reform because after they did their television and radio advertising, 80 percent of the people in America didn't want health care reform. They were frightened. They were confused.

That doesn't take away from the fact that we now have 45 million people with no health insurance. It doesn't take away from the fact that we have many people who have insurance that gives them minimum and inadequate rights. That is why we tried to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights—to give patients certain rights.

THE NOVEMBER ELECTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my friend from Missouri not so subtly indicated that he thinks there is going to be a new world out there after the November 7 election. I think he is going to be very disappointed. He is going to be disappointed because the American people understand the record of George W. Bush better each day.

For example, the prescription of George W. Bush for health care, I think, is bad medicine for America. Why? Because the State of Texas and George Bush have the worst record in the nation on health insurance coverage. That says a lot. But he has won that award; just like Houston is the most polluted city in America. He won that award. He also wins the award for the worse health coverage in America. Texas has fallen to last among all States in overall health insurance coverage. Texas ranks second to last in health insurance coverage for children, and the percentage of children without coverage has gone up under the Governor.

While nationwide Medicaid enrollment has increased, Medicaid enrollment in Texas has declined.

George W. Bush retains roadblocks to eligible populations in health programs. Even a judge found Texas guilty of not providing 1.5 million children with adequate health care. This was August of this year. The justice said the State failed not only the 1.5 million children but 13,000 abused and neglected children. Rather than taking corrective action, the State decided to appeal the court's ruling over the objection of State legislators.

Texas legislators blame Bush for Texas' poor health insurance coverage.

In a letter to the Vice President from Texas State representatives, the Governor prioritized oil breaks over children's health insurance in 1999. In 1999, after Bush deemed a $45 million oil industry tax break an emergency and made it the first signed bill of the session, Democratic legislators questioned his priorities in putting the legislation before expanding the CHIP program, or children health insurance programs. ''It's about priorities,'' Democratic representative Dale Tillery said. ''I know a whole lot of uninsured children, but I don't know a whole lot of poor oilmen.''

I could go into more detail about Governor Bush's record on health care but this gives us a general idea.

The American public is beginning to find out more about George W. Bush. Yesterday, the Rand Corporation, a nonprofit organization that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis, an independent, fair, nonpartisan corporation, said that claims Governor Bush has been making about education in Texas and how well they are doing is without foundation, not factual. In fact, the only way that Governor Bush is able to take any credit for it is that tests are skewed in Texas. The Rand Corporation said if you use Texas math in any State, the education scores all over America would be magnified.

The fact is, the State of Texas is doing worse that most States. What Governor Bush is claiming about education is simply without foundation.

In addition to the independent Rand Corporation, another independent nonpartisan body, the American Academy of Actuaries, reported today that Governor Bush's proposed tax cut will basically bankrupt the country. The American Academy of Actuaries report finds that George W. Bush's $3 trillion tax cut, combined with his plan to divert money from the Social Security trust fund into individual stock market accounts, would make it all but impossible to eliminate the publicly held national debt. In fact, one of the people from the American Academy of Actuaries who worked on this report said: I don't see any way they pay off the public debt. Given Bush's large package of tax cuts, the budget will go negative quickly. There won't be a surplus anymore.

This is not a partisan report. It has been produced by one of the most widely respected organizations in America. The American Academy of Actuaries is part of a growing chorus of voices which have discredited Governor Bush's plan to privatize this Nation's most successful Federal program in our history, Social Security. In August, the Century Foundation also concluded that Governor Bush was making a promise to seniors and to young people that he couldn't keep with his Social Security privatization scheme. You can't do it for both.

This study, which was written by the respected economist Henry J. Aaron and former Federal Reserve Board member Alan Blinder, found that diverting just 2 percentage points of the Social Security payroll tax into private accounts would result in a reduction of benefits by as much as 54 percent and higher payroll taxes to keep the Social Security trust fund solvent.

In addition, Larry Summers, the Secretary of the Treasury, who is also a trustee of the Social Security system, and therefore has a fiduciary relationship to make sure the system remains solvent, said if just 2 percent of the payroll tax is diverted from the Social Security revenue stream, the Social Security trust fund will lack the resources to pay benefits by the time someone who is now 40 retires.

By today's report, the most damning indictment of the Bush plan to date is this report from the actuary group, the first independent report finding that the Federal budget surplus, a result of hard choices we have made in this country, would be eliminated by Governor Bush's shaky retirement scheme. To add insult to injury, not only would we return to the bad old days of deficits as far as the eye could see, we would devastate the most popular social program in the Nation's history, a program which has virtually eliminated the poverty rate among the elderly, provides critical benefits to disabled Americans, and supports widows, many of whom have little or no retirement security.

Let's review what is at stake in this privatization scheme. We have turned a record deficit of $400 billion, counting the Social Security surplus we used to use to hide the deficit, in 1992, to a record surplus this year of $260 billion. We have paid down more than $450 billion in debt. We sparked the longest expansion in economic history, 22 million new jobs, the fastest and longest real wage growth in three decades, the lowest unemployment in three decades, the highest home ownership in two decades, and the largest 5-year drop in childhood poverty since the 1960s.

I was on a debate a week ago last Sunday and two Republican colleagues who I had the pleasure of discussing the issues with started saying it is because the Gingrich Congress that we