

nothing but tax over-payments. It is the American taxpayers' money and it should be returned in the form of debt reduction, tax relief or Social Security reform.

If we don't give the non-Social Security surplus back to the taxpayers in these ways, Washington will soon spend it all. Such spending will only expand the government, making it even more expensive to support in the future, creating an even higher tax burden than working Americans bear today and a higher federal budget.

I join Chairman Alan Greenspan who has been advocating using surplus for debt reduction and tax relief rather than increasing government spending.

My S.O.S. legislation would achieve this goal by creating a new point of order against any legislation reducing the FY 2000 non-Social Security surplus if it is not used for debt reduction, tax relief or structural Social Security and Medicare reform.

The S.O.S. legislation is a fiscally responsible bill. I urge my colleagues to support it.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, March 1, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,725,649,856,797.45 (Five trillion, seven hundred twenty-five billion, six hundred forty-nine million, eight hundred fifty-six thousand, seven hundred ninety-seven dollars and forty-five cents).

One year ago, March 1, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,643,046,000,000 (Five trillion, six hundred forty-three billion, forty-six million).

Five years ago, March 1, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,848,389,000,000 (Four trillion, eight hundred forty-eight billion, three hundred eighty-nine million).

Ten years ago, March 1, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$3,026,322,000,000 (Three trillion, twenty-six billion, three hundred twenty-two million).

Fifteen years ago, March 1, 1985, the Federal debt stood at \$1,712,490,000,000 (One trillion, seven hundred twelve billion, four hundred ninety million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,013,159,856,797.45 (Four trillion, thirteen billion, one hundred fifty-nine million, eight hundred fifty-six thousand, seven hundred ninety-seven dollars and forty-five cents) during the past 15 years.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY

• Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about an important point in our history and that is to commemorate this day 164 years ago, Texas Independence Day.

Each year, I look forward to March 2d. This is a special day for Texans, a day that fills our hearts with pride. On

this day 164 years ago, a solemn convention of 54 men, including my great, great grandfather Charles S. Taylor, met in the small settlement of Washington-on-the-Brazos. There they signed the Texas Declaration of Independence. The declaration stated:

We, therefore . . . do hereby resolve and declare . . . that the people of Texas do now constitute a free, sovereign and independent republic.

At the time, Texas was a remote territory of Mexico. It was hospitable only to the bravest and most determined of settlers. After declaring our independence, the founding delegates quickly wrote a constitution and organized an interim government for the newborn republic.

As was the case when the American Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, our declaration only pointed the way toward a goal. It would exact a price of enormous effort and great sacrifice. My great, great grandfather was there, signing the declaration of independence. As most of the delegates did, he went on eventually to fight the Battle of San Jacinto. He didn't know it at the time, but all four of his children who had been left back at home in Nacogdoches died trying to escape from the Indians and the Mexicans who they feared were coming after them.

Fortunately, he and his wife, my great, great grandmother, had nine more children. But it is just an example of the sacrifices that were made by people who were willing to fight for something they believed in. That, of course, was freedom.

While the convention sat in Washington-on-the-Brazos, 6,000 Mexican troops held the Alamo under siege, challenging this newly created republic.

Several days earlier, from the Alamo, Col. William Barrett Travis sent his immortal letter to the people of Texas and to all Americans. He knew the Mexican Army was approaching and he knew that he had only a very few men to help defend the San Antonio fortress. Colonel Travis wrote:

Fellow Citizens and Compatriots: I am besieged with a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continual Bombardment and cannonade for 24 hours and have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison is to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken. I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly over the wall. I shall never surrender or retreat. Then I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism, of everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid with all dispatch. The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due his honor and that of his country—Victory or Death.—William Barrett Travis, Lt. Col. Commander.

What American, Texan or otherwise, can fail to be stirred by Col. Travis' resolve? In fact, Colonel Travis' dire pre-

diction came true—4,000 to 5,000 Mexican troops laid siege to the Alamo. In the battle that followed, 184 brave men died in a heroic but vain attempt to fend off Santa Anna's overwhelming army. But the Alamo, as we all in Texas know, was crucial to Texas' independence. Because those heroes at the Alamo held out for so long, Santa Anna's forces were battered and diminished.

Gen. Sam Houston gained the time he needed to devise a strategy to defeat Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto, just a month or so later, on April 21, 1836. The Lone Star was visible on the horizon at last.

Each year, on March 2, there is a ceremony at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park where there is a replica of the modest cabin where the 54 patriots pledged their lives, honor, and treasure for freedom.

On this day, I read Colonel Travis' letter to my colleagues in the Senate, a tradition started by my friend, the late Senator John Tower. This is a reminder to them and to all of us of the pride Texans share in our history and in being the only State that came into the Union as a republic.

Mr. President, I am pleased to continue the tradition that was started by Senator Tower, because we do have a unique heritage in Texas where we fought for our freedom. Having grown up in the family and hearing the stories of my great great grandfather, it was something that was ingrained in us—fighting for your freedom was something you did.

I think it is very important that we remember the people who sacrificed, the 184 men who died at the Alamo, the men who died at Goliad later that same month. Their deaths gave birth to Texas Independence and we became a nation, a status we enjoyed for 10 years before we entered the Union as a State.

I might add, we entered the Union by a margin of one vote, both in the House and in the Senate. In fact, we originally were going to come into the Union through a treaty, but the two-thirds vote could not be received and, therefore, President Tyler said, "No, then we will pass a law to invite Texas to become a part of our Union," and the law passed by one vote in the House and one vote in the Senate.

I am very pleased to, once again, commemorate our great heritage and history. •

U.S. ASSISTANCE TO MOZAMBIQUE

• Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Administration's decision to send urgently needed assistance to southern Africa, where heavy rains have caused devastating floods, particularly in the Republic of Mozambique.

Last night President Clinton approved the deployment of a Joint Task Force to the region, including C-130 aircraft to deliver desperately needed supplies, and six heavy lift helicopters

to pluck survivors from the trees and rooftops where they cling to life. This assistance will supplement the efforts already underway, under the auspices of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of Defense.

Mr. President, this assistance comes not a moment too soon. Meteorologists believe that even more rain is likely to fall on the region in the very near future. The resources the world has already provided are stretched nearly to the breaking point, as the need to deliver food and other supplies to survivors competes with the need to rescue those precariously hanging on above the floodwaters, waiting to be evacuated to dry land. The Mozambican families who survived the threat of rising waters are now at risk again, as water-borne diseases like cholera, malaria, and meningitis surge in the flood's aftermath.

These floods are particularly tragic because the country most seriously affected by them, Mozambique, has made significant strides toward recovery from its long and brutal civil war. Though the country is still affected by extreme poverty, in recent years Mozambique has enjoyed exceptional rates of economic growth, and while more needs to be done, the country has improved its record with regard to basic human rights. Mr. President, the people of Mozambique have been fighting for a better future. This kind of disaster comes at a terrible time, but our intercession may help the people of Mozambique to hold to the opportunities that lay before them before the waters rose.

The American government and the American people have reached out beyond our borders time and again to aid communities in crisis—from the earthquake victims in Turkey and Taiwan to the mudslide survivors in Venezuela. We stand united in a basic expression of human compassion again today. I applaud the Administration's action; I believe it is an entirely appropriate use of our country's resources, and I wish the people of southern Africa the very best as they work to recover from these devastating floods.●

PRICE-ANDERSON AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2000

● Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I am pleased to cosponsor the Price-Anderson Amendments Act of 2000 with my colleague and the ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Senator BINGAMAN.

For over 40 years the Price-Anderson Act has provided a comprehensive system of liability coverage for nuclear incidents and has been extended three times since 1957, most recently in 1988. The act's authority to extend new coverage will expire on August 1, 2002, and I believe that it is important that we extend the authorities well in advance of that date.

When we reauthorized the law in 1988, we asked both the Department of Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to review the Act and submit reports assessing its value and the need for further extension as well as making recommendations for any necessary changes. Both agencies recommended that the Act be extended with only minor changes. This legislation makes those relatively minor modifications and extends the authorization for an additional ten years.

Mr. President, the Price-Anderson Act is an important aspect of the development of nuclear energy in the United States. If we are going to meet any of the emission goals set forth for our domestic electricity production, then nuclear power necessarily must remain a vital component of any energy policy. The Price-Anderson Act is essential to allow contractors and suppliers to prudently take the financial risks associated with nuclear activities for the Department of Energy as well as those undertaken by commercial nuclear facilities licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The Price-Anderson Act provides important protections to the public in the unlikely case of a nuclear incident. This legislation will extend those protections as well as making other necessary amendments to the Act.

I fully support this legislation and I hope that we can have it enacted expeditiously.●

READ ACROSS AMERICA DAY

● Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it is especially appropriate that the Senate is debating education reform today, because today is Read Across America Day. The National Education Association deserves great credit for bringing together the nation's leading education, literacy, and community organizations to help children in communities across the Nation experience the joy of reading.

Reading is the foundation of learning and the golden door to opportunity. But too many children fail to read at an acceptable level. For students who don't learn to read well in the early years of elementary school, it is virtually impossible to keep up in the later years. That's why literacy programs are so important. They give young children practical opportunities to learn to read and practice reading. We also need to do all we can to encourage children and parents to read together. That's why Read Across America Day is so important.

I am also proud of other programs that take place throughout the year to encourage reading. In October 1998, Congress passed the Reading Excellence Act to provide competitive reading and literacy grants to states. The purpose of the program is to help high-need schools teach children to read in their early childhood years. In addition to classroom instruction, the program helps teachers to improve their teach-

ing. It also expands the number of high-quality family literacy programs, works with local and national organizations to ensure that children have access to books, and provides early literacy assistance for children with reading difficulties.

Last August, Massachusetts was one of only 17 states to receive funds under this competitive grant. The Massachusetts Department of Education distributed these funds to local school districts throughout the State. The program builds on the America Reads initiative. In 1996, President Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton designed a new effort to call national attention to child literacy by proposing the "America Reads Challenge," which encourages colleges and universities to earmark a portion of their Work-Study funds for college students willing to serve as literacy tutors. Institutions of higher education across Massachusetts are already creating strong ties with surrounding communities, and participation in the initiative enhances those relationships. Today, over 1,000 colleges and universities across the country are committed to the President's "America Reads Work Study Program," and 73 of these institutions are in Massachusetts. I'm proud of the strong national commitment that we are making to help every child read well. By working together, we can make a significant difference for children across the country.

Last year I celebrated "Read Across America Day" with students from Squantum Elementary School in Massachusetts. The students and teachers have an excellent slogan—"Drop Everything and Read." For at least 15 minutes a day, the school does just that. But if we truly want to help all children learn to read early and well, every day should be Read Across America Day.●

TRIBUTE TO LARRY AHRENS

● Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to Larry Ahrens, a man who has become an institution in Albuquerque. This week he celebrates his 20th anniversary as morning host on 770 KOB, one of the best-known radio stations in New Mexico. Larry's radio career has spanned much of my own Senate career, and we have developed a wonderful friendship and working relationship over the past two decades.

There is something comforting about turning on the radio and hearing the same recognizable voice welcoming the day. For thousands of New Mexicans, Larry has become that reassuring deliverer of news, commentary and other interesting and entertaining information. It hardly seems like 20 years have lapsed since Larry first addressed KOB listeners and endeared himself to us with his level-headed take on life in Albuquerque and the Land of Enchantment.

Larry Ahrens took over New Mexico's most high-profile radio job as