

being visited by auditors who make a precise determination as to whether \$10 for one purpose has been used for some other purpose or not. It is a form of accountability that has required our school districts to spend more and more money on administrators and on filling out forms and less and less money on educating the students themselves.

We substitute for that one ultimate form of accountability, accountability measured by whether or not our students are doing better, by whether or not our kids are getting a better education. No State may gain the benefit from the provisions of Straight A's unless that State agrees to a form of testing, of actual achievement of the students, and promising if it is given this flexibility, those student achievement standards will rise, scores will rise in the period under which they are working with Straight A's.

It is neither more complicated nor more simple than that. The goal of educating our children is to see to it that they are prepared for the world in which they will live. We are now able more and more to measure how those goals are met. Do our students read better? Do they write better? Do they compute better? The accountability in Straight A's is measured by those standards, not by how well their administrators and teachers fill out forms and not how well they come out in an after-the-fact audit.

I have every confidence that as a part of the very important debate over education and the renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we will debate Straight A's. I am convinced as this body finishes its work it will be a part of the most constructive and most successful renewal of our activity in the field of education that this Congress has accomplished in generations.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I now ask consent there be a period for the transaction of routine morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

RETIREMENT OF JACK E. HARPER, JR., CHANCERY CLERK OF SUNFLOWER COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Jack E. Harper, Jr., of Sunflower County, Mississippi. Mr. Harper recently retired as the Chancery Clerk of Sunflower County after serving tirelessly in this position for 44 years. This is an exemplary record of public service, and it is a privilege to honor this outstanding Mississippian for his unselfish dedication to Sunflower County government for so many years.

In addition to Mr. Harper's lengthy service as Chancery Clerk, I also com-

mend him for his involvement in numerous civic activities and for his military service. Mr. Harper is a veteran of the United States Marines, having served 31 months in the Pacific Theater during World War II. In 1951, while he was a member of the Mississippi National Guard, he was ordered to active military duty for 2 years and served 1 year in Korea during 1951-1952. In conjunction with his military service, Mr. Harper is a member and past Commander of the Indianola American Legion and VFW posts. Additionally, Mr. Harper has been active in his community, as demonstrated by the fact that he served as President of the Indianola Lions Club and as the District Governor of the Mississippi Lions.

Jack Harper has always shown a commitment to education. He earned degrees from Indianola High School, Mississippi Delta Community College, and both Bachelor of Laws and Juris Doctor degrees from the University of Mississippi School of Law, my alma mater. Additionally, he has served as a member of the Board of Trustees of Mississippi Delta Community College since January, 1961, and has served as Board Chairman since 1968. He is a past President of the Mississippi Junior College Inter-Alumni Association, and he is a member of the State Association of Community and Junior College Trustees. He currently serves as the Co-Chairman of the Education Committee for the Indianola Chamber of Commerce.

Although Jack Harper is retiring from official public office, I know that he will continue to serve his community and the State of Mississippi in the same devoted manner that he has for his entire life. I am envious of the time that he will now have to spend with his family, particularly his grandchildren. Once again, I congratulate and thank Mr. Harper for his service to Sunflower County and Mississippi.

GUN ENFORCEMENT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, earlier this week, President Clinton sent to Congress his budget proposal for the 2001 fiscal year.

Among his initiatives is a proposal to improve the enforcement of federal firearm laws. Specifically, the President requests more than \$280 million to provide law enforcement agencies with tools they need to reduce gun crime. The proposal includes funds to: improve the speed and accuracy of Brady background checks by upgrading State and local criminal history records; hire 500 new Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) agents and inspectors; provide grants to hire 1,000 new federal, state and local gun prosecutors; implement a comprehensive crime gun tracing program; and support local anti-gun violence media campaigns.

I believe this is an important initiative in the fight against gun violence, and I applaud the President's commitment to this issue. I hope that during

this Session, Congress will support full funding for this aggressive gun enforcement initiative, and will act to close loopholes in our federal firearm laws that give young people and felons easy access to guns.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I am most pleased to join millions of Americans in commemorating African-American History Month and particularly this year's theme "Heritage and Horizons: The African Legacy and the Challenges of the 21st Century." This theme as announced by the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH) is most appropriate and timely as we enter a new millennium and hopefully a new and even brighter era of African-American progress.

Since 1926, Americans have observed a time during the month of February to recognize the vast history and legacy that African-Americans have contributed to the founding and building of this great nation. It was the vision of the noted author and scholar, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, that led to this celebration. As we review the last 100 years, it is important to remember that there have been many challenges and changes in the 1900's for African-Americans.

During the early 1900's, discrimination against African-Americans was very wide spread. By 1907, every Southern state required racial segregation on trains and in churches, schools, hotels, restaurants, theaters, and in other public places. New leaders for the African-American race emerged such as W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, whose intellectual thoughts on the progress and direction of African-Americans are still very much discussed in the community.

There was also the Northern migration of hundreds of thousands of Southern African-Americans during World War I to seek jobs in defense plants and other factories. Many African-Americans served our country admirably during this war and in World War II. Like World War I, this war led to the expansion of defense-related industries and opportunities in the North for employment. During the 1940's, about a million Southern African-Americans moved North. Discrimination played a large role in the labor industry which led A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to threaten a march on Washington, D.C. President Roosevelt then issued an executive order forbidding racial discrimination in defense industries.

Following World War II, three major factors encouraged the beginning of a new movement for civil rights. First, many African-Americans served with honor in the war, as they had in many of the wars since the American Revolution. However, in this instance, African-American leaders pointed to the records of these veterans to show the

injustice of racial discrimination against patriots. Second, more and more African-Americans in the North had made economic gains, increased their education, and registered to vote. Third, the NAACP had attracted many new members and received increased financial support from blacks and whites. Additionally, a young group of energetic lawyers, including Thurgood Marshall, of Baltimore, Maryland, used the legal system to bring about important changes in the lives of African-Americans, while Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. appealed to the conscience of all Americans.

Congress had an important role in passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I am pleased to note that Clarence Mitchell Jr. of Maryland played a critical part in steering this legislation through Congress. African-Americans also began to assume more influential roles in the national government, a development which has benefitted the entire Nation.

Gains in education for the African-American community have been significant. From 1970 to 1980, college enrollment among African-Americans rose from about 600,000 to about 1.3 million. This gain resulted in part from affirmative action programs by predominantly white colleges and universities. By the early 1990's about 11 percent of all African-Americans 25 years of age or older had completed college. About two-thirds of that group had finished high school. There have also been many more advances and accomplishments during that time, but this is just a brief overview of what has been a tremendous and rich history and heritage for African-American people in our Nation for the last 100 years.

As we look forward to a new century, we anticipate that African-Americans will continue to prosper in American society and throughout the world. Their success is our success. As we look towards the horizon, we see record breaking events for African-Americans.

The unemployment rate for African-Americans has fallen from 14.2 percent in 1992 to 8.3 percent in 1999—the lowest annual level on record. The median household income of African-Americans is up 15.1 percent since 1993, from \$22,034 in 1993 to \$25,351 in 1998. The real wages of African-Americans have risen rapidly in the past two years, up about 5.8 percent for African-American men and 6.2 percent for African-American women since 1996.

The African-American poverty rate has dropped from 33.1 percent in 1993 to 26.1 percent in 1998—the lowest level ever recorded and the largest five-year drop in more than twenty-five years. Since 1993, the child poverty rate among African-Americans has dropped from 46.1 percent to 36.7 percent in 1998—the biggest five-year drop on record. While the African-American child poverty rate is still too high, it is the lowest level on record. As the African-American population continues to

expand, we continue to strive to make laws that improve the lives of all Americans so that many more record breaking accomplishments occur.

As we begin the first Census count of the 21st century, we are working to ensure that Census 2000 is the most accurate census possible using the best, most up-to-date methods to make sure every person is counted. According to the Census Bureau, the 1990 Census missed 8.4 million people and double-counted 4.4 million others. Nationally, 4.4 percent of African-Americans were not counted in the 1990 census. While missing or miscounting so many people is a problem, the fact that certain groups—such as children, the poor, people of color, and city dwellers—were missed more often than others made the undercount even more inaccurate. A fair and accurate Census is a fundamental part of a representative democracy and is the basis for providing equality under the law. Therefore, I encourage everyone to make sure your neighbor is counted.

I would also like to observe that the State of Maryland is currently benefiting from a continued growth in our African-American population. Between 1990 and 1997, when the last set of complete figures were available from the Census Bureau, the number of African-Americans calling Maryland "home" grew to 1.4 million—an increase of 200,609 people. This makes Maryland the state with the eighth largest African-American population in the United States. Nearby Prince George's County was second in the Nation in terms of growth during this seven-year period with 68,325 new African-American residents. I am confident that an accurate Census 2000 count will show increases in these figures across the state.

I am also most gratified to note that finally, a memorial to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has been approved and a site near the tidal basin in Washington D.C. was chosen. The sacrifice that Dr. King made for civil rights has touched every element of American society. I am particularly pleased to be involved in this effort to mark the contributions of this great leader. This memorial will join the monuments to Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln in some of the most hallowed ground in our Nation.

Mr. President, as we look towards the future for African-Americans during this new century, it is my hope that the King Memorial will serve both as a monument to past achievements and our heritage, and also as an inspiration for our Nation to continue the struggle for an equality that includes all Americans.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise today to bring your attention to an issue of great concern to many people in my home state of Arkansas.

This week, I introduced a bill, S. 2041, to continue to promote the use of best management practices in the forestry industry by relieving this nation's private timberland owners of an impending unnecessary regulatory burden.

My bill would permanently prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency from requiring water pollution control permits under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System for the forestry activities of site preparation, reforestation, thinning, prescribed burning, pest and fire control, harvesting operations, surface drainage, road construction and maintenance, and nursery operations.

Recently in El Dorado and Texarkana, Arkansas, literally thousands of private timberland owners came together to discuss and express their concerns about this new extension of EPA regulations and to learn of the potential impact they may have on their private property and private forests.

Simply put, my legislation will statutorily ensure that all forestry activities will remain as non-point sources in the eyes of the EPA. Under the Clean Water Act, the EPA has jurisdiction to protect the water quality of the United States by regulating point sources of water pollution.

Let me define what I mean when I speak of "point" and "non-point" sources of pollution. A point source of pollution is pollution from a single point such as an industrial plant's wastewater pipe or a wastewater drainage ditch. Non-point sources of pollution like rainfall runoff from a field or a forest cannot be defined as a set point. What is important here is that Congress, upon passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, very clearly did not give the EPA authority to regulate non-point sources of pollution.

The EPA's proposed revisions to the Total Maximum Daily Load requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, issued in September of last year, seeks to change this authority. This proposed regulation would enhance clean water by extending the NPDES point source TMDL water pollution rules to forestry activities. This would be accomplished by reclassifying forestry non-point sources of pollution as point sources of pollution.

The forestry activities included in my legislation have always been considered as non-point sources of water pollution and therefore not subject to EPA regulations. The EPA's new regulation change would require point source water pollution permits for all of these activities. In other words, these new regulations would require permits on the very things we want to promote in forestry—responsible harvesting and thinning operations, best management practices, and reforestation.

I agree with the EPA's objective of cleaning up our nation's impaired rivers, lakes and streams, but firmly believe that its proposed revisions are not the best solution to the problem of clean water. Placing another unnecessary layer of regulation upon our nation's local foresters will only slow down the process of responsible forestry and the implementation of forestry Best Management Practices.

In Arkansas, we have a very successful Best Management Practices program for all forestry activities. In fact, over 85% of Arkansas' private timberland owners voluntarily adhere to these Best Management Practices to reduce water pollution from all forestry activities.

Let me restate that over 85% of Arkansas' private timberland owners voluntarily adhere to these Best Management Practices to reduce water pollution from all forestry activities. This is a wonderful example of where everyone works together to take care of their own environment and have been successful in their efforts!

The EPA's background for the new regulation states that these new requirements of obtaining water permits for forestry activities would take effect only if the state did not develop a satisfactory system of its own, or if a specific water body needed the regulation to remain clean. It also states that only 3 to 9 percent of all non-point source pollution comes from forestry-related activities.

Mr. President, let's talk through each of these forestry-related activities to find out just exactly what each includes as well as what a good Best Management Practices program does to combat potential pollution from each of these.

Site preparation. Generally, site preparation includes removing unwanted vegetation and other material when necessary and before any harvesting of timber can take place. Best Management Practices provide guidelines to minimize the use of equipment and disturbances near streams or other bodies of water, keep equipment out of streamside management zones, and minimize the movement and disturbance of soil.

Reforestation. Reforestation is simply the process of planting trees. Reforestation is the single process that prevents any further erosion of exposed soil. I can't see why we would want to slow down the reforestation process by implementing a permitting process.

Prescribed burning. Prescribed burning is done almost exclusively to prevent potential forest fires. In many of our nation's old growth forests, prescribed burning has prevented what would have been certain destruction of thousands of acres of beautiful forestland. We want to prevent forest fires for the loss of timber as well as for the potential loss of property and life. Best Management Practices provide guidelines for conducting prescribed burning operations and ensuring a minimal potential for erosion and forest fire.

Pest and fire control. If someone is trying to control a forest fire, why do we want to hinder their efforts? For the same reason, we don't want our Nation's forests eaten up by bugs.

Harvesting operations including thinning and, when necessary, clear-cutting. This is the crux of the issue. Timber harvesting is the timber indus-

try. Following Best Management Practices ensures that during any harvesting operation, extreme care is taken to prevent unnecessary water pollution. Best Management Practices encourage thinning of existing forests as opposed to clear-cutting of our Nation's forests. Thinning is going into a forest and removing only a small portion of the timber.

Surface drainage. Surface drainage through a forest is a naturally slow. And, following Arkansas' Best Management Practices, a buffer of trees must be left around all streams and rivers.

Road Maintenance and Construction. It is necessary to have forest roads to reach the available timber. Best Management Practices require the minimization of stream crossings, designing the road to be no wider than necessary, and building roads to minimize the adverse impacts of heavy rain.

Nursery Operations. To conduct any reforestation activities, you must have seedlings to plant. Best Management Practices for nurseries include minimizing soil disturbance, runoff, and chemical application.

Mr. President, the voluntary use of these and many, many other Best Management Practices in Arkansas have successfully reduced and prevented water pollution from all forestry activities. Our nation's private timberland owners should not be burdened with more unnecessary regulations when they are already voluntarily complying with Best Management Practices to effectively reduce water pollution.

Reasonable minds should prevail and agree on a common sense solution to promoting Best Management Practices in the forestry industry without unnecessary regulation and allow states like Arkansas to continue voluntarily implementing our successful best management practices.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, February 9, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,690,617,208,881.34 (Five trillion, six hundred ninety billion, six hundred seventeen million, two hundred eight thousand, eight hundred eighty-one dollars and thirty-four cents).

One year ago, February 9, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,585,068,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred eighty-five billion, sixty-eight million).

Five years ago, February 9, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,803,443,000,000 (Four trillion, eight hundred three billion, four hundred forty-three million).

Ten years ago, February 9, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$2,980,491,000,000 (Two trillion, nine hundred eighty billion, four hundred ninety-one million) which reflects a doubling of the debt—an increase of almost \$3 trillion—\$2,710,126,208,881.34 (Two trillion, seven hundred ten billion, one hundred twenty-six million, two hundred eight thou-

sand, eight hundred eighty-one dollars and thirty-four cents) during the past 10 years.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

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

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a treaty which were referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

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

2000 ECONOMIC REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 87

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Joint Economic Committee.

To the Congress of the United States:

Today, the American economy is stronger than ever. We are on the brink of marking the longest economic expansion in our Nation's history. More than 20 million new jobs have been created since Vice President Gore and I took office in January 1993. We now have the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years—even as core inflation has reached its lowest level since 1965.

This expansion has been both deep and broad, reaching Americans of all races, ethnicities, and income levels. African American unemployment and poverty are at their lowest levels on record. Hispanic unemployment is likewise the lowest on record, and poverty among Hispanics is at its lowest level since 1979. A long-running trend of rising income inequality has been halted in the last 7 years. From 1993 to 1998, families at the bottom of the income distribution have enjoyed the same strong income growth as workers at the top.

In 1999 we had the largest dollar surplus in the Federal budget on record and the largest in proportion to our economy since 1951. We are on course to achieve more budget surpluses for many years to come. We have used this unique opportunity to make the right choices for the future over the past 2 years, America has paid down \$140 billion in debt held by the public. With my plan to continue to pay down the debt, we are now on track to eliminate the Nation's publicly held debt by 2013. Our fiscal discipline has paid off in lower interest rates, higher private investment, and stronger productivity growth.

These economic successes have not been achieved by accident. They rest on the three pillars of the economic