

marketing campaigns are in place to promote the use of credit cards for small ticket, everyday items. Last year, Americans charged more than \$35 billion in purchases of less than \$10, up from \$23.7 billion in 2003. Credit or debit card sales of transactions of \$5 or less grew from \$10.8 billion in 2003 to \$13.5 billion in 2004. According to the Federal Reserve, consumer debt levels have more than doubled in the last 10 years. A U.S. Public Interest Research Group and Consumer Federation of America analysis of Federal Reserve data indicates that the average household with debt carries approximately \$10,000 to \$12,000 in total revolving debt. Debt payments eat up more and more disposable income, while certain members of the financial industry encourage the use of more and more debt. Through financial literacy efforts, consumers are becoming aware of the pitfalls associated with excessive leverage and enter into debt relationships understanding the impact of additional debt on their current and future financial position. However, we must do more to enhance our efforts in this area.

Current statistics confirm that consumer debt remains more popular than ever. The present level of consumer debt, coupled with the lack of consumer savings, is indicative of the need to continue to support financial literacy in this country in an effort to get people to better understand the ramifications of their financial decisions. Part of the problem is that many people do not understand fully how consumer debt can overtake them. According to the Federal Reserve, as of year end 2004, there was over \$2.1 trillion in consumer credit and \$10.1 trillion in mortgage debt outstanding. Consumer credit increased 4.5 percent from its 2003 level. Of the total outstanding consumer debt, approximately \$791 billion is revolving debt. Meanwhile, consumers paid out \$24 billion in credit card fees last year, an 18 percent increase from 2003.

Compounding the debt pressures consumers are facing is the fact that they have cashed out an estimated \$480 billion in home equity during the refinancing boom of 2001-2004. According to Freddie Mac, in hard-dollar terms, American homeowners converted \$41 billion in real estate equity into spendable cash in the third quarter of 2004 alone. According to the Federal Reserve, as of June 30, 2004, Americans owed \$766.2 billion on home equity loans and lines of credit, more than twice as much as in 1998. Lenders have reduced settlement fees and streamlined the closing process for loans dramatically, increasing the consumer friendliness and speed at which loans are originated. The days of using your home as a nest egg for life changing events, such as job loss, medical emergencies or divorce, are over. The home has become a catch all financing option, while increasing individual consumers' debt burdens. Meanwhile, con-

sumer savings is at one of the lowest levels in history, 0.2 percent.

The combination of increasing debt burdens and marginal savings in America has created a catalyst for bankruptcy. Through November 2004, nearly 1.9 million individuals filed for bankruptcy in the U.S., modestly below last year's record level, but at a level that continues to merit concern. In considering that statistic, it is important to remember that this number consists of affected individuals. When you add in non-filing spouses and children, the number of people impacted by bankruptcy can more than double. In reviewing these numbers, I believe it is readily apparent that increased financial literacy is needed to offset unchecked consumer exuberance and aggressive marketing practices.

Beyond the statistics I just quoted, financial illiteracy is creating roadblocks to achieving part of the American dream, home ownership. Fannie Mae's 2003 National Housing Survey found that a significant roadblock to home ownership is lacking accurate information about the homebuying process. For the unhoused to become housed, a banking or financial relationship is part of the process. However, for the nation as a whole, approximately 10 percent of individual households remain "unbanked." The unbanked are those who forego a relationship with a financial institution. By not participating in the financial mainstream, the unbanked miss out on the convenience, security, efficiency, and wealth-building opportunities that financial institutions offer. I think we can all agree that wealth-building and saving for the future are vital to the future economic success of the U.S. Extending financial literacy initiatives to all, from the unbanked, to students, to debt-burdened adults, is in all of our best interests.

We must be committed to providing people of all ages with the financial skills and insight to help them achieve financial independence and to make good choices when spending money and taking on additional debt. Prevention remains key, and education lies at the heart of prevention. I think my colleagues would agree that as society moves more and more toward an "ownership society" with the advent of health savings accounts and private accounts as currently proposed in the President's Social Security reform plan, the need for improving the financial literacy of this country is now, and the delivery and content of these literacy and economic programs needs to broaden and expand to all Americans, no matter the age.

I encourage my colleagues in the Senate to join me in commemorating efforts to forward financial and economic literacy in this country by recognizing April 2005 as Financial Literacy Month. But more than that, I hope that each of my colleagues becomes a champion of economic and financial literacy education so that all

citizens in this country are prepared to contribute and participate in our evolving asset ownership society. I once again thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for cosponsoring this resolution, and I urge the support of our other colleagues as well.

SENATE RESOLUTION 87—EX-PRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE RESUMPTION OF BEEF EXPORTS TO JAPAN

Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. BOND, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. TALENT, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. BUNNING, Mr. JOHNSON, and Mr. ROBERTS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Finance:

S. RES. 87

Whereas the livestock industry in the United States, including farmers, ranchers, processors, and retailers, is a vital component of rural communities and the entire United States economy;

Whereas United States producers take pride in delivering an abundant and safe food supply to our Nation and to the world;

Whereas Japan has prohibited imports of beef from the United States since December 2003, when a single case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) was found in a Canadian-born animal in Washington State;

Whereas the United States agriculture industry as a whole has been negatively affected by the Japanese ban and the loss of a \$1,700,000,000 export market to Japan;

Whereas the United States has undertaken a rigorous and thorough surveillance program and has exceeded internationally recognized standards of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) for BSE testing and has implemented safeguards to protect human and animal health;

Whereas Japan is a member of the OIE and has agreed to such standards;

Whereas the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of the World Trade Organization (WTO) calls for WTO members to apply sanitary and phytosanitary measures only to the extent necessary to protect human, animal, and plant health, based on scientific principles;

Whereas the United States and Japan concluded an understanding on October 23, 2004, that established a process that would lead to the resumption of imports of beef from the United States, yet such imports have not resumed;

Whereas despite the best efforts of officials within the United States Department of State, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the Office of the United States Trade Representative, the Government of Japan continues to delay imports of beef from the United States on the basis of factors not grounded in sound science and consumer safety;

Whereas the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures does not provide to WTO members the right to discriminate and restrict trade arbitrarily; and

Whereas Japan has been provided a reasonable timeframe to establish appropriate trade requirements and resume beef trade with the United States, and the Government of Japan is putting a long and profound bilateral trading history at risk: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that if the Government of Japan continues

to delay meeting its obligations to resume beef imports from the United States under the understanding reached with the United States on October 23, 2004, the United States Trade Representative should immediately impose retaliatory economic measures against Japan.

SENATE RESOLUTION 88—DESIGNATING APRIL 2005 AS “FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH”

Mr. AKAKA (for himself, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. CORZINE, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. DODD, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. INOUE, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. KOHL, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. LEVIN, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. PRYOR, Mr. SANTORUM, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. THOMAS) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 88

Whereas at the end of 2004, Americans carried 657,000,000 bank credit cards, 228,000,000 debit cards, and 550,000,000 retail credit cards;

Whereas based on the number of total United States households, there are now 6.3 bank credit cards, 2.2 debit cards, and 6.4 retail credit cards per household;

Whereas Americans consumer credit debt continues to increase, and has reached a level of in excess of \$2,100,000,000,000 as of year end 2004, of which \$791,000,000,000 is revolving consumer credit;

Whereas a United States Public Interest Research Group and Consumer Federation of America analysis of Federal Reserve data indicates that the average household with debt carries approximately \$10,000 to \$12,000 in total revolving debt;

Whereas Americans owe \$766,200,000,000 on home equity loans and lines of credit, more than twice as much as in 1998;

Whereas Americans converted \$41,000,000,000 in real estate equity into spendable cash in the third quarter of 2004 alone;

Whereas the current level of personal savings as a percentage of personal income is at one of the lowest levels in history, 2 percent, a decline from 7.5 percent in the early 1980s;

Whereas through November 2004, 1,869,343 individuals filed for bankruptcy;

Whereas a 2002 Retirement Confidence Survey found that only 32 percent of workers surveyed have calculated how much money they will need to save for retirement;

Whereas only 30 percent of those surveyed in a 2003 Employee Benefit Trend Study are confident in their ability to make the right financial decisions for themselves and their families, and 25 percent have done no specific financial planning;

Whereas approximately 10 percent of individual households remain unbanked, i.e., not using mainstream, insured financial institutions;

Whereas expanding access to the mainstream financial system provides individuals with lower cost, safer options for managing their finances and building wealth;

Whereas a greater understanding and familiarity with financial markets and institutions will lead to increased economic activity and growth;

Whereas financial literacy empowers individuals to make wise financial decisions and reduces the confusion of an increasingly complex economy;

Whereas the Spring 2004 Student Monitor Financial Services Survey found that 46 percent of college students have a general pur-

pose credit card in their own name and 37 percent carry over a credit card balance from month to month;

Whereas 45 percent of college students are in credit card debt, with the average debt being \$3,066;

Whereas only 26 percent of 13- to 21-year-olds reported that their parents actively taught them how to manage money;

Whereas a 2004 study by the JumpStart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy found an increase in high school seniors' scores on an exam about credit cards, retirement funds, insurance, and other personal finance basics for the first time since 1997; however, 65 percent of students still failed the exam;

Whereas a 2004 survey of States by the National Council on Economic Education found that 49 States include economics, and 38 States include personal finance, in their elementary and secondary education standards, up from 48 States and 31 States, respectively, in 2002;

Whereas personal financial management skills and life-long habits develop during childhood;

Whereas personal financial education is essential to ensure that individuals are prepared to manage money, credit, and debt, and become responsible workers, heads of households, investors, entrepreneurs, business leaders, and citizens; and

Whereas Congress found it important enough to ensure coordination of Federal financial literacy efforts and formulate a national strategy that it established the Financial Literacy and Education Commission in 2003 and designated the Office of Financial Education of the Department of the Treasury to provide support for the Commission: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates April 2005 as “Financial Literacy Month” to raise public awareness about the importance of financial education in the United States and the serious consequences that may be associated with a lack of understanding about personal finances; and

(2) calls on the Federal Government, States, localities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and the people of the United States to observe the month with appropriate programs and activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 89—CONGRATULATING THE MONTANA FFA ON ITS 75TH ANNIVERSARY AND CELEBRATING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF MONTANA FFA MEMBERS

Mr. BURNS (for himself and Mr. BAUCUS) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 89

Whereas in 2005, the Montana FFA, chartered in 1930, celebrates its 75th anniversary as a premier student development organization where members gain life and leadership skills;

Whereas more than 40,000 Montanans have been FFA members;

Whereas Montana FFA alumni provide outstanding leadership to agriculture and agribusiness at the local, State, and Federal levels;

Whereas the Montana FFA Association is the largest career and technical student organization in the State, with over 2,550 members from 75 chapters;

Whereas the mission of the FFA is to make a positive difference in the lives of students

by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agriculture education;

Whereas FFA is an integral component of agriculture education in the public school system; and

Whereas the National FFA Organization is a federally-chartered organization:

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the Montana FFA on its 75th anniversary; and

(2) directs the Secretary of the Senate to transmit to the Montana FFA an enrolled copy of this resolution for appropriate display.

SENATE RESOLUTION 90—DESIGNATING THE WEEK OF MAY 1, 2005, AS “HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATION WEEK”

Mr. LUGAR (for himself, Mr. BAYH, Mr. CORZINE, and Mrs. DOLE) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 90

Whereas the year 2005 marks the 60th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust, which was ruthlessly and tragically carried out by Nazi Germany under the leadership of Adolf Hitler and his collaborators;

Whereas the Holocaust involved the murder of millions of innocent Jewish men, women, and children along with millions of others, and an enormity of suffering inflicted on the many survivors through mistreatment, brutalization, violence, torture, slave labor, involuntary medical experimentation, death marches, and numerous other acts of cruelty that have come to be known as “genocide” and “crimes against humanity”; and

Whereas in the past 60 years, the Holocaust has provided the peoples of the world with an object lesson in the importance of compassion, caring, and kindness; an awareness of the dangers inherent in bigotry, racism, intolerance, and prejudice; and an understanding of the importance of an appreciation of the sensitivity to diversity: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week of May 1, 2005, as “Holocaust Commemoration Week”;

(2) commemorates the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II and the liberation of the concentration camps; and

(3) encourages all Americans to commemorate the occasion through reflection, acts of compassionate caring, and learning about the terrible consequences and lessons of the Holocaust.

SENATE RESOLUTION 91—URGING THE EUROPEAN UNION TO MAINTAIN ITS ARMS EXPORT EMBARGO ON THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. SMITH (for himself, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. KYL, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. ENSIGN, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. LIEBERMAN, and Mr. ALLEN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 91

Whereas, on June 4, 1989, the Communist Government of the People’s Republic of China ordered the People’s Liberation Army to carry out an unprovoked, brutal assault